

ARA Event Observer Report

Observer Name: Victor Savard-Arseneault

Observer State of Residence: Québec (Canada)

Event Name: Capital Riichi Open 2026

Event Location:

Teraanga Commons, Rooms 270 and 272
Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, ON, Canada, K1S 5B7

Event Date: May 30-31, 2026

Number of Participants: 63 (4 DNF¹)

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

The tournament began with 6 hanchan of cumulative play. After hanchan 6, positions 9+ kept their score and played two more cumulative hanchan, while the top 8 players had their score quartered, were matched against each other using snake seeding² and played two more hanchan to determine positions 1-8.

The event used the 2025 edition of the World Riichi Championship ruleset with the following modifications:

- Red fives
- 30-10 uma
- 80+1 time limit

The event ran on time for the whole two days.

¹ One player dropped out of the tournament after round 4, two others left after round 6 and one left after round 7

² Hanchan 7: [1,2,7,8] [3,4,5,6]; Hanchan 8: [1,3,6,8] [2,4,5,7]

Names of Officials/Referees:

Paul Chang-Richardson – Tournament Organizer

Toshihiro Sakurai – Head referee

Lynette Dang – Referee

Grant Mahoney - Referee³

All referees were non-playing.

Adam Koon – Substitute player

Jonah Davidson – Substitute player

Cameron Little – Substitute player (*Saturday only*)

Alexander Guidone – Substitute player (*Sunday only*)

Ellen Chang-Richardson – Front desk and data entry

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

Announcements were made by the tournament organizer (Paul Chang-Richardson) before the start of play on both days, as well as occasionally between rounds.

A timer was visible on the projector during rounds. Paul also made announcements when there were 30, 10 and 0 minutes remaining for the current round.

Table assignments were made available shortly before the start of every round. They could be found in a [google sheet](#), which was also visible on the main projector. The document could be accessed via a link posted on the tournament's Discord server, as well as by scanning the QR code found on the back of every participant's tournament badge. Standings were also visible in the same document and updated in real time.

Prizes:

The tournament winner received a trophy, and positions 2-8 received medals.

There were also other mahjong-themed prizes, such as a gunpla mahjong set and M.League merchandise; the top 8 players got to pick one each, and the rest were awarded to random participants in a raffle.

³ Grant was originally intended to be the head referee, but had to withdraw for health reasons, and was later reinstated as an assistant referee after making a (partial) recovery in time for the event.

Catering:

There was light cold catering (sandwiches) for lunch on both days. Multiple participants commented positively on the quality and variety of sandwich options. Water and coffee were also available free of charge.

Tournament Atmosphere:

The tournament had a fun and positive atmosphere. Many people were excited by the fact that this was Ottawa's first ever riichi tournament.

The overwhelming majority of participants were from Canada, with nearly half of those coming from the host club. Among them, there was a large proportion of less experienced players, with many taking part in their first tournament. Although the event was not especially competitive, there were still plenty of seasoned players to be found.

There were no reported problems when it came to noise levels during games or the temperature control in the main tournament room.

Complaints and Issues:

This section will be split into two parts: major issues and minor issues. Major issues were reported by several players, whereas minor issues were less severe in nature and/or were reported by fewer people.

Major Issues

Two major issues were reported. The first was related to the tables used, and the second was about the schedule.

First, the tables. Although most tables used were perfectly serviceable, a handful of them (those that fold in half) had a ridge in the middle that made it more difficult to build walls and handle tiles in general. Some tables (not necessarily the same ones) also had stability problems and would noticeably shake during shuffling.

Second, the schedule. A couple players complained about not liking the 80+1 time format, but a much more generalized complaint was that the breaks between games were too long. In particular, many participants felt that the lunch break could have been shortened by up to an hour and still allowed ample time for participants to eat and relax before the second half of the day.

Minor issues

In no particular order:

- One participant complained that a substitute player had significant trouble building the wall.
- Some participants noted that the scoring sticks were not consistent across tables: some tables had colored sticks while others didn't, some tables had 3×5k and 4×1k while others had 2×5k and 9×1k, some tables had 500 sticks and others didn't, etc.
- One participant noted that the scoring table "business cards" available at every table did not use kiriage mangan.
- One participant complained that two francophone players occasionally spoke to each other in french at one of their tables. It is worth noting that the tournament staff made an announcement about this at the start of the event, stating that players at a table could use any language they wanted to communicate during the game as long as all four players understood it.
- A few participants complained about many players having bad table manners. This can be expected in a tournament with so many beginners, but perhaps the host club could do a more thorough job of preparing its players before the event.
- Multiple participants complained about duplicate encounters after round 6. This can be explained by the fact that the organizers used Good Enough Golfers to generate the pairings, but did not put in the previous rounds' pairings when generating table assignments for rounds 7 and 8 (after separating the top 8). The issue was pointed out during the lunch break shortly before game 7, and the organizers decided to let it happen and make an announcement about the situation since they felt there was not enough time to correct the problem.

Referee error

Two separate players during the event were awarded a chombo penalty for swap-calling. Multiple participants questioned this decision, as both the 2025 WRC Rules and penalties documents specify that the penalty for swap-calling is a dead hand. Referees argued that a clarifications document specified the penalty for invalid melds had been changed to chombo, and that swap-calling was included in this as the action resulted in an invalid meld.

The decision was ultimately overturned and the point penalties nullified, for two reasons: the WRC rules director had been contacted in the meantime and confirmed that swap-calling was its own case (unrelated to invalid melds) that should be punished with a dead hand, and the referees figured that the invalid meld penalty should not have been a chombo under lower penalties anyway.

No other issues with referee decisions were reported to the observer.

Observer Personal Summary:

Despite the aforementioned issues, I would consider the Capital Riichi Open 2026 to be a success. The organizers did a solid job putting the event together despite their lack of experience. The quality of the venue was one of the highlights: it was easily accessible via transit and quite nice on the inside as well. Several tournaments I have attended previously had problems with venue accessibility, temperature control, noise levels during games, amount of space available (both in the main room and in the waiting area) or bathroom capacity, but none of those issues were present at this event.

I will definitely be returning next year, and I know many others will too.