

Leaves from the Executive Branch (9th edition)

(by Ray Yuenger)

At its September 6, 2020 online meeting, the District 21 (“D21”) Board of Directors voted to economize on publishing the D21 newsletter, the Diamond in the Ruff, by distributing issues every three months instead of every month. However, news doesn’t occur on anyone’s schedule, so I asked our District Director, Jackie Zayac, to continue summarizing the meetings of the ACBL’s Board of Directors after they occur and post them to the D21 website. Her reports can be found at this [link](#).

And, as D21 President, I’m going to continue reporting on District developments after they occur. In this special edition of my column, I’m going to discuss what happened at the latest Board meeting, some changes in D21 personnel, and a new online game for 99ers. I won’t provide a transcript of the Board meeting, just a summary of the topics I think are of interest to many in the D21 membership.

The September 2020 Board Meeting

Tournament cancellations and manager stipends

Like just about everyone, D21 is hurting financially from the impact of COVID-19. The ACBL has canceled tournament sanctions through February 2021 and it’s unknown when it will be safe, let alone legal, to next hold a face-to-face tournament. The main income sources of D21 are our regionals, then our participation in Western Conference STAC weeks, then sectional ads in our newsletter. All those income sources have dried up. Our tournament manager, Pam Hughes, has been forced to negotiate to end hotel contracts D21 entered years ago to give us locations for our regionals. She is still negotiating with the hotel in Monterey about the January 2021 regional to cancel the contract without D21 paying a contractual penalty for not meeting its room commitment.

The stipend per regional for our tournament manager was increased in May 2015 by the Board to \$6,500. That decision did not contemplate what stipend is appropriate when a regional is canceled due to a pandemic. For the Sacramento regional, at the May 30 meeting the Board reduced her stipend to 90%. Pam was excused at the September meeting for the Board’s discussion of her stipend. Against my recommendation, a majority of the Board voted to reduce her stipend to 50% for subsequent canceled tournaments.

Sectional supplies

At the May 30 meeting, the Board voted in favor of one motion to (1) turn in our leased van six months early to save money on lease payments and (2) move D21’s tournament supplies from a storage unit to a POD. The POD was said to serve two

purposes, cheaper storage and having a company available to deliver the tournament supplies to our regionals by trucking the POD around.

As I explained in the 6th edition of my Presidential column in the July [Diamond in the Ruff](#), further investigation revealed that the savings on the van would be minimal due to a prepayment penalty and the combination of turning in the van and moving supplies into a POD would essentially put D21 out of its traditional business of providing supplies to Units for their sectionals. I restated this additional information at the September meeting and apologized for being inadequately informed when presenting the motion at the May meeting. After gaining more information after the May meeting, I decided not to implement the Board vote until the Board was better informed.

By the time of the September meeting, the supplies had been relocated within the same storage facility into a much less expensive storage unit at close to the anticipated cost of the POD and with greater access available. As President, I explained at the meeting that under the lease/option for the van, D21 will have an opportunity to purchase the van at the end of the lease in November for \$16,500. According to Kelly's Blue Book, the value of the van is \$25,000 and the van is among the top-rated used vans. Whether D21 uses the van for tournament supplies or sells it, we are better off buying it. A majority of the Board approved the motion by online poll to purchase the van.

As President, I explained that D21 would not go out of the sectional supply business before hearing from every Unit in the District.

ACBL Board reorganization

Jackie Zayac reported that the ACBL's Board of Directors agreed in July to a reorganization whereby there will be 13 Regional Directors instead of the current 25 District Directors. Beginning in 2023, Districts 20 and 21 will be consolidated for purposes of national representation only into Region 12. This doesn't mean that D21 will disappear. It will continue to exist and hold regionals as before.

Does this downsizing of the ACBL's Board make you wonder if D21 needs to have two representatives from each of its 21 Units attending its Board meetings? Are 42 head better than 21? They sure are harder to fit onto a Zoom video screen.

The Diamond in the Ruff

The Bylaws of D21 require the District to publish a periodical for its members, but they do not say how often. As I've explained before, our long-time Editor Rich Luttrell gets a stipend of \$350 a month when the newsletter is published. The publisher (in Florida) is paid \$25 a page for laying out the newsletter. Our unit columnists are volunteers. As Executive Editor, I am a volunteer.

Two polls were conducted during the September meeting, one to determine whether people would rather have the newsletter delivered by email or simply posted on the D21 website. The other asked how frequently to publish the newsletter when there are no regionals, sectionals, or unit games to report. The Board voted in favor of email delivery and in favor of publication once a quarter, as I already mentioned.

