



Observer report for Irish Riichi Championship 2026 (Riichi, MERS 3)

Observer: George TWIGG

Date: 23-24 August 2026

Place: Dublin, Ireland

Website or other source(s) of information: <https://mahjong.ie/irish-riichi-championship-2026/> plus detailed and informative emails leading up to the weekend, including a very useful guide letting participants know what to expect in terms of rules, table etiquette and expected standards of behaviour. There was also a WhatsApp group participants were invited to join.

Participants: 44 players

Represented countries: Ireland (26), United Kingdom (7), Denmark (4), Germany (3), Ukraine (2), Sweden (2)

Playing schedule: 2 days, 8 rounds (5+3)

Location: Dublin Business School, Dublin – we had the use of the 4th floor, including a spacious playing area that easily fit 11 tables, plus sufficient seats for dining and sofas for chilling out, which competitors enjoyed after hard-fought games.

Equipment: 11 sets provided were of equal size and in excellent condition, with coloured point sticks. Mats were generally in good condition, except the one on Table 8 which had quite a few pockmarks. Tables were covered in square boards which provided more space for junk mats to be placed, though some legs were wobbly.

Refereeing: There were 5 playing referees participating in the tournament (Tom Pearson, Simon Picard, Timur Hahn, Martin Schleimer and Jiang Zhu). Queries were responded to promptly and efficiently thanks to the large number of officials the organisers had approached.

Complaints: Before each game, starting seats were assigned to each player via drawing winds, meaning that most participants began as East/South/West/North an unequal number of times, with consequent variance in how many dealerships they got and therefore their point-scoring potential. The technology exists to decide player pairings ahead of time so that opponents are known in advance and each competitor begins as East/South/West/North in 2 hanchans apiece, and in my opinion should it be used, as it is at other tournaments; there is enough variance in mahjong without introducing additional asymmetries where it is not necessary to do so.

On the afternoon of Day 1, loud and distracting pop music began to emanate from a nearby bar, but this was out of the organisers' control and unless any player felt especially inspired by Lady Gaga and Whitney Houston, nobody will have been advantaged or disadvantaged by it. Indeed, it

no doubt enhanced the experience for some! An occupational hazard of having managed to book an attractive venue in a convenient city centre location.

Information / communication during the tournament: A visible clock was projected from a computer onto a main screen and other screens elsewhere in the room, with a gong signalling the start and end of the 75-minute time limit; however, a couple of players noted that they could not see a screen from some seats, as most were pointed in the same direction. Additionally, an announcement when 15 minutes were remaining might have been welcome, especially for those struggling to view a screen.

I was surprised that there was no briefing prior to the start of Hanchan 1 as there usually is at EMA tournaments, pointing players towards important contacts (organisers, referees, observer) and going over ground rules (e.g. chombos, how the time limit works, and so on). I could see that a PowerPoint presentation on this subject had been prepared, but this was dispensed with in favour of starting Hanchan 1 on time. In my opinion, it would have been better to slightly delay the round so that this information could be communicated, or else do the presentation earlier even if some players were still arriving. A short briefing was eventually delivered before Hanchan 2.

There was a delay to the beginning of the afternoon session on Day 1, but there was conflicting information about exactly how long this delay was; at one point the tournament website was saying 1:30pm, the WhatsApp group said 1:45pm and the scores app read 2:00pm. A formal spoken announcement to guests gathered in the playing room and in the lunch area would have communicated this more effectively. On Day 2 timing issues were completely ironed out and play progressed much smoother, which was pleasing to see.

Rankings were posted on the main screen between games, promptly and in a clear format.

Sessions: Excellent playing atmosphere, FFF (Fair-play, Friendly and Fun). I heard no complaints of unsporting behaviour from any of the participants.

Catering: Cold buffet with wraps, sandwiches, noodles, pasta salad and fruit. Hot and cold drinks were provided during intervals, as well as plentiful sweet and savoury snacks. The food was of good quality and sufficiently varied.

Prizes: Trophies for the Top 3, plus additional awards for other achievements (e.g. biggest hand, biggest comeback, top Irish players). These prizes were unique, attractive and specially made for the competition, and winners seemed delighted to receive them (I know I was!)

Conclusion: This was my second Irish Riichi Championship and, like the first one, I thoroughly enjoyed myself. It has been a pleasure to see the Irish mahjong scene develop during this time; in Cork two years ago there were more participants from the UK than Ireland, whereas in 2026 the number of Irish players taking part had doubled. All Ireland Mahjong seems a well-run organisation with a firm (and welcome) commitment to inclusivity that is embedded in its structure and its attitude towards running its competitions, as evidenced by the tournament guide issued to visitors in advance. Any minor issues stated above were far outweighed by the impressive achievement of running a highly successful first-ever riichi competition in Dublin, and I would be more than happy to attend further events run by All Ireland Mahjong in future.