

Board Meeting Minutes

American Go Association

Meeting Date and Time: September 8, 2019, 8:00 pm EDT

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Overview | 4 |
| In Attendance | 4 |
| Absent | 4 |
| Summary | 4 |
| Actionable Motions Passed | 4 |
| Minutes | 5 |
| Games Played Report | 5 |
| Top Tournament Schedule | 5 |
| New Jersey Open | 5 |
| Congress Tournaments: Strong Players | 6 |
| Chinese Go Congress | 7 |
| Congress Surplus: Creation of Scholarship Fund | 7 |
| Ratings | 8 |
| Update on Executive Search Committee (discussed in May 2019) | 9 |
| Update on Treasurer search (discussed in April 2019) | 9 |
| Rules re: Submission of Tournaments for Ratings (Devin Frazee) | 10 |
| Board Meeting Schedule for 2019-2020 | 11 |
| Appendix: Reports and Proposals | 13 |
| President's Report | 13 |
| The Fall Meeting | 13 |
| Games Played Report | 13 |
| Top Tournament Schedule | 14 |
| The New Jersey Open | 15 |
| Congress Tournaments I | 15 |
| Congress Tournaments II | 16 |
| Pair Go Rules | 16 |
| Ratings | 17 |
| North American Go Federation | 17 |
| US Go Congress Surplus | 17 |
| Chinese Go Congress | 17 |
| North American Go Federation Proposal | 18 |
| Ratings Process & Algorithm Update | 19 |
| Summary | 19 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Background | 19 |
| Ratings process today: | 19 |
| Common complaints and their causes | 20 |
| Ratings Delays | 20 |
| Algorithm Improvements | 21 |
| Appendix A - Notes on membership software implications | 22 |
| Appendix B -- Gurujeet's notes on current failure modes | 22 |
| Proposal to Increase Sigma()Expansion in the AGA Ratings System | 24 |
| Executive Summary | 24 |
| Background | 24 |
| Consequences | 25 |
| Proposal | 26 |
| Alternatives | 28 |
| Changing to a different rating system that explicitly discounts older results | 28 |
| Raising the constant even further | 28 |
| Changing the sigma expansion function to logistic growth | 28 |
| Proposal to Update the Ratings Process | 30 |
| Summary | 30 |
| Desired Outcomes | 30 |
| Proposed Solution | 30 |
| Important Considerations | 30 |
| Additional Benefits of the Proposal 🌟 | 30 |
| Optional Addendums to the Proposal (Potential Risk of Complications) | 31 |
| Risk Analysis of Proposal (Very Low Risk of Membership Loss) | 31 |
| Next Steps (Plans for Implementation) | 32 |
| Notify membership via email and social media | 32 |
| Update the website (mid to long term goal) | 32 |
| Create/finish additional supporting proposals | 32 |
| Appendix A | 33 |
| Appendix B | 34 |
| Appendix C | 35 |
| Potential Issues | 35 |
| Potential Solutions | 35 |
| Measuring Failure | 35 |

Overview

In Attendance

Lisa Scott (Chair, Central Region Rep)
Devin Frazee (Central Region Rep)
Chris Kirschner (Western Region Rep)
Gurjeet Khalsa (Eastern Region Rep)
Dan Ritter (Eastern Region Rep)
Paul Celmer (At-Large Rep)
Andy Okun (President)
Andrew Jackson (Executive VP)
Samantha Fede (Secretary)
Hajin Lee

Absent

Chris Saenz (Western Region Rep)

Summary

This is the first meeting of the new AGA Board and following a new topic-oriented meeting structure. The board discussed expanding and improving major AGA tournaments through funding and policy. The board moved to double the sigma expansion rate of AGA ratings and to revise memberships to better allow for single event and participation in AGA tournaments by foreign nationals. The board also discussed ways to speed up the process of updating ratings following tournaments.

Actionable Motions Passed

1. That the board direct the president, at his discretion, to spend up to \$2,000 to support restarting the NJ Open.
2. The policy established for the NJ Open be published and the conditions justifying it be published and the conditions for similar application also be published.
3. The creation of a policy that would establish conditions for AGA support of tournaments. Devin, Chris K, and Dan form a committee to create this policy.
4. The board expresses concern at the report about the most recent masters and would like the president to explore additional options and present those at the next board meeting.
5. Motion to double the sigma expansion rate per Andrew Jackson's proposal.

6. The president is authorized to revise the single event membership to resolve the issues related to timing and duration of the event.
7. Give the president authority to authorize creating complimentary memberships for foreign nationals on the day of the tournament.

Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order 8:06 EST
2. Approval of Minutes (July minutes available here: https://www.usgo.org/sites/default/files/boardminutes/AGA%20Board%20Meeting%20Minutes%2007_19_2019.pdf)

Paul moves to approve, Devin seconds, unanimous approval.

3. [President's Report \(Report available in the Appendix to these minutes\)](#)

a. Games Played Report

- i. [More information in the [President's Report](#). Further analytics distributed to the board]

Lisa: Steve pointed out that the decrease in the number of games also correlates with the recession

b. Top Tournament Schedule

- i. [More information in the [President's Report](#).]

Gurujeet: I like the overall idea of coordinating tournament dates

Lisa: I think there is good geographic coverage, but I would like to see us capitalize on the 2020 Congress by encouraging a big tournament in CO say January 2021.

Chris K: We have a yearly tournament but it's not that big, doesn't attract a lot of outsiders

Andrew Jackson: I think it's an element of the west coast culture.

General support for these regular big tournaments

c. New Jersey Open

- i. [More information in the [President's Report](#).]

Dan: I think that's a good idea, and finding a venue is a hard thing, so I think allocating money to that is good use of our money

Chris K: I think this is a Pandora's box, including political reasons. If we support NJ open, where there's easy train access, that's one thing but if you want a big tournament in Seattle, that's require more resources

Lisa: Maybe we could provide it as start-up money?

Gurujeet: It's a tournament with a long history.

Chris: But that's also an element of "those who have get more"

Lisa: I agree but I think giving it this year and seeing how it goes, and then hopefully they can get restarted.

Chris: I think my constituents would have a major issue with east coast events get this level of support.

Lisa: Perhaps if there was something setup where if people have a major plan, regionally, they could apply for the sums.

Chris K: Perhaps small grants like 3000?

Gurujeet: I think we need to figure out where the money is needed to improve the go community.

Chris K: This is a rural vs. urban issue.

Andrew Jackson: This is not an either or situation.

Dan: I think it's worth investing more in areas where there is more interest.

Devin: I think the only thing that's on the table right now is preserving the NJ open.

Devin motions. Gurujeet seconded. That the board direct the president, at his discretion, to spend up to \$2,000 to support restarting the NJ Open. The ayes have it.

Chris votes nay, and states it is based on the failure to include any provision to include applications of this policy to another venue.

Chris expresses concerns over the involvement of the chair in discussion.

Chris moves: **The policy established for the NJ Open be published and the conditions justifying it be published and the conditions for similar application also be published. Paul seconds.**

Andrew: I think we would be excited to provide \$2000 in funds for any tournament that can reasonably expect to get 75 people.

Devin: Chris, would you be interested in working together between now and the next meeting to develop a proposal for such a plan?

Gurujeet: My concern is that your motion implies we are creating a policy, and I don't think that we are.

Motion amended to read: The creation of a policy that would establish conditions for AGA support of tournaments. Devin, Chris K, and Dan form a committee to create this policy.

The ayes have it. Approved.

d. Congress Tournaments: Strong Players

i. [More information in the [President's Report.](#)]

Dan: My concern is that if we withdraw the instruction supporting the previous structure, we will have issues for the next Congress. Is there a reason we need to do this now?

Chris: I move that the board expresses concern at the report about the most recent masters and would like the president to explore additional options and present those at the next board meeting. Dan seconds.

Gurujeet: My hesitations are so that if we don't like the new one, we could work on reforming the current one.

Ayes have it.

