

Observer report for the Four Winds Open 2026(Riichi, MERS 3,5)

Observer: Michael van der Sluijs

Date: October 3rd and 4th 2026

Place: Mühlheim am Main, Germany

Participants: 80 players

Represented Countries:

														
47	9	5	4	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Playing Schedule: 2 days, 8 hanchan (4+4) of 90 minutes each, after which you would finish your current hand and play 1 more if your game hadn't ended by then.

Location: Kulturhalle Schanz, the main room of the venue was used for play which had ample space for all tables, players and referees. There were break areas available both outside in the courtyard or inside in a separated space from the main playing area.

Very easy to reach as it is right along the Mühlheim am Main S-Bahn station(2 minute walk)

Equipment: Players from across Germany and the Four Winds Frankfurt club supplied sets for this tournament, which resulted in various different sets, shapes and tile sizes at tables, this is something you can't always prevent but an effort should be made for all playing materials to be as uniform as they can be.

The same issue arose with point sticks, where most tables would use the common 1x10000, 2x5000/3x5000, 9x1000/4x1000, 1x500, 5x100 setup, but some tables would have completely different sticks available, for example a table played with 5 10000 sticks which caused some confusion through the round(fixed after reported).

All Junkmats were in good condition.

During registration, the tournament organizers gave every player a bank card sized "scoresheet" and a little card that announced to other players you would appreciate help with scoring hands. A great little touch in my opinion.

Refereeing: Ben Thomas (Head-Referee), Elmar Mohsenzada and Ken-Nico Schultheiss were all non-playing referees.

Having 3 non-playing referees is incredibly uncommon and it helped in running this tournament without much delay.

Referees were called to each table at the end of a hanchan to confirm final scores and make sure no mistakes were made. Referees acted swiftly to any calls made that required their attention.

Regretfully, some inconsistencies in ruling between the 3 different referees happened, this can easily be solved next time by having a proper line of communication within the Referee team present.

Information and Communication:

A countdown before the start of every hanchan and a timer projected on a large screen were present.

A paper that shows the time a round starts, which table you play at and which seat wind you have been allocated were distributed at registration.

Scores were trackable online at <https://fourwindsfrankfurt.club/tournaments/four-winds-open-2026/live> updated fast after every round was finished.

Playing Sessions:

Due in part to the large amount of new players, the referees were called upon often. Some players also took "advantage" of the longer timer by taking more time to think than they would otherwise, this was brought to my attention by several other players.

Regardless of this, the general level of play and atmosphere at the tables was high and everyone was able to enjoy each game to the fullest.

Catering:

Drinks were available for no extra charge throughout the tournament from the fridge in the break room, players were encouraged to "take what they need" themselves.

The food was supplied in house by the Kulturhalle Schanz and consisted of chicken/vegan Jambalaya, Yakitori Skewers and Soup on Day 1 and Rice with beef goulash, beef rolls and Pasta on Day 2.

There was sufficient choice and amount however the quality of the food, while edible was not always the best and resulted in several complaints from multiple different players.

The "side-dishes" (Yakitori and Beef Rolls) also ran out before everyone was able to have them due to the long timer of the rounds. There was supposed to be enough of both for everyone, but the organizers should have mentioned to only take 1 piece of these dishes.

Prizes:

4 beautiful trophies representing the 4 winds that not only mahjong but also the Four Winds Frankfurt club are known for were presented to the top 4 of the tournament.

A huge congratulations to Taiki Ando, Kevin Hausler, Fabian Weber and Paul Micheli for their results!

**Conclusion:**

A tournament not without flaws, but to be proud of nonetheless. I highly recommend attending the 2027 event which has already been announced to be planned for the weekend of October 9th and 10th.