DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS
FOURTH ANNUAL OPEN TOURNAMENT

RETURN TO THE STARLESS SEA

Bride of Cyclops Con 2020

PLAYER PACK

GOODMAN GAMES

INTRODUCTION

Returning for 2020: The DCC team tournament! For many years our tournaments were the stuff of legends, and now they're back under DCC RPG rules! Return to the Starless Sea is the fourth official Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG Open Tournament for ~~Gen Con~~ *Bride of Cyclops Con* 2020.

The earth shudders as a vortex of purple clouds swirls above the screaming keep. Short-lived towers of stone burst toward the sky and then melt back down while spectral faces howl in the lightning. You and a hundred peasant allies prepare to storm the nightmarish castle. Centuries ago, your gongfarmer ancestors stormed this castle, and now you Return to the Starless Sea!

Return to the Starless Sea is a competitive, scored, two-round tournament. Teams of five players throw their level 0 parties against the horrors of the keep, and the highest-scoring teams advance to round two. The winning team claims a plaque of immortality on the Gong of Doom, wizard van belt buckle trophies, and bragging rights for the rest of their natural and unnatural born lives! In addition, every player receives a patch commemorating them as members of the gongfarmer battalion.

Tournament dungeon crawls are different from normal DCC RPG modules in that they follow the tournament play structure. Rounds are timed, teams are awarded points based on their accomplishments in the adventure, and top-scoring teams advance to the next round. This player pack will familiarize you with the basic concepts of tournament play.

Don't worry if you don't have a team; we'll assign you one. Some basic proficiency with Roll20 is appreciated, but not required. Get those virtual dice ready and start making sacrifices to the Luck Gods. You're going to need all the help you can get!

CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS YEAR'S TOURNAMENTS

A number of changes from previous tournaments have been made to accommodate this year's setting, which are highlighted below. See specific sections detailed later in the Player Pack for more information on the changes:

- Two rounds instead of three (p. 3).
- Three flights in Round 1 (p. 3).
- Top teams from each flight advance to finals (p. 3).
- Tournament games will use Roll20 and Discord to support virtual play (p. 3)
- New rules for VTT (Virtual Table Top) tournaments for this year's setting (p. 5).

SCHEDULE

This year's elimination-style tournament will take place over two rounds with the Round 1 games scheduled for Friday and Saturday morning, and the finals on Saturday night. This year the teams will be composed of five players, and Round 1 will feature more than 20 games over three flights. As a change from previous years, the top scoring team(s) from **each** first round flight will advance to the final round held on Saturday evening (see the schedule below for the number of advancing teams from each flight). All games will take place virtually using Roll20 and Discord.

A player meeting will be held on Thursday, October 15th at 10 pm Eastern, the day before the official tournament start. All tournament participants signed up for games are encouraged to attend as tournament staff will be going over the information in the player's pack and will be available to answer questions from participants. The tournament will officially kick off the first day of the convention at 12:00 pm Eastern with the start of the first round one games.

Finally, the closing ceremonies will be held on Sunday at 10:00 pm Eastern over the Goodman Games Twitch channel - where the winners of the tournament will be announced!

	Time EDT	Where	Advancing Teams
Thursday, Oct 15th			
Player Meeting	10 – 11 pm	Zoom	-
Friday, Oct 16th			
Round 1, Flight 1	12 – 4 pm	Roll20 and Discord	1 (+1st Alternate)
Round 2, Flight 2	9 pm – 1 am	Roll20 and Discord	3 (+3rd Alternate)
Saturday, Oct 17th			
Round 1, Flight 3	12 – 4 pm	Roll20 and Discord	2 (+2nd Alternate)
Finals	9 pm – 1 am	Roll20 and Discord	-
Sunday, Oct 18th			
Closing Ceremonies	10 – 11 pm	Goodman Games Twitch	Tournament Winners Announced!

PLAYER GUIDELINES

Scoring system: This is a points-based tournament. Advancement from one round to the next is determined by the teams that have the most points, and they do not carry over from round to round. Additionally, a team that quits early will not advance regardless of points scored (see **Don't Quit Early**).