- e. Congress Tournaments: Congress Tournament Coordinator and US Open
Lisa: We piloted it the past year, and just want to formalize it.
Dan: These past years, we've seen a need for someone to take the reigns and coordinate between the various tournaments.
- f. Pair Go Rules
Chris: I move to go into executive session to discuss Pair Go Rules, Gurujeet seconds, moves into executive at 8:50pm EDT.
Devin motions to leave executive session, Chris seconds, executive session ended at 9:06pm EDT
- g. North American Go Federation [[Referencing PDF in appendix, here](#)]
Hajin: It's a high-level summary of what we have so far, what we want NAGF to do and what the leadership structure would be, as well as our national address (on paper, the National Go Center). We're still working on details.
Chris: The idea has been floating around for 20 years, great that we're moving on it.
Devin: It's specifically for the pro system?
Andy: Principally, but it could do other things. Other high level tournaments, but big national tournaments (US Open, Canadian Open) would continue to be nationally run.
[Hajin leaves the call]
- h. Chinese Go Congress
 - i. [[More information in the President's Report.](#)]
Devin: Sounds interesting
Paul: Does the AGA have a policy on how we refer to Taiwan?
Andy: Yes, Taiwan. EGF's decision to refer to it as Chinese Taipei is one of the reasons they have CGO sponsorship
- i. Congress Surplus: Creation of Scholarship Fund
 - i. [[More information in the President's Report.](#)]
Lisa: We've had surpluses most years because our price structure has changed. We've been talking about assigning these funds when there's a surplus about 10,000k to split between the hosting chapter, the AGA, and 50% to the fund. We're looking to create this fund. It would be an opt-in process.
Chris: If we do this, someone needs to come up with a somewhat concrete proposal.
Lisa: I think we could direct the president to start that.
Paul: I would like to lower the overall cost. I like the optional element of it
Chris: Maybe specifically for the lowest cost options.

Lisa: The problem is we still need to keep a certain mark for the break even point, to have a comfortable margin in case attendance is low.

Chris: I'm concerned that this is such a complicated procedure. I'd like to see something circulated early.

Lisa: Our goal will be to distribute something in the next 5 weeks.

j. Ratings

i. [Ratings report in Appendix](#)

ii. [Sigma change proposal in Appendix](#)

Andrew Jackson: With the departure of Jonathan Bressler, who we owe so much thanks to, I'm trying to simplify it to make the system more manageable for the future volunteer. I'm happy to do this and looking for guidance from the board on certain issues and not on discretionary issues. We've discussed this extensively online prior to this meeting.

Andrew Jackson: One issue is complimentary memberships that are done without extensive complicated processes. I'd like people to think about a process to do that. I don't think a TD abusing it is likely. Note that Steve Colburn pointed out there is an online way to sign up for promotional memberships that many TDs aren't aware of. The sigma expansion issue was originally drafted 5 years ago, it just involves changing something in the code (doubling the sigma or change it to logistic growth). An easy one to deal with is the idea to push 1 day memberships to 10 day memberships. I just need guidance.

Lisa: I'm fine with that except for Congress.

Andrew: I don't think that's an issue. It makes it much more complicated for that exception.

This is relevant because if there's a two day tournament, or if they sign-up a couple days in advance.

Lisa: What about a 5 day membership.

Andy: It can just be our policy that that isn't allowed at congress. We're not enforcing it.

Lisa: What solution to the sigma problem do you prefer?

Andrew: I can double it right now, it's not much but it's better than nothing. A more complicated analysis is probably needed but this first step doesn't preclude that.

Dan: I motion to double the sigma expansion rate per Andrew Jackson's proposal. Devin seconded.

Gurjeet votes nay. The ayes have it.

Chris: I'd like to see some simulations first.

Lisa: Those are in the documents linked.

Gurjeet: Could I also suggest that we publish both so that people can see and then after some time decide.

Andrew: I'd like to do something like that and will try to make it happen.

Chris: I motion the president is authorized to revise the single event membership to resolve the issues related to timing and duration of the event. Devin seconds. Ayes have it.

Gurujeet: I would also support TD discretion for complimentary memberships.

Devin: I've noticed you can sign up for memberships without paying on your own, so could we do that and then have a post-hoc activation of the membership without payment. I imagine this isn't intentional. But, you can get an AGAID just using that system.

Andrew: As Devin pointed out, there is a way to have a non-active account, but it goes with Devin's proposal about whether we need everyone to have active memberships to rate tournaments.

Chris: This needs more technical discussion. What do we mean by complimentary? There are other technical issues with same day ratings.

Andrew: We've addressed these, the ones in the document are the ones we are not able to automate already.

Gurujeet: I've only encountered this once, and creating unpaid IDs seems to address it.

Gurujeet motions to give the president authority to authorize creating complimentary memberships for foreign nationals on the day of the tournament. Chris seconds. Unanimous.

4. Ongoing Business

a. Update on Executive Search Committee (discussed in May 2019)

We have formed to search for a new future AGA president as Andy Okun will not be president forever. Lisa, Chris, Paul, are on this committee and will invite former presidents.

b. Update on Treasurer search (discussed in April 2019)

Andy Okun requests that anyone who might be interested to please contact him. Danny Ko is still doing it but very soon he will not be able to. Can the executive search committee include this search?

Lisa: I don't think the former presidents are exactly the correct people, but we can try to help and figure it out going forward.

Gurujeet: I support hiring a CPA to do taxes portion, like we've discussed before.

Devin: I might be willing to serve, but I need more info.

Lisa: Can officers and board members be the same person?

Chris: The bylaws allow it.

[will continue offline]

5. New Business

- a. Rules re: Submission of Tournaments for Ratings (Devin Frazee)
 - i. [Proposal to Update the Rating Process](#)
 - ii. The above doc is commentable using the “add a comment button found on the right edge of the document. Feel free to leave comments!
[general sense that more discussion is needed]
Andrew: The current policy is not to require 100% membership to do ratings.
6. Request for items for discussion during November 2019 Meeting
 - a. Preliminary discussion of long-term goals and direction, in preparation for a long discussion of the topic in November (discussed June 2019 and in the past)
Lisa will set up a google doc for people to contribute to in advance.
Decided against in person retreat. Discussed potential videochat options. 50% of next meeting will be ongoing issues, 50% will be the “strategy meeting” Nov 17 meeting will be at 7pm EST, expecting a 3 hour meeting.
7. Devin moves to adjourn. Paul seconds. Unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 10:19pm EDT.

Board Meeting Schedule for 2019-2020

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Meeting</u> | <u>Location</u> | <u>Topics</u> | <u>Written Reports</u> | <u>This Year Supplemental Issues</u> |
|---------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Sept. 8, 2019 | Fall Meeting | Phone | Tournaments, Games, Rules, Ranks and Ratings | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annual Tournament Calendar 2. Report on Games and Tournaments Played 3. Report on Pro Play 4. Minutes of Prior Meeting | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pair Go Rules 2. Pro System Restart 3. Proposal on Major Tournaments and Rewards 4. Proposal regarding New Jersey Open |
| Nov. 17, 2019 | Strategy "Retreat" | Video | Long view of the organization | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategy Memo 2. Minutes of Prior Meeting | |
| Feb. 23, 2020 | Winter Meeting | Phone | Admin, Communications, Congress, Staff, Education | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Roster of Positions and Staff 2. Reappointments List 3. Minutes of Prior Meeting | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher Program |
| May 17, 2020 | Spring Meeting | Phone | Budget, Investments, International Affairs | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preliminary financials 2. Investment report 3. Budget 4. Report of the VP of IR 5. Minutes of Prior Meeting | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proposed reworking of membership categories, as noticed in 2019 Chapter Assembly Meeting |
| Aug. 7, 2020 | Congress Meeting | YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, CO | Financial Position, Membership | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annual Financial Report 2. Annual Report of the organization 3. Report on Membership 4. Minutes of Prior Meeting | |

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|-----------------|--------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Aug. 8, 2020 | Chapter Assembly Meeting | YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, CO | Congress, Chapter Relations, General Discussion | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Annual Financial Report2. Annual Report of the organization3. Chapter Membership and Rewards4. Prior Year's Chapter Assembly Minutes | |
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Appendix: Reports and Proposals

President's Report

1. The Fall Meeting

In our new schedule of Board meetings, our goal was to have this meeting cover many of the topics that involve our tournaments, the calendar of tournaments, our rules of play, and so on. This program is still in its infancy, but I am presenting my first report in a form that I hope we can develop as the years go on. Attached please find an Excel spreadsheet with (a) how many rated games were played by month and year since 1991 and (b) the top 20 size tournaments for the last three years. My hope is that we can use this to give ourselves some goals and measures.

