

ARA Event Observer Report

Observer Name: Jeff Tran

Observer State of Residence: California

Event Name: Riichi Mahjong Columbus Open 2024

Event Location: Greater Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, OH

Event Date: 5/11/24-5/12/24

Number of Participants: 56

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

Scramble:

Seven rounds, 75-minute games, 15 minutes between rounds. Seats were determined by tournament software.

Day 1: Two games, one hour lunch, three games

Day 2: Two games

Semifinals:

The top eight from scramble were split into two tables to play one set of two 75-minute games. Top two finishers from each table advanced. Seats were determined by direct wind tile draw at table and two dice rolls before each game.

Finals:

One set of two untimed games. Seats were determined by direct wind tile draw at table and two dice rolls before each game.

5th-8th place:

One set of two untimed games run simultaneously with the finals. Seats were determined by direct wind tile draw at table and two dice rolls before each game.

Names of Officials/Judges:

Tournament Organizer: Kathy Horton

Head Judge: Kathy Horton

Judge: John Boucher

Judge: Brandon Shull

Judge: Terra Longadelphier

Judge: M Kanke

Judge: Erica Jung

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

General announcements were given between rounds by the TO/HJ.

Pairings and the round timer were displayed on a TV at the judges' table. The TO/HJ also verbally announced when there were 30, 20, and 10 minutes remaining.

Standings were available online for anyone to see. They were updated live as tables completed except for round 7, when they were not updated until all tables were completed.

Prizes:

1st-3rd place: Trophies

4th-8th place: Medals

All entrants were provided three tickets to enter raffles for various door prizes.

Catering:

Bottled water

Tournament Atmosphere:

Staff and players were organized and friendly. The tournament room was spacious and comfortable with padded chairs supplied by the convention center.

Complaints and Issues:

Start of tournament: The first round started about 10 minutes late because the tables needed to be repaired.

Untimed finals games: The finals lasted well over three hours because the games were untimed. This pushed the end of the tournament to about 9:30pm. The TO/HJ made a note to change this for next year.

Compasses: Some tables had AMOS compasses available for use. Players at the other tables either used their all-last sheets as compasses or eschewed using one entirely. For consistency in the player experience, all tables should have the same equipment available.

Participant Feedback Items:

- The 1P per minute time penalty for needing to use the bathroom during a game was overly punitive. Participant had gone to the restroom before the third game (first after lunch Saturday) and felt the need to go again midway through the game but had to wait until the end so that they would not be penalized.
- The tournament was overly strict with the following game's start times during the scramble. With the schedule already delayed, an extra minute or two for players to finish shuffling tiles and building walls would have been reasonable. Their table was still building walls when the timer started for one of their games.
- The breaks between rounds could have been longer for bathroom runs. If a table is still missing a player when the tables are assigned, staff should sit down in the empty chair to help shuffle tiles and build walls.
- An unnamed player in their game started playing noticeably slower once they were in first place. They did not know what players should do in this situation. This observer explained that they should call a judge over to monitor the pace of play and take any actions as necessary.

- The start time of the first game for each day should be consistent. If a TO chooses to use a different time on the second day for schedule reasons, they should remind players of this multiple times on the first day.
- Because 5th-8th place got the same amount of ARA qualification points, the extra set was unnecessary to play. The preference was to take the raw scores from the semifinals for placement and release the players to free play.

Observer Personal Summary:

The tournament venue was two meeting rooms in the Greater Columbus Convention Center, separated by a retractable wall. At 56 entrants, all tournament rounds were able to be held in one room with the second room being used as a break room. No food was provided, but there was no shortage of options available within walking distance for coffee/snacks/meals.

There was some schedule drift on each day, but the TO/HJ tried to keep it to a minimum by being stricter with time penalties. There were a few complaints about this (see above), but to this observer's knowledge, no actual time penalties were applied.

Spectators were allowed to watch the semifinals and finals, provided they remained quiet and did not react to the hands/discards that they could see. No problems were reported.

No side events were run after the end of the scramble. The second tournament room was repurposed for free play, leaving the main room with only the tables for the semifinals and finals. Players did not have an issue with a lack of organized games and were able to form their own tables or engage in other activities.

Chatter from free play was clearly audible through the dividing wall, but this observer assumes that it was not an issue for the judges/players because no staff member asked that room to quiet down.

All in all, the tournament was well run, and the players seemed to enjoy themselves.