

# GRAND NATIONAL TEAMS provisional REPORT, MAY 2010

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<u>agenda item</u>	<u>action</u>
2009-2010 GNT narrative	
D14 GNT Financial Report	Distribution to Winning teams: <b>\$1700</b> up 15%
Changes to District 14 Policies re. GNT	Motions to Amend: Preferred Date: the last, not 4 <sup>th</sup> weekend of April Venue & Date Change for GNT Finals: Championship Flight Unit Final Table fees reserved for Flight champions who are Unit Final participants
2010-2011 Conditions of Contest(CoC)	discussion Minor changes: Swiss vs. Seeded fields[brackets]
District 14 future Spring Calendars	Set GNT final dates 3 years in advance [table to Fargo?] 2011 May 14-15 Des Moines 2012 April 28-29 Twin Cities 2013 April 27-28 tba 2014 April 26-27 Twin Cities

## Event Interest

Persistent declines at both the club-qualifying and district final levels have been reversed in the last two years.. We increased club qualifying table count and had 51 tables of 2-session Unit final play, a continuous gain over last year's dramatic performance increase.

It takes an effort from interested volunteers with some passion to have a successful Unit campaign. Gregg Walsh, Dee & Nancy Wilson, Tony Ames, and Judy Nassar helped make the club qualifying games reach record table counts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in their units.

Success at the District Finals is dependent upon diligence in publicizing the event via tournament flyers, and at local clubs & sectionals, on the web site and the Minnesota bridge blog, and the efforts of club directors to promote team play. This is particularly beneficial in flight C where team formation isn't a given. A number of Flight B pairs lacked teammates as well. The 50% drop in Flight C teams was disconcerting however. We can do better to help our newer players understand the allure of the grass roots national events.

## District Final Venue

Holding the GNT District Final in the Twin Cities proved to be a success again this year, however the use of 24 sets of preduplicated hands, a nice perk for players, caused expenses to rise significantly (\$526). Total District final receipts were **\$6617** up \$245 from \$6372 last year. 31 teams, with 131 players entered the GNT event vs 33 teams (138 players) last year. Team count was up in A (7 vs 5, and B(16 v 15). Tony Ames assisted interested players in team formation again, but only 6 teams competed in Flight C down from 12. We surmise that some of last year's participants felt overmatched. Total table count, including a GNT Fundraising Swiss was 118 up 10 tables from last year due to contest conditions change for round robin B & C finals.

Unit 216's tremendous support for the GNTs this cycle makes Des Moines the logical choice for next year's venue if venue expenses can be controlled. How to balance the District's geographical diversity with the historical concentration of tournament-interested players coming from Minnesota, particularly in the top brackets, remains a thorny issue. I think any unit promising the greater of \$3,000 or actual district final profit to hold a GNT district final should be welcome to apply to be a venue.

Another continuing vexing issue is bringing our district's best together to compete in the GNTs. A proposal to change the date and venue for the GNT district finals for the Championship Flight will be addressed in a few minutes.

## Notes and Observations

In the 07-08 cycle there were 343 tables in 49 club-qualifying games.

In the 08-09 cycle there were 564 tables in 78 club-qualifying games, a healthy increase.

In the 09-10 cycle there were 676 tables in 70 club-qualifying games, a nice bump in table count

Here is a table identifying the last 3 years of club qualifiers and table counts by Unit:

Unit	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	comments
MN-103	0	13- 87 tables	6 - 54 tables	St. Cloud dropped from 37 to 6 tables
MN-178	7- 68 tables	24-203 tables	25 – 240 tables	Benefitted from later Distr. Final date
IA-163	25-130 tables	23-115 tables	13 - 64 tables	Big decrease
IA-216	4- 35 tables	5 - 61 tables	16 - 248 tables	A quadruple + a 22 table Unit Final
IA-235	2 - 10 tables	1 - 10 tables	1 – 7 tables	
NE-184	5- 47 tables	5 - 42 tables	2 – 11 tables	Significant dropoff
NE-241	5- 50 tables	5 - 40 tables	4 – 39 tables	
ND-104	1- 3 tables	2 - 6 tables	3 - 13 tables	Held a 5 table 2-session Unit Final
SD-162	0	0	0	
total	49- 343 tables	78-564 tables	70 – 676 tables	

We should still consider additional revenue sources and commit to finding a way to give each team \$2000+ in the future. Could a district-wide STAC be held to supplement the GNT fund? It's a burden vis a vis gas and hotel expenses to make a long journey, and if we assisted teams who undertook the travel it might demonstrate our dedication to the value of the grass-roots event. In that vein....

I encouraged Unit 216 to hold a Unit final and use the profit from the event, which was about \$700, to assist teams in covering their travel and hotel expenses to travel to Minnesota. Profits from next year's Unit final in Minnesota will offer the same: an equal distribution to all Minnesotans who travel to the District finals. Unfortunately, Iowa sent just one team to the finals and they were not from Unit 216. Unit 104 also held a 2-session Unit game with 5 tables. Minnesotans had a joint unit final this year that offered each flight's winning teams free entries at the District final as long as they remain in the hunt. Minnesota units might have had to dip into their funds to cover the shortfall between free plays granted and the \$488 profit from the Unit final, but a number of the 'favorite' teams fell by the wayside, which, by the way, IS par for the course.

