

World Computer Bridge Championship, VII

**June 22-27, 2003
at the
1st European Open Championships
Menton - Côte d'Azur - France**

Location and Dates

The ACBL's 2003 World Computer-Bridge Championship will start on Sunday, June 22, 2003, and end no later than Friday, June 27. The Event will take place at the European Bridge League's 1st European Open Championship, Menton-Côte d'Azur, France. The playing area will be at the Palais du Louvre, next to the main playing venue at Palais de l'Europe.

Entry

Applications for the main event of the ACBL's World Computer-Bridge Championship, VII must be submitted by March 31, 2003, to the ACBL gary.blaiss@acbl.org and allevy@aol.com.

The ACBL reserves the right to refuse entry with or without cause.

The applicant must agree unconditionally in writing to the ACBL Conditions of Contest. The following statement must be submitted.

I _____ submitter of the program _____ unconditionally agree that I and my representatives participating in the championship event will abide by the stated Conditions of Contest and to any changes that may be made by the ACBL or its agent. If I or my representatives or operator violate any Condition of Contest I understand that my program may be disqualified as specified in the Conditions of Contest.

_____ Signed

2003 Conditions of Contest:

General

The ACBL will set the final Conditions of Contest. This includes any future changes to the Conditions of Contest below. ACBL Management or its agent may, at their discretion, alter the Conditions of Contest.

Entrants are responsible for having their programs compatible with the interactive software that will manage the contest, referred to as the Table Manager. Some help will be available for this purpose, but the responsibility lies with the entrant.

The contestants agree not to file legal claims for any reason regarding this event against the ACBL, its agents, Directors and administrators and other contestants. The persons filing such legal claims shall not be eligible for future ACBL computer events.

The Conditions of Contest include all relevant provisions of the ACBL code of behavior.

One violation of the Conditions of Contest is cause for a warning or disqualification. A second violation will shall result in disqualification. This applies to all Conditions of Contest whether before, during and after the play dates.

Complaints against players and officials may only be lodged with the ACBL Management. The disposition of these complaints will be final and cannot be appealed. Any complaint deemed frivolous, false or capricious is a violation of the Conditions of Contest.

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I. An Entry

An entry consists of a program and a submitter or submitters. The submitters must own the program entered or represent the company that owns the program. The submitters or company represented must be the developers of the program. A program (or a substantially similar version) may not be entered more than once. The ACBL will be the sole judge as to the eligibility of a program.

The program's operator may be either the submitter or, with the permission of the ACBL or its agent, an acceptable person designated by the submitter. Acceptability will be determined by the ACBL.

Programs must meet a minimum standard of play to be determined solely by the ACBL.

Each participant must submit a copy of their program at the start of play.

For the purpose of checking that programs are not violating any of the Event's requirements, various program tests may be done, including testing before, during, and after the Event. Any test will respect the commercial confidentiality and copyright of the source code, algorithms and other intellectual property related to the program. A program's submitter, operator and owner must comply and cooperate fully in any test.

II. Play Format

If there are six or fewer entries:

Round robin followed by a final match.

If there are seven to ten entries:

Round robin followed by semifinal and final match.

If there are eleven or more entries:

Round robin, to be played in two brackets, followed by semifinal and final match.

(A) Round Robin:

20-board matches against each opponent, IMP scoring converted to Victory Points using a 20-VP scale. If there are six or less entries, there will be 32-board matches.

If six or less entries, the top two contestants play a final; if seven to ten entries, the top four contestants play a semifinal; if eleven or more entries, the top two contestants in each bracket reach the semifinal.

(B) Semifinal:

64 Boards, IMP scoring

If seven to ten entries, 1st plays 4th and 2nd plays 3rd

If eleven or more entries, first of one bracket plays second in the other bracket.

Ties for the last position from the Round Robin:

If there is a tie for the last position, and one contestant must be eliminated, then a 10 Board playoff will take place without carryover. If there are multiple ties for the last position, and one or more contestants must be eliminated, then an eight-Board round-robin will take place, without carryover, with the final positions determined by quotient. All multiple ties that do not include elimination will be determined by a coin toss, for example, if there is a two-way tie for 1st and 2nd or for 3rd and 4th.

(C) Final:

64 Boards, IMP scoring

Deals in Play:

Matches in the same round robin round will play the same deals (boards). Files containing the match deals will be created randomly. Hand records will be distributed by the Coordinator after the start of each match.

Carryover:

If six or less entries, the top two contestants play a final with carryover; if seven to ten entries, the top four contestants play a semifinal with carryover and then a final with carryover; if eleven or more entries, the top two contestants in each bracket reach the semifinal, without carryover, and then a final without carryover.

Only the contestant that finishes higher in the round robin than it's opponent can be awarded a carryover. The carryover, if applicable, will be equal to the lesser of (a) the head-to-head VP difference the two opponents and (b) the their overall VP difference. There is no carryover if the contestant finishing higher in the round robin did not win the head-to-head round robin match against it's opponent.

If any KO match ends in a tie then 8-board segments will be played until there is a winner.

The number of boards for any stage may be changed by 25%.

III. Schedule of Play

The schedule of play will be set by the Coordinator. The Coordinator's approval is required for any deviation by participants from the schedule, including, but not limited to, playing a match at a different time than scheduled. If the starting time for a session is not at, or near, the scheduled time, then the Coordinator may require that a different set of deals be played.

Round Robin, June 22-24 or 22-25

For more than six entries, round robin play will be in a 4-session/day schedule. Each 20-board match is expected to be played, both ways, in under 3 hours, allowing 2 hours 40 minutes (4 minutes per board) for play and 15 minutes for setup. The first round of round robin play will start on the morning or afternoon of June 21.

For six or less entries, round robin play will be in a 4-session/day schedule. Each round robin match will be consist of two 16-board segments, with VP awarded based on the entire 32-board match. Each 16-board segment is expected to be played, both ways, in under 2 1/2 hours, allowing 2 hours 8 minutes for play and 15 minutes for setup. A small break will be allowed between 16-board segments.

Semifinals, June 25 or 26**Finals, June 26 or 27**

IV. a. Allowable Systems and Conventions

Limited systems and conventions will be allowed, modeled after the ACBL General Chart, modified to allow only natural opening one bids. General details are given **elsewhere**. In general, non-standard systems and conventions will not be allowed, with consideration given to what is standard in different parts of the world. The **Convention Card Spreadsheet** is the definitive list of allowable Conventions. Requests can be made for additional allowable conventions. The final decision on allowable conventions will be made by the Coordinator.

IV. b. Explainable Bids

In all cases bids shown in red on the **Convention Card Spreadsheet** are explainable to the opponent, that is, the meaning of the bid will be described to the opponent either through electronic communication or through manual input. Also see the section describing **Allowable/Explainable Bids**. Note that explainable bids are self-explainable, that is, the bidder explains the bid to both opponents. An explanation may come from the program, the operator, or a combination of both.

The input may be either electronic or manual. Electronic input is not required. An operator may always revert to manual input.

An explanation is limited to the meaning of the current bid (in regard to the entire auction). Only "new" information will be given, and will be limited to all or part of that described in the protocol. All "explainable" bids shall be recorded, with a record made of the information given and the information input. This must be verified by both contestants. Details of which bids are explainable are given **elsewhere**.

The program or operator may give the meaning of a bid or sequence of bids.

No penalties will be imposed for unintentional insufficient or inaccurate electronic transmission of information relating to an explainable bid. In general, if there is a protest due to information that was transmitted electronically, the deal will be replayed using manual input.

The operator must state before a match whether Manual Input of the meaning of Explainable Bids will take place (a) as the bids are made, (b) at the end of the auction, or (c) not at all. If (a) or (b) is chosen, an exception will be allowed if it is declared before a match that the meaning of certain conventional bids will never be input. One reason that this option might be chosen is if a program already understands the meaning of an explainable conventional bid. If any other exception is requested during play it must be made to the Coordinator or Director, not the opponent.

Participants are not to input the meaning of any bid that is not an explainable bid. Participants must confine their input to the information contained in the protocol. No exception can be made by the participants. If there is a question regarding whether a bid is explainable or not, the Coordinator or Director should be called to resolve the issue.

Input of the explanation of an explainable bid will be consistent with the **Protocol**. The explanation consists of the range of the opponent's suit lengths, high card points, total points, or specific controls, if relevant. Input also includes, when relevant, that a bid is asking for: Aces,

Kings, a 4- or 5- card major; a minor; support; a lead in suit; or lead not in a suit. The explanation also includes whether a bid is forcing to game, one round, or promises a rebid. That is a summary. The actual input follows.

Explainable information consists of one or more of the following pieces:

"[n] cards in [suit]" (repeated for each relevant suit)
"up to [n] cards in [suit]" (repeated for each relevant suit)
"at least [n] cards in [suit]" (repeated for each relevant suit)
"[n1] to [n2] cards in [suit]" (repeated for each relevant suit)

"[n] total points"
"up to [n] total points"
"at least [n] total points"
"[n1] to [n2] total points"

"[n] points in [suit]" (repeated for each relevant suit)
"up to [n] points in [suit]" (repeated for each relevant suit)
"at least [n] points in [suit]" (repeated for each relevant suit)
"[n1] to [n2] points in [suit]" (repeated for each relevant suit)

"[n] total aces"
"[n] total kings"
"ace of [suit]" (repeated for each relevant suit)
"king of [suit]" (repeated for each relevant suit)

"Asking for aces"
"Asking for kings"
"Asking for a major suit"
"Asking for a four-card major suit"
"Asking for a five-card major suit"
"Asking for a minor suit"
"Asking for a four-card suit"
"Asking for support"
"Asks for lead in [suit]"
"Asks for lead not in [suit]"
"Forcing for one round"
"Forcing until game"
"Promises a rebid"

V. Convention Cards

The tournament [Convention Card Spreadsheet](#) (Windows Excel) must be filled out.

One Convention Card per program.

Minor changes may be allowed before a match with the Coordinator's approval. Conventions cannot be changed during a match. The Coordinator or Director can make exceptions for cause.

VI. Method of Play

Computer Equipment

P4 1.5+ MHz/128 MB or similar equipment, running under Windows 98 or XP. All contestants will use the same or similar equipment.

Table Manager

Two copies of each program will play as a pair on a network of computers to be provided.

Matches will be controlled by a Table Manager program developed by Ian Trackman of Blue Chip Bridge Ltd. This program is the property of Blue Chip Bridge Ltd which has full copyright and other intellectual property rights to it. It will be supplied to acceptable potential contestants solely for the purpose of preparing for the Montreal competition. To receive a copy an entrant must agree to the above restrictions, abide by the copyright, agree not distribute the program, and sign a release statement provided by Blue Chip Bridge, Ltd.

Transmission of information as to deals, bids and play of cards and otherwise, will be consistent with the protocol defined on <http://www.bluechipbridge.co.uk/protocol.htm>.

Programs must not communicate with their “partner” program or any other program nor search for any information. Any attempt to do so will be deemed to be a violation of the rules. The penalty is disqualification. The ACBL reserves the right to implement whatever network monitoring and/or other measures that it thinks fit without disclosure to the participants.

Time-outs, bugs, crashes, and delays

Operators may take reasonable time-outs during a match. If a program crashes or is the subject of an obvious bug during a match, time-out will be granted, and the operator may use his best endeavors to fix the program within a reasonable time to be determined by the Coordinator. If he cannot do so, the Coordinator will take whatever steps considered reasonable to ensure that none of the other participants are disadvantaged as a result.

Programs may compute while the opposing program is bidding or playing a card. However, all bridge-related activity will cease for a time-out or an unexpected halt in play.

Between matches operators may improve and/or debug their programs, provided that the program remains substantially the same. In rare cases an adjustments may be allowed during a match or between deals, if there is a clear and unmistakable wrong setting and the adjustment can be made quickly.

In the event of an unexpected halt in play, the board will be replayed. The operator is to ensure that, when replayed, the program does not have any advance knowledge of the interrupted board. In all cases of unexpected halts in play, the Coordinator will be notified before play restarts.

Speed of Computer Play

Round robin: Speed of play will be, on average, 4 minutes per board (approximately 1/2 that of human play speed) or, on average, 2 minutes per program pair per board. While it is expected that all computers will be the same, if they are not then the timing of play may be adjusted accordingly. Each 20-board Round Robin match segment is expected to be played in 80 minutes. This excludes any set-up time or delays or time-outs due to rulings, power outages, computer

mishaps, or 5-minute coffee break. This 2 minutes per board does not include the time for Manual Input.

Slow play in the round robin will be penalized. A match, consisting of two segments (corresponding to two tables of play), will be played in approximately 160 minutes. A warning will be given for the first 5-minute delay, that is, if a program is playing its side of the table at 45 minutes per 20-boards (instead of 40 minutes per 20 boards). If a participant considers that the opposing program is exceeding its time limit, as described here, the matter should be referred to the Coordinator. The Coordinator may then monitor the speed of play, or may assign a monitor. If the monitor deems that the program's play continues to be slower than 45 minutes for 20 boards, up to a 6-IMP penalty per monitored five-minute delay will be imposed. After a five-minute delay the play speed must be increased to under 40 minutes per 20 boards. Further penalties of 6-IMPs per five-minute delay will be imposed with a further time adjustment made.

After start of each match a program may raise its speed of play (play faster) but may not lower its speed (play slower), unless the Coordinator or Director determines that circumstances exist to allow an exception. Such circumstances include a clear error or oversight. Intent and fairness will be the deciding factor.

Semifinals and final: Speed of play in the semifinals and final will also be, on average, 4 minutes per board. Timing regulations and penalties will be similar to those in the round robin. A warning and penalties will apply if play is longer than 37 minutes per 16-board segment.

VII. Protests and Rulings

When a question of conditions of contest is raised, the Coordinator should be called. The usual infractions regarding unauthorized information, revokes, penalty cards, leads out of turn, etc., do not take place in computer play. Infractions may involve slow play, misinformation and insufficient information related to explainable bids, or a failure to specify (alert) that a bid is explainable.

Regarding a question of Insufficient/Incomplete/Incorrect Information

Unlike in human play where the penalty is often resolved in an extreme manner, that is to say, best/worst possible results, here our first choice is to replay a deal with the correct information given. If this is not possible then the Director or Coordinator will resolve the issue. There is no intent to penalize inadvertent and infrequent misinformation. Fairness and equity will be the guideline.

The Coordinator can make a ruling or direct the inquiry to the Director. Rulings can be discussed with the participants and reconsideration can be requested. If reconsideration is requested, then the Coordinator and/or Director will consult with others before making a final ruling. All decisions are final.

VIII. Code of Behavior

Inquiries before and during the Event

All inquiries regarding this Event must be respectfully directed to the Coordinator. Contacting the sponsors or administrators of participating organizations must be cleared with the Coordinator. If approved, the communication will be forwarded.

Conduct during Play

When play is in session the participants (including the program operator and any representatives associated with the entry) will maintain a quiet and respectful atmosphere so as not to affect or disturb opposing participants or other participants in the same room.

All interaction between participants shall be respectful. Protests and appeals made to the Coordinator or Director shall be respectful.

Promotional Activities

During the dates the contest is being conducted (June 22-27) and through the completion of the 1st European Open Bridge Championships (June 14-28), participants shall not publish, or submit for publication, any aspect of the championship event, exhibition matches, or informal competition of any kind, without the express consent of the ACBL.

General Conduct

A contestant, or someone associated with the contestant, program, or company that owns the program, may not publicly criticize this contest. Constructive criticism is welcome and should take the form of an inquiry to the Coordinator.

Complaints against players and officials may only be lodged with the ACBL Management. The disposition of these complaints will be final and cannot be appealed. Any complaint deemed frivolous, false or capricious is a violation of the Conditions of Contest.

Any lack of full cooperation with the event administrators or officials will be considered a violation of the Conditions of Contest. It is an offense and violation of the Conditions of Contest to fail to comply with instructions of an event official. This applies to all Conditions of Contest whether before, during and after the play dates.

One violation of the Conditions of Contest is cause for a warning or disqualification. A second violation shall result in disqualification.

IX. Coordinator

Al Levy

Tournament Director

Gary Blaiss