2. Games Played Report

- a. What this report shows is that we have a reasonable spread of games throughout the year, with by far the largest month being the month of Congress, but with more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of our games _not_ played at Congress. That distribution seems healthy to me.
- b. On the other hand, the number of rated games played in a year is pretty much static at the moment. There was a sharp run up, from 6,000 to 9,000 a year, during Mike Lash's presidency, one guesses from a combination of the Ing Grant adding youth games and the effect of Hikaru No Go. The games slid again under Allan and myself and are now averaging 5,000 games a year.
- c. The Top 20 tournaments pages show consistently that Cotsen is largest, and So Cal in the top three or four. New Jersey would be second, but stopped being held. (More below on that.) I did not include the Congress tournaments, but perhaps should have. Let me know if you think they would be useful. The US Open is always our largest tournament, and the Die Hard would always be in the top five, with about 160 games played.
- d. There are some geographic holes that make the top 20 tournaments not wholly indicative of the spread of our tournament play. A few major cities in smaller population markets have a lot of activity, but no one tournament that is very large, Boston and Seattle most notably.

3. Top Tournament Schedule

- a. I would like us to encourage a continuing calendar of expected top tournaments, both to provide events that people can rely on and plan around, but also to provide events that we can use for league play, qualification points, top player rankings, and the like. Instead of hoping that events continue, I think we should work with organizers as time goes on to encourage succession of organizers and continued advance planning. The current schedule I would like to maintain at a minimum is:
 - i. US Open
 - ii. Die Hard
 - iii. Cotsen
 - iv. New Jersey Open
 - v. Maryland Open
 - vi. So Cal Championship
 - vii. Evanston Spring
 - viii. NGC Cherry Blossom
 - ix. South Central Go Tournament
 - x. Jujo Jiang or Replacement BAGPA Tournament in SF
 - xi. A Major Seattle Tournament, expected to be smaller, and chosen for a time of year with less activity elsewhere
 - xii. Gotham Go Tournament
- b. We may also want to add a San Diego tournament, the Pennsylvania state championship tournament, an Ohio tournament, and perhaps a second in New York, if they look to become reliable.
- c. I would like us to help maintain these tournaments, including the expenditure of some resources. I propose this take two forms to begin with.
- d. PROPOSAL: That we agree in principle to modify the Rewards system to encourage chapters to hold more tournaments, to hold them consistently year after year, and to seek to make them bigger. I will rely on Gurujeet and Bob to come up with the detailed proposal and bring it back to the board for final approval.
- e. For discussion, I propose we agree in principle to provide direct financial support, at the president's discretion, to maintain and protect portions of this tournament calendar. This idea will take more work than the previous one, as previously we have entirely relied on Chapters to create and manage tournaments outside Congress and rare others. My idea is not that we create an open invitation for Chapters to ask for resources; that should be handled via the rewards system I think. Instead, I am thinking that we should occasionally agree to help selected Chapters run tournaments that we want to be key parts of our calendar. We could do one or two directly ourselves, and indeed a North American championship would fall in that category (see below).

4. The New Jersey Open

- a. The New Jersey Open was held successfully for 30 years running on campus at Princeton University, run by Rick Mott, who had a connection with Princeton, and others including Paul Matthews. It was one of the largest tournaments in the country, the only one outside of Congress that sometimes beat the Cotsen.
- b. In 2016, Princeton officials abruptly barred the tournament from campus, based it having too little student involvement. Rick became disheartened by this. There was a major tournament the following year run by Paul and Feng Yun, not AGA rated, and which has not been repeated.
- c. Given the popularity and size of the event, I do not want to lose it permanently. I have been in touch with volunteers in New Jersey, looking for new organizers. Venue costs could be an issue, however, and typically running an event of that size is something you work into, rather than something you do out of the box. I have one willing prospect in Northern NJ, and Rick is writing up a guide for me of what a proper NJ Open is. Nonetheless, I think it may take some more effort from us to get it going.
- d. PROPOSAL: That the board direct the president, at his discretion, to spend up to \$2,000 to support restarting the NJ Open.

5. Congress Tournaments I

- a. Some years ago, the board directed the president to split the US Open into two sections, a main tournament resembling the traditional one, with six rounds, for players up to 6D+, and a Masters tournament of nine rounds, with a \$10,000 prize pool, for pro and 7D players who wanted the stronger opposition, to replace to open section of the US Open as well as the North American Masters and the Strong Player Open.
- b. While the board understood some of the downside, including the lack of a clear North American championship, the tiring schedule on the players and the staff of a nine-round event, and the difficulty that North American players would have winning, these were outweighed by the significant goals of having a prestigious event that would attract strong players from around the world and provide a significant improvement in the quality of play and of opposition faced by the best North American players.
- c. For a number of years, these goals were met, with quite large Masters sections, excellent players and games, and good turnout. While there was some grumbling from some of the stronger North American amateurs, and the North American Masters prizes faded somewhat within the larger event, it was successful.
- d. In the last several years, however, the drop off in the number of strong North Americans attending Congress and/or playing has been significant, including among pros. This year's sign ups for the Masters was so small that the TD sought permission, which was granted, to reduce the event to seven rounds. The tournament was won by a pro from Japan. Strong players have continued to say the event is not as attractive to them, as the possible arrival of an unknown number of overseas pros of extraordinary strength not

only stops them from winning, but sometimes stops them from putting together a net winning record.

- e. It is time to revise this structure. I do not have a proposal ready for a replacement, but would like in the meantime for the board to vote for the following proposal.
- f. PROPOSAL: That the Board withdraw their earlier instruction regarding the Open Masters, and direct the president, by year's end, to propose an alternative structure of one or more tournaments that balances (a) the tradition of US Open competition (b) the desire for a North American championship that attracts North Americans pros and strong amateurs and (c) the desire to attract the best players to the US Go Congress. The understanding should be that the AGA's portion of the budget should be comparable to the support currently given for the Masters.

6. Congress Tournaments II

- a. It has been the informal practice for some time that the US Go Congress directors or co-directors would staff the Congress' competitive events, including the US Open, with tournament directors. While this in some ways was beneficial, with new volunteers being brought in from time to time, and improvements made in the events (most notably the standard of US Open rounds starting on time), it has also led to some inconsistency in administration. We are proposing, with the consent of the organizers of next year's Congress, that the AGA and the Congress Coordinator take the responsibility of having a "congress tournament coordinator" who seeks volunteers for the TD posts at Congress and maintains the standards for how the different tournaments are administered. In particular, the way the US Open and the top tournaments are conducted should be a matter for AGA to set.
- b. No action is necessary by the board, but we wanted to have an opportunity for discussion.

7. Pair Go Rules

- a. A question arose at the Madison Congress about whether some of the competitors were communicating. The TDs, and an AGA panel looking into after, found no significant indication that such communication happened, and the results stand. We can provide more information to interested board members if they wish. As far as we are concerned the matter regarding this year is concluded, but we can't speak for the players involved. Given the value and prestige of the top section Pair Go tournament, with the prize of a place at the IAPGC in Tokyo, the TDs of the tournament, the Congress Coordinator, the Youth Coordinator, and the President, are looking into having a more detailed rule set regarding potentially expressive conduct in the Pair Go tournament. This is an item for the board's information.

8. Ratings

- a. Andrew Jackson, acting ratings coordinator, will present an account of the current ratings process and the potential for changes and improvements.

9. North American Go Federation

- a. Discussions are proceeding with staff and the Canadian Go Association about the creation of a North American Go Federation. With the chair's permission, I would like to have Hajin Lee join us for a brief discussion of what is involved.

10. US Go Congress Surplus

- a. For the past few years, the surplus from the Go Congress has been roughly \$40,000. As you know, our agreement with each year's local organizing committee allows half of the year's surplus to be used by its AGA chapter for its own Go-related purposes, as long as they are in line with the AGA mission. Discussions between the Congress Coordinator and the 2020 Congress Directors led to the suggestions that the surplus (when it exceeds \$10,000), be partly used for scholarships for future Congress attendees. This year's Go Congress in Madison, WI, was organized on site by Dave Weimer, a long time Go organizer and volunteer and previous Go Congress director, who expressed interest in hearing more about such a proposal, with the idea that it could begin with the 2019 surplus. We wish to have a board discussion on the details of this proposal, with the idea of using it in future years as well.

11. Chinese Go Congress

- a. As you may recall, I agreed to attend a "Weiqi Leaders" meeting that was part of the 3rd Chinese Go Congress, which took place in late August in Rizhao, Shandong, People's Republic of China. The meeting took on considerably more substance than general such meetings do. I am sending around a brief confidential memo tomorrow discussing what happened and its implications. We can discuss it, though there is no immediate action required.

