



Observer report for Yakitori Riichi Open Berlin 2026

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Date: June 6–7, 2026

Place: Berlin, Germany

Website or other source(s) of information: All information on the website: <https://berlin-mahjong.club/yakitori-open-2026/>

Participants: 92 players.

Represented countries:

 GER	 POL	 GBR	 SWE	 FRA
38	14	6	6	5
 NED	 ESP	 BEL	 UKR	 SUI
4	4	4	4	3
 AUT	 PHL	 ITA	 USA	
1	1	1	1	

Playing schedule: 2 days, 8 hanchan (4+4) of 75 minutes each (gong: finish the current hand + play one more).

- The first six hanchan were round robin.
- The 7th hanchan was played in groups of 16 players, based on the ranking after the first six hanchan. (First group of 16 players: Table 1: 1-5-9-13, Table 2: 2-6-10-14, Table 3: 3-7-11-15, Table 4: 4-8-12-16. Second group of 16 players: Table 5: 17-21-25-29, etc.)
- The 8th hanchan was played if groups of 4 players, based on the ranking after the first seven hanchan. (Table 1: 1-2-3-4, Table 2: 5-6-7-8, etc.)

Location: Priesterweg 4, 10829 Berlin. This is a sports complex ("Dominicussportplatz"). We played in a single large room that could fit all 92 players and the referee table.

Equipment:

- Folding tables with adequate dimensions were used.
- Chairs were comfortable.
- The junkmats were stuck to the tables. It was very enjoyable, this should be done in more tournaments! 👍
- **A few colored sets had different tiles for 1p (pin) and 1s (sou). It is recommended to inform players about this and to show said tiles before the start of the tournament, as it can be disturbing the first time you draw them in hand.**
- Berlin Mahjong Club members cleaned all sets on Friday night before social play.

Refereeing: Three non-playing referees: Julian Nowakowski, Yufan Dong, and Manuel Tertre. The referees were roaming around the room, making it easier to call them when needed. This is only possible with at least one non-playing referee. 👍

Complaints:

- Each player drew their number and seating online, which cannot be fully proven to be random. Indeed, even if the source code is published, players cannot verify that this is indeed the exact code that is installed on the server. Some players mentioned that they would prefer an offline drawing at the start of the event.
- A complaint with the Mahjong Pantheon web app was reported by one table: in some situations, the in-app timer prevents playing one more round after a win call. This does not comply with the new EMA rule, according to which a new round starts as soon as a win is called. As a result, referees had the players write an all-last sheet on a paper, and the referees had to register scores manually during the break.
- Sticks points (tenbou 点棒) were not used: an app was used instead, accessible from a website on mobile phones. Some players told me that they were not able to use their phones throughout the day for battery reasons. I advise the organizers:
 - To make sure to **prepare some spare phones**, in case all players at a table cannot use their phones.
 - To have a dedicated space on the organizers' table with a power strip and chargers for people who kindly use their phones during hanchan.
 - To inform players about the previous two points before the start of the tournament, during the initial announcements.
- On Saturday afternoon, the playing room was too hot and smelly. It is recommended to open the windows during the lunch break and in between each hanchan in order to get some fresh air and lower the CO₂ level (this was done on Sunday after I mentioned this to the organizers, thus fixing the issue).
- Because of the format of the 7th and 8th hanchan, some people ended up playing against the same players three times over the course of 8 hanchan, which was not appreciated in a tournament with such a large number of players.
- Some people clapped whenever a yakuman occurred. This was disturbing, as some people can easily lose focus. An announcement for the very first yakuman of the tournament can be tolerated (without the clapping, please!), but during a competitive tournament, the sound level during play is expected to be kept to a minimum.

Information / communication during the tournament:

- Very good communication from the organizer team in between hanchan to give instructions (referee announcements and rules reminders) and information to players (food break, putting the tiles back in the boxes after the last hanchan, etc.). 👍
- A visible clock was projected from a computer onto a huge screen.
- A gong clearly informed players of the start and end of the sessions.
- Rankings were kept up to date between each session and accessible on a dedicated website.
- Before the start of each hanchan, the table seating was displayed on the big screen.
- The statistics about the games were greatly appreciated (<https://rating.berlin-mahjong.club/event/64/order/rating>). 👍
- During play, referees kindly reminded some tables to play at a decent speed, as some people were taking more time than expected when playing.

Sessions:

- Excellent playing atmosphere, FFF (Fair-play, Friendly and Fun).
- Several players from the Berlin Mahjong Club were present during the tournament and acted as substitutes when needed.
- The referees noted that the Pantheon app made sure that every player was more focused on checking the yaku and fu of winning hands. Also, point exchanges were automatically handled by the app. Thus, very few scoring mistakes were made during the tournament. 👍

Catering: Lunch in a different room, coffee and snacks provided throughout the day.

Water bottles (still and sparkling) and bottles of fruit juice were available.

Chinese food was served during both lunch breaks (self-service), with enough vegetarian options. Some players said the food quality has improved a lot compared to previous Yakitori tournaments, well done!

Prizes: Trophies for individual ranking (1st, 2nd, and 3rd places). One chocolate bar for the top 10 players, for everyone who achieved a yakuman, for the referees, and for the EMA observer. A special "yakitori" prize as well.

Conclusion: Awesome tournament in Berlin. We hope that you can indeed plan a three-day tournament for next year!