

ARA Event Observer Report

Observer Name: Max Suddendorf

Observer State of Residence: New York

Event Name: Great Lakes Riichi Open

Event Location: Saline, MI

Event Date: October 19-20, 2024

Number of Participants: 60

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

2 Day Event

5 Hanchan Day 1

2 Hanchan Day 2 then cut to top 4 who played 2 more rounds untimed

2 timed Hanchan Post cut

75 minute rounds with no additional hands

Names of Officials/Judges:

Steve Augustin - Head Organizer

Brian Tseng - Head Judge

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

Standings and Pairings were in a google sheet that was pinned in the discord. Pairings were also printed and accessible at individual places in the venue.

Announcements were handled individually between rounds or at the start of days.

Prizes:

There were prizes down to top 8 who received ARA invitational points. There were also cash prizes for top 4. Lastly there were raffle prizes distributed to anyone outside of top 4 and everyone got a mahjong tile crochet bag knitted by a tournament participant and his wife.

Catering:

Bagels and Coffee were provided in the morning and water, coffee, and tea were available through the day. Canned soda and energy drinks were available for purchase from the venue.

Tournament Atmosphere:

The tournament atmosphere was a bit cramped but not so bad as to impede movement. It also had ambient noise which was unavoidable due to being held in the backroom of an open game store. Local players and staff kept a warm and friendly atmosphere throughout and made participation in both the tournament and post tournament events enjoyable.

Complaints and Issues:

No direct complaints or feedback were issued to the observer but there was a time that an individual player took it upon themselves to regulate the level of noise from other players after a few similar warnings from the staff. There was also briefly a children's birthday party that the venue had double booked during day 2 but it was resolved without major issue. Lastly the water in the complex went out rendering the bathrooms useless in the early games of day 1, but the staff was quick to communicate where working bathrooms could be found.

One finalist lamented that it was not easy to focus playing in the same space as everyone else especially once everyone was crowded around the table at a respectful but still noticeable distance.

Observer Personal Summary:

Personally I thought it was a great first tournament. The schedule did run more behind than it needed to due to some inexperience with post round data entry/resets and aggressive scheduling but not so much that it would cause travel issues. The staff was very communicative and the locals made the event enjoyable to attend and also had plenty of post tournament recommendations for food and drinks.

The awards ceremony could have been planned better and taken less time, but that was due to the sheer number of booby prizes available to be given.

The game store venue had some issues with ambient noise but also provided a great place to exist after finishing games and between rounds.

This was also the first tournament in the ARA qualification cycle (Toronto also did this) that had the games post cut count toward placement for top 8 after isolating top 4 in order to have a finals. This allowed for serious games to be played for as much of day 2 as possible and seemed to be received positively. It did negatively impact a few people but I did not hear anything from them regarding the format and the general mood in the room for the final 2 games was still as competitive as it was prior to the top 4 cut being made which to me is a success in incentivizing players to play the full event.