

Observer report for the Riichi Dutch Open 2025, (Riichi, MERS 3)

Observer: Michael van der Sluijs

Date: October 11th and 12th

Place: Hengelo, The Netherland

Website or other source(s) of information: All information in regards to Schedule, Location, Registration, Fee, Players etc. Was available on <https://niji-riichi.nl/rdo-2025/> through its drop-down menu.

Information regarding ranking was accessible through the website and a QR code provided at the venue.

Participants: 56 Players

Represented Countries:

NED	GER	BEL	ROU	SUI	EUR
					
36	9	7	2	1	1

Playing Schedule: 2 days, 9 hanchan (5+4) of 75 minutes, after which you finish the current hand and 1 more (if possible).

Location: The "Denksportcentrum Hengelo", a large space that can have upwards of 25 tables be played at comfortably. Adjacent was the buildings Bar area which was perfect to spend the time in between hanchan.

Location was easily reachable by car, bike etc. The nearest bus station was a 10 minute walk and the train station was only 5 minutes away.

Equipment: Junkmats and sets provided by both the Niji Mahjong Club and the NMB (Nederlandse Mahjong Bond / Dutch Mahjong Association). Junkmats were placed on tables available in the venue, while a bit on the bigger side, they were easily usable for Riichi Mahjong.

Refereeing: Anneke Keyl (Non-Playing Head Referee), Olav Sommers and Jacqueline Oudshoorn (Playing Referees)

It was requested to call the Head Referee when a Chombo had to be confirmed.

Anneke Keyl was called upon a lot more than I have witnessed at other tournaments, this might be due to the influx of new players in The Netherlands. She handled all of it with the care expected of a seasoned player and referee, the Non-Playing Referees did not have to act once.

2 players had made mention of the referee making an "unclear" or "unjust" call during the game, after which the issue was brought up again and resolved properly as to leave no confusion, perhaps another side effect of the new player base.

Complaints:

Several participants let me know of their annoyance due to other players being loud and having “non-mahjong” conversations during tournament play, this was consistently repeated by the organisation and referees, it did not quite disappear during day 1 but during day 2 the noise had subsided and everyone could focus on the game properly.

Water was not available for free. Only coffee and tea were supplied without charge.

Information / Communication during the tournament:

A visible clock in the form of a large digital stopwatch that rang after 75 minutes signalling the end of a hanchan. A gong used to signal the start of a hanchan.

Ranking available through a QR code scannable around the venue.

Sessions: Most games went by without much issue, however some tables had either beginners or elderly players making those hanchan run less smoothly than preferred. This however did not have a major impact on the integrity of the game.

Atmosphere was amiable and competitive

Catering:

2 free of either coffee or tea were available on both days, other drinks were available for an extra fee.

Warm lunches on both days with plenty of variety, vegan, gluten-free and lactose-free options were also made available.

Prizes:

A trophy for each spot on the podium, thank you gifts for the volunteers and a “Free Fee Voucher” for the player who ended in last.

Conclusion:

A tournament like many before it in The Netherlands, perfectly acceptable and still improving with every iteration. The location for it was quite far from a lot of major Dutch hubs which may have resulted in less foreign players coming than these tournaments deserve.

A perfect tournament to introduce yourself or others to the more competitive side of mahjong.