

AGA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

March 25, 2007 – 8:00 PM

Present:

Roy Laird (Chairman)
Paul Celmer (Eastern Region)
Chuck Robbins (Eastern Region)
Robert Barber (Central Region)
Roy Schmidt (Central Region)
Gordon Castanza (Western Region)
Mike Lash (President)

Absent:

Willard Haynes (Western Region)
Pauline Pohl (Secretary)

Chairman Roy Laird called the meeting to order at 8:05 PM.

Gordon Castanza moved to approve the February minutes, Bob Barber seconded and they were unanimously approved.

President's Report

Ing Grants

President Mike Mash reported that Ing's Goe America has approved a total of \$73,000 to fund a variety of projects over the next year, including:

The US Youth Go Championship

The Ing North American Master Tournament, a new event that will combine the former Ing Cup and NAMT into one large pro-am event, with an elimination round on the Internet, regional qualifiers and a final playoff with substantial prizes

The Ing Redmond Cup

US Go Congress Youth Scholarships

. . . as well as a variety of other projects such as a national pro teaching tour, for which funds are available if they materialize.

President Lash stated that these are the first proposals to be funded under the AGA's new project-based relationship with the Foundation. Rather than simply receiving a block grant as in the past, the AGA not submits specific proposals, which are funded in principle; then we provide the Foundation with a timetable, and receive the actual funds as they are needed to run each event. With this grant, President Lash feels the AGA has "reached a new equilibrium" with the Foundation. "We can plan for the next year with some confidence. If we can repeat this cycle, perhaps on a calendar basis, we can begin making some long-term plans. The new proposal based approach is better for

both sides; the Foundation sees the results more clearly, and the AGA is no longer restricted to receiving \$80,000 per year.

President Lash also reported that he had sent a letter to the Foundation inquiring about the selection of the US representative for The World Ing Cup next year. The Ing Cup (not to be confused with the North American Ing Cup) is the biggest international go tournament, with a top prize of \$400,000. He inquired about the timing of the invitations so that we can plan our selection process.

In other international news, President Lash noted that the secretary of The Mexican Go Federation recently joined the AGA. Lash took the opportunity to contact him and begin to build ties with that association. Paul Celmer suggested that we consider inviting a representative to the Go Congress. President Lash will present this option to Congress organizers.

In passing President Lash noted that it was difficult to identify a significant contact at the present time for the Canadian Go Association.

US Youth Go Championship

President Lash reported that five of the eight qualifying tournaments have been held, and we are on track to complete eight qualifying events. With funding assured from the Ing Foundation, the USYGC looks like a huge success, and members of the Board commended President Lash and the USYGC for such an outstanding achievement in the first year.

World Amateur Go Championship

Two players tied on WAGC points for the first time this year, so President Lash arranged a one game playoff, and Andy Liu defeat Mozhang Chen, winning the right to represent us in the World Amateur Go Championship. This year's guest official will be EJ Editor Chris Garlock, who will broadcast key games live from Tokyo. Thomas Hsiang will also attend as a member of the IGF board. The AGA will cover a portion of his expenses.

Ing-NAMT Combined Tournament

As noted the Ing Foundation has approved funding for a new tournament that will combine the Ing Cup and the NAMT into one larger event. Operations VP Chris Kirschner, USYGC Coordinator Nicole Casanta and Dennis Wheeler will develop a tournament in which players who qualify through online play will meet in face to face regional qualifiers, with the finalists playing for significant prizes.

Personnel Issues

Bob Barber has resigned as Congress Liaison. The crucial position of Tournament Coordinator also remains vacant. President Lash will continue to work with Kevin Purvis to identify candidates for these positions.

Dennis Wheeler has agreed to serve as Internet Tournament Coordinator. Chuck Robbins stated that a previous Internet Tournament Committee, comprised of Chen-dao Lin, Robbins, Jeff Shaevel, Larry Gross and Mike Bull developed extensive protocols for

the conduct of important matches. He will arrange for Dennis to have copies of those protocols.

