

Scorecard article – May/June 2020

The worst of times! As I write this article, the number of Covid 19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths are rising with the peak still unknown. We've cancelled the Columbus NABC, all bridge clubs in major metropolitan areas are closed, tournaments are cancelled and the financial outlook for ACBL and business in general is dismal for at least a few more months. I hope and pray that you are safe and healthy and that the pandemic will pass soon.

The best of times!!! Yes, there are a lot of good things since I last wrote and more on the way. First, the ACBL Board had its first full meeting virtually and the highlight was passing the restructuring proposal by a supermajority. Since this is a bylaws change, it must pass again at the next full board meeting and then be ratified by the Board of Governors.

Over the election cycles of 2021 thru 2023 the size of the ACBL Board will be reduced from 25 to 13 members by combining districts for the sole purpose of electing regional directors. All other district functions remain unchanged. District 16 will be combined with District 15 and our regional director will be elected in 2021 under the proposal.

Restructuring the Board is not a new idea. The minutes reflect several attempts over the past 25 plus years. The current push started in 2015 and I've been working on it since taking office in 2017. It was clear to me then that restructuring would require a change in the members of the board and that has been achieved as we've had 14 new members since 2016. Of those 14, 12 voted in favor, 1 opposed and 1 abstained. I'm confident that a combination of reducing the size of the board, focusing the work of the board on strategy, finance and oversight along with having the bridge committees report to management will ultimately result in better governance and business decisions.

Another good thing is that as I write there are over 150 clubs that are operating as virtual clubs using the Bridge Base Online platform and I expect we'll have another 300 to 400 over the next couple of weeks. Little did I know when in the fall of 2018 I approached Executive Director Joe Jones for permission to run an experiment to play online club games on BBO that the work to make that happen would enable ACBL and BBO to reach this point in less than 3 weeks. The collaboration between BBO, ACBL Tournament Directors, Club services, Information Technology, and Club Managers from around the country has been amazing to witness.

The response from players to both the Support Your Club games and the Virtual online clubs has been tremendous. Many club managers/teachers have collaborated in the effort to teach players how to use the BBO platform as well.

Another long-term effort that I've been advocating is to develop a bridge app that would interest younger people in learning and playing bridge. For over two years, a successful iPhone app developer has been working and leading a team to develop such an app. I've been in contact with him and encouraging him for a year. This past week the ACBL Educational Foundation Board approved a significant grant to help fund the development. The app is expected to begin to launch for public use later this summer.

I am also amazed by the efforts of doctors and scientists around the world to develop a vaccine that is effective against Covid 19 in record time. Typically, these vaccines take 5-6 years to become available to the public and as I write clinical trials have been started for a vaccine and others will be launched in a few weeks.

This makes me optimistic that despite the tremendous loss of life and wealth caused by the virus that mankind will ultimately conquer it and that the innovations spawned by the pandemic will benefit us in many ways in the future. Until I have the opportunity to see you in person, stay safe and healthy. We'll be together once again in the clubs and at tournaments and have many stories to share.