North American Go Federation Proposal

1. Mandate
 - a. To represent the Go community to North America in international contexts
 - b. To establish and maintain professional promotion and ranking systems
 - c. To organize pro qualification events
 - d. To organize North American Championships
2. Leadership/Administration
 - a. Board of Directors
 - i. Each member association's president or his/her designee
 - ii. Senior community leaders and a Go expert
 - iii. A representative for NAGF's pro players
 - iv. "Executive Director" to be in charge of the administration
 - v. One of the board members is to be "Chairperson of the Board"
 - b. Administration
 - i. General Secretary
 - ii. Treasurer
 - c. Address/Location
 - i. The National Go Center: 4652 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington DC, USA

Ratings Process & Algorithm Update

Summary

I request the board consider the following:

- Whether tournaments can be rated without verifying that all members are current
- Clarify the edge case behavior around single-day memberships
- What improvements could be made around the chapter-based 'promotional membership' documentation
- What improvements could be tolerated for allowing online signup of complimentary members by TDs
- Review the document on changing our [sigma expansion](#) and approve it.
- Establish and communicate a clear policy on self-promotion to our TDs and our membership.

Background

Jonathan Bresler stepped down this year after many years of reliable and regular service, which I believe we have formally recognized -- if not, let's please do that for his excellent work.

Having taken new ownership of the role provides an opportunity to effect a few improvements to the process and the algorithm. Let me recapitulate the process in effect today, then outline some proposals for incremental improvement to today's process. Finally, I'll touch on the possibility for improving the AGA's ratings algorithm.

Ratings process today:

The ratings coordinator today is responsible for running programs dependent on three separate systems -- the membership system, the ratings system, and the AGAGD.

1. A TD pairs and runs a tournament, and generates a compatible "results file", whose specification is described [here](#)
2. The results file is sent to ratings@usgo.org
3. The ratings coordinator transfers the result file to the server.
4. When a batch of results files is ready to be rated, the ratings coordinator updates the ratings system's tables of players using the latest database dump from the membership manager ("TDListA")
5. After the ratings' database is updated, a script checks the players in the TD's results file for current memberships.
 - a. If any members have invalid membership status -- of which there are many, see below -- the ratings coordinator emails the TD and cc's membership@usgo.org, until all the players issues have been resolved.
6. Once all the players are established as having valid memberships, the ratings coordinator adds the games in the results files to the ratings system but has not yet rated them.

7. The coordinator then runs the results file through a 'sanity check', which identifies possibly transposed results or other data quality issues.
 - a. If any issues are found, another round of emails with the TD ensues.
8. Assuming the check passes, the ratings coordinator commits the results, updating the AGAGD tables and membership tables

Common complaints and their causes

To summarize, the most common member feedback is that tournaments take too long to be rated, and the status of played tournaments is not visible to members until a tournament is completely rated.

Ratings Delays

The most common cause of rating delays are issues relating to the memberships not being current on all players at the time of the tournament.

As Gurujeet pointed out (see Appendix), there are a dizzying number of possible membership pitfalls that could lead attendees to not have compliant memberships, and any one player being out of compliance delays the entire tournaments being rated. This punishes all the compliant members with delayed ratings while all the edge cases are tracked down and manually dealt with. **The simplest fix would be to rate all tournament results, regardless of membership status.**

The board should determine whether such a process change would be worthwhile: On the one hand, results could be updated in a timely fashion. On the other, this is the only point where we actually enforce membership, so there is the potential for abuse. Various ways could mitigate or limit the potential for abuse, for example: The AGAGD could be modified to prevent players from viewing their ratings unless their membership is current, which should provide a sufficient incentive for players to keep up to date, and players could see their results as fast as the TD can send them. This is just one possibility, though, and the board could perhaps come up with more.

Some miscellaneous proposals for patching the other edge cases:

Proposed: Consolidate the available ratings types and streamline the administration of the others. This requires the board or the membership to discuss.

- Event only memberships: As implemented, these memberships are 'valid' for a single day, and it's unclear how the system is supposed to work for multi-day tournaments like the Congress. **Remove this membership class or clarify edge case behavior.**
- Complimentary memberships: There's no way today for a TD to give a VIP a complimentary membership and get a valid ID immediately. The big problem here is that these can't be registered online, meaning the TD has no AGA number and has to do an email round-trip before an AGA number can be assigned. **Proposed fixes include:**

- Removing this type of membership
- Giving the TDs the ability to sign up “free” members somehow. (will involve MM changes)
- Documenting to TDs that promotional memberships should be resolved prior to tournament day.
- **(removed** section on promotional memberships, as these can be done online. Potentially a documentation overhaul on the sign-up page?)
- Disable the “change ID” feature of lifetime memberships.

In development: Better tools to consolidate duplicate memberships.

Another major failure point is the existence of multiple memberships for the same person. The TD shouldn’t be responsible for figuring out which ID corresponds to the player in front of them. If multiple memberships are detected after the fact, the ratings & membership czars should be able to merge their game history into one profile for the AGAGD and merge the stale membership entries in the MM. Tools to do this do not currently exist.

In development: Better online tools for validating results files.

Today, the results files can’t be checked without emailing them to the ratings coordinator. The syntax checks, membership checks, and other data checks should be available via an automated form that can at a minimum provide basic validation that a results file is probably correct.

Algorithm Improvements

The next most frequent complaint about the ratings system is the problem of “self promotion”. In short, the constants that govern our systems’ quickness in changing our members ratings are set such that our system does not keep up with our members improvements. This manifests in our members asking the TDs to be “promoted,” i.e., paired at a different rating than the one displayed. This has several downsides:

- This puts pressure on the TD, who has to make a judgment call about whether to grant the players petition.
- There’s no mechanism for tracking how often this happens, which makes data quality hard.
- Players can repeatedly try this with no penalty, which messes up the outcomes of tournament play (e.g., a self-promoted player goes 0-5 and messes up tiebreaks, etc).
- The players have low confidence in our rating systems ability to reflect their progress.

This problem has come to a head in the last two years, as the US Open TD has refused to grant any promotions, and has made statements to the effect of the problem being ours to solve.

Several solutions have been outlined in the past:

- Increasing the rate of sigma expansion, [proposed in 2015](#) and referred to a committee, which was never formed.

- Changing to a new rating system, such as Elo++ or Whole History Ratings.

Request: I would like the board to review the document on sigma expansion and approve, deny, or request more information.

Request: I would like the board to communicate a clear policy on self-promotion to our TDs and our membership.

Lastly, If the board would like to study the possibility of pursuing a new ratings algorithm, I would enthusiastically support such a course of action.

Appendix A - Notes on membership software implications

As outlined above in the description of the current process, the ratings software is a downstream dependency of the membership software. The board has considered alternatives for that software, so here are some items to consider:

1. As long as we block ratings on membership status, the ratings software will be dependant on the latest data for current memberships. Rating everything but suppressing visibility of ratings would make that dependency much easier.
2. If the “membership software” is the one handing out our AGA IDs (which will be the primary key for our ratings/AGAGD tables), writing our own pairing software will impose constraints on the membership software. (i.e., today, TDListA is updated daily)
3. Automating the synchronization of membership software to the ratings software will require close coordination with any vendor providing membership services.

Appendix B -- Gurujeeet’s notes on current failure modes

- Event only membership – we allow someone to pay \$10 to have an AGA membership for the event only. The system puts this in with an expiration date on which it is paid and it has no actual tie to the event. If entered before the event (and general best practice should be to pre-register attendees and encourage them to have current membership) then it will show as expired when the ratings report is submitted. Multi-day events have been problematic as well. Sleuthing these situations generally involves several people and numerous emails back-and-forth.
- Expired memberships – members who have not played recently show up and no longer remember their password to login. To reset it they need to know the email used to create the account. They often do not know this email, or in some cases no longer use and have access to that email. They can send a request to find out what the email was but this typically does not turnaround on the day of a tournament. If the email that was used is no longer available to them, then manual intervention on the backend is required (also not typically available on tournament day). There have been reports of password reset not working correctly as well, but that may have been fixed.

- Multiple memberships – for the email reasons above or simply user error, users sometimes create additional memberships each with their own AGA IDs. I recently spoke to someone at the NGC who told me they have three AGA IDs. He sent an email to membership and was told we cannot delete old IDs. This creates confusion and rating issues if the wrong ID is used.
- Promotional memberships – chapters are allowed to give first-time members a discounted membership. There is a manual form for this which is supposed to be mailed in and then processed. This requires work on the front and the back end and a tournament is not ratable until it is processed. For NGC tournaments we have been collecting cash, making a personal PayPal donation, and then sending an email to the Treasurer, and to Charles Alden (Membership) about what we did. Charles has been flexible enough to return us an AGA ID within a few days without requiring the form, and the Treasurer I assume properly accounts for the money, but this is a Rube Goldberg solution that should be handled by the system.
- Complimentary memberships – members of an overseas organization are allowed to play with a complimentary membership. This situation also has to be documented and an AGA ID supplied by Membership before a tournament can be rated.

