

ARA Event Observer Report

Observer Name: Andre Carneiro

Observer State of Residence: NY

Event Name: Hammergirl Anime 2024 ARA Qualifier

Event Location: Hammergirl Anime (376 Jefferson Rd, Rochester, NY 14623)

Event Date: Oct 5-6, 2024

Number of Participants: 40 registered, 36 at Hanchan 1

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

Event ran over 2 days, starting with a 6 hanchan scramble (4 on Sat, 2 on Sun AM). The 4 players with highest cumulative score then played 2 hanchan (scores reset) on Sun PM to determine their final placement. Scramble used a 90+0 timer. Final hanchan were not timed. Final hanchan were played on an autotable upon agreement from all 4 competitors.

Names of Officials/Judges: Luke Morgan

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

The tournament had a [website](#) with all pertinent information, including registration and payment links. Once registered, players were invited to a Discord server where announcements, standings, pairings, etc. were posted at the end of each hanchan.

Prizes: Trophies / medals were awarded for players finishing 1st through 8th.

Catering: Coffee and refreshments were available.

Tournament Atmosphere: The tournament was held inside a big anime store, in a semi-private area separated from the rest of the store by merchandise this play. It was a unique setting, allowing players to explore the store in between hanchans and support a local business. Players were offered a discount to make purchases.

The atmosphere was casual and cordial. The tournament was quite beginner friendly, with fewer, longer hanchan: 90 min instead of the usual 75 min. Penalties were lower than WRC and some aides were available, e.g., compasses, scoring tables. The tournament director set a clear tone: being an "Open", players should be kind to those who are less experienced and might play more slowly. Players would only be penalized for slow play if they were clearly and intentionally obstructing the game.

Complaints and Issues:

The tournament ran without any significant issues.

Note on selecting an ARA observer: during the kickoff announcements on Sat, Luke explained that the tournament did not have an observer yet and asked for volunteers. One player raised their hand and was introduced. Later in the day, another player approached Luke concerned that the observer was local to Rochester, and that it'd be preferable to have an observer who was from another city. An ARA Board Member explained the role eligibility and duties to me Saturday evening, so I let Luke know on Sun AM that I'd gladly play the role. He announced me as the observe while kicking off Sunday play, allowing players ample time to seek me and share their thoughts if desired.

A few players approached me and shared their remarks, which I report here:

- 1) Several players reported being paired with the same opponent(s) more than once and would like duplicates to be minimized (or eliminated if possible). Suggestions to make this more consistent across tournaments included:
 - a. Having an ARA-recommended online tool that generates random pairings and optimizes for no / minimal duplicates
 - b. Having pre-generated pairings for every tournament size, made available by ARA to tournament organizers
- 2) Players would have preferred having more than one judge, and more engagement from other tournament staff. Players acknowledged that Luke is a very experienced judge and organizer. But he had a lot on his plate, and that created some bottlenecks, e.g., check in, score reports, standings updates, pairing generation. The tournament did have 4 staff other than Luke, who were introduced at the outset. But players remarked that they were playing mahjong at a table outside the tournament area most of the time.
- 3) A few reports regarded judging:
 - a. Players mentioned that, unlike other tournaments, the judge interjected into their game despite the table not having called "judge". Some felt that this was disruptive.
 - b. A player reported that etiquette was emphasized by the judge often but not enforced evenly. They felt called out for something minor, while breaches by others (e.g., unnecessary table chatter) did not lead to the same outcome.
- 4) Some players remarked that they would prefer a quieter play area, e.g., the store had background music, audible chatter from games played in nearby area, general customer traffic.

Observer Personal Summary:

I was happy to return to Rochester, where I played my very first Riichi tournament in 2020. It was nice to see local players again, players from other cities, and some new folks.

The location within Rochester felt quite convenient: near the airport, lots of affordable hotels nearby, good food options within walking distance, ample parking, etc. The store is HUGE, and certainly a unique setting for a tournament.

The longer hanchan meant that most of my tables finished the entire game, with less pressure to play fast or miss a critical S3/S4 dealership. Selfishly, I would have loved a top 8 cut so I could play more 😊 but I understand that the cut is probably based on the ARA points for this size of tournament.

Flow was good, but not quite good enough. After all, suuankou tenpai is only 1000-3000 pts... but it was fun competing against a wide array of players and trying to earn a spot in the top 4. I didn't make it in the end, but was happy to see NYC represented!

As always, I appreciate all the efforts Luke and his staff put in to make this event happen for us, and give us another chance to get some points towards WRC.