



## **Observer report for Warsaw Mahjong Takai 2017 (Riichi, MERS 2)**

**Observer:** Michael DONAGHY

**Date:** November 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> 2017

**Place:** Warsaw, Poland

**Website or other source(s) of information:** All information on the website of Polska Liga Mahjonga : registration, program, list of participants, live results. Detailed information and registration form were only made available quite close to the time (around a month in advance IIRC) and carried a “Time schedule could be slightly changed” warning - somewhat concerning for those travelling to the tournament. Also an email regarding the use of the scoring app and providing the download location was only sent on the Friday afternoon, after yr humble correspondent’s flight had already departed.

**Participants:** 40 players: 3 Belarus, 1 Britain, 3 Japan, 31 Poland, 2 Ukraine

**Playing schedule:** 2 days, 8 rounds (4+4) of 90 minutes with 15 minute breaks. While this made for an early end time particularly on the Sunday, it was perhaps too intense on the Sunday with three straight hanchan (9AM-2PM) before lunch.

**Location:** Lecture/seminar room in the basement of the chemistry department. Comfortably accommodated the group, though some tables had one chair fixed to the wall which was slightly inconvenient. There was a concern that the below-ground location would make using the phone app difficult, but wifi was provided, and in the event signal was adequate for yr humble correspondent at least.

**Equipment:** All tables used identical good-quality sets and junkmats; large supply of power banks and spare phones for use with the scoring app, along with a backup supply of score sheets (which did not see use). The scoring app was astonishingly smooth and easy to use, and yr humble correspondent made sure to test the double ron functionality (though sadly was unable to test yakuman scoring). I didn’t see any trouble or confusion at any point, nor receive any complaints, though it should be mentioned that this tournament had a very young playerbase compared with what I’ve found to be typical. (Yr humble correspondent was probably the second-oldest participant).

One point of concern is that placing phones around the tables makes it easy to dislodge them when shuffling - I witnessed one phone being knocked off (thankfully with no damage) when the shuffling process shifted the junkmat. Another concern is that player assignments were prefilled, rather than using a transparently fair method like drawing a player number. Since all tables were using a single login for the app and there was no signing of scoresheets or the like, I’m also somewhat concerned as to what would happen if a player attempted to submit falsified scores.

**Refereeing:** Szymon Lasota was non-player head referee, with Dominik Kolenda, Marta Binkowska, and Jakub Bacic. Almost all issues resolved at tables, with the only referee calls being a) yr humble correspondent getting confused upon ron-ing the discard from a swap-call b) yr humble correspondent making a late call for pon and proceeding to further embarrass himself c) some confusion over whether a rinshan kaihou qualified for haitei.

**Complaints:** None.

**Information / communication during the tournament:**

Visible clock projected from a computer on a screen. Electronic beep supplemented by some shouting marked the start and the end of sessions. Scores and rankings projected between rounds and available via the scoring app and website. Wind assignments were missing from printed player cards, but available via app and a couple of printed pages posted on the walls.

**Sessions:** Very relaxed and friendly tournament - perhaps slightly too casual, with occasional shouting across the room about interesting hands. Players knew the rules and kept a decent standard for things like shuffling, though yr humble correspondent did have to explain the importance of using one hand at the table to one referee.

**Catering:** Water and some snacks provided, players directed to obtain their own lunches from one of the restaurants in the area during a 1:15 break. Yr correspondent recommends the Italian restaurant on the corner. Organised beer trip in the evening which yr humble correspondent neglected to attend, being already drunk on the fine wine of the day 1 score chart.

**Prizes:** Game- and Japan-related souvenirs for top 4 players - yr humble correspondent had to leave before the ceremony.

**Conclusion:** Fun tournament as usual for Warsaw, maybe not quite on the level of previous years (the previous venue was more elegant, and yr humble correspondent enjoyed the tea ceremony) but still a great tournament by any reasonable standard.