

## **Firecracker Sectional Tournament Chair Duties**

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The following is a guide to the duties of the Unit 503 annual Firecracker Sectional Tournament chair. See also the ACBL "Resource Guide for Planning Sectional and Regional Tournaments" available on line at [web2.acbl.org/documentlibrary/units/TournamentGuide.pdf](http://web2.acbl.org/documentlibrary/units/TournamentGuide.pdf). Note that the practical realities for our tournament mean that we cannot fit in with the "ideal" timescales set out in the ACBL document.

The tournament is held annually, Wednesday through Sunday, traditionally during the week of 4<sup>th</sup> July. This is subject to the availability of the venue, the day of 4<sup>th</sup> July and the District 21 Tournament Schedule. 2011 through 2014 the tournament was held in the last week of June and is scheduled for 10 – 14 June in 2015.

Dates are booked with D21 two years ahead by the chair. Dates can be changed by agreement of the D21 scheduling coordinator; currently (Nov. 2014) Charles Smith, tel. 916 961-1105. Alternative contact by email through ACBL D21 web site linked from our unit web page.

Traditionally the new chair has been persuaded to take on the duties by the current chair, before they run their last tournament. Often the set up/take down chair has moved up to take on the role of tournament chair. If that fails the Unit president takes on the task of finding a chair. Ideally the chair should be agreed in the first half of the year preceding the year of the tournament.

The two main tasks are to find a venue (preferably in our Unit designated area; if not permission to hold the event must be obtained from the Unit in whose area the venue is located) and decide on the playing schedule.

At the 2014 size a space of 11,000 to 12,000 square feet is required. See separate "Requirements for Annual Firecracker Sectional Bridge Tournament" document for more details. Since 2007 the event has been held at the Santa Clara Convention Center. Increasing rental charges, reducing availability and firm contracts only being available 6 months prior to the event is making continuing use of this venue problematic.

For 2015 the SCCC rental contract will be available at end Nov./beginning of Dec. This should be signed immediately and returned to SCCC with 25% deposit and enables other items waiting for the contract to proceed. The balance payment is due one month prior to the event.

In 2014 and 2015 the playing schedule was revised from the format which had run successfully for a number of years, to stimulate interest and to accommodate venue room reductions. In determining the schedule and any changes the following separate documents were used: "2010 to 2014 Firecracker Table Counts", "Firecracker Attendance Analysis by Master Points 2010 to

2014” and “Firecracker 2010 to 2014 Attendance Analysis by Unit”. Also opinions of other long time players in the Unit and tournament directors were canvassed.

In 2013 a Saturday Youth Day pairs 0–5 game was introduced in conjunction with a SiVy Youth Bridge Pizza party. Consideration should be given in the schedule for events specifically aimed at very new players.

Before the Tournament Flyer is printed (750 copies) the final playing schedule must be approved by the ACBL tournaments department. They request no changes after approval. In addition to venue and playing schedule, the flyer should include hotel, parking, tournament and partnership chairs, catering and any other relevant information. The flyer should be printed to be distributed, through Calvin Harper, the Bridge book person, at the Monterey Regional in January. Through him they will be displayed at subsequent Sectionals and Regionals.

The Unit has to provide hotel accommodation for the directors who run the playing side of the Firecracker, probably between 35 to 40 room nights. Also it is desirable to include rooms for other players. The hotel has been the adjacent Hyatt Regency in the recent past. Negotiations with hotel(s) can be handled direct or through the Santa Clara Convention and Visitor Bureau. The hotel will likely require a contract with attrition in the event that minimum numbers of rooms are not taken up. The rooms booked have decreased by about 50% in the past three years to 73 in 2014.

Recruit other chairs; partnership, hospitality, set up and take down, caddies and Second Harvest Food Bank and coordinate with them before and through the Tournament. Partnership chair’s name, phone number and email need to be on the flyer.

Prepare a budget for the board to approve in the usual Unit budget timescale. This will determine the session fees.

Obtain ACBL sanction.

Determine room and lobby/ancillary areas layouts. Layouts at SCCC are well established and require few changes year to year. John Mattis has been helpful in preparing drawings.

Design and print the flyer before the end of the year. 750 copies required. Prior to 2013 single color print flyers on colored paper were used and were cheap to print. In 2014 one side multi-color print, with the reverse single color was used at a considerably higher cost. This is scheduled to be repeated for the 2015 flyer.