This speaks again to the reality that any team that is 'on' it's game can win the trip. Unit I/N coordinators or GNT coordinators need to have the interest and moxie to energize the base of newer players if bridge is to survive. I believe, if promoted intelligently, the GNTs, with it's grass roots nature, and hefty masterpoint awards, including gold points at Unit finals, could be popular again like the early 90s.

We should encourage the use of GNT fundraisers to increase the GNT funding pools or help participants travel to district finals. Can we reach \$8,000 in cycle profits without additional strategies? GNT fundraising sanctions were used to have a Sunday Swiss with a full sectional rating at the GNT finals, but only 10 teams played (too close to the Gopher?). District 14 does not seem to have used GNT fundraising events in the past-- this IS an untapped tool in our toolkit ?

## GNT Financial Report

Club qualifying fees showed both big gains and some notable weakenings. Qualifying games totaled \$3380 vs. last year's \$2820, a 17% increase. Unit Final income increased from \$96 to \$552. Unit 163 did not have a unit final this year.

Profit after expenses at the District finals was \$2861, a decrease from last year's \$3052. The profit would have been well in excess of \$3,000 with a more judicious use of pre-duplicated boards. Largely as a result of this line item District final expenses grew from \$3320 to \$3920.

This year's GNT cycle produced a profit after expenses of \$6687, compared to last year's \$5,920.

Changes to the conditions of contest, vis a vis the Flight B & C finals (roundrobin vs. KOs, as well as the \$1 increase per person per session (~\$400). helped boost the cycle's profit. Although the use of preduplicated boards creates the fairest contest conditions for Flights B & C, and provides a perk for all players (hand records), the expenditure cost meant the winning teams took a \$84 hit in the subsidy. The GNT final, on a stand alone basis had a \$640 profit, which would have been nearly \$1000 but for duplicating costs. If the flights with more tables duplicated boards for other, smaller flights we could save a lot of money with just a few minutes of time expended: B makes 2 sets for C, C makes a set for A, A makes a set for the top flight.

Unit final surcharges in 2009 (138 x \$11 = \$1518) produced 25% of that cycle's income, and maintaining revenue neutrality in the face of lost surcharges (due to the scheduled all Minnesota Unit Final) was thought to be a challenge for the 2009-2010 cycle. The Unit Final surcharge at this year's District final totaled \$935 from the 85 participants who did not play in a unit final, a decrease of \$583 in 2009 when noone played in a Unit Final. 45 of the 131 participants in the District finals played in Minnesota's joint unit final + 1 from No.Dakota. Revenue to the district from Unit 216's Unit final helped offset the impact of the loss of income from fewer surcharge fees, and if you add the Unit final table fees and the \$11 surcharge fees we nearly reached last years surcharge dollar figure while also giving our players the chance to earn hundreds of masterpoints including fractional gold awards for the non-life masters. Continued encouragement for holding unit finals with incentives to the players (beyond masterpoints) is a no-brainer in my opinion.

The Sunday Swiss team was not a consolation event. After unsuccessfully exploring a number of other formats, Judy Nassar obtained sanctions from the Bridge Club of St. Paul to hold GNT fundraising events offsite, so the event could carry a full sectional rating. There was lots of publicity, and hopes for a better turnout than 10 teams compared to the 8 teams that played in 2009. Whoever is running the event needs to personally solicit participation. Half of Saturday's non-qualifying teams (6 of 12), returned for the Swiss, a good showing. An opportunity to save over \$300 in director's fees was lost by not realizing that the GNT fundraising Swiss did not require even an associate tournament director. Might we consider holding a sectional concurrent with the GNT finals?

### Winning Team Remuneration

My goal this year: \$1600/winning team, with a GNT profit of \$6400 was exceeded. \$2,000/team is within reach, but we would need to undertake an additional effort to clear \$8,000 in the cycle to get to that number. My proposal finals in the Championship flight, & segregated Unit final funds will assist in this effort, but at a cost to table count at the Gopher if our district's better players still won't come to the regional to play.

Mike Cassel  
D14 GNT Coordinator  
5/29/2010

**Motion: District 14 will distribute \$1,700 to the 4 winning teams from the income from the 2009-2010 GNT cycle.**

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### District 14 GNT Policy Change Amendments:

**Motion: District 14 policies re. the Grand National Teams shall be amended as follows:**

Current Policy states: The preferred date for the District 14 GNT finals is the fourth weekend in April.

1. Proposed Amendment: strike the word fourth and replace with last. The preferred date for the District 14 GNT finals is the last weekend in April.

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Current Policy states: There is no carryover to the second day.

2. Proposed Amendment: There is no carryover to the second day in flights with KO formats for semifinal and finals play.

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Current Policy re. Flights B & C state: The District Finals start with a two session qualifying K.O [<10 teams] or Swiss [11+ teams].

