

District Director Update

I hope all of you are healthy and still taking precautions against contracting and spreading the coronavirus. When I look back, it seems like face-to-face play and tournaments were a long time ago and I long for their return. Each day I remind myself that I need to be careful and not contribute to the spread of the virus, so I wear a mask when I'm in stores and other businesses and try to maintain social distance where possible at all times. So far, I believe few bridge players in my area have contracted the virus and hope that's true in your area as well.

Virtual club play has continued to expand and with the special events such as the regionally rated tournaments and silver linings games, ACBL should finish the year near break-even.

The number of members playing online has increased each month, but it's still less than ½ of the number of people that played in clubs in 2019. I'd like to encourage each of you to reach out to someone you know who's not playing online and help them through the process or if you are not playing online consider reaching out for help. There are great videos by Donna Compton and others to guide you and I'm sure some of your partners will help as well. Whether we like it or not, I believe online play opportunities will be much greater than face-to-face for many more months.

The ACBL Board has held two special meetings in May and June. Key decisions and actions from those meetings were:

- The Board supported management's request to cancel face-to-face tournaments for the remainder of 2020. District 7 had announced their intention to hold two regionals during the summer months and this precipitated the discussion and the decision. Protecting the health and safety of our employees and members is the highest priority and since many tournament directors and the vast majority of our players are in the most vulnerable demographic for Covid 19, we felt strongly that cancelling is the right thing to do. **Please let me know if a facility wants to collect a cancellation fee for any tournament cancellation between now and the end of the year. League counsel is glad to help as well.**
- A new Online Ethical Oversight Committee was created and has been staffed to deal with allegations on online cheating. Three cases were reviewed by Appeals and Charges in May and many more are in the pipeline. It's important for everyone to realize that the **only** communication allowed during a hand is to chat to the entire table. BBO has extensive online monitoring tools but ACBL needs help from players and online directors to curb cheating. If you notice very unusual play that indicates improper communication by partners, please report it to the virtual club manager. The play can be reviewed and a recorder form filed if needed to trigger a more thorough investigation.
- The Board approved a motion to create a Guest Membership. We had taken the action to do this in 2019, but that motion required eliminating temporary membership.

Management had delayed implementation due to technical issues and asked for permission to have both membership options until the technical issues are resolved. The urgency came about because about 7000 non-members are playing in ACBL sanctioned online games. Without a membership number they are excluded from masterpoint limited games and are assigned to the "A" stratification for unlimited games. Management wants to enroll them as guest members and then try to convince them to buy a full membership.

- A taskforce was created to develop a strategy for online bridge in the future. It is headed by Jay Whipple and has two D16 members Nancy Strohmer and Donna Compton.
- A motion to allow districts and units to run regional and sectional tournaments was defeated. The primary reasons were:
 - ACBL and Clubs need the income during this time much more than units and districts that have minimal fixed costs.
 - There are many technical difficulties and manual processes for running two session events using BBO. Management does not want to incur the programming and training expense needed to allow units and districts to perform these operations so the players would have a good experience. BBO currently has no facility to charge entry fees for team games and to play either Swiss or Knockouts requires a lot of work by the director to set up matches. A large tournament could overwhelm BBO's abilities in this area.
- The Board supported management's plan for online special events for the rest of 2020. These include additional regionally rated opportunities, silver linings weeks, club championships and a club appreciation week in October. Watch your e-mail for announcements.

I received notice that I have been elected to continue in the District Director position for three more years as no one filed to contest the election. Thanks to all for your support and encouragement.

In closing, these are very trying and unprecedented times for the world, our nation and for us as individuals. I want to encourage you to do everything you can to be helpful to others and to limit the spread of Covid 19. Best wishes for your health and safety and good times at the tables!

Paul Cuneo