Contract the chosen Hotel; almost certainly the Hyatt Regency for 2015. This will likely involve a signed contract with attrition clause in the event that sufficient rooms are not booked. Obtain phone and web links for booking at the preference rate for inclusion on flyer and other publicity.

Contact the District 21 tournament director and get hotel room requirements for the tournament directors. Book their rooms at the hotel.

Through Alan Templeton change the Firecracker page of the Unit web site to give up to date information, request volunteers and generally to sell the tournament, particularly to Unit members. Keep the page updated and fresh.

Organize publicity on ACBL and D21 web sites and anywhere else available free.

Distribute flyers to local Units 3 or 4 months prior to the Firecracker. In 2014 we offered to have their flyers and put them on our board.

Place half page Firecracker advertisements in the D21 Forum monthly newspaper, usually to appear 6 to 8 weeks prior to the event. Note that copy is required 4 weeks prior to publication. My experience is that the Forum usually arrives in the last week of the prior month. Billing is done direct to the Unit treasurer.

In the 3 to 4 months prior to the Firecracker “sell” the event to our Unit members. Fewer than 50% of the Unit members attend the Firecracker. If 100 additional members played one session this would equate to 25 tables and could be the difference between profit and loss. Some methods used are visiting out of Unit games and promoting them, getting directors of games at the Bridge Center to promote the Firecracker at their games, using the Kibitzer, the firecracker page of our web site and email blasts. The colorful flyers in the restrooms at the Unit seemed to catch everyone’s attention.

Obtain copy of ACBL insurance certificate for the free additional coverage. The venue will require a copy.

Liaise with the nominated tournament director. It is helpful to make yourself known to them before the event at Regionals or other Sectionals.

Liaise with tournament director and Calvin Harper on D21 supplies needed. Almost all of the equipment and supplies except chairs and some sets of boards come from D21. A big decision is whether to use Bridge Pads, owned and supplied by Unit members or Bridge Mates supplied by D21. Bridge Pads are almost certainly only used at the Firecracker and are much vilified by many of the directors, possibly because they are very familiar with Bridge Mates from using them frequently. Costs are similar.

Liaise with set up/take down chair on timing for arrival of supplies, familiarity with layouts and sufficiency of volunteers. Usually a team of 8 to 12 with 4 to 6 heavy lifters and the rest on light duties will be enough to set up the event in one and a half to two hours. It is important that the leader of the team setting out the tables understands the drawings and table spacing required. It is helpful for the leader to come early to mark the table centers with paint tape or similar.

Take down volunteer crews are sometimes hard to pin down. Requests on the PA before during and after the last session has usually produced enough; 4 or 5 signed up in advance is helpful. For 2015 there are two take down days as we do not have the upstairs room on Sunday.

Instruct Calvin Harper on the supplies needed and what time they are required to achieve set up in good time.

Liaise with the venue Event Manager on all aspects such as game times, furniture, cleaning, catering, AC control, power supplies, microphone for PA system, unloading access for Calvin, trollies for unloading, signage, storage area, etc.

SCCC have a catering subcontractor, Aramark in 2014, and separate agreement on provisions for coffee, meals and water in the playing areas will be necessary. Coffee and food provision will involve a minimum sales guarantee.

SCCC also have a PA subcontractor and it will probably be necessary to negotiate with them on the cost of microphone provision as their rack rates are high.

The subcontractors can be dealt with directly or through the Event Manager.

Arrange pre-dealt boards for Pairs games. This has been done in the past by Will Watson liaising directly with the tournament director but Will should be asked if he will do this about two months prior to the event. Will has also been the driving force in getting results posted to the Unit web site as the tournament progresses.

Liaise with the tournament director during the week prior to the event to ensure layouts are agreed, timing and other details are clear.

Run the non-playing side of the event in liaison with the tournament director. This includes handling the cash, around \$20,000 in total, collected by the tournament director which is for the Unit treasurer. The tournament director will provide an account summary detailing all monies collected and paid out. Due to the way it is presented this takes some time to understand.

Post Firecracker collect statistical information from tournament director. This enables updating of the various tables of games, tables individual attendance etc.

Update Firecracker page on Unit web site.