

Have You Considered the North American Pairs?

Part of the beauty of duplicate bridge is that it allows us to enjoy the game at our own pace. Many of us love to play at the club level, and some prefer tournament-level games, or even national events.

The North American Pairs, or NAP, is a special opportunity to give that “next level” a try. The District 11 Board and the Cincinnati Bridge Association would like to invite you to participate in the NAP District Finals at Cincinnati’s “OctoberBest” sectional next fall (October 28-30, 2011).

How exactly does the NAP work? You may have heard of the NAP, or even “qualified” at a local club game, but you may still have questions. . . . Hopefully, we can provide some answers.

Q: What is the NAP?

A: The NAP event has been a major ACBL pair championship since 1979 and was originally known as the Grand National Pairs. After several qualifying stages, it culminates in a national final held in conjunction with the Spring NABC, which will be held in Memphis in March 2012.

Q: How many pairs go to the national final in Memphis?

A: The contest has three Flights: Flight A (open); Flight B (fewer than 2000 masterpoints); and Flight C (non-Life Master with fewer than 500 masterpoints). Our District will send the top 3 pairs in each Flight at the District Finals on to Memphis.

Q: I expect to make Life Master soon. I am ineligible for Flight C?

A: The cutoff date for determining eligibility for the NAP is the June 2011 masterpoint cycle. This means that masterpoints won after May 6, 2011 will NOT affect your eligibility for a particular Flight. In other words, if you weren’t a Life Master on May 6, 2011, you’re eligible for Flight C. Similarly, if you didn’t reach the 2000 masterpoint level as of May 6, 2011, you’re eligible for Flight B.

Q: What’s the deal with these “qualifying” games at my club?

A: To play in the District Finals in Cincinnati, you must “qualify” at a local club anywhere in the District. NAP Qualifying games may be held twice per month at each club during the months of June, July, and August. To qualify for a particular Flight at your club, you must finish in the top 50% of that section (rounded up and including ties); in addition, any pair with at least an “average” score not in the top half of a section also qualifies.

Q: Why do I have to pay more for these “qualifying” games?

A: The ACBL sanction fee is increased for these games, so that's why most clubs charge a bit more. However, NAP qualifying games are "sectionally rated," paying 50/50 red and black points. This means that winners get many more points than they typically would at a "regular" club game. For an additional buck, it's really one of the best deals around!

Q: Do I have to play in the District finals with a player I qualified with at the club level?

A: No, club level qualification is earned as an individual and not as a partnership. You may play in club qualifying games with as many different partners as desired. Both members of a partnership must, of course, be individually qualified at the club level to play together at the District Finals in Cincinnati.

Q: Is there a Unit qualifying event?

A: No. Some Districts have separate qualifying events at the Unit level; our District has eliminated the Unit stage, qualifying individuals directly from the club level to the District Finals.

Q: Do the winners of the District Finals receive any financial support?

A: Yes! The first place winners of the District Finals in each Flight will receive \$700 per person, and the second place winners receive \$300 per person. These awards are paid directly from the ACBL. Our District has historically provided a \$100 per person award to the third place winners in each Flight, and we expect to be able to do so again this year.

Q: What are the District Finals like?

A: The NAP District Finals are a two-session pairs event held on the Saturday during Cincinnati's "OctoberBest" sectional. This year, the District Finals are held on October 29, 2011 at 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza, 11320 Chester Rd, Cincinnati, 45246. For those who have attended our Flying Pig Regional in recent years, the Crowne Plaza is directly across the street from the Regional site at the Sharonville Convention Center. The Crowne Plaza is a fantastic venue for the NAP District Finals, and we're sure you'll enjoy the event, win or lose. You may want to consider coming on Friday to "warm up" or stay over for the Sunday Swiss! (If you're looking, teammates for the Sunday Swiss will be guaranteed). Reasonable room rates will be available, and additional details about the tournament will be available soon.

If you have any questions about the NAP, please feel free to contact our District NAP/GNT Coordinator, Bill Higgins (bhiggins@orw-d.com). Questions about the OctoberBest sectional should be directed to Tournament Co-Chairs Barb Levinson (bsl@fuse.net) or Gayle Keaney (gkeaney@aol.com).

Thanks, and we hope to see in Cincinnati!

Bill Higgins, District 11 NAP/GNT Coordinator

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