

# ARA Event Observer Report

**Observer Name:**

Edward Zeng

**Observer State of Residence:**

Pennsylvania

**Event Name:**

Vancouver Riichi Open 2026

**Event Location:**

The Great Hall, AMS Student Nest, 6133 University Blvd, Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z1

**Event Date:**

July 18-19, 2026

**Number of Participants:**

52 (5 players dropped after day 1)

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

2 Days, 6 hanchan scramble followed by a top 8 cut with 50% point carryover.

Only the top 8 played Games 7 and 8.

Game 7 (Playoff Game 1) will be played by the top 8 with seating as ([1, 4, 5, 8], [2, 3, 6, 7]).

Game 8 (Playoff Game 2) will be played by the top 8 with seating as ([1, 3, 5, 7], [2, 4, 6, 8]).

90+0 time limit.

WRC 2025 Ruleset with Red Fives, 30/10 Uma, and Nagashi Mangan.

**Names of Officials/Judges:**

Cyrus F (TO), Zihao H (Head Judge), James P (Judge), Anthony (Sub/Helper), Howard (Sub/Helper), Tony (Sub/Helper)

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

Announcements were very minimal and did not include rule clarifications. On Day 1, the microphone volume was not sufficient for the entire room, resulting in some players missing announcements. Discord announcements were not very clear and did not ping everyone. By Day 2, announcements were much clearer, the microphone volume was improved, and games were mostly started after all tables were confirmed to be ready.

**Prizes:**

300/150/100/50 CAD for 1st-4th place, along with a certificate.

**Catering:**

There was water at the venue. There were many food options within walking distance on campus.

**Tournament Atmosphere:**

The tournament was held in a large conference room that was very spacious, giving players plenty of space throughout the event. Overall the venue was comfortable and not overcrowded. One observation was that there was significantly more table talk than is typically expected during tournament play. Some tables included several newer players who frequently chatted during games, and judges generally did not intervene to remind players to keep table conversation to a minimum.

**Complaints and Issues:**

Day 1 began with tournament setup starting around 9:40 AM. There were no side tables or side chairs available for players to place point trays on. Three players arrived at approximately 10:40 AM after the scheduled start time but did not receive late penalties. The first hanchan began at approximately 10:44 AM.

The start of Hanchan 1 was very disorganized. The round began after only a countdown without first confirming that every table had completed wall building and was ready to begin. The countdown was quiet, and announcements were minimal. Furthermore, a timer was not displayed in the beginning, and only a clock. The judges said something along the lines of "We will start at 10:46", rather than displaying a countdown of 90 minutes. This was immediately brought up by the observer and fixed.

Several judging and procedural issues occurred during Day 1. In one hand, the dealer discarded before the north player had drawn their 13th tile. The dealer then stopped the north player from drawing, and a judge initially ruled that the north player had committed a chombo. The hand was reshuffled before the judge later returned, corrected the ruling, removed the chombo, and instead issued the dealer a warning.

At another table, during south four, one player declared riichi and at ryuukyoku declared no-ten. The judge ruled that players needed to give tenpai money for the hand and the game almost ended because the dealer was no-ten. Afterwards the judge came back and corrected the ruling and asked for the tenpai money to be returned, and south four was re-done.

Judges were frequently observed standing very close to active tables, which may have made some players uncomfortable.

In another situation, the tournament organizer observed a player declaring riichi incorrectly. Rather than waiting for the players to call for a judge, the organizer intervened immediately after another player declared ron and ruled the action a chombo. While the ruling itself may have been correct, proactively intervening in an ongoing hand rather than responding to a "judge" call from players after the hand is over is a debate for passive vs active judging.

Tournament logistics were inconsistent throughout Day 1. No junk mats were used, and point sticks were stored in trays underneath the tables. The tables themselves were slippery, making tile handling less comfortable. One table consisted of a mahjong table placed on top of another table, making it noticeably unstable. The magnetic tiles were also difficult to use, and frequently collapsed sideways. Table numbers were not clearly displayed, making it harder for players to locate their assigned seats. Score reporting procedures were inconsistent, with one judge

instructing players to sign score sheets before verifying scores while another judge personally recounted every player's point sticks before allowing score sheets to be confirmed. Scores were also not recorded using a standardized format.

Also, one player was initially provided with a yaku reference sheet (with definitions of yakus and how to count fu, the same sheet that club uses, but is not allowed under WRC rules) by one staff member, but the head judge later took it away and gave them a yaku list sheet (which is allowed under WRC rules).

The start of Hanchan 2 consisted only of a verbal "OK, start" without a countdown. Lunch scheduling was also quite tight. The previous hanchan finished at approximately 2:25 PM, with lunch ending at 3:05 PM, leaving players roughly 40 minutes for lunch, which was difficult for many players to manage.

For Hanchan 3, the 3:10 PM start time was announced at approximately 3:00 PM, but the announcement was not loud enough for the entire room. As a result, several tables did not begin play until two to three minutes after the official timer had already started.

Penalties for late arrivals were applied inconsistently. Players arriving late after lunch were penalized beginning immediately at 3:10 PM on a per-minute basis, while the players who arrived significantly late for the first hanchan received no penalties (this was later reverted- see below). The head judge also took pictures of players that were late before letting them in instead of writing down names. Furthermore, during the middle of the third hanchan, the head judge interrupted hands to confirm the players that were late to the hanchan to write down the penalty.

On a different note, there was an attempted schedule change about 2-3 days before the tournament to start Day 2 an hour earlier for some players to watch the world cup. This made many players displeased as this would disturb their travel plans (many Seattle players had chosen to drive up in the mornings). This schedule change was announced to be reverted at the end of Day 1, where each player exiting the venue from Hanchan 4 was told about the reversion.

After much feedback from players after Day 1, Day 2 ran significantly smoother. Games were started only after all tables were confirmed to be ready, announcements were loud enough for the entire room to hear, and penalties assessed for players arriving late to Hanchan 3 on Day 1 were reverted before Hanchan 5. There was one delay before Hanchan 5 after it was discovered that six red fives had accidentally been included in one set of tiles. For hanchan 6, the head judge started the game before all tables had completed building their walls, despite the players' pushback. Those tables were instead given extra time. Finally, there were no announcements made before hanchans, as the staff rushed to get games started exactly on time. This meant that announcements for future tournaments were done before Hanchan 7, after most of the players had left. Announcement of the ARA observer was also only properly done at the beginning of Hanchan 5.

### **Observer Personal Summary:**

The tournament organization improved substantially between the first and second days. Day 1 was a mess, with many participants coming up to me for many repetitive complaints. The biggest problem was not making clear announcements before hanchans, making sure every table was ready, and not delaying the start time for Hanchan 3 to account for earlier delays. But, the staff responded to the feedback from day 1 very well and many of the concerns were addressed during

day 2, demonstrating the staff's receptiveness to feedback and willingness to make on the spot adjustments during the event.

I suggest that the organizers should add an "announcements" time before the first hanchan begins where everyone should be seated. This time should be used to check how many "new" tournament players there are, review the rules, introduce the format and the ARA observer, and emphasize that if there is ever a situation that players are unsure of the ruling, that they should call the judge, and that the head judge can always be escalated too if the judge call was unsatisfactory.

Overall, while Day 1 felt somewhat disorganized and inconsistent in both logistics and judging procedures, Day 2 ran much more smoothly. Future events would benefit from more standardized judging procedures, more practice for clearer communication before each hanchan, more consistent enforcement of tournament policies, and improved equipment and table setup. The spacious venue provided a comfortable playing environment, and with improvements to organization and consistency, the tournament has a strong foundation for future tournaments.