

# ARA Event Observer Report

**Observer Name:** Oliver Krekeler

**Observer State of Residence:** Ohio

**Event Name:** Chicago Area Riichi Tournament

**Event Location:** Rosemont, IL.

**Event Date:** September 20-21, 2025

**Number of Participants:** 120

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

The tournament was scheduled for 9:00 AM Central both days of the tournament; everyone played at least 9 hanchans, but after the first 7, the top 8 were locked in and divided into 2 groups to each play a 2-hanchan set, with the top 2 from each table advancing to the finals. The finals were a single, untimed hanchan with a 50% point carryover; all other rounds were 75+0 minutes with at least 30 minutes in-between rounds.

**Names of Officials/Judges:** Aldwin Gordula (Tournament Organizer/Judge), Takahiro Sakurai (Head Judge), Nathanael Kozinski (Judge), Christian Stout (Judge), Arnold Talbert (staff), Sue Zuege (staff), Annabelle (staff/substitute), Jay Sarrol (staff/substitute), Momo (staff), Merle Ferrante (substitute), Francisco Gallardo (substitute), Doria Voorhees (substitute), J-How (substitute)

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

Announcements were vocally announced to all players, mostly in between hanchans and occasionally on discord; standings were made available via an online spreadsheet; and pairings were available via an online spreadsheet or on paper print outs taped onto various walls and counters.

**Prizes:**

There were cash prizes for the top 4 placements, a custom junk mat for 1<sup>st</sup> place, trophies for places 5<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>, and custom compasses for places 1-16. In addition, M-league pins were raffled away during

the awards ceremony; tickets were awarded in hanchan 9 at the rate of 3 for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2 for 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 1 for 3<sup>rd</sup> place in hanchan 9, with an extra ticket being awarded per yakuman won by a participant.

### **Catering:**

The venue had a restaurant, and there were several dining options nearby within walking distance, though some participants noted that there were somewhat limited options near the venue.

### **Tournament Atmosphere:**

The tournament was held in two rooms, both of which had staff, a clock, and started games at the same time. The main tournament room was a little cold at the start of day 1, and there were a few areas by the walls that were a little dark, but not to the point that any tiles were unreadable. Participants were generally friendly and welcoming, while staff were respectful. Post-tournament free play was held both tournament nights in addition to the night before day 1; the hotel turned off the air conditioning after midnight, but free play was otherwise an enjoyable experience.

### **Complaints and Issues:**

There was a microphone and speaker that were not used during announcements; some players complained that this made it difficult to hear announcements for players seated farther away from the speakers.

During day 2, there were enough drops that the tournament had to be reduced by 1 table; this caused issues with the standings spreadsheet that made it difficult to determine where you and everyone else was.

Hanchan 9 started before the standings from hanchan 8 were put in, leaving everyone with incomplete information, which multiple participants found unacceptable. Around 20 minutes into hanchan 9, the standings were updated, the clock was paused, and participants were permitted to look up the standings on their phone; some participants were concerned that giving everyone an excuse to use their phone during the tournament could result in some people sharing information with others.

### **Observer Personal Summary:**

It's uncommon for tournaments in the US to use oka or M-league rules, so CART was a nice departure from the norm. Extending the time between hands to 30 minutes meant day 1 was almost entirely on time, but day 2 did fall behind schedule at some points. The equipment was identical across all tables, apart from the finals, which were held on an auto table instead. Participants were permitted to watch the finals in-person if they were quiet; I heard no complaints about this arrangement. It was chilly in the morning and hot during the night, but that's largely outside of the Organizer's control. While the top 8 cut was very small for the number of players, I think it still worked well enough because everyone was given 2 hanchans to compete for the top 16 medals/compass or the top 30 qualification points. Overall, I really enjoyed CART 2025, and I hear most others did as well.