



Stratifying ACBL Games by Bob Gruber

Recently, a player had several questions concerning how the ACBL handles stratified events. In particular, the questions were:

- How are rankings for A, B, and C determined?
- What is the scoring policy for A or B players playing with a C player?
- Is determination of the cutoff points constant between units?

First, ACBL sets some broad guidelines, but the particulars for regular club games/events¹ are set locally within these broad guidelines. Special games such as Sectional Tournaments at Clubs (STaCs) and Fund games are an exception in that the ACBL often mandates the masterpoint breakpoints separating strat A from strat B and strat B from strat C. Other than that, there's tremendous variability allowed in setting up the strata/flights for club games and sectional tournaments.

At the club level, unless "management" mandates the break points, on a game-by-game basis the director has full discretion where to break the 3 strata. In Ventura, the directors usually set up:

A=unlimited, B=max of 1000, C=max of 500

but, the director can judge the people playing and set the flights wherever he/she wants, say

A=unlimited, B= max of 300, C= max of 100 or

A=unlimited, B= max of 200, C= max of 50.

Strats A, B
and C for
Open games

Note that the preceding paragraph lists strat/flight A as unlimited. That's true if it's an open, that is, an unrestricted, game. But many games impose an upper masterpoint limit. 299er games are common, as are 199er, 49er, and more. If the game is point-limited, that will be the upper limit for the top strat/flight. (Also, flights/strats designated as A, B and C are usually reserved for open games. Point-limited games are usually designated as D, E and F.)

Strats D, E
and F for
point-limited
games

If you're in flight A, you can only earn points for placing in A.

If you're in flight B, you can earn points for placing in B or A. You get the masterpoints that are most advantageous for you. More on this in a minute.

If you're in flight C, you can earn points for placing in C or B or A. Again, you get the points that are most advantageous for you.

In short, you can earn masterpoints in your strat or any higher strat. You cannot earn points in any lower strat.

If you're a C pair "most advantageous" might include any of six (6) categories. That would be the case if there are overall rankings as well as N-S and E-W rankings. The six categories are:

- Overall in A
- Section rank in A
- Overall in B
- Section rank in B

¹ Game and event are often used synonymously. However, an event may have multiple games, but not the reverse.



Overall in C

Section rank in C

A Flight C pair could place in all six categories. Flight B players are limited to the top four (4) categories and Flight A to the top two (2) categories. Whatever your flight, if you do “come in,” you win the points in the single category that gives you the most masterpoints. (You do not get to add the masterpoints in all the categories in which you placed.)

But this isn't the end of the variations. When establishing the strata/flights, the director can choose to make the strat/flight of each pair based on:

- a) the person with the higher point total, or instead,
- b) make it the average of the two players.

Director's choice: flight/strat based on higher point total -or- average of the pair
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This selection, of course, pertains to all pairs in the game; the director doesn't get to pick and choose some pairs for higher point total and others for average points. Generally speaking, making it the average of the pair seems fairer.

There is yet another factor here. In an open game—the top strat is unlimited—one member of the pair may be over the breakpoint for a particular strat, but if, on average, the pair is below the breakpoint, they are in the lowest possible strat by average. If the event has a game with an upper masterpoint limit, such as a 299er game, then neither member of the pair may exceed the game's upper limit.

But wait, there's more. The questions were specifically about A, B, and C, but the director can select two (2) flights (A & B) or even one (1) flight where everyone is in the one and only flight. Of course, if there's only one flight, it's not really a stratified game.

In entering the player names, the director may have ACBLScore automatically determine the strat for each pair based on the parameters already specified or may manually enter each pair's strat. If in possession of knowledge beyond ACBL's masterpoint totals, the director may override ACBLScore's determination and specify a different strat for a pair.

Finally, as strongly implied, each Unit is independent of all other Units when it comes to setting the cutoff between strats/flights. In fact, each independently-owned game is independent of all other games. Furthermore, let's say there's a regular Monday afternoon game. The strat breakpoints can vary from one Monday to the next! In allowing this great range of variability, the ACBL allows the director to tailor the stratification to the players participating on any given day/session.