3. Proposed Amendment: strike KO and replace with round-robin

## District 14 GNT Policy Change Proposal: GNT finals for the Championship Flight

**Motion:** Whereas current ACBL GNT Conditions of Contest require 5 teams in a flight to award masterpoints for 2<sup>nd</sup> overall, and the recent history of GNT participation in the Championship flight in District 14 falls far short of a five team field, it is proposed that District 14 policies re. the Grand National Teams for the Championship flight add the following:

### **3. District 14 Grand National Team Finals for the Championship flight shall be held concurrent with the second 4-session knockout during the the Gopher regional tournament in May.**

#### Positives:

1. Encourages the district's best players to come for the GNT finals with the synergy of playing in the Regional, and the incentive of winning the trip to the summer nationals.
2. Recognizes that a preponderance of GNT participation in the top flight has routinely come from Minnesota tournament players and saves a lot of outstate travel expenses every other year.
3. Offers non-finalists top-bracket regional play vs. a consolation event.
4. Eliminates the "two long trips in a month" disincentive.
5. Eliminates the difficulties of pursuing previously considered and logistically problematic online play for the top bracket.
6. Increases the GNT income and raises all team subsidies by ~\$100.
7. Offers the opportunity to Flight A players who did not win their flight in the District finals in the A flight to "play up" and enter the Championship flight event during the regional.
8. Would not require additional ACBL Director services as they are already committed to the Regional.
9. Might lead to overall increases in top-flight participation over multiple days at the Gopher from "full-time" or frequent regional & National players who won't consider a trip for a 2 day event.

#### Potential Negative Consequences:

This arrangement would bite into the revenues from table fees for the second knockout at the Gopher that might not be fully offset.

Requires annual lengthy travel for all but Minnesotans.

Would require negotiation with the Gopher Tournament and support from Units 103 & 178 who stand to possibly see diminished profit.

Regular attendees at both the GNTs and the Gopher would lose the potential for that KO's masterpoint awards for overall finishes.

Minnesotans who work would have to take 2 1/2 days from their jobs

Gopher KO teams with different compositions than GNT teams have an issue

District 14 has 54 members who are above 5,000 masterpoints (8/6/09 cycle). Another dozen or so are closing in on 5,000. Given the propensity for 5 and 6 person teams in the top bracket, getting to a 5 team Championship bracket is not a 'gimmie', but many fine A players are capable of competing against the best and might decide to "play up".

Districts in Canada (1, 2 & 18) as well as 10, 17, & 22 routinely schedule GNT finals in conjunction with regionals. District 4's GNT finals are held with a concurrent sectional.

**District 14 GNT Policy Change Proposal**  
**GNT Unit Final Table Fees to Be Reserved**

**Motion:** Whereas current District 14 GNT Conditions of Contest require an \$11/player surcharge at the GNT District Finals for players who did not participate in a Unit Final, and GNT Final tournament organizers and directors annually receive complaints about the surcharge, item #8 shall be supplemented with the following paragraph :

**“To encourage participation in Unit finals and the scheduling of them by D14 units, the accrued District 14 table fee of \$6.00 per table per session at Unit finals will be distributed equally to District flight champions who played in a Unit final, an additional subsidy, not to exceed \$100/player.**

Rationale:

1. Give players something to play for: gold points, masterpoints, rather than charge them with no alternative.
2. Incentivise play at the event with the additional subsidy for District winners who played in feature.
3. Profits from the event can be used pay entry fees for flight winners at the District finals if they are held in a local venue, or be distributed to unit players who travel out of their home area to offset travel expenses: gas and hotel fees.
4. The Unit final is not designed to nor will it restrict participation at the District final no matter how poorly a team might perform.

Eligibility to be dependent upon participation in a Unit Final in the current cycle. If monies from Unit final sanction fees remain undistributed, they will carry over to the next GNT cycle and be reserved for the next cycle's Unit Final participants.

46 tables were in play in 2-session Unit finals this cycle which would have produced \$552 for distribution to flight champions. If two of the District winning teams had played in their unit final each player would receive an additional \$69. If only one team that played in a Unit Final won the trip, each player would receive an additional \$100 and \$152 would carry over to the next cycle. This year 4 members on the Kaplan team would each receive an additional \$100 and the other district winners would receive \$34 less.

Consequences:

Over half of the income generated at the District final in 2009 came from the \$11 surcharge: 33 teams x \$11 x \$4 + \$66 (5&6 player teams)= \$1,518. In the 2009-2010 cycle only \$935 came from the surcharge, but nearly \$550 was raised for the district and a lot of masterpoints, including fractional gold points were won locally.

Giving tournament players an incentive to play in a Unit final will increase the Unit final table count, & that offsets the surcharge loss and directly benefits winners who encouraged their Units to hold a Unit final, and then played in it.

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**GNT Discussion Items**

- Feedback on current structure/ CoC/
- Strategies to free up the first weekend in May for District GNT finals
- Logistics, promotion

Mike Cassel, May 29, 2010