As the vote was in September, as Executive Editor I've determined that there will be a December 2020 edition, and then in 2021 the newsletter will be published in January, April, July, and October. The January newsletter will be delayed to report on the January 9 virtual Board meeting. If and when we resume face-to-face bridge, the Board will reconsider the publication schedule.

Charity donations

The D21 Charity Chair, Jeff Hack, recommended that D21 donate \$1,500 to each of four charities: Richmond Emergency Food Pantry (Unit 497), Samaritan House – San Mateo (Unit 498), Alameda County Community Food Bank (Unit 501), and Community Service Agency of Mt. View, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills (Unit 503). These were the only charities nominated by Units. The Board had authorized giving an extra \$1,000 at its May meeting. The Board approved Jeff's recommendations at the September meeting.

As the representative of Unit 507, Stu Goodgold presented a recommendation from the Unit's Board that the District and the ACBL not give away their general funds while the organizations have no income. As President, I explained that this recommendation would be considered by a Practices and Policies Committee I have formed.

Personnel Changes

Richard Meffley was stricken before the September Board meeting and passed away shortly after the meeting. People who read the social media sites of [Facebook](#) or [BridgeWinners](#) will have already heard this sad news.

Richard represented D21 on the ACBL's Board of Governors for a long time. As D21 President, I've appointed Max Schireson to fill that position until the Board can elect a replacement at its January meeting.

Richard also served as the D21 Tournament Coordinator, making sure that Units in D21 didn't double-book sectionals on the same weekends. I've appointed Anne Hollingsworth to fill that position. I've also asked all Units to identify their sectional coordinators to Anne.

In a very close election, Stu Goodgold was elected to be the last District Director of D21. I say the last one because of the reorganization of the ACBL's Board of Directors I mentioned above. He will take that position in January.

I've already thanked Jackie Zayac for her service as DD privately. I'll do so here publicly. She energetically represented D21 and most recently was responsible for the creation of a new event, a two-day 0-2500 Swiss Team National Event on Tuesday and Wednesday of the Spring NABC. I hope to harness her energy to help D21 evolve with the changing times.

New Online 99er Game

Around September 23, as D21 President I was contacted by Lamya Agelidis of D22 in southern California about establishing an interdistrict game, involving D21, D22, and D23 (also in southern California) strictly for the 99ers in our districts who may not otherwise have a place to play with and against their peers.

Through a series of Zoom meetings, emails, and phone calls, I've learned that Jay Whipple (past President of the ACBL; creator of The Common Game; creator of Fast Results and more) initially built this program (including software) to function like a Support Your Club game for the ACBL to operate, but the ACBL passed on the opportunity. Jay then successfully established the program in his home District 9, and other nearby Districts have since joined with him. Lamya and Jay were on an ACBL task force recently and she learned about the program, which Jay has offered to us.

While learning about it, I've reached out to what I was told were all the virtual clubs (VACBs) in D21 to see if any of them had objections. Most responses were enthusiastic. I also emailed all the 99ers in D21 with an introduction to the program that now appears on the D21 website [here](#).

The first game was held on Monday, October 19. The interdistrict California 99er Nite Club is offered Mondays through Thursdays at 6:30 PM. It is a 12-board game. After the game at 8:00 PM is about a half-hour Zoom session free or charge during which the players can ask a teacher about the bidding and play of the evening's hands.

Among the rules for playing is that a player's home club must enroll its 99ers in the program before the player can play. Also, the player must have prior experience playing in a VACB. Many directors from D21 volunteered to direct during the first month, too many to use all of them considering there were also volunteers from D22 and D23. We have also have volunteer teachers, although in the long run we expect to be compensating directors and teachers. The SYC part of the program is that all tables fees left over after ACBL table fees and BBO's share and program overhead will be rebated to local VACBs when their players play.

There have been growing pains because the list of VACBs I received wasn't completely up-to-date. Also, we've had to turn away some players whose clubs hadn't enrolled them. Some VACBs needed help with the enrollment software and some players needed help registering, which we've provided in a pre-game Zoom meeting.

The program is intended to be revenue-neutral for the Districts. We hope to recoup our initial seed money, but turn over the profits to our local VACBs while giving dozens of tables of 99ers a place to play. If you are wondering why D21 didn't try to do this solo, I've been told that it takes a large player base to find enough players able and willing to play. We have over 70 clubs from the three Districts participating already and averaged 22 tables last week (which was an enhanced masterpoints week).

I did provide advance notice to the Unit's Board representatives about this program, but did not call for a Board vote, because the relevant vote is whether our local VACBs decide to enroll their 99ers. The D21 Board traditionally hasn't told local clubs how to operate.