The President concluded his report and remained for the following discussion.

Rank Certification

Roy Laird stated that the Rank Certification Committee responded to last month's mandate to include professionals in the certification process with some questions and concerns. At least one professional is concerned that mixing rating analysis and rank certification would weaken both, rather than strengthen them. Concern was also expressed about "cheapening" certificates by making modest priced options available. There were also questions about the redundancy of a two tier system. If a candidate qualifies through the rating system, why is the pro necessary? What if the pro disagrees? But if the pro never disagrees, isn't that rather undignified?

Roy Schmidt had looked into a similar situation that arose some time ago when the US Chess Federation considered a Title Certification process. The plan reportedly "died from lack of interest"; players asked, "If we have a rating, why do we need a certificate?" Like the proposed certificates, it would have no bearing on tournament play, and so it was seen as having little value.

Some Board members see little value in this proposal, especially for weaker players, while others would enjoy, as Chuck Robbins said, "hanging it with my trophies." All agreed that any AGA certificate should be solidly backed by AGA rating data, but for tournament purposes the player's current rating, not the certified rank, would determine playing strength for pairing purposes.

President Lash reminded the Board that the proposal is intended as a benefit for members, some of whom seem interested. Bob Barber said the crux of the matter seems to be that both sides have a financial stake in the certification process. He also commented that unlike chess, the go world has an Asian pro tradition, that we may or may not choose to emulate in the US to some degree. Paul Celmer expressed the belief that there could be a way that we could work together with the pros. Chuck's experience working with the pros for this year's Congress is that they appreciate anything that helps them to generate a new revenue stream. His motion that the Rank Committee "develop options to certify ranks that involve the US pros" was unanimously adopted.

Conflict of interest

The Board reviewed a concern expressed by Operations VP Chris Kirschner that the by-laws require the Board to "write and publish its policies and requirements" regarding this issue. It was noted further that under Section 11 b, "Board members shall recuse themselves from a conflict of interest deliberation if they have an involvement, or apparent involvement, in the case;" and that this provision may have been breached when Congress Director and Board Member Chuck Robbins participated in discussion of a proposal to begin paying fees to professionals at the Congress. In preparation for this meeting Chairman Laird sent to all members a report by the Governance Committee, which examined this issue closely in 2005. They offered consensus think on several cases but no guidance for general policy.

Bob Barber thought that fears that the Board would somehow be swayed by someone's pecuniary motives were somewhat exaggerated. Mike Lash pointed out that the by-laws do not specify financial interest, but refer generally to "involvement or apparent involvement in the case." The proposal is that such persons would routinely withdraw from discussions in which they had an "interest," or be asked to withdraw. Mike Lash pointed out that some people do not like open conflict, and feel uncomfortable speaking freely against someone in this way. He pointed out that such a procedure could give the ultimate decision greater integrity.

Roy Laird felt that members should recuse themselves from votes where their interests might be affected, but they should participate fully in discussion of those programs. Bob Barber and Paul Celmer also spoke in favor of "fair, open, inclusive" discussion that includes all relevant parties. Roy Schmidt noted that interested parties are often the best source of information; they alone may have the answer to a question or objection that arises at any point in the discussion. Roy L clarified that recusal from discussion would mean going off the record. Gordon Castanza and Roy Schmidt pointed out that everyone who joins this Board, or any Board, does so because of certain interests. They asked, are they therefore barred from discussion of any issue in which they may appear to have an "involvement"?

The Board took the unanimous view that in the instance of concern, no conflict of interest or violation of the by-laws had occurred. We agreed to continue discussing what further steps might be necessary to comply with the by-laws.

Next meeting April 22, 8:00 PM EDT.

Chairman Roy Laird adjourned the meeting at 9:20 PM.

-- submitted by Roy Laird