Proposal to Increase Sigma (σ) Expansion in the AGA Ratings System

Executive Summary

The value of α in the ratings code equates to the “time-decay” of the certainty of the rankings. Currently, it is set at $\alpha = 0.0005$. I propose doubling it, or changing it to a logistic function.

Background

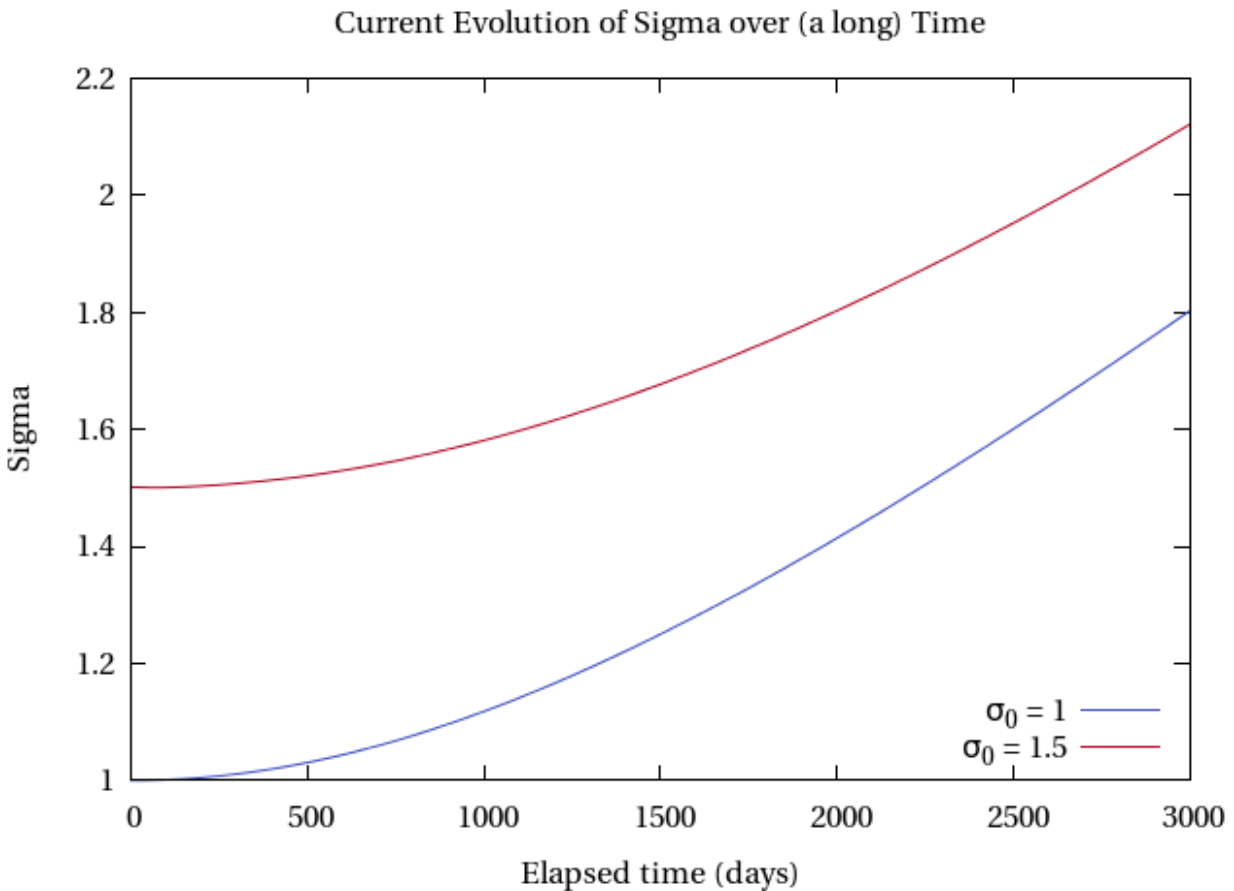
The AGA rating is based on a strong statistical footing. For a brief, digestible summary of the maths involved, please see here: <http://www.usgo.org/files/pdf/AGARatings-Math.pdf>, most notably section 4.3.

This system is sound and robust, and has proven itself workable and useful. However, one common critique of the system is that it is perceived as being too difficult to change your rank through regular play.

If AGA members think their ranks unchangeable, the number of people who self-promote at tournaments is possibly too high. These are subjective opinions, naturally, and there are many anecdotes about this: some players who go 3-1 at every monthly tournament for years without progress, some players who repeatedly repromote themselves in the US Open year after year. As a result, TDs have to make judgement calls about whether or not these promotions are viable. That’s not really their job -- that’s the job of the ratings system.

So what controls whether or not ranks change much with the addition of new information? The “sigma” parameter in the ratings algorithm represents our uncertainty about a person’s rank. When sigma is high, we’re more likely to make large adjustments to their rating with the addition of more information. When sigma is low, we’ll make smaller adjustments. It’s possible that players who think their ratings aren’t changing enough are perceiving that their sigma is very small. Ideally, our uncertainty about a players rank would increase as time passes, both because they could have gotten better or worse and because the composition of the rest of the player base changes over time. Someone playing in an AGA tournament for the first time in twenty years is facing a very different corpus of players than they might have earned their rating in!

So here’s how sigma changes with time in today’s ratings code:



This is also the graph shown as “Figure 2” in “The AGA Ratings System”, linked in the opening paragraph. I’d like to draw your attention to two salient features of the graph:

- First, the graph goes out 3000 days -- 8+ years.
- Second, the graph given shows the decay of certainty for two hypothetical values of σ , 1.0 and 1.5.

The current system has been in place since 2010, when Phil Waldron re-wrote the AGA ratings software to mimic Paul Matthews’ Accelrat software. Phil’s comment on the historical value of sigma is as follows: “Remember, of course, there’s no guarantee that the current sigma expansion parameter is optimal. The system mimics Paul Matthews’ system, but there’s no telling where that [value] came from.”

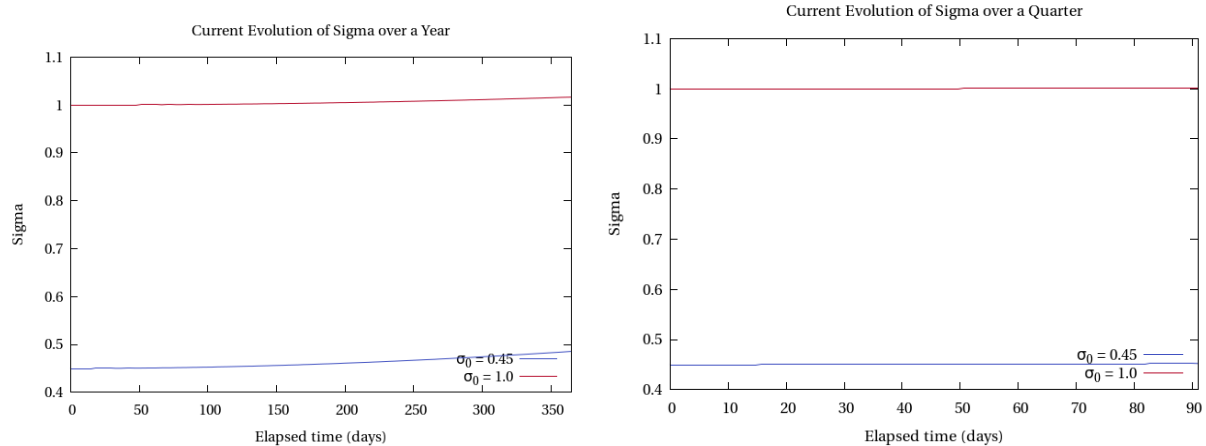
Consequences

In combination, there are two consequences of this particular behavior:

1. The rate of sigma expansion is **very slow**: if we’re reasonably sure about your rank to within one stone today, after a decade of no new data, we’ll only be slightly less sure -- we’ll think you have the same rank to within two stones.

2. σ of 1.0 and 1.5 are **not representative** of active members. The growth of σ for actual members is incredibly small: the **median sigma** among members who have been active in the last year is **0.45**.