Earning points: In the course of your adventure, your team will earn points by exploring locations and progressing through the levels of the tournament. The scoring system awards efficiency in solving the encounters within the adventure. You will lose points for unleashing traps or dangers that could have been avoided, and for PC deaths.

If a team advances between rounds: All their slain PCs are miraculously recovered and all PCs begin the next round at full hit points. Disapproval resets between rounds; however, any disapproval effects are retained for the duration of the tournament. However, used equipment, burned stats, and lost spells are not regained between rounds. **To reiterate, burned stats are not recovered between rounds.**

Rolling for others: Players are not allowed to roll dice for other players. If a player is absent and they are required to make a roll, the party can opt to wait (wasting time) or skip, but no "team rolling."

Time is of the essence: The adventure is a dangerous, challenging place. Each room is a mystery unto itself. It is unlikely that any tournament group will complete all of level one before the four-hour time limit is up. The same goes for later levels. Therefore, time is of the essence. The more you explore before the time limit expires, the more points you have the opportunity to score, and the greater your chances of advancement. Groups that advance to the next round automatically start at the beginning of the next level of the adventure.

Starting gong: The tournament gong will be used to keep official time. Rounds start and end when the (virtual) tournament gong goes off.

Games that start late: A game that starts late because of a late or missing player is allowed a 10-minute grace period after the listed start time. After that 10 minutes, each minute lost is counted against the four-hour time limit. For example, a game is scheduled to start at 9:00 am. A player is late so it starts at 9:05. The game can go to 1:05 pm with no penalty. If the late player had instead showed up at 9:25, however, the game's four-hour time limit would be considered expired at 1:10 (four hours past the expiration of the grace period at 9:10), so the players effectively lose 15 minutes of playing time.

Starting without a player: After the 10 minute grace period, teams may opt to continue waiting or to begin their session. If they wish to continue waiting, this time counts toward the four-hour limit. Otherwise, the absentee player is declared a no-show and that player's character is removed from play for that and subsequent rounds.

Trading items: Your team can trade items between themselves as they see fit, but only once the round (and clock) has started. Armor is fitted to the physique of a specific character, and cannot be traded.

Don't quit early: At any point during the round, a player may quit, but it doesn't 'take effect' immediately. If you are in combat, one complete round of combat (from initiative X to initiative X) is fought. If you quit as a trap is sprung, any effects of that trap are fully resolved. If you quit during a save or check, you are considered to have failed it. Characters of players that quit early are treated as having been slain, with the associated point penalty.

If an entire team quits early, the team is automatically eliminated and does not advance.

Minimum age: Players must be 13 years old to participate in the tournament.

Minimum team size: teams must have at least three players to play. Teams that qualify to advance must have a minimum of three players available to play in subsequent rounds. If an advancing team does not have the minimum number of players, the next qualifying alternate team will be selected to advance in their place.

Words to the wise:

- If you are on a team with people you met at the tournament, it is a very good idea to get their contact information in case you advance; this has cost teams in the past!
- To level the playing field, some rolls (like damage) have predetermined results.

VTT RULES FOR 2020

The 2020 tournament includes the following new rules for the funnel setting and virtual play.

PCs and pre-generated characters: Unlike in previous years, teams will not be issued characters in advance. Each player will be assigned four random 0-level characters at the start of the round.

PC death: For the funnel, there is no bleeding out or recovering the body. A PC whose hit points are reduced to zero or less is irrevocably dead.

Replacing lost PCs: During the funnel, there will be opportunities for teams to replace PCs in the event of multiple deaths or even a TPK. There are two ways for a party to get replacement PCs: **from the encounter** or **between encounters**. As replacement PCs may have an impact to scoring, the judge will note when a replacement PC incurs a scoring penalty or not.

- Encounter-specific replacement PCs: Some encounters have peasants that can be rescued as replacement PCs. They are not always obvious; some are hidden and some require going off the beaten path. However, all have some risk associated with gaining them; the risk varies by encounter but can be quite high. The number of PCs lost in the rescue could equal, or exceed, the number rescued. If a party recovers an encounter-specific PC by overcoming the risks, **they may have that PC with no scoring penalty** even if it exceeds a party size of 20, which means a player may have more than four PCs if the extras are recovered in this way.
- Replacement PCs from the peasant horde: Between encounters, players can opt to refill their ranks from the invading peasants streaming through the halls and grounds. A player may only choose this option if they have less than four PCs; once they have four, this option is not available. **Replenishing PCs between encounters incurs a scoring penalty**. Since there is a scoring penalty for replacing PCs in between encounters, some players will decline the opportunity to refill their ranks to four PCs. This is fine, albeit risky, and might be a good strategy in some cases.
- TPKs and replacement PCs: If the party TPKs in an encounter, the judge will distribute four new PCs to each player and start the party just beyond the encounter's exit. The encounter is considered finished and looting of dead PCs is prohibited. For scoring purposes, this counts as replenishing PCs between encounters as noted above. Teams should note that there is a "TPK" scoring penalty in addition to that applied to refilling their ranks.

- Running out of PCs: Finally, every table has a finite number of 0-level character sheets. An especially unlucky group of players could use up all of them. In this case, the party may no longer replace PCs.

One token per player (generally): To accelerate play in the VTT environment, Round 1 mostly employs a single token per player rather than per PC. All of a player's PCs can act in round, but for simplicity that player's "cohort" is represented with a single token. If necessary, the judge will make a copy of the player's token to represent the separated PC or have the player draw on the map the position of the PC.

Initiative per player (cohort): To accelerate play in the VTT environment, initiative is determined via one roll per player's cohort rather than once per PC. The player uses the largest Agility modifier of their PCs. For the funnel, rolling d16 initiative for a PC with a 2h-weapon is ignored.

Macros and speeding play: To provide a uniform, fair experience across tournament games, judges will not use their own Roll20 macros in their sessions. However, players are welcome to use macros they write in game to speed play. Players can also speed play by rolling all their PCs' unmodified attacks at once, e.g., "/roll 4d20". This will display all four d20 rolls before adding them together. However, before rolling, the player must designate the correspondence of PCs to the order of the rolls, "Hugh is the first roll, Shanna is the second roll, etc." This avoids *ad hoc* assignments of the PC with the highest damage to the highest attack roll.

THE TOURNAMENT IN DCC RPG

Bride of Cyclops Con 2020 is the fourth time that the DCC open tournament format is being run using DCC RPG rules. The judges have discussed the rules and module extensively prior to "going live" at the convention. In the interests of consistency and fair play, we are disclosing in advance how certain game elements will be handled.

Fair warning - these rules will be run as stated here during the tournament, regardless of official errata, customer service opinion, or what's in the rulebooks.

Dice chain: The tournament uses the official dice chain rules from the DCC RPG core book as follows. In addition, the maximum die for dice chain bonuses is a d30:

d3 – d4 – d5 – d6 – d7 – d8 – d10 – d12 – d14 – d16 – d20 – d24 – d30

Judges do not reveal DC, AC, etc.: For tournament play, judges are instructed not to reveal the numerical target for rolls. Players are welcome to deduce targets, but they cannot know ahead of time what they are. They need to spend resources such as Luck without knowing how much to spend. And, Luck must be spent before knowing whether the numerical target was achieved. Once a player spends Luck, they can no longer modify the roll.

Monster fumbles and crits: If a monster fumbles, it does not roll on the fumble table. Instead, it receives a -2 penalty to its next attack. Similarly, when a monster inflicts a crit, a standard crit result is applied rather than rolling on the specific monster crit table.

Mighty deeds: Players can describe the mighty deed however they like, but the judge will always apply within a specific set of parameters that best fits the description and the desired result. Results always last only until the end of the following round.

Divine aid: The forces of gods are either indifferent or are weakened over the vast distances of the multiverse where the PCs now find themselves. A cleric must succeed on a DC 15 spell check, and his disapproval range automatically increases by 10 whether the casting was successful or not.

The gods are unable to answer specific requests – and can only hope that their aid serves their devotees. So that teams compete fairly, the results of casting are static. Each time the cleric successfully invokes divine aid he must choose one of the following:

- The caster receives the blessing of their god. The cleric, or any one PC the caster designates, receives +3d to a single roll. The bonus may be held until needed, but does not carry over between rounds;
- OR the caster, or a PