

**GNT/NAP/Special Events Task Force
Report to the ACBL Board
Memphis—Wednesday, March 14, 2012**

Task Force Members:

Margot Hennings (ACBL BOD D6 and Task Force (TF) Chair)
Mark Aquino (GNT and NAP Coordinator, D25 and Coordinators' Forum (CF) Chair)
Bonnie Bagley (ACBL BOD D17)
Rich Carle (GNT and NAP Coordinator, D20)
Mike Cassel II (GNT Coordinator, D14)
Barbara Doran (NAP Coordinator, D6)
Georgia Heth (ACBL BOD D8)
Sheila Pies (NAP Coordinator, D9)
Paul Pomeroy (GNT and NAP Coordinator, D12)
Carol Robertson (ACBL Staff)
Patty Taylor (ACBL Staff)

Seattle Meeting:

GNT/NAP Coordinators' Forum—*First ever such get-together*

Memphis Meetings:

GNT/Nap/Special Events Task Force
3 – 5 p.m. Thursday, March 15, 2012
Beale Room, Marriott Hotel, second floor

GNT/NAP Coordinators' Forum
9:30 a.m. – 12 Noon Saturday, March 17, 2012
Room 201 on the 2nd floor of the Convention Center

Impetus for Formation

- Outgrowth of defeated motion to have ACBL fund GNT entries for the national-level competitors

Initial Statement of Purpose:

- New events/strategies
- Develop *grass roots* programs that encourage participation in bridge

Added Purpose:

- Work with the CF to *improve current grass roots* events and thereby encourage greater participation

Activities to Date (TF and CF):

- Telecom among TF members, Monday, March 5
- Agreement on focus—initial emphasis on GNTs, then NAPs, then other Special Events
- Copious email exchanges with lots of creative, “out-of-the-box” thoughts—right now, “anything goes”
- Successful cover story in March *ACBL Bulletin*, pushed to fruition by Mark Aquino
- Central repository established on ACBL website for district GNT and NAP Conditions of Contest; expanded use in future for uploading of marketing tools and templates (don’t re-invent the wheel), due to dedicated efforts of ACBL Staff Patty Taylor
- Discussion of the role of the CF and the role of the TF—TF as “advisory” and “implementing” arm of the CF to develop “passable motions”
- Understanding and actively taking advantage of the synergy between the CF and the TF as well as the NABC New Events/Strategies Task Force and Full Service Clubs Task Force—many opportunities for new ideas
- Goal between Memphis and Philadelphia is:
 - Research and analysis of available data to identify current trends to support conclusions and
 - Development of “whole package” of ideas and motions as needed to:
 - Redefine “grass roots” events with emphasis on participation from the clubs up through the national level at an NABC
 - Reconfigure flights to increase participation particularly among the least experienced players and those with more than 5000 MPs who do not turn out to compete against the pros
 - Suggest innovative funding ideas including understanding of regulations already “on the books” that allow fund raising for GNTs and “easy” new ways to allow and incentivize GNT fund raising
- Key successes and key tools for future successes:

Communication, Compilation, Access, More Communication

Accomplishments of the GNT/NAP Coordinators' Forum

November 2011 – March 2012

Mark Aquino, D25, ACBL-wide GNT/NAP Coordinator Chair

Thinking back over the past few months, I would have to say that the biggest accomplishment of the GNT/NAP Coordinators' Forum has been the fact that we have created an opportunity to communicate common concerns, to identify opportunities for improvement, and to develop a mechanism for corrective action regarding attendance, marketing, and funding of the premier grass roots events within the ACBL – the Grand National Teams and the North American Pairs.

Data needed to understand the attendance trends just wasn't being assembled at ACBL HQ even though the raw information could easily be extracted from their computers. By setting up a network of experienced and capable volunteers, we were able to get the raw information and organize the data into a format that helped highlight significant opportunities and achievements.

The first big accomplishment was the organizing and consolidation of NAP club game attendance over the past 5 years that revealed a whopping 71% attendance increase. Breaking down the data by district and by flight, and by adding the different ACBL member populations provided huge insight into areas that would require further exploration and action. (see Appendix 1)

We soon discovered to our chagrin that data was not being gathered and maintained in such a way as to best benefit the GNT and NAP coordinators and to help facilitate focused marketing initiatives. District results for GNTs by number of teams and by flight were simply not available because the district team count was not the focus of the headquarters. In addition, NAP Qualifiers at the club level were not being recorded and tabulated centrally and shared which would make district marketing efforts easier. Redundant efforts were being expended on local marketing of the NABCs. Conditions of Contest were not being centrally stored for easy access and cross reference. The

Coordinators Forum highlighted these opportunities for improvement and the real big achievement is that people in positions to influence corrective actions listened and began to make big improvements. A lot still needs to be done, but in the past few months the following things have been achieved:

A GNT/NAP forum was organized in Seattle. By organizing an ACBL-wide forum in Seattle, and by attracting the attention and support of our new President and our new CEO, as well as the support of a half dozen BOD members, we were able to detail a program for corrective actions that has proven to be a good starting point for improved attendance, and sharing of ideas and best practices.

- 1) From the level of response, this appears to be gaining traction to become a regular forum.**
- 2) A combined GNT/NAP Coordinators and "BOD Squad" called the "Special Events Task Force" was created to provide a mechanism for the CF to directly help develop motions for approval and enactment by the BOD.**
- 3) In response to requests for improved ACBL Bulletin publicity, the March cover and feature article was devoted to the Grand National Teams district finals still underway in 22 out of the 25 ACBL Districts. (see Appendix 2)**
- 4) Committed resources in the form of the Special Events Manager, Patty Taylor have been applied, and Patty has been steadfast, speedy, cheerful, and dedicated to providing information and assistance wherever and whenever she could.**
- 5) A central repository for various district NAP and GNT Conditions of Contest has been established on the ACBL Website.**
- 6) A webpage on www.acbl.org has been identified for the posting of District and Unit NAP and GNT final rounds , locations, and dates.**
- 7) A Best Practices Subcommittee under the Leadership of Barb Doran, D6 has been created.**
- 8) Clarity and detail are being brought into sharp focus for the development of a GNT Fund Month and/or an alternative set of funding mechanisms.**

- 9) **Opportunities for increasing attendance and competition have been developed. “Out-of-the-box” thinking, challenging long-established paradigms are being openly aired. One such novel suggestion is conducting the GNT Open Finals concurrent with the Spingold Finals, thus breaking up the strangle hold the top pro teams have had on the GNT Open Championship event.**
- 10) **A refreshing and contagious spirit has been created of “why not?”, instead of “we’ve never done it that way before, so it can’t be done”**
- 11) **Information that had been provided on an as-requested basis in the past, is now broadly understood, shared, and disseminated. Example is listing of all the clubs in each district.**

All of this has been created in just a few months. Much more progress is expected in the months to come.

Huge thanks to BOD!!

Without your support, none of this progress would have been possible.