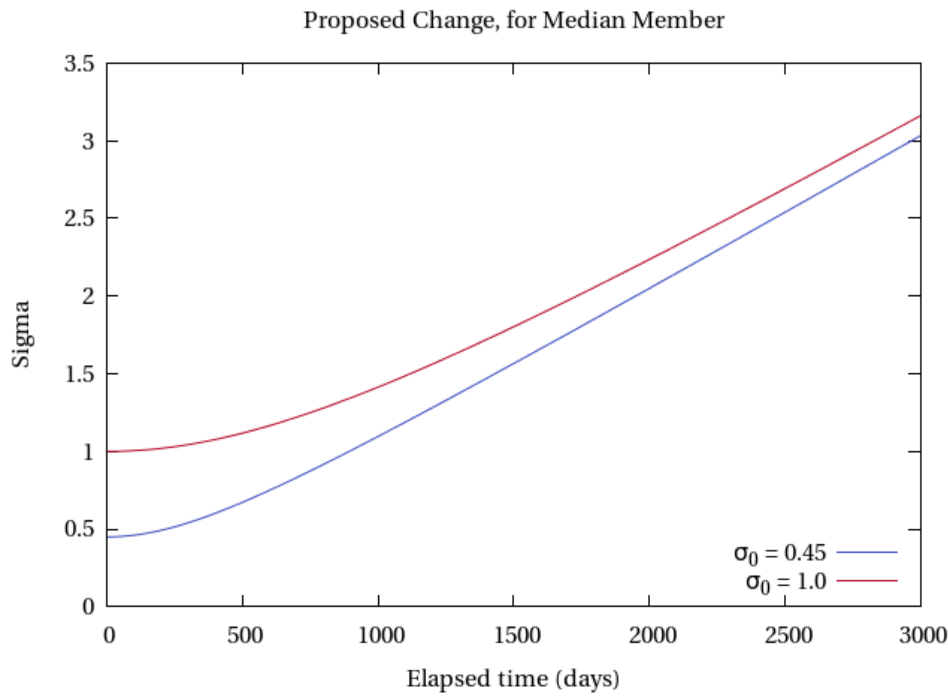
Taken together, this means that most players experience something very different: a time scale of 300 days, not 3000, and with much lower initial sigmas. For the consistent players (players who play rated games every hundred days), they're concerned with an even smaller part of this graph, the part between $t=0$ and $t=130$. In other words, even if I take half a year off between tournaments, this is how much change I could look forward to.



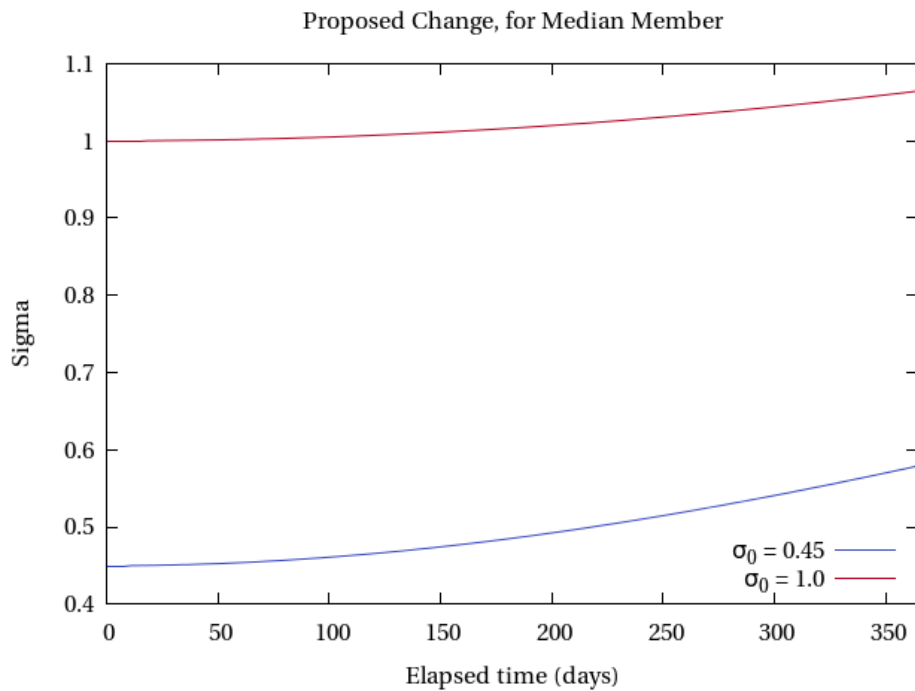
If these lines look linear, that's basically the problem. Considering also that the player who plays rated games every quarter will usually have their sigma decrease as they have additional tournament results, and we can see why people self promote so often: resetting their sigma is the only way they can see meaningful changes in their rating over time.

Proposal

Rather than change the system dramatically, or alter any of the underlying math, I propose merely doubling the constant (α) which controls the rate at which sigma expands. The value of α in the ratings code equates to the "time-decay" of the certainty of the rankings. Currently, it is set at $\alpha = 0.0005$. Doubling it to 0.001 will produce the following experience for the median member and the member with a sigma of 1.0.



And zoomed in to our 1-year view, here is the median member's experience with the change vs without the change.



Lastly, please consider that the steady expansion of σ is the ONLY way the passage of time is applied to ratings. There is no other mechanism that discounts older results: when a player's rating is recalculated in light of new results, the old ones are **not** discounted by any mechanism other than the existing uncertainty -- that is, sigma.

Alternatives

Changing to a different rating system that explicitly discounts older results

Alternate rating systems (Whole History Rating by Remi Coulum, TrueSkill, etc) provide explicit methods for discounting older results compared to more recent ones. Our current system does not.

Raising the constant even further

Why stop here? Instead of doubling, we could quadruple the constant to 0.002. This would produce a yearly growth like this for the median member, but have the consequence of long term expansion way past what we've usually seen.

Changing the sigma expansion function to logistic growth

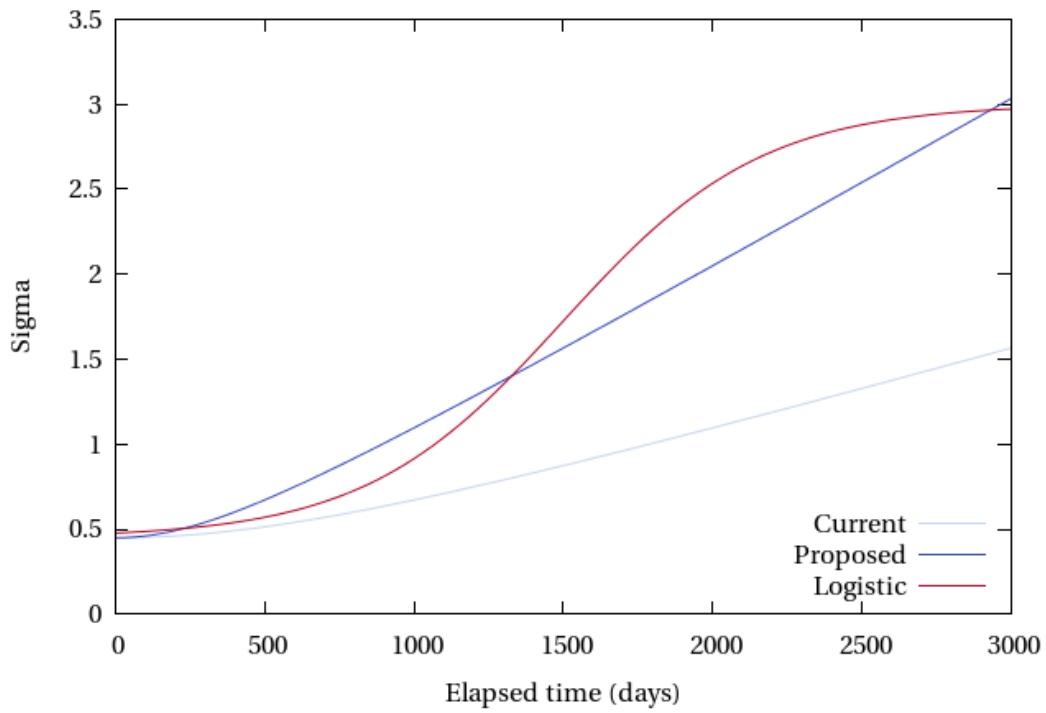
This is my favorite alternative.

