

**Minutes**  
**AGA SPECIAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**  
**Wednesday, September 15, 2010 – 9:00 PM EDT**

Meeting called to order by: Andrew Okun at 9:10 PM EDT

Type of meeting: Special Board Conference Call

Attendees:

Jie Li (At Large)

Paul Celmer (Eastern Region)

Chuck Robbins (Eastern Region)

Lisa Scott (Central Region)

Laura Kolb (Central Region)

Gordon Castanza (Western Region)

Andrew Okun (Western Region, Chairman)

Allan Abramson (President)

Pauline Pohl (Secretary)

Absent:

None

**1. Discussion of letter from Feng Yun 9p and Resulting Correspondence on AGA Chapter List**

- a. Okun asked if any of the Board members or the President would like to start by stating their views on the issue.
- b. Robbins said he thinks the policy hasn't been in effect for long enough to make a decision to overturn it. It should be given a chance to have the desired effect of higher participation in tournaments by strong players.
- c. Scott said the level of dissatisfaction is high enough something should be done.
- d. Li said all of our resident female professionals were excluded from the recent women's international tournament because of the ten-game rule.
- e. **Castanza made a motion that "the Board eliminate the ten-game policy effective immediately". Celmer seconded the motion.**

- f. Celmer said he thinks the ten-game rule was made with good intentions, but it hasn't worked out as planned. None of the four chapter representatives Celmer talked to is in favor of the rule.
- g. Castanza said the rule doesn't make sense to single out one group (professionals) over another (amateurs). Professionals are members of the AGA and should be treated the same as other AGA members. If the rule doesn't apply to professionals, it shouldn't apply to other members.
- h. Robbins said the rule wasn't being selectively applied. Castanza agreed, but saw the complaints being against holding the professionals to the rule. If the pros are exempt, all members should be exempt.
- i. Celmer said if the rule is eliminated, we still need to think of a way to attract strong players to tournaments. An American home grown professional system should also be a part of a plan to encourage strong players to get involved.
- j. Li said the only thing that likely will attract strong players is large cash prizes, because travel expenses are high.
- k. Scott said other ideas may work like having professional commentary available at tournaments.
- l. Celmer said subsidizing travel expenses for strong players could also encourage them to attend more tournaments.
- m. Kolb said she is on the fence, because the rule hasn't been in effect for very long. It does not seem to be effective so far.
- n. Okun said that Keith Arnold has reported having more strong players at his tournament because of the ten game rule. Li said he doesn't think most of the strong players were there because of the rule. There were several local strong players who have attended the Baltimore tournaments for years.
- o. Robbins said amateurs have had to get ten games for a longer time, so they are used to it and have been doing it. The rule is only new for professionals.
- p. Abramson said he looks at these issues from a policy perspective. What are the underlying beliefs that led to the rule? It's not right for someone to appear out of nowhere and disappear again after winning one of a small number of

chances to compete overseas. The issue was to make those trips available to people who support local tournaments. Abramson thinks the rule is a good rule, and is incredibly modest. If you are a serious competitor, it should not be hard to get ten rated games in a year. There may be difficulty for people who live far from tournaments, but they can arrange rated games at clubs to meet the requirement.

- q. Scott said a member from Montana couldn't even find a club to play at.
- r. Abramson said also one of the commentators on the website life in 19x19 said something eloquent in regard to the ten rated games requirement: "If you are serious, ten games are not a big deal. Taking one or two days out of your life to compete for a chance to travel overseas is not too much to ask." In America, there is an egalitarian approach that says everyone should be treated equally, and professionals don't deserve extra privileges. In Asia, they are held in higher esteem almost like gods. In America, that attitude doesn't exist to a large extent. The question to Abramson is, do we care about a strong player in Colorado or Los Angeles showing up to win a large prize and walking away with it or not?
- s. Robbins said people used to be very upset when an unknown person walked in and took away a big prize. It was a huge issue to active players.
- t. Abramson agreed that was and is a huge issue and was behind the ten-game rule. That's where it came from. We have to decide whether we still care about that or not. If people are in it only for the money, then they are not an amateur. He made a decision in his own club not to give cash prizes, but rather to encourage competition for the love of the game and camaraderie.
- u. Okun asked whether what used to happen, someone appearing out of the woodwork and claiming a prize and disappearing would be possible now given how strong the existing competition is. There are some very strong amateurs and professionals the newcomers would have to beat.

