

# ARA Event Observer Report

**Observer Name:** Erik Dylan Karhan

**Observer State of Residence:** New York, Riichi Nomi NYC

**Event Name:** Chicago Area Riichi Tournament 2024

**Event Location:** Hyatt Regency O'Hare Chicago, 9300 Bryn Mawr Avenue, Rosemont, Illinois, United States, 60018

**Event Date:** Sept 21-22, 2024

**Number of Participants:**

104

**Event Schedule Summary:** *(Days played, number of rounds, finalist rounds, time per round, etc.)*

2 Days, 8 hanchan scramble, 2 hanchan finals. Hanchans are 75 minutes long, starting at 9am each day with a 90 minute break for lunch at noon.

**Names of Officials/Judges:**

Tournament Organizer - Takahiro Sakurai

Head Judge - Aldwin Gordula

Judge - Koichi Nakashima

Judge - Christian Lee Stout

Staff - Amie Talbert

Sub 1 - Merle Ferrante

Sub 2 - Sue Zuege

Sub 3 - Mark Oyos

**Communication to Players:** *(How were announcements, standings, pairings etc. communicated to players during the event?)*

The introductory communications were given before hanchan one and covered basic tournament information, who the staff were, who the observer was, and any questions players had.

Supplemental information was provided between rounds as situations arose. The round pairings were given both in an online spreadsheet as well as on papers posted around the tournament room. Before the final hanchan of day 2, announcements about other tournaments and events were given, and after the finals an awards ceremony was held.

**Prizes:**

Plaques were given for 5-8th place, trophies for 1-4, and two plaques were also given for the player with the highest individual hanchan score and the player with no fourths. A custom sewn junkmat bag was awarded to first place.

**Catering:**

Water was provided on site, but all food was left to the participants. The hotel offered breakfast and lunch options, and there were fast food restaurants in the general vicinity. Players were given enough time to walk to the nearby mall for food, but most “fancy” meals were a few miles away.

**Tournament Atmosphere:**

The tournament room was well lit, and spirits were high. The tournament seemed to be received very well, with many players saying they found it very fun and the people who wished to play seriously enjoying the competition as well. The staff was never rude, and they made an effort to make sure the experience was welcoming to beginners. Freeplay afterwards was also enjoyable. Chombo situations did cause some tension but that is to be expected of any tournament.

**Complaints and Issues:**

Players were left anonymous for the following comments.

Players complained that the air conditioning was too cold, or too warm. It was shifted throughout the tournament to try and adjust conditions.

One player complained that another player should not have been allowed to make an announcement between hanchans regarding players’ responsibilities and telling us to call over judges. The announcement was somewhat impromptu, with some organizers not knowing it was going to happen. However, the message seemed positive, and aimed to make sure people were asking when they needed clarification rather than turtling up and letting problems go on. In the future, it would probably be best to have a tournament official make any such announcements.

Another player reported that they were too hesitant to call over a judge when they observed a player using their phone for an extended length of time during a hanchan, because they felt that the judges saw the action but did not act to penalize or correct it. They and several others felt that judges should have adhered to WRC standards more closely rather than leaving many decisions to personal discretion. The exact scenarios were not specified.

Other players felt that certain judges did not understand rulings well enough and that situations that occurred could have been corrected in less convoluted ways. In multiple cases, a chombo was given midway into the next hand because the judges had to deliberate on the case. This caused players to get shaken and upset. Such calls should be made during the hand where the chombo has occurred, or at the very least between hands to be less disruptive.

The last complaint had to do with scheduling. Unfortunately both days had 20-30 minute delays due to late players. Players felt that it would be better to start the hanchans on time and have tables with late players be given a grace time to complete their hanchans, similar to how NAO was run. Instead, the entire room waited. A few players also wished that the 8th hanchan had been held before lunch so that players could choose to leave for the day rather than be forced to come back to the venue for one final game.

**Observer Personal Summary:**

The event was run relatively smoothly, with information readily available for all participants. The equipment was completely uniform, with identical sets, mats, and tables available for all players. Judge calls could have been handled more smoothly. Many cases ended with judges having to consult each other and disagreeing, leading to delays and worrying players. However, the hanchans were timed well, and despite delays the gaps between hanchans did not feel overly long. With tweaks to the judge training, handling of late players, and enforcing rulings more uniformly, the event could easily be perfected. Overall, an enjoyable weekend in an easy to get to venue.