To combat the tendency for this change to lead to large sigmas in players who are gone for a long time, we could also change the function for sigma expansion from it's current eventually-linear behavior to a logistic function, which will eventually plateau at some maximum value.

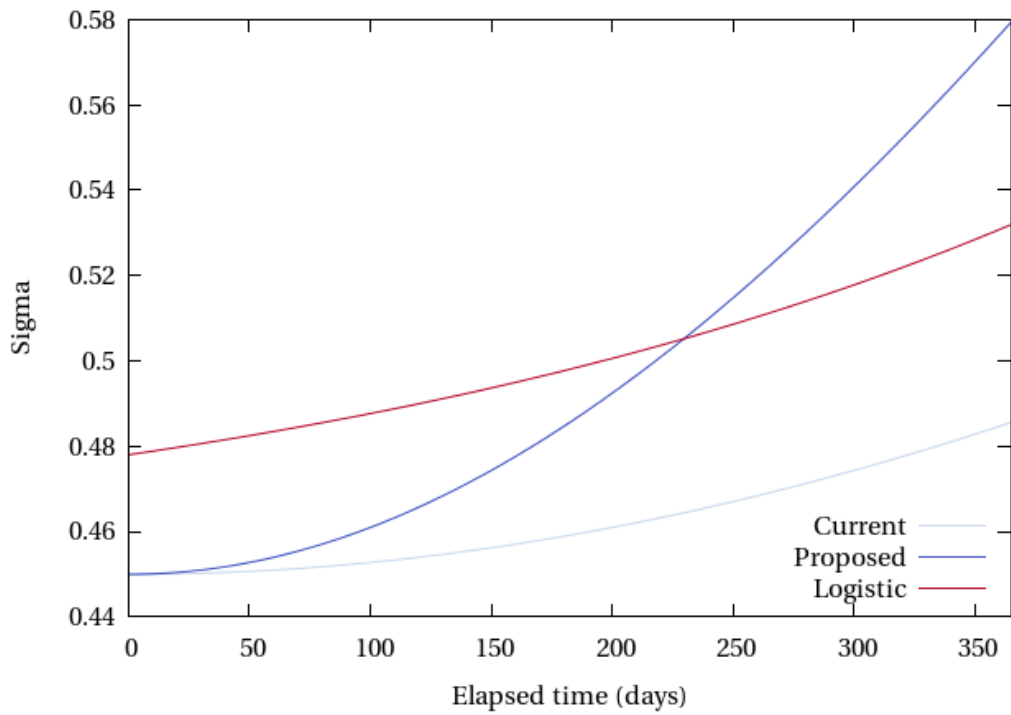
For instance, here are the curves of expansion for a logistic function which will eventually peak at a sigma of 3.0, with a peak expansion rate at approx. 5 years out.

$$g(x, \sigma_0) = \sigma_0 + \frac{(3-\sigma_0)}{(1 + e^{-.003*(x-1500)})}$$

Logistic Function vs Proposed Change, for Median Member



Logistic Function vs Proposed Change, for Median Member, One Year



Proposal to Update the Ratings Process

Summary

Allowing tournament games to be rated without 100% paid memberships will solve long-standing technical issues and enable various desired outcomes. While addendums to the proposal have been suggested, adding them does not have a clear benefit other than to mitigate a loss of membership.

A risk analysis was performed using data scraped from the agagd site (similar to the [presidents report](#), but focusing on total yearly players registered).

This proposal also has a plan for implementation, as well as with a plan for if things do go wrong and who will make those decisions ([Appendix C](#)).

Desired Outcomes

1. To better allocate volunteer staff time by reducing the number of complaint emails
2. To foster a more positive and trusting relationship with our club organizers and TD's
3. To increase membership satisfaction with their AGA rating and tournament experiences

Proposed Solution

To allow VP of Ratings to process submitted games without requiring 100% of participants to have a paid/active membership.

Important Considerations

This proposal is to be understood as the first step in an ongoing process for improvements. It should be integrated with future proposals which aim toward a unified long-term mission and vision for the organization. Implementation is to be handled by the VP of Ratings.

Background, current status, common complaints, and a detailed review of various people's perspectives are thoroughly described by Andrew Jackson in his document '[Ratings Process & Algorithm Update](#)'.

Additional Benefits of the Proposal 🌟

1. Passing this proposal also solves the "single-day" membership edge case!
2. This also solves the difficulty of submitting hardship memberships!
3. It also solves giving complimentary memberships for members of an overseas org.

In these cases, this can allow chapter organizers to use their discretion to submit ratings where membership is unpaid due to some special case.

Optional Addendums to the Proposal (Potential Risk of Complications)

- a. To allow for a marginal percentage of non-paid members to be included in the submission of tournament ratings, but to cap the amount allowed
- b. To block the visibility of ratings for unpaid members
- c. To add an asterisk to accounts that have a delinquent membership and not allowing them to attend future tournaments until they catch up on their dues.

In these three cases, we increase the likelihood for a delay in implementation, which could very well mean never implementing. Furthermore, technical solutions are easy to think of, but often much less easy to fully implement. Lastly, they will be more complicated to explain to our membership and TD's.

Risk Analysis of Proposal (Very Low Risk of Membership Loss)

- We can always reverse the proposal and doing so would be simple
- Data would suggest ([Appendix A](#)) that 95%+ of our membership would continue to pay dues. This conclusion is based on the assumption that many people sign up for a membership because of a tournament
 - 2 TD's and their tournament participants make up the top 25% of the total (Go Congress and the Seattle Go Center)
 - The next 25% or players come from only 4 TD's (National Go Center, Massachusetts Go Association, Cotsen Open, San Diego)
 - The next 25% of players (total now of 75%) come from 11 TD's
 - I find that it is only 40 TD's that account for 95% of all tournament participants
 - **In conclusion:** by examining the list of club codes, it seems to me that most (if not all) of **these TD's are dedicated AGA members who would continue to support the AGA** by enforcing AGA membership sign up and renewal for their tournament participants, even if it wasn't required.
 - Furthermore, it should be manageable to track compliance of these clubs.

Next Steps (Plans for Implementation)

NOTE: Corresponding VPs would take the executive action as they deem necessary to enact the proposal with the things below only to be used as guidance.

Notify membership via email and social media

Key points for the E-Journal team to communicate:

- This is a policy of “forgiveness” (maybe there is a better word) to help ease TD pain.
- This is built on trust in our organizers, but will be reversed if abused.
- Organizers will still need to ensure that players have an AGA ID before they can be rated.
- Ideas for Campaign name: “Tournament Oversight Forgiveness”, “Tournament Organizer Lenience”, “Chapter Trust Initiative”, any other ideas?

Update the website (mid to long term goal)

- Provide more clear guidance for organizers trying to run a tournament. Specifically, on how to look up and check the current status of an AGA member.
- Provide clear guidance on how to handle Single-Day, Hardship, and Complementary memberships to overseas dignitaries.
- Highlight the tools available (such as promotional-vouchers).
- Communicate a clear policy on self-promotion.
- I (Devin) have made a [fancy new facade to the website](#) as an example of how various things could be re-organized. (Actually approval and decisions about the website will be made by Chris Garlock and his team)