- v. Abramson said it could be harder now than it used to be, but on the other hand we may see more former insei and other strong players immigrating.
- w. Scott said if a 9 Dan shows up at a local tournament, maybe the director could encourage them to become involved in a positive way, rather than in the negative way implied by the ten-game rule.
- x. Jie Li said he faced a Korean insei (Song Hong-suk) at the Oza 2008 Eastern OZA and beat him. That Korean player was able to enter the OZA and grabbed 2<sup>nd</sup> place during his visit to the U.S. and grabbed 2<sup>nd</sup> place because the OZA was an open tournament. That player went on to win the World Amateur Go Championship this year. Li says American amateurs and professionals can compete at the highest levels and don't need to be protected from strong foreign players.
- y. Abramson said Ming-jiu Jiang is the only professional who has satisfied the ten game requirements this year.
- z. Abramson said Janice Kim is against the rule and he believes James Kerwin is against it. The main professionals interested in competing seem to be Feng Yun and Ming-jiu Jiang. If the rule is kept, and Feng Yun wants to compete, she will play ten games like everyone else.
- aa. Okun said many in the chapter discussion and elsewhere had expressed the opinion that either the ten game rule shouldn't apply to professionals or else that the requirement should be less stringent for professionals, but the direction of the Board discussion seems to be to treat professionals like other members.
- bb. Li said he thinks the rule should be eliminated, because rather than encouraging participation, it has actually decreased some participation. In 2010, we had to waive the ten-game requirement for the Chunlan Cup and the World Pair Go Tournament to get enough people to compete. We chose not to waive the rule for the Women's International Tournament but ended up not sending someone to compete for the Women's tournament and let a Canadian professional win. Abramson said two amateur women did compete. Li said

those amateurs were not as competitive as our female resident professionals.

- cc.** Okun asked if, should we decide to drop the rule, we adopt something to replace it, or drop it outright.
- dd.** Scott said we could always add qualifier tournaments to compete for the privilege of competing in big tournaments.
- ee.** Abramson said Kirschner suggested accumulating points like they used to do to earn the right to represent the AGA.
- ff.** Castanza said the motion could be amended to include that system where people are awarded points according to finishing first, second, third, etc. with a multiplier for larger fields to make those wins more valuable. Players accrue points according to their placement multiplied by the value of the tournament and players would hold points according to their performance over time and against different fields.
- gg.** Li said the ten-game rule has caused enough controversy and complicating the rules further could cause even more problems.
- hh.** Abramson said it continues to penalize players who can't get to tournaments and it is complicated, but the system has its supporters, because it has the effect of rewarding active strong players.
- ii.** Okun said there is one tournament in November, the Fujitsu qualifier that was to be subject to the rule. He asked if Castanza's motion would be effective immediately and apply to the Fujitsu qualifier. Castanza replied that the motion was to drop the rule effective immediately.
- jj.** Celmer said he is not ready to vote on a points system. He only wants to discuss the ten-game rule tonight.
- kk.** Robbins reiterated that the policy hasn't been in place enough time to learn whether it would have the desired effect in the long run. Feng Yun got burned by it this time, but the rule could be taken more seriously in the future if it is allowed to stand. It is an elegant way of saying those who support the AGA get something for their effort.

**II. Castanza called the question. The roll call vote was: five in favor (Li, Celmer, Scott, Castanza, Okun), one against, (Robbins) one abstention (Kolb)**

- mm.** Robbins said Li should recuse himself from the voting, because he is directly affected by the issue.
- nn.** Li said he needs to make his position clear on this important issue. Li said he does not want to recuse himself, and asked the Board Chairman to make the ruling.
- oo.** Abramson said the issue wouldn't affect Li, because he always plays more than 10 games.
- pp.** Castanza said Robbins' objection was out of order, because his objection must be made during the discussion of the main motion. Okun agreed and said he must overrule Robbins' objection.
- qq.** Li asked if the Masters Tournament would still be requiring the ten games. Abramson said the requirement would be removed from that tournament too. He also mentioned that he plans to add a 30 day grace period for the continuous membership rule.
- rr.** Okun asked how the decision should be reported to members, because he is on his way out to sea for several days and will be away from communications, so he won't be able to do it himself. Abramson volunteered to call Chris Garlock and give him the news flash to be reported in the e-Journal.

## **2. Adjourn**

Castanza made a motion to adjourn. Li seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm EDT.

Minutes submitted by Pauline Pohl, AGA Secretary