

# **European Mahjong Association EMA General Assembly 2011**

**July 9, 2011 – Mestre / Italy**

## **Presidential Report**

The past two years, EMA has welcomed more member organizations, more players and we have seen more mahjong activities around Europe than ever before. In this report you can read about some of the major developments over the past two years, since the GA of 2009.

### **MCR**

#### **Open European Mahjong Championship**

While we are gathering here in Mestre for the 2011 GA, we would like to send another big thank you to our Austrian friends, who made the OEMC 2009 a splendid event. We have now seen 3 successful OEMC events and have no doubt that the 2011 edition, hosted by the Federazione Italiana Mah Jong, will be just as great.

We have not (yet) received an application for the organization of the next OEMC, but during this GA, we should discuss the frequency of major (i.e. European) championships. Counting the OEMC of 2009 it is the 4<sup>th</sup> major tournament and they turn out to be expensive, perhaps too expensive for many players.

This in turn, will lead to less participants, a trend which can also be observed in other – national MERS2 – championships. Players have more choice than ever, which in itself is a good thing, but for organizers it is getting more difficult to make a sound budget, as they do not know how many players to expect.

#### **World Mahjong Championship**

The Nederlandse Mahjong Bond has successfully taken up the challenge to organize a World Mahjong Championship. In August 2010, 220 players from all over the world gathered in Utrecht, to battle for the title for 3 (long) days.

It was a great honor to be given this opportunity by the WMO and EMA wishes to express its gratitude toward the Dutch for making this possible.

## **Rules and referees**

We have witnessed some degree of 'cool down' from the elevated levels of discussion about the MCR rules (and their interpretation). The 2008 EMA "MERS Tournament Regulations" have helped clarify some rules and regulations for tournaments in Europe and many more players have certified themselves by passing a referee exam.

Nevertheless, we should still continue to emphasize that our game is a friendly game, with clear rules and honorable prizes to be won, but it remains a game nonetheless.

Also, after the successful referee seminar in Baden, two more seminars have been organized (WMC and French Open 2011) and we now have a substantial number of certified referees. We should now encourage them to actually take up the challenge and (volunteer to) be a referee. For this year's OEMC it was near impossible to find players willing to do so.

## **Riichi Mahjong (RCR)**

Riichi mahjong (RCR) is developing strong – we see many new players, especially from France and Great Britain, Russia and Poland. In 2010 the Deutsche Mah-Jongg Liga hosted another great and successful European Riichi Championship and EMA is grateful for their efforts as well.

We also have an increase in tournaments, since France, Great Britain and Russia have now organized MERS1 and MERS2 tournaments. However, this means that we now have weekends in which players have the choice of participating in 2 or even 3 tournaments (RCR and MCR).

## **Sponsorship**

The agreement with Mahjong Time was prematurely finished, although this practically didn't change anything. The partnership was mainly a 'paper thing' as no real funding ever came out of it. MJT did sponsor local tournaments a couple of times, but even those deals were not always honored.

For the WMC the Dutch partnered up with Mahjong Logic, which now seems to have some sort of mutual beneficial effect for other organizations as well. MJL is a sponsor of the OEMC 2011 as well and we are trying to develop a more interesting competition – perhaps even a new Online European Championship – in the near future.

However, sponsoring remains a difficult issue and MJL is basically aiming at another type of player than most EMA members represent. I.e. they focus on playing for money (like poker sites) and while there are some players that do not object to that, most of them will not engage in that sort of play. On the other hand: there is no membership fee at MJL, as opposed to MJT, where serious play requires a paid subscription.

## **Ranking Systems**

The ranking systems have been updated with new algorithms, which makes them more dynamic. We now also have a ranking 'per country' and Sébastien Berret is maintaining the rankings with great accuracy and in a professional way. They are amongst the most visited pages on the EMA website.

## **International connections**

Contact with WMO remains sketchy at best. More often than not, e-mails sent remain unanswered, while all of a sudden an e-mail will come in covering some totally different / unexpected item.

Our Chinese friends will not be present at this OEMC, but we have been invited to the 5<sup>th</sup> China Maijang Championship and we've received word that they are planning to organize the next WMC. Details about the latter are not yet clear.

Japan is still not involved in WMO, but remains an (equally) important partner for EMA. We continue to discuss the RCR rules with them and they are respected participants in all major tournaments (both RCR and MCR).

## **A presidential remark**

Finally, I want to thank Tina Christensen and Sébastien Berret for maintaining the face of EMA. I have often wondered during the past 2 years what the course of EMA could or should be in the coming years. Frankly, I don't know – we remain a body run by volunteers, with little chance to meet and get things done. We also lack funds, which in my view we need to further develop and increase the level of play.

At the time of writing this report, I have not yet made up my mind whether or not I would like to continue the presidency, provided I would receive the confidence of the GA once more. Perhaps it is time for the newcomers to stand up and take responsibility. At any rate, I can see that EMA is an ever developing 'community' that is holding its own in the mahjong world and I hope we can keep up the good work.

Brunssum, June 2011

Robert Rijnders

President