



Observer report for Porto Riichi Open Championship 2026 (RCR, MERS 3,5)

Observer: Klaudia LENSU

Date: August 6th – 7th 2026

Place: Porto, Portugal

Website or other source(s) of information: All necessary information could be found on the tournament website. More detailed public transport information would have been appreciated. Payment instructions were sent by email; the payment deadline was quite early (end of May).

Participants: 52 players from 13 different countries.

POR	FRA	POL	GBR	ITA	SWE	NED	GER	ESP	BEL	UKR	FIN	AUT
												
15	8	7	6	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1

Three players cancelled the day before the tournament. All three substitutes were made full players in their stead. On the morning of the tournament, one player was a no-call no-show. To solve this, Yulong Zhao switched from a non-playing to playing referee.

On Sunday, a player wanted to quit the tournament due to frustration. They eventually agreed to play until a reserve substitute (who was in the city, but not at the venue) could arrive. The player maliciously quitting was disqualified and ranked at the bottom of the results.

Playing schedule: 2 days, 8 rounds (5+3) of 90 minutes (75 minutes, current hand + 1 more). The tournament started at around 09:00 on Saturday and ended at 15:30 on Sunday.

Tournament format: Round robin. Players drew their player numbers at the beginning of the tournament. The seating order was fair with no repeats.

Location: Hotel Cristal Porto, Travessa de Antero de Quental 360. The venue was 8 minutes away from the nearest metro station and close to a bus stop. The hotel was nice and clean, and multiple players chose to sleep there.

The playing space on the first day was the smaller event hall of the hotel, which was large enough for the amount of players, but lacked air conditioning sufficient to handle the heat and humidity created by 5 intense hanchans. For the second day, the tournament was moved to the larger hall, which was very spacious and had good air conditioning. It was also available for social play after the tournament ended on Sunday.

The players could access most of the first floor of the hotel during the tournament. The hotel lobby served as a cooled rest area. The garden could be used to experience the summer heat during the day, and was a very nice natural socializing space during the evenings. There were 4 bathrooms near the tournament halls and more could be found in the lobby.

Equipment: The tiles and point sticks were of standard good riichi quality, in good condition. The tables were square and standard size, topped with Junk mats. All sets and mats were brought in and verified by the organisers on the evening before the tournament. Different tables had different point stick setups to reach 30,000. The scoring sheets had orasu sheets printed on the back.

Refereeing: Yulong Zhao and Sergio Matos Lima were playing referees, with Yulong the main referee.

Not all players were thoroughly familiar with the new rules, resulting in multiple dead hands for discarding before saying riichi.

Complaints: Multiple players noted the heat in the first day's playing room. One player also said the lighting in the room was not good enough, but I myself found it sufficient, and I'm usually sensitive to poorly lit venues. In any case, both issues were solved by changing the room.

No writing pads for filling in orasu or score sheets were provided, so players had to write their score using something else, such as the edge of the mat, as a platform.

Information / communication during the tournament: Personal seating charts were provided to the players at the start of the tournament. A visible clock was projected from a computer to a wall. Round start and 75 minute announcements were done verbally. The game results and tournament rankings were uploaded online to a website accessible by QR code.

Sessions: Excellent playing atmosphere, FFF (Fair-play, Friendly and Fun). There was a number of new players, and other players did their best to make them learn the game procedures (such as the order of actions when calling), without frustration.

Catering: Lunch was served at the hotel's restaurant. It was a buffet with many different options, including salads, vegetarian and non-vegetarian main dishes, desserts and other local delicacies. The food was tasty, and was provided until it was clear everyone had eaten their fill. Espresso was available for free upon request.

During the first day, soft drinks and local pastries were available at the playing room. During the second day, only bottled water was provided. The local tap water was quite good. The bar in the garden could be used to buy other drinks.

Prizes: The first, second and third place each received a trophy in the form of a dragon plush toy. Each Yakuman was awarded a special prize. The highest and lowest ranked Portuguese player and the Observer also received prizes.

Conclusion: Nice tournament in a great venue in Porto. The organisers worked very hard to solve problems as they came up to keep things running smoothly.



The second day's playing room