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Announcement and Update from Joe Jones, ACBL Executive Director

1 message

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American Contract
Bridge League

Announcement and Update from Joe Jones, ACBL Executive Director

September 2, 2020

To: Unit and District Officers

Hello everyone,

It's been a little over five months since the pandemic struck and effectively suspended all in-person sanctioned bridge play and over fifty percent of our usual revenues. I am happy to report the organization is surviving and is continuing to serve our members. First, I have an important announcement, and then I will give you an overview of what's underway.

Tournament Sanctions are cancelled for January and February 2021.

At this time, we are not hopeful there will be a vaccine or a significant change in the current conditions to allow in-person play for January and February. We are announcing this now so Units and Districts can begin cancelling their events. No decision has been made regarding the spring NABC or March tournaments.

Virtual Clubs

With significant help from Jay Whipple and BBO, we were able to very quickly create Virtual Clubs on BBO. Currently, there are over 500 clubs running online games. Some clubs have pooled together, so the 500 clubs represent over 1,500 in-person clubs. Virtual clubs are averaging over 115,000 tables monthly. Every other month we are offering upgraded games.

Online Tournaments

We just completed our third regionally rated online event. These have proven to be very successful. The recent tournament and the last event, held in June, generated 13,000 tables in four days. We are offering these events every other month with the next ones being held in October and December. In July, we held a very successful online NABC-rated knock-out that attracted 72 teams and a pair event which drew 138 pairs. Look for more NABC-rated events in November.

Finances

Despite losing half of our revenues from the suspension of in-person play, we have managed to replace a large portion with online revenue. We have also aggressively cut expenses to match the lower revenue. Year-to-date, club revenue is up over \$200K, tournaments are down over \$600K,

and NABCs are down over \$1MM. In order to cut expenses initially, all employees worked a reduced schedule with reduced pay, and we ended up furloughing almost 40% of our full-time employees. We are now working a full schedule, and we have brought back some employees. We are expecting to end the year with a positive bottom line.

Future of online play

The board established an Online Task Force to make recommendations on how the ACBL should go forward with online play. The task force

reported their recommendations to the board and management last month. Later this month, management will bring to the board their recommendations on how to implement the task force's recommendations.

Marketing & Membership

We brought on Mary Stratton, our new Marketing Director, just as the pandemic struck. Mary quickly got up to speed and was very helpful in assisting with member and stakeholder communications. She, and her team, has also done a great job of promoting special virtual club games and tournaments. Now that revenues have stabilized, the marketing department will focus on stabilizing membership. Very soon, the new free guest membership will be rolled out, and there will be a campaign to get more members playing online. A full marketing plan will be presented to the board in October.

If you have not already seen it, here is the link to the more expansive Management Report submitted to the board at the July meeting

<https://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/about/MontrealA.pdf> .

Please know how much we value all that you do every day to support the game of bridge. As we work together to grow the game, I welcome your thoughts and suggestions.

Sincerely,

Joe Jones

ACBL Executive Director



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