

**District 21 Director's Report**

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The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men Gang aft a-gley. (Robert Burns, To a Mouse, 1785)

236 years later, this still is true. In my June report on the activities of the ACBL, there was a very optimistic outlook on the opening of Face-to-Face (FtF) bridge returning and tournaments being scheduled. Not long after, the delta variant of COVID-19 made its appearance and dulled that optimism.

Club attendance has struggled to maintain even the initial levels of play since they opened, and some have even closed again until the delta variant subsides. Based on common measures of a geographic area's degree of infection, the

ACBL is applying those measures to scheduled tournaments across North America and cancelling many, putting others on a 'maybe' status, and letting a very few continue as scheduled for the coming months. Of the later, no regionals and only 4 sectionals scheduled for October were permitted to proceed without further restriction. One of those 4 sectional was in D21. (The other 3 were in British Columbia, New England, and a Chicago suburb.) The minimum requirement for all tournaments is that everyone must be certified (where not disallowed by law) to have been vaccinated. Everyone should follow the current CDC guidelines for wearing a mask, and by necessity, must follow state or local requirements for indoor activities.

The unfortunate fallout from the delta variant is that many players had to continue playing online, or even go back to playing online when their FtF club closed once again. The ACBL had decided to lower the bonus factor for online Virtual Club games from 1.25x to 1.00x. But since the return to FtF bridge had stalled, they reinstated the 1.25x factor. And while the special online games awarding silver and gold points were supposed to stop after August, it was decided to continue them for the same reasons.

At the beginning of October, and at the request of the ACBL Board, management started a full enforcement of the existing Visitor Policy, also known as the Guest Policy. This policy has been in effect for quite a long time and said that Virtual Clubs should not have more than 15% guest in their games. A few very large VC games were well above that limit and remained there because the enforcement was not strict. Now it is, and these few VC games were warned to heed the 15% limit. The result was that these clubs had to inform their players that many would not be allowed to continue as visitors.

The fallout from the enforced visitor limit caused an avalanche of complaints via emails to me as District 21 Director, and to the other 24 board members. Frankly, it was nearly overwhelming, but I tried to personally respond to each and every email from D21 members.

Prior to this month we heard the opposite complaint from FtF club owners and VC game directors. Virtual Club games were originally meant as a stop gap measure during COVID-19 to allow players to continue playing with fellow club members, and also provide financial aid to FtF clubs in meeting their rent and other expenses until they could reopen. Of course, COVID-19 and its variants have been a problem for much longer than anyone anticipated. Smaller club owners, both FtF and online have been voicing complaints that a few very large clubs have been siphoning their players away to the point of pushing them over the brink. The ACBL Board wants to give clubs a decent chance to survive and make a healthy comeback once the pandemic is over.

The whole board wants to encourage players to play. The board also wants to provide 'robust' support for the return of FtF bridge. Sometimes these goals are difficult to reconcile. The board is in the process of reviewing suggestions from all District Directors. Some suggestions include not counting partners of those players already on the include list, and not counting pairs asked to fill in a half table. I have proffered a



suggestion that those players that request a change to a specific VC club's 'include list' be allowed to do so if they do not have a reasonable game already available.

In addition to this primary issue, the board did accomplish some other work. At a special meeting in August, the board approved two future NABCs: Memphis for Spring 2025, and San Diego for Fall 2026. It may seem strange in these pandemic times to contract with hotels so far out, but an independent consultant noted that there was a large pent-up demand to hold convention-sized events that were cancelled or postponed in the last 1 ½ years.

The Board of Directors traditionally holds 3 multi-day meetings a year, each just before that start of an NABC. We still have been holding these meetings on Zoom even though there has not been an NABC since San Francisco in Fall 2019. Since there is so much on the Board's agenda, we have also been holding one day meetings each of the other 9 months.

This article is my summary of what is of the most importance to the average D21 player who reads this newsletter. The ACBL Board has instituted another useful aid. We now have an official National Directors Report detailing the actions of the board at our last full meeting. Rather than repeat what is contained in the report's 9 pages, I will see that it is placed on the D21 web site. If you are interested in the workings of the board and its deliberations, please click [here](#) to read the Report.

The Austin NABC is still on schedule for November 2021. I hope to see many of you there. Let's all hope it doesn't go 'aft a-gley'!