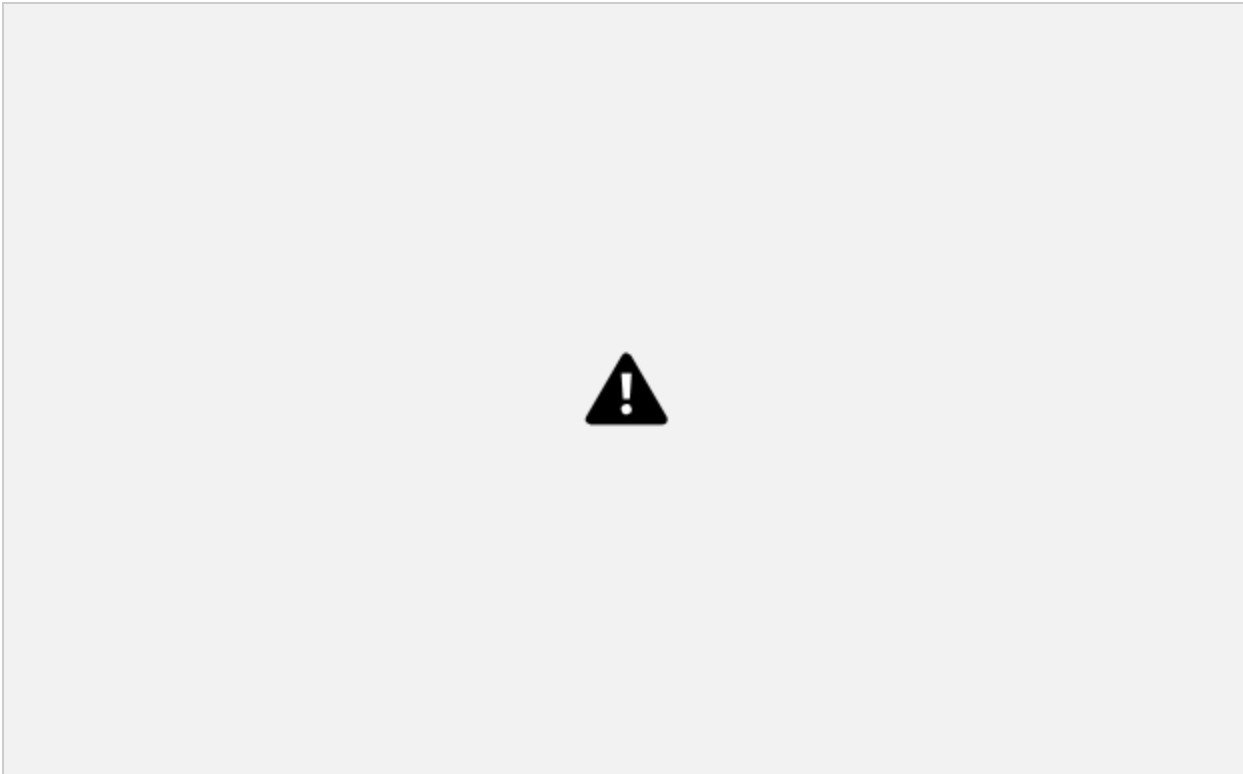
Create/finish additional supporting proposals

In general, the idea being to focus on the carrot, not the stick, when giving reasons for members to pay their AGA dues.

1. Add incentives for chapters to increase paid membership through a reallocation of funds back to the chapters for running tournaments.
(As mentioned in the [President's Report](#) section 3d, tasked to Gurujeet and Bob)
2. Direct the president, at his discretion, to spend up to \$2,000 to support restarting the NJ Open. (As mentioned in the [President's Report](#) section 4d)
3. Finalize [proposed changes](#) to the ratings sigma
4. Roll out the ranking system (I lack documentation)
5. Any others?

Appendix A

Data analysis on players in tournaments from 2017-2018



| Players | cong | seat | ngc | mga | cots | sand | bagp | goth | evan | tria | mdop | sccg | syra | boul | bost | dall | soca | aust | nova |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 2017 | 454 | 280 | 171 | 218 | 163 | 112 | 102 | 85 | 81 | 77 | 71 | | 48 | 55 | 66 | 47 | 76 | 33 | 42 |
| 2018 | 520 | 206 | 201 | 126 | 161 | 117 | 74 | 84 | 64 | 48 | 50 | 114 | 63 | 51 | 25 | 41 | | 42 | 22 |
| Grand Total | 974 | 486 | 372 | 344 | 324 | 229 | 176 | 169 | 145 | 125 | 121 | 114 | 111 | 106 | 91 | 88 | 76 | 75 | 64 |
| Sum of %'s | 18% | 27% | 34% | 41% | 47% | 51% | 54% | 57% | 60% | 62% | 65% | 67% | 69% | 71% | 72% | 74% | 75% | 77% | 78% |
| Count | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |

| davi | ston | nyc | nyig | phil | jujo | mvgc | orla | mass | sant | penn | ny | nc | colu | losa | verm | denv | caro | port | wash | sanm |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 26 | 60 | | | 53 | 53 | | 31 | | 22 | | | | | 40 | 23 | 11 | 30 | 6 | | |
| 36 | | 56 | 55 | | | 50 | 18 | 48 | 22 | 44 | 44 | 43 | 43 | | 10 | 20 | | 22 | 27 | 27 |
| 62 | 60 | 56 | 55 | 53 | 53 | 50 | 49 | 48 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 43 | 43 | 40 | 33 | 31 | 30 | 28 | 27 | 27 |
| 79% | 80% | 81% | 82% | 83% | 84% | 85% | 86% | 87% | 88% | 89% | 90% | 90% | 91% | 92% | 92% | 93% | 94% | 94% | 95% | 95% |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 |

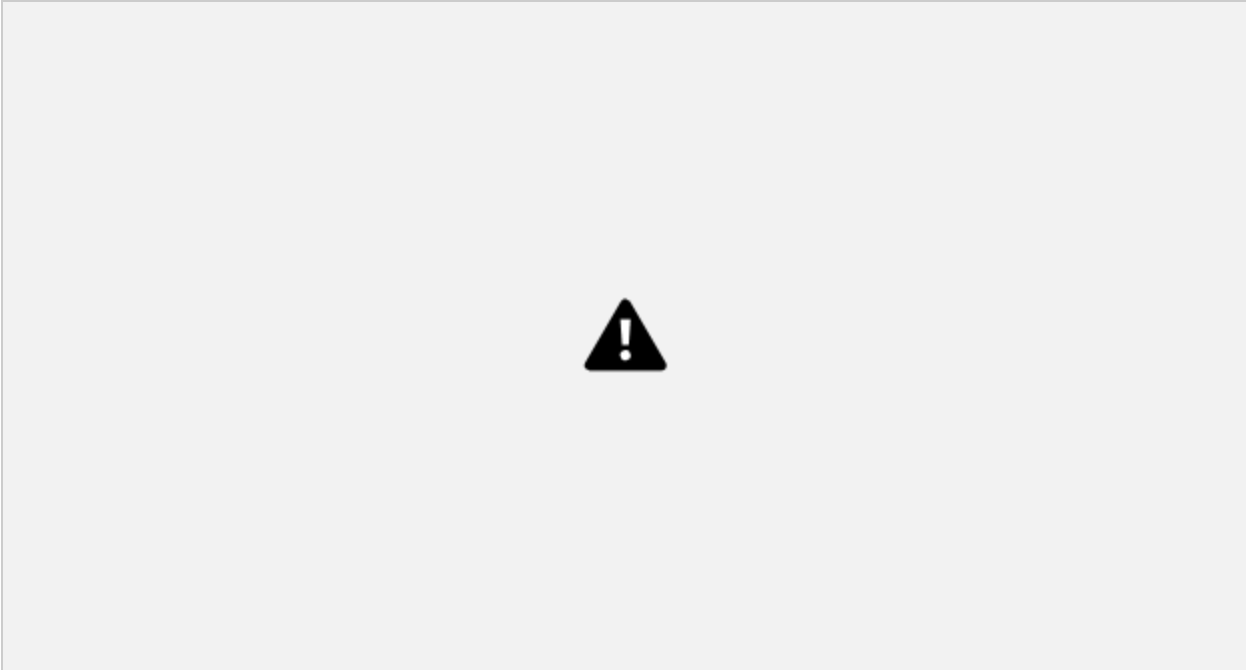
| safe | tole | slsh | roch | taco | erie | albu | iowa | scgt | dsgc | berk | kala | maui | ariz | desm | pasa | noak |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 27 | | 26 | 10 | | | 9 | 11 | 16 | 12 | 4 | | 8 | | | | 2 |
| | 26 | | 16 | 23 | 20 | 11 | 8 | | | 7 | 9 | | 7 | 6 | 3 | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 27 | 26 | 26 | 26 | 23 | 20 | 20 | 19 | 16 | 12 | 11 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 2 |
| 96% | 96% | 97% | 97% | 98% | 98% | 98% | 99% | 99% | 99% | 99% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 57 |

Appendix B

All data scraped from agagd.usgo.org

[Link for the interactive version of graph below](#)





Appendix C

Potential Issues

- a. We have a small number of organizers who are abusing the new policy.
- b. We have a medium amount of organizers trying their best, but “mistakenly” rating a high number of non-paid players.
- c. We have mass membership loss as people flagrantly rate their tournaments without asking anyone to pay their membership dues.

Potential Solutions

- a. VP of Ratings no longer rates that specific TD’s submissions without a fully paid roster.
- b. We look into implementing a technical solution to solve this ([mentioned above](#)).
- c. We simply send out another marketing campaign explaining to membership that our experiment didn’t work and we are going to revert to how things were previously.

Measuring Failure

The VP of Ratings will have the authority to decide if any additional solutions are needed and to implement them in a timely manner without further board approval.