

Observer report for Cherry Blossom Tournament (RCR – MERS1)

Observer: Robert Rijnders

Date: Feb. 27, 2010

Place: Nijmegen

Website or other source(s) of information: Website + additional newsletters

Participants: 60 (NL, DK, FI, DE, FR, GB, PT, BE)

Playing schedule: 4 rounds of 90 minutes

Location: de Vereeniging – nice spacey venue (can hold up to 100 players)

Equipment: Mahjong tables (some a bit wobbly, but in general okay), small(er) sets with numerical – these traditional sets are just fine, even when you're used to playing with big tiles

Refereeing: Sjef Strik and Martin Rep acted as referee by turn. No problems, other than one complaint that 'Ippatsu' is not a valid term for mahjong ('Ron' or 'Tsumo' should be used). For the complaining player (Frank Rostved) this was not handled adequately (see next page)

Complaints: See above and next page

Information / communication during the tournament: No visible clock, but this was the first official (MERS) tournament where the gong was sounded 15 minutes before the end of the round: current hands were then to be finished, after which one more hand would have to be played (and finished, regardless of the 90 minutes deadline). Scores / standings were available in a timely matter

Sessions: -

Catering: Vouchers (2) for all players for a drink or a sandwich – additional f&b at own expense available at the bar.

Prices: 1 – 3 and the special 'Frans Roquas Trophy' for the winner

Conclusion: As usual a smooth tournament – the relaxed atmosphere probably contributes to the still growing popularity of Riichi in Europe ☺

To Observer Robert Rijnders

In the first round, a Dutch player made the call "ippatsu" for going out. I called referee Sjef Strik - and told that it wasn't a valid call - so the shown hand was dead. Sjef told that it was ok - "a special Dutch rule" - so we played on as nothing was wrong.

In break of round 1 and 2, I complained to both referees Sjef and Martin Rep, that the decision wasn't "by the EMA Riichi rules" (3.3.10/11). No changes made and information to all (foreign) players. Another player made the same call in round 2!!

After round 3, Martin Rep told me, that I was right about the rule "going out call", but still no changes/information made.

I also discovered that many Dutch players forgot to rotate the tile on a melded set to whom who discarded the tile - as said in rule 3.3.5. Somehow it disturbed my concentration!!

What to do - next time I discover players/referees breaking the rules??

By the way, it was a good tournament.

Regards,
Frank Rostved

Note from the observer:

While Frank is absolutely correct that the only valid terms to be used are 'Ron' and 'Tsumo', it is not usual in Riichi tournaments to make a (big) point out of it. Contrary to MCR, where announcing mahjong with for instance the term 'self pick' will lead to a dead hand if the referee is called, this is not common in RCR. As a result of this, it is not in the rules as a 'violation' as it is in MCR – this may have to be changed, according to what EMA decides.

However, I feel that the complaint has not been handled adequately. There is no such thing as 'a special Dutch rule' and it is certainly not common for all players to use that term (although Sjef argues that the Dutch have been taught this, I for one am not aware of this). As a matter of fact, most players choose 'mahjong' to be on the safe side, as they are uncertain about which (Japanese) term to use. Martin and or Sjef should have used another explanation for their ruling, but I guess the bottom line is that they felt this to be a 'petty complaint'.

To be fair: I was informed by Martin about it and my initial reaction also was 'so what?' But as stated above, Frank is correct and it will be dealt with in the next release of the rulebook.

The point on the tiles not being rotated correctly is of greater impact – players should stick to that rule, as it is vital for the game. Probably some players stick to the idea that as it is useless in MCR, it's probably useless in RCR as well. This should be handled by the referee, but Frank did not make a call on this issue.