

What's the Difference?

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There are different kinds of tournaments, such as Sectionals, Regionals, Nationals, STaCs, GNTs and NAOPs. Tournament awards include Black points, Silver Points, Red Points, Gold Points, Platinum Points and... Clear Points? What's the difference? What does it all mean? In this article I'll explain all of this!

First you have Tournaments. Clear Points are won in ACBL tournaments and games online, such as the 12-board ACBL "speedball" tournaments on BBO. They give you points toward rank, but don't count as any of the required colored or black points.

A Sectional Tournament is generally sponsored by your Unit (In the ACBL a Unit is a geographic area that helps support a number of clubs and the ACBL members living in that area. Houston is contained in Unit 174, which spans from College Station to Huntsville and down to Galveston). Sectional tournaments often have two-session events (teams and pairs) and pay more points than a similarly sized game at your local club would award. The points awarded at a Sectional are Silver Points. For those who joined the ACBL after 2009, you'll need 75 Silver points to make Life Master. Sectional Tournaments are generally three or four days long.

An STaC is a **Sectional Tournament at the Club**. These tournaments also pay Silver points, but not quite as many as a regular Sectional Tournament would. On the other hand, they can be a lot easier for people who live a long way from a big city to get to! Also, they help support your local club with needed revenue, and we do need to keep the clubs alive!

Regional Tournaments are sponsored by your District. Your local clubs in the Houston area are in Unit 174, which is in District 16 with 17 other units. ACBL District 16 is geographically huge, containing all of Mexico and almost all of Texas (excluding areas around El Paso and Amarillo). In District 16, the responsibility for running Regional tournaments is passed on to the Units, so Unit 174 runs the Houston Regional each year in January. Regional Tournaments pay Gold Points for overall places in two-session open (and some limited) games and for Section First wins in two-session open and some limited pair games. Red points are awarded for lower section places in pair games, and for lower team game brackets and some limited pair games. To achieve Life Master, you'll need at least 50 points that are any combination of Gold and Platinum, and an additional 50 points that can be any combination of Gold, Red, or Platinum (As an example, 40 red and 60 gold would meet both requirements). Regional Tournaments are generally six or seven days long.

So what are National Tournaments? There are three National Tournaments held by the ACBL each year, in Mid-March, Mid-July, and starting the day after Thanksgiving. National Tournaments run for ten or eleven days! A National Tournament has both Nationally-rated and Regionally rated games. Regionally-rated games are two-session events, for both pairs and

teams, much like at a Regional Tournament. The Regional events pay Red and Gold points just as they do at Regional Tournaments. In addition, the Nationals have a full slate of free educational sessions (usually two a day), as well as opportunities to take director and teacher certification classes (there is a registration fee to pay for course materials).

What is an NABC event? They're divided into two groups: NABC+ and NABC events. NABC+ events are unlimited (in most cases, any member in good standing can enter, and there is no upper limit. Exceptions are events like the Platinum Pairs and the Life Master Pairs, where Platinum Pairs requires you have a certain number of Platinum Masterpoints, and the LM Pairs is only open to those who have achieved Life Master Status). These events are multi-day events of four or six sessions for pairs, and longer in some cases for team games. NABC+ events pay Platinum Points for section places, team game match wins, and overall places. Platinum points are not needed for Life Master status, but 100 are required for the 10,000-point Platinum Life Master rank. NABC events are also two-day or longer events, but with a top Masterpoint limit. They pay Red and Gold points; some pay 10% Platinum Points for overalls.

Two special events in the ACBL are the NAOP (North American Open Pairs) and GNT (Grand National Teams). Both events are "grass roots events" – they are designed to let players qualify at the club level and from there earn the right to play against the ACBL's best. Each event is divided into flights or brackets, and each event requires that all members of a team or pair be from the same district (special rules are in place for those in the military, students, and who have multiple residences; see me or your Regional GNT or NAOP representative if you have questions about these).

For the NAOP Pair event, the brackets are Flight C (non-life master and under 500 Masterpoints), Flight B (under 2500 Masterpoints) and Flight A (unlimited). Qualify for the NAOP by playing in a NAOP qualifying event at a club game held June - August; players who have won a qualification for a given flight may play in that flight's District Final (District 16 holds their Final in January). The top places in the District Final earn the right to play in the National Finals held each year at the ACBL Spring National Tournament in March. There is also a stipend paid to each pair that plays in the national final; in past years it's been up to \$2,000 each for the 1st place pair in each bracket! The National Final for the NAOP is a two-day event.

For NAOP sectional games, awards are as follows:

	Club	District	National Final
Flight C	50% red, 50% black	Overall: 50% Gold, 50% Red Session: Red	1/3 Gold; 2/3 Red
Flight B	50% red, 50% black	Overall: Gold Session: Red	Overall: Gold Session: Gold/Red
Flight A	50% red, 50% black	Overall: Gold Session: Red	Platinum

For the GNT Team event, Flight C remains under 500 and NLM; Flight B is still under 2500. Flight A is under 6000 Masterpoints, and the Championship Flight is open to all Masterpoint ranks.

Clubs or Units may sponsor GNT qualifying events, but in District 16, no qualification is currently required to play in the District Final. Let the GNT District Coordinator know you're coming, and show up. (In past years, Championship and B flights have been held in Houston in April, and Flights A and C in Richardson in May.) The District events may be one or two days, depending on how many teams enter (generally two days if four or more teams). If 8 or more teams are entered in either B or C flights, two teams from that flight earn the right to play in the Summer Nationals; otherwise only the top team goes on to the Nationals. The team(s) representing the district typically gets a subsidy from the District to help with travel costs.

The District GNT events pay gold points for overalls and red for match wins, except that Flight C overall awards are 50% gold and 50% red.

The GNT events at the Nationals are truly different than you've played in before! Day 1 is a Swiss Team event, where the first round is random matches, and then you'll play teams with a similar record to yours. At the end of the day, the top 16 teams go on to play a single elimination knockout contest where you'll play 52 - 60 boards in one day against your opponent. Win and you go on to play your next opponent. Lose, and you can play in a different event tomorrow.

The Championship Flight awards Platinum Masterpoints. Overall awards in A and B are Gold. Overall awards for flight C are $\frac{1}{3}$ Gold and $\frac{2}{3}$ Red.

The NAP and GNT are **fun!** I strongly encourage you to participate and get a chance to play against the best players in your bracket, perhaps to even represent our District in the ACBL finals!

I'm available to answer questions on any of the above. Or:

For more information on ACBL Masterpoints, see <https://acbl.org/masterpoints/>

NAP Conditions of Contest are at <https://www.acbl.org/nap-qualifiers/>

GNT Conditions of Contest are at <https://www.acbl.org/gnt-qualifiers/>