

# ARA Event Observer Report

**Observer Name:** Max Inman

**Observer State of Residence:** Washington, D.C.

**Event Name:** Charm City Riichi Open 2026

**Event Location:** Omnihedral, 8600 Foundry St, Savage, MD

**Event Date:** 6/20/2026 - 6/21/2026

**Number of Participants:** 56

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

10 total 75+0 timed hanchans over 2 days with a top 4 cut after 8 hanchans. Pairings were all scrambled except for the top 4 cut. Top 4 played for positions 1-4 in a 2-game set while other players continued the scramble for all other positions; tournament scores were reset to 0 for the final top 4 table.

Day 1 – Sunday, June 20th

|               |                            |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| 8:30 – 9:15   | Sign-in / Table Assignment |
| 9:15 – 9:45   | Opening Ceremony           |
| 9:45 – 11:15  | Hanchan 1                  |
| 11:15 – 12:45 | Hanchan 2                  |
| 12:45 – 2:00  | Lunch                      |
| 2:00 – 3:30   | Hanchan 3                  |
| 3:30 – 5:00   | Hanchan 4                  |
| 5:00 – 6:30   | Hanchan 5                  |
| until 10pm    | Free Play                  |

Day 2 – Sunday, June 21st

| Time          | Activity                   |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| 9:00 – 9:45   | Sign-in / Table Assignment |
| 9:45 – 11:15  | Hanchan 6                  |
| 11:15 – 12:45 | Hanchan 7                  |

12:45 – 2:00    Lunch  
2:00 – 3:30    Hanchan 8  
3:30 – 5:00    Hanchan 9 (and Top 4 Round 1)  
5:00 – 6:30    Hanchan 10 (and Top 4 Round 2)  
around 7pm    Closing Ceremony

**Names of Officials/Judges:**

Tournament Organizer: Sean Pines (NKWDD)

Head Judge: Corak (EBDAE)

Judges: Emma S (NDDQP), fionnagán Madison (EG9Q9)

Substitute Players: Alisha De La Cruz (NM8PP), Anneliese Lain (E9WLM), Ava (NL77E)

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

Announcements were made to players in person at the tournament and through Discord. The Discord link was sent to players twice prior to the tournament through email along with other important event information.

Pairings and standings were communicated through a [Google Script](#) also used at DC Open 2026 and a previous 1-day event run by Charm city. A QR code linking to the site and the schedule were also printed on the back of players' badges received at check-in Friday night or Saturday morning.

The organizers also gave a presentation during opening announcements highlighting rules and etiquette for tournament play as well as logistics for the event.

**Prizes:**

First place: \$300

Second place: \$240

Third place: \$160

Fourth place: \$100

**Catering:** Players had the option to join a group order for pizza for lunch both days (cheese or pepperoni) at \$3 a slice. Water bottles were available to players at no cost. Filtered water was also available to players from the fridge in the back of the upstairs of the game store, and other drinks were available for purchase from the game store.

Outside of the organizer-provided options, there were cafes immediately in the Savage Mill complex offering pastries, sandwiches, and drinks. There was also a sports bar and grill in the complex. On Day 1, there was a bluegrass festival taking place at the mill that brought food trucks with additional

options. Players also had time to drive to nearby options, but were strongly encouraged not to on Day 1 due to limited parking availability from said festival.

### **Tournament Atmosphere:**

The tournament overall had a very friendly yet competitive atmosphere. Roughly half of the participants I would say were experienced tournament goers, with everyone else generally being local or players who play tournaments here and there. Due to CCR running a 1 day event earlier this year, there were very few players for whom it was their very 1st event. The full scramble format with top cut in the smaller field also led to several dramatic matchups, particularly as the fight to make the top 4 cut narrowed.

I did not hear any major complaints about slow or ostensibly weak play, but a couple players were slower at building walls and general play. I think lower penalties and a well-executed opening presentation on tournament rules and etiquette aided in lowering newer players' anxiety. Extra time was offered when chombos occurred, but regardless of this many games finished before the timer.

Free play was typically lively, but no organized side events were offered.

### **Complaints and Issues:**

Many players commented that the room was too hot/clammy. The tournament took place in the basement of a games store, leading to parts of the room getting fairly warm during tournament play, particularly on Day 1 when it was hotter outside. Despite organizers' best efforts running electric fans to cool the problem areas, some spots in the room were unavoidably hot throughout the weekend.

Other players also noted that the room was somewhat cramped, and one player noted potential accessibility issues with the venue. One side exited to outside stairs leading to the games store's main floor and the larger Mill complex, while the other side exited to an accessible parking space and loading zone surrounded by a significant incline to access the rest of the complex. The organizers have informed me they had a plan to dedicate staff to assist with any accessibility issues if such issues had arisen.

One player complained about the bathrooms, although multiple other players noted they were glad there was more than 1 bathroom. There was only 1 single-seater bathroom in the actual tournament space, but the game store upstairs had another single-seater bathroom, and the mill complex also had public restrooms about a 5 minute walk away. I echo those that are grateful there was more than 1 option, but a problem with the single bathroom in the tournament space still could have presented a real challenge to players' comfort.

There were 3 instances I heard of sets having differently sized tiles. One or two tiles in the set would be slightly shorter than the others. In the first incident, the set was fully replaced, and a player noted this replacement was carried out smoothly and efficiently with an appropriate amount of time returned to players. In the other two cases, a different player (who happened to experience all 3 tables) noted that the discrepancy was harder to discern than the first case, and the judge said if everybody at the table was ok to continue, they would resume play without changing the set. The table judged it to be not an issue and continued playing in both cases.

I heard of one incident in which a player showed the wrong tiles to make a call, then moved the tiles off and under the table, seemingly out of embarrassment, when it was pointed out. I believe the judges gave them a chombo for this incident, noting that it may have been ruled an obstruction with suspicion of cheating and potential DQ in full penalties.

One player stated that they wanted longer time between hanchans. The organizers pushed hard to keep the tournament on schedule, very clearly announcing hanchan start times and noting that they would enforce late penalties. They were largely successful in that effort, which I expect many players appreciated. I believe one player did get a late penalty for arriving late to day 2. With a potentially larger field next year, more buffer time may still be a wise adjustment if possible.

There were no comments about the Double Ron modification, and I believe there was only 1 or 2 instances of a Double Ron in the tournament. I also heard no comments about lower penalties, but I personally think it was a positive choice for the event. One sub played the whole tournament following a drop-out a couple days prior to tournament start, but no other drop-outs occurred and the sub was recorded in the standings as a normal participant.

### **Observer Personal Summary:**

In general, I found this to be a very smooth and well-organized tournament. All complaints I heard were almost exclusively about the venue, summarized best as a healthy community appetite for a bigger CCR tournament next year at a different, larger venue. Still, I appreciate that the organizers anticipated the potential pitfalls and took proactive steps to address them (setting up fans, incorporating a presentation with a rules primer into the opening announcements, informing players of bathroom options, having the pizza group order option, etc.)

Play was competitive but friendly, and free play delivered a typically exuberant, lighthearted atmosphere. I heard almost no comments about judging or others' play during the tournament, which says to me that everyone was able to focus and enjoy high-quality competitive play.

Logistically, transit options and nearby lodging were less than impressive, but several players including myself successfully carpooled. Personally, I thought the food options were more than adequate and the bathroom arrangement was also sufficient.

I left the event very much looking forward to a (hopefully) bigger, more ambitious CCRO 2027.