

ARA Observer Report

Observer: Nathanael Kozinski (Illinois)
Event: DC Riichi Open 2024
Location: Marriott Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C.
Date: Apr 6, 2024 - Apr 7, 2024
Players: 112 (2 DNF)

Event Information Sources

Pre-tourney and post-tourney information was shared with entrants via email and the DC Riichi discord server.

Registration, pairings, and standings were hosted on the DC Riichi website <https://dcriichimahjong.com/2024-open/>.

Event Schedule Summary

Two days, six rounds (5 + 1) of hanchan (75+0) followed by cut to top 16. Semifinalists reset points and played two hanchan, where the top from each table advanced to final. Finalists reset points and played two hanchan.

Officials/Referees

Harrison Corp (Head Judge)
Dustin Fries
Tamas Erdos
Kyle Pittleman

All officials were non-playing in accordance with US tournament standards.

Communication

For major announcements, players congregated in the larger of two playing rooms where staff communicated with aid of a microphone. Round start/end was synced between the two rooms and marked with a gong. Round time was displayed on a projector, and various time warnings were announced throughout each round. Round-by-round standings and pairings (including seat position) were posted on the website.

Prizes

Trophies were awarded to the top 4, medals for placing 5-16, and every participant received a goodie bag of miscellaneous items (stickers, pins, dice, compass, mug, etc.) with higher placing entrants receiving extra items.

Catering

Water dispensers were provided in both playing rooms. Food was not provided, but organizers prepared a list of available options within 15 minutes' walking distance and provided ample time to return to the venue.

Tournament Atmosphere

A variety of table dynamics were present as a result of a healthy mix of veteran players and first time tournament participants, but overall the atmosphere was competitive and fun.

Complaints or Issues Observed

In the first round, the start was slightly unsynchronized between the two playing rooms. This was corrected, and all subsequent round starts were properly synced.

Certain places in the larger playing hall had a poor view of the projected round timer. Organizers could not implement an immediate fix but noted the issue for future tournaments.

Several players noted instances of players not vocalizing calls (chii, pon, tsumo, ron) loudly enough, or not vocalizing them at all.

A player reported hearing of an incident where unnecessarily pointed remarks during a hanchan potentially caused discomfort to another person at that table.

A player described feeling overly pressured to play a non-standard riichi variant during free play.

Observer's Personal Summary

I was very excited at the prospect of attending the 2024 DC Open, which promised a strong field of competition and featured a venue close to the U.S. Capitol. The tournament managed to eclipse my expectations, in no small part due to the hard work of the DC Riichi staff! I must commend everyone who played a part in the preparation, organization, and logistical management of such a large event--surely a challenge as the player count ended up over three times that of their previously hosted Open. One particularly strong point was responsive and detailed staff communication with regards to transportation and lodging concerns.

The venue itself met the needs of the large playing field, and I felt comfortable with the quality of all of the sets and mats that I used over the course of the event. Judge calls and scoring were handled in a prompt and professional manner. The rousing introductions at the start of each round were an amusing way to focus the excitement in the room, although I was a bit concerned for the hearing of the players closest to the speakers! That energy grew into the party atmosphere that enveloped free play after the first day's hanchan had completed.

The semifinals and finals were strategically located in the smaller playing hall, separate from any potential distractions that could be caused by the second day's free play in the larger room. This more intimate setting also created an incredible atmosphere for a marvelously tense battle in the final hanchan. With time a factor due to a number of renchan, the four competitors displayed impressive sportsmanship in increasing their pace of play to maximize the number of hands played.

Overall, the event was well run, and I had an amazing time competing and connecting with players from all over the US. I hope to be able to visit DC again for a future tournament!