

2021 D17 GNT Flight A, B & C Finals

D17 Bridge Buzz, July 2021

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There was no pre-qualification required to play in the district final to encourage participation for the flights, with the exception of the Championship Flight as the winning team of the 2020 D17 GNT Championship Final was held at the 2020 Tucson Regional and the D17 Board declared that team to be the 2021 Championship Flight Team.

There was concern that Flight C players with little or no experience playing team games or online would be comfortable entering the event. To the rescue came Sharon Smith, a C player herself, who is the CO/WY representative on the D17 Board of Directors and the D17 Education Committee Chairman and by the way gained the gold points she needed for her Life Master playing in the D17 Flight C Finals. Congratulations! Sharon organized two practice Swiss team games for C players, a very successful endeavor. The sessions were free on Shark Bridge, teams were formed and coaches were found for the teams. Seventeen teams played the first session and fourteen teams played the second session. The result? TWENTY-EIGHT teams entered the D17 Flight C GNT Finals. Another incentive for the Flight C players is that D17 waived the entry fee for Flight C teams, which has been done for several years.

Because of the participation of so many Flight C teams a total of 48 teams played in the D17 GNT Finals – the most ever!

Since the Flight A, B & C D17 Finals were played on BBO using a Bridge Finesse platform team names were required and the teams got very creative in selecting their names. One B team, the Sun Lake Aces even went so far as to name themselves: Ace of Spades (aka Jim Wart), Ace of Hearts (aka Donna Hofer), Ace of Diamonds (Kitty Larson), and Ace of Clubs (W. Lakin Hines – also a D17 Board Member). A side note – Jim Wart and Lakin Hines were first in the 2019 D17 Flight B NAP Finals and competed in the March 2021 Online National Flight B Finals. The Sun Lake Aces will be playing in the National Finals, they placed second and since more than 8 teams played, two teams will represent D17 – perhaps their name helped.

The winning Flight B Team, the Gila Monsters: Doug Couchman, Cayce Blanchard, Kyle Rockoff, Andi Parham, Ron Vickery, and Edward Helpert consists of first-time participants in the D17 GNTs and some relative newcomers to D17, who hit the ground running by becoming super volunteers - Doug Couchman and Kyle Rockoff. Doug is the ACBL Board of

Governors' (BOG) Chairman and current 1st Alternate to the ACBL Board of Directors (BOD) and Kyle is a D17 BOG representative as 2nd alternate to the BOD.

The Flight C winners, The Flying GuMBos: Michael Toomey, Sandy Johnson, Geneva Fisher, and Beth Gaffney paid tribute to their teacher and team coach by insisting she be included in their team picture with the carousel pony. Sally Ann's bridge alias, as well as the name of her business, is Pony Girl Bridge. BTW Sally Ann made the pony out of paper mache.

The second place Flight C team, The Colorado Aces: Murlene Williams, E. Roger Williams, David Loring, and Sally Donaldson had an obstacle in the beginning when team captain, Murlene Williams had to find another pair to join her and Roger when her original teammates were unable to play. She found a winning combination with David and Sally.

The Flight A winning team's name says it all – Colorado Springs Oldies many members of the team: William Curtis, James Black, Don Patterson, Kim Caley, and David Ruttner have played in the D17 GNT Finals and have represented D17 at the National Finals.

Much appreciation and kudos are due to so many people who stepped up to the plate and made the D17 Online GNT Finals an outstanding success:

Ken Horwedel – our Director In Charge who worked many, long hard days in preparation for our finals.

Liz Hamilton – D17 President, a huge supporter of the GNTs who helped keep things rolling.

Sharon Smith, with the help of John Grossmann, who organized the Swiss Team Coaching and games with coaches and hand analysis.

Unit 360 members who agreed to play the day before the event when a team had to drop out because of illness, so that there would be no sit outs: The Ski Team: Lee Kulbitski, Sam Taylor, Myrna Heimer, and Joan Tokarz. And again, to Myrna Heimer and Joan Tokarz who filled in the second day.

All the coaches and players – there would be no GNTs without you.

**Thank you all
Bonnie Bagley
D17 GNT Coordinator**