ARA Event Observer Report

Observer Name:
Bichen Wang

Observer State of Residence:
California

Event Name:
Riichi Nomi Open 2026

Event Location:
Middle Collegiate Church 50 E 7th St, New York, NY

Event Date:
August 1-2, 2026

Number of Participants:
256

Event Schedule Summary: *(Days played, number of rounds, finalist rounds, time per round, etc.)*
Day 1 - Saturday, August 1st

Registration: 9:00 am – 9:45 am
Opening Ceremony: 9:45 am – 10:00 am
Hanchan 1: 10:00 am – 11:30 am
Break: 11:30 am – 11:40 am
Hanchan 2: 11:40 am – 1:10 pm
Lunch Break: 1:10 pm – 2:10 pm
Hanchan 3: 2:10 pm – 3:40 pm
Break: 3:40 pm – 3:50 pm
Hanchan 4: 3:50 pm – 5:20 pm
Break: 5:20 pm – 5:30 pm

Riichi Nomi Group Photo: 5:25pm, Sanctuary
Hanchan 5: 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm
Free Play: 7:00 pm Onward

Day 2 - Sunday, August 2nd

Check in: 9:15 am – 9:45 am

Hanchan 6: 10:00 am – 11:30 am
Break: 11:30 am – 11:40 am
Hanchan 7: 11:40 am – 1:10 pm
Lunch Break: 1:10 pm – 2:10 pm
Hanchan 8: 2:10 pm – 3:40 pm
Break: 3:40 pm – 3:50 pm
Hanchan 9: 3:50 pm – 5:20 pm
Break: 5:20 pm – 5:40 pm

Hanchan 10: 5:40 pm – 7:10 pm
Award Ceremony and Group Photo: 7:20 pm – 7:45 pm
Free Play: 7:45 pm - 10 pm

Games were 75 minutes + 0 with a swiss bucket scramble

Names of Officials/Judges:
TO: Claire H
Head Judge: Rob C
Judges: Andres H, Austin B, Vinny T, Sam D, Cristi M, Michael H, Yicheng, Sam
Subs: Caroline S, Wes H, Vince C
Other helpers: Vince, Christine, Josh, Michelle, Eric, Yoona, @Midori, @dofume,

Communication to Players: *(How were announcements, standings, pairings etc. communicated to players during the event?)*
Comms were through discord and through the website https://scores.riichi.nyc/
Announcements were made through a group discord call with all participants

Prizes:
1st-8th: medals
1st: $600 + championship ring
2nd: $400
3rd: $300
4th: $200
5th: $150
6th: $100
7th: $75
8th: $50
Riichi Book 1 to a deserving player of the TO's choice
Julian Amano Award to the player with the best sportsmanship (Plaque)

Catering:
Some bottled water available. Since this was in Manhattan, there was no shortage of food options within walking distance.

Tournament Atmosphere:
The tournament was split on 4 floors in a church. There was a wide range of player skill level at the tournament, and the swiss pairing system allowed people to play people who were doing about as well as themselves which is a nice touch.
The tournament quickly segmented itself into buckets as advertised and was a great way to have a bunch of people at different skill levels still have a reasonable game.

Complaints and Issues:

- A few people complained about not having enough time to eat. Some hanchans ran way over their allotted time which meant only about 45 minutes to eat.
- At least 7 direct complaints about the tables which had two perfectly good sides and two sides that had legs in front of them in which case you either had to sit straddling the legs or sideways or an extra person's width away from the table. After a couple games like this, either your back or legs could get sore.
- Multiple general complaints that people don't know how to shuffle. Observer also personally noted several people who shuffled such that half the tiles flipped over or only shuffled the 4 tiles in front of themselves.
    - Feedback is to make a short video about etiquette and shuffling to play at the beginning of every tournament.
- A direct complaint about a player. complaint quoted below:
    - when asked to roll dice for saikouiisen seating, they said "can't we just do seats instead? Why do you care so much?" after I said it was the tournament ruleset, they said "I guess we can do it, just because you care so much."
    - they threw tiles at their discards/at people when they wanted to call and threw sticks at people when paying
    - they shuffled so aggressively that tiles flew off the junk mat even after being asked by other players to be more gentle
    - they were visibly tilted at the table even while they were 1st, verbally complaining when others won hands
- Direct complaint against a player

    - Unnecessary chatter, even after being warned. Table talk as they would tell the table they're folding after someone had called riichi.
- Direct complaint against a player during Hanchan 5 (quoted):
    - [Player] try to act like a beginner and purposefully waste time before each hand to maintain the persona. They would also intentionally pause on tiles they cannot call to further shamisen/maintain persona. I feel like this is also very unsportsmanlike of them, considering they're on the top of the leaderboards.
- Direct complaint against a player in Hanchan 3 (quoted):
    - [Player] repeatedly talked in between hands (during the shuffling/building wall) to the two other players on my table that they are familiar with. I feel this is bad sportsmanship behavior because they could have colluded. They also try to cause distraction repeatedly by sighing and shamisen.
- Second direct complaint against the same player:
    - Said player threw sticks and tiles and dice in the general direction of the table. Like the casual here's a pile of sticks–chucks them onto the table in the direction of the winning player.
    - When shuffling, they'd vigorously turn tiles over. When told to use the side of their hands, they straight up slammed their palm onto the table.
    - When winning, they'd slow shuffle and slow build walls and would generally be the last player to build their wall.
    - Sighs a lot all the time
    - Yapping a lot during the game
- Complaint about being seated too close to the wall in the rooms with the projector. If you were seated facing away from the wall at the same wall of the projector, you couldn't see the timer.
- Some tables didn't have pens so people had to borrow them from other tables
- A set in the gold room has a 1p and a 1s that look fairly similar. Someone chombo'd by winning with the wrong 1 in their hand.
- A set ended up missing a 6m after day 1. It was not found, so the set was replaced for day 2.
- General complaint about how sticky the tiles became after the 4th hanchan for the day. It is noted that the sets are indeed cleaned after free play after day 1 and after lunch. So maybe we need to tell people to wash their hands more.
    - Someone dealt in by picking up a tile, having the tile next to it stick just enough so that that tile ends up falling. A player called ron on the dropped tile, not the tile in the player's hand. The person who 'dealt in' didn't want to deal with calling a judge at this point since they weren't in the running for anything, but that is pretty annoying.
- Issue with an early reveal by west in ryukyouku, but south had made some kind of motion but didn't finish their motion. It was ruled that south induced west to make a motion, so no penalty was applied.
- Ruling issue with someone attempting to draw a tile from the live wall after a kan. Since the player had not looked at the tile, the ruling was a guidance.

- A player called riichi. Someone chased. Then the player in riichi tried to bail. The table called a judge and a chombo was declared on the first player.
    - The same player notably at a different table allegedly discarded a tile from their hand during riichi but was not caught by the others at the table (just one person). They ended that hand noten after riichi and got a chombo anyway.
- A player went to draw and noticed their wall, 2nd from the left, top tile, was missing from their wall. They counted and they had 14 tiles. They somehow managed to yoink that tile into their hand during the draw and were awarded with a sho-chombo for taahai.
- Four TBD rulings in the ruling sheet for
    - Player accused of sorting tile into hand before making riichi call, also attested by 1 other player and 3rd player unable to see
    - All last sheet incorrect by 5k points. Very consequential for 3 players conditions
    - dealer discarded before the dora tile revealed
    - Made a small undetermined sound on another players discard. one player called judge over for false Ron but other players at the table did not hear Ron. Gave a warning to the player
- A confusing situation around some players not present. Coming back from lunch, player A and player B were late. As player A ran back, they didn't check which table they were supposed to go to and just sat down in an empty seat and started their game (right on time). The other table waited for player B to show up. As player B came to the table (3 minutes after the hanchan started), they realized all 4 players were already at their table and playing! A judge was called and it was noticed that player A had gone to the wrong table! Since this is after lunch of day 2 on tables that weren't in contention and in the same swiss bucket, the judges just permanently swapped the two players' seats. Player B ended up with a 3 point penalty for being 3 minutes late but was not penalized more during the waiting period figuring out what happened.
- Issue regarding drawing from the wrong wall as quoted: "During hanchan 1, a player at my table kan and drew from the wrong wall. The other players at the table and I immediately called the judges over and let them know about the situation. I believe this should have been a sho chombo, based on the PDF shared with RNO 2026 tournament participants. The PDF states very clearly that this is a case of sho chombo. Surprisingly, the judges decided it was only a warning and asked us to continue the game. As soon as the game ended, I checked the PDF, talked to the judges, and let them know that I believed they had made the wrong judging decision. This was then flagged to the head judge of the tournament. Before hanchan 6, the head judge talked to me. We discovered many discrepancies between the PDF shared with all tournament participants, the official training documents shared with all judges, and the unofficial training documents shared with all judges. We also discovered that the judges at hanchan 1 misunderstood the situation and assumed that the player at my table only touched the tile. Still, in fact, the player fully lifted the tile, moved it across the table, and then put it back. The judges made the wrong judging decision based on the wrong assumption about the situation."
- A player made these observations regarding judging (quoted) regarding the above situation:

    - There are discrepancies between the PDF shared with RNO 2026 tournament participants, the official ruling documents shared with the judging team, and the unofficial ruling documents shared with the judging team.
    - The judging team is referencing important official ruling documents, but they are not accessible to the RNO 2026 tournament participants prior to/ during/ after the tournament event.
    - The judge at hanchan 1 misunderstood the situation and details and made the decision based on false assumptions and information.
    - Correcting judging errors is difficult based on the event system.
- And offered these suggestions:
    - Discrepancies between the documents shared with the tournament participants and the ones shared with the judging team should be minimized as much as possible. When discrepancies are discovered, judging decisions should follow the documents shared with the tournament participants, instead of being based on the judges' assumptions or documents that are not accessible to the tournament participants.
    - All official ruling documents referenced by the judging team should be shared and accessible to the tournament participants prior to the tournament event.
    - The judges should not use their assumptions and should minimize making false decisions based on false assumptions and information.
    - Correcting judging errors should be easier, especially in these cases; the players have been communicating with the judging team as promptly as possible. The use of the Swiss shuffling system/scoring system should not be the reason for reluctance in correcting judging errors.
- 35 total chombos, 47 total sho chombos. Some complaints were made in general towards the saikouisen rules as it's meant to be played in an all-professionals setting and might be a bit too strict in an open.
- Not all were complaints! We also had lots of good feedback!
    - The venue is accessible (had an elevator) and the space is comfortable and bright
    - Staff was helpful
    - Bottled water was nice
    - Pairings were easy to find, and tables were well marked
    - Information dissemination was great
    - Games generally started on time
    - Air conditioning was good the entire time (hooray no fire in the a/c unit this year!)
    - Free play was super fun and the side events were popular

Observer Personal Summary:

Congrats to the team for running a great tournament. This is really the tournament to strive to be. Most rounds started on time, there were plenty of staff, and the hosting of 256 players is no small feat. The venue worked well with how many people there were, and the staff were professional and got the tournament moving along.