

Draft Minutes - Annual Assembly, August 2011

O Board of Directors Report, Andy Okun

- O Laura Kolb's term ending – replaced by Daniel Smith
- O Adam Bridges treasurer's term ending – replaced by Roy Schmidt starting in September – transition in progress
- O Budget cutting has been our biggest concern; made up for small decline in membership and large decline in funding; we are solvent and in surplus
- O Offer for sponsorship (KBA) of pro certification test: Board two days ago instructed Allan to accept; sponsor will provide funds for tournament; Kim Myung-Wanan 9p as referee; we will act quickly and with goal of first pro exam in 2012
- O Allan reported on discussing pro certification at the strong players meeting: suggestions & consensus on almost all issues; players prefer & recommend that exam be in same place and week before/after next year's congress; recommended 9 rounds, 2 hour games, in 5 days (2 rounds per day except for last day)

O President's Report, Allan Abramson

- O Apology: did not know that the chapters mailing list has not been functional – chapters received member emails, but not chapter ones – will get materials to everyone
- O The best/worst of the year: best – more school programs, online tournaments, thriving e-journal, aga credit card; worst – barely stabilized membership numbers, and still dealing with what value does one get from AGA membership?
- O We need to have sense of community in American go – want to get to 10k members

- O Question: what is membership right now? Allan: roughly 2300, and our peak was 2400-2450

O Treasurer's report, Allan Abramson for Adam Bridges

- O Documented in the budget & notes
- O Bottom line: large surplus last year for probably anomalous reasons: money from two congresses not one; more lifetime memberships sold than expected; costs for operating web site were lower than expected; ended with a surplus of \$17k
- O Budget costs have been reduced 25% in past three years (great savings from moving to e-journal, for example)
- O Membership growth and sponsors very important; we have a newly revitalized fund-raising committee and a new marketing brochure; expect to get some substantial funds in the next year;
- O Need funds for congress to reduce costs for attendance

Lisa: last summer I visited 30 clubs in 13 states (4 weeks): We need to make membership valuable, such as with game reviews? Maybe not podcasts, but real lessons; also materials to help promote go, flyers, ability to get cheap boards, etc.; chapters want these as benefits of membership – use membership database for this kind of thing

O E-Journal Report, Allan Abramson for Chris Garlock

- O Chris submitted a lengthy report naming all those who have contributed
- O Circulation pushing 15k ;new features every month

O Talking about new graphic art, etc. - much more that can and will be done

O International Affairs Report, Allan Abramson for Thomas Hsiang

O Refer you to Thomas' long report

O December Mind Sports Games in Beijing: sending team of five, competing in two go events (the only go ones); players will receive money just for going, at least \$2000 – if they win a game, that increases a lot; qualifier has already been held – names will be mentioned at banquet

O Next year's Mind Games are uncertain: Manchester 2012 has financial difficulties; not sure who will run it and where (when = after special olympics, last 2 weeks in August); format, teams, events mostly same as last time, except that poker has petitioned to be included; poker will be included as a demonstration game

O Future congresses meeting – possibility of a joint congress with Canada (Vancouver), 2014

O Caffeine and anti-doping; probably does not affect go players as the amount of caffeine considered altering is very high, but something to be considered

O 2012 Congress Presentation, Paul Celmer and Peter Armenia

O Same location as successful 2006 congress

O Conference center & summer camp geared towards our kind of conference

O Could accommodate 800 people – lots of space, probably not a lot of other people using facilities

O Key staff of '06 congress returning – Peter Armenia, Paul Celmer, Arlene & Adam Bridges, Bob Bacon, Chris Kirschner

O Blue Bidge Center staff already knows go congress' needs; we can use many active club members as volunteers

O Why it will be better than last time: more hotel style rooms, main playing room more centrally located, more wireless coverage, Asheville tourism, more on-site activities for non-players

O Proposal to bring pro certification tournament to congress; go camp will also be there the week before congress

O Could accommodate spectators for pro certification tournament

O First U.S. academic go symposium: could be week before congress or during congress; opportunity to present academic papers on mathematical, educational, etc. aspects of go

O Scenic, free parking, relatively low cost, true summer camp for kids with lots of activities, crafts, etc.

O Accommodations: multiple style/cost options for rooms, including lodges/cottages for families/groups

O No open consumption of alcohol in public areas

O Airports: Asheville, 20 minutes away; Greenville, sc, 1.5 hours; Charlotte-Douglas international, 2 hours; all within 100 miles of Blue Ridge Assembly

O Cost summary: adult reg - \$350; youth reg - \$200; meal plan - \$225; banquet included!

O Overall cost range: adult \$775-\$1275; youth \$625-\$1125

O Contact info & website at www.gocongress12.org

Question by Terry: camping? Rvs on site? ==> no, neither

Question by Ted: summer average temp? ==> highs 83-84

- O Vote on the Next Congress:
- O Quorum voting on 2012 congress: 31 votes present but some reps voted and left, enough votes total for a full quorum (44+)
- O Willard Hanes moved to approve Blue Ridge Assembly for 2012 congress
- O Gordon seconds; all approve, except for paul and peter opposing (traditional for organizers)

O New business

O Improving Chapter Services

- O Starter sets & equipment: recently have not provided equipment; how do chapters feel about their needs? Not high end equipment, very cheap starter sets
- O Suggestion: send two sets for new chapters (have them pay s&h); when they have five AGA members increase # of sets to 5? Allan: do we want to do it, and how do we make it work, when we need to preserve relationships with vendors
- O Good reasons to be a chapter? Mailing lists, running tournaments, tournament listings (getting chapters in contact with other chapters/players), and software for running tournaments
- O Daniel: want to see online management tools for chapters, member management, etc.
- O Paul: can we change policy so that only AGA chapters can be listed on web site & can advertise events, etc. in the e-journal?
 - O Allan: philosophical issue: prefer not to restrict that kind of thing; want to encourage AGA membership, but more important to encourage go; if chapter chooses not to join AGA, still want them to be able to list tournaments, etc.
- O Daniel: having AGA logo on website helps a lot in terms of attendance
- O Cynthia: have older chapters mentor new chapters
- O Allan: email at any time on these issues

O Tap of Prizes/Fees

- O Allan: the next few years will see an increase in number of international tournaments w/significant cash prizes
- O Thomas suggests taking 20% tap from AGA members attending
- O Existing international pros do not like this idea, but strong players accepted tap as reasonable below \$2000
- O For next Mind Games, European Go Federation is taking 50% tap, and this has been accepted by strong players and pros of Europe
- O Still collecting input and the community is split on this issue
- O It continues under discussion and will probably be decided by December
- O Asian organizations tap various amounts (considered normal), but they are different from the U.S. in that many are government-funded and provide various benefits and services to pros and strong players
- O Consideration for expense money of organization in supporting/sending players? Allan: AGA expenses are fairly indirect – volunteer time, etc. - can't make strong case for money expended by AGA on behalf of players

O Should we promote formation of state organizations?

- O Allan: European and Asian federations have many small countries with core groups organizing; the total numbers of organizers for the EGF is much larger than AGA.

- O If we encourage state organization formation, it would create new leadership and new levels of competition (regionals, etc.), local fund-raising and school activities – would be positive for AGA
- O Cynthia: should use existing structure to avoid redundancy/overscheduling for officers
- O Lisa: definitely useful for larger regions like central
- O Michael: may be premature: will see same problems as with chapter membership; some states would form active associations because they already have an active member base, and a lot would not
- O Example: Bay Area Go Players Association: many loosely-affiliated organizations, and about 1 tournament per month
- O Mark: would be good to have a hub for state/region -
- O How would this be different from what regional representatives already do?
- O Allan: this would supplement existing structure; at state level 3-4 people and assist chapters/players in forming new clubs, playing games, etc. - engaging in competitions with others states/regions – new level of activity – not just what we're doing now, but people who are interested in promoting at a higher level and encouraging that
- O Peter: premature: the organization needs to be bigger first
- O Lisa: would be useful in connecting smaller clubs/communities with each other
- O Chris: not states, but smaller regions – communities – geographic boundaries not as useful
- O **ACTION**: Lisa, Michael, Roger – committee of 4+ to develop idea & follow up

O Open Discussion

- O Michael lash: general proposal
- O A member since 1984; life member since 2004; President from 2004-2008
- O Proposal for new business model for the AGA: a new category of membership
- O Goals: 1) increase # of members, 2) generate membership #s large enough to attract sponsors and advertisements
- O Every AGA administration has tried to boost membership
- O It always will be hard to get people to pay to be part of AGA; maintaining the current model will keep same results
- O New model is Facebook/Google model: free membership
- O AGA membership would become free; join and never leave the rolls unless one chooses too
- O Expect the numbers will swell; also make all members e-journal subscribers
- O Would immediately boost membership to 15k, including people who play go but don't want to pay membership fee
- O Paid membership would remain in place and stay a vital part of AGA: the difference is that free members get limited service, such as: non-members edition of ej, eligible to play in AGA tournaments, get a rating, but only paid members would be able to vote and be chapter representatives, and will be only members getting “real” benefits, i.e. yearbook, go boards, limited offers, discounts, congress discounts, etc., and only paid members can compete internationally
- O Without paid membership, how do we make money?
- O The key financial part of this proposal is that in exchange for free membership, there will be fixed AGA rating fee that every player pays when they play in an AGA-rated game; e.g. go to a local tournament, 4 rounds, initial fee of \$2.50/game – no membership fee, but \$10 AGA-rated fee paid up front; the tournament director collects this money and sends to AGA with rating info; otherwise, results will not be rated (non-AGA tournaments/games will not have rating fees)

- O For paid members (\$30), first 12 games of the year are free (that is, already paid for)
- O Statistics: not including congress, 5900 rated games played per year: if 5500 rated games are played in a year, at \$2.50 per rated game, then \$27k generated per year; the first year would lose 80% of membership revenue, bringing \$50k revenue down to \$10k for Year 1; the online store, etc. would supplement (although not directly related)
- O This becomes a user fee-supported business model – people who play the most games get the most value from the AGA, so they are the ones who will provide revenue under this model
- O Decreased revenue for first years would be okay because of reserves, and if revenue does not increase as predicted, can go back to previous (2011 current) business model
- O **ACTION**: propose an ad hoc committee, of which Michael will be member
- O Lisa: what about youth? Although not technically “youth”, many U.S. players, esp. strong ones, are 20-somethings with no money in this economy – if they have to pay for games, they can't play
- O Michael: bulk discount cards? Free games past 50 per year?
- O Comment: this is a problem: if you can't play without paying, it becomes an admission fee, and our chapters' tournaments are free
- O Paul: what are numbers for lapsed members? ==> 17K-ish
- O Daniel: how does lifetime member status change?==> Michael: it doesn't: they pay rating fee too
- O Peter: should make it free for lifetime members
- O Michael: okay to adopt that amendment
- O What is point of increased membership if we don't have them playing rated games? ? ?
==> Added sponsorship and advertising
- O Added benefit of getting e-journal: once they know benefits of membership through e-journal, people will want to become paid members
- O Cynthia: how do we validate membership numbers? For sponsorship purposes, what is an actual member? Will sponsors think large numbers of non-rated-game-playing, possibly phantom members, valid for their purposes? Do we define an active member only if they have played rated games recently?
- O Siri: will lose people who already spend time and money getting to clubs (or getting their kids to clubs); also, phantom/non-updated members' ratings need to be addressed (doesn't feel fair)
- O Peter: not just paid/unpaid: should be something like partial vs. full member depending on how many rated games they want to play per year
- O Lisa: any kind of pay-per-play is burdensome for the (young) demographics we particularly want to target; hard to spin advertising for youth if tournaments become expensive
- O Allan: concern: if we adopt this, it is a large experiment that would not necessarily be covered by reserves: need to approach it in a financially responsible way; needs to be better defined in terms of plan of action and risks; marketing problem can be dealt with by finding a better way of estimating actual playing population; don't want to adversely affect youth
- O **Ad hoc committee volunteers**: Paul Celmer, Lisa Scott, Michael Lash, Daniel Smith, Matt Mallory

O Adjournment

- O The Assembly was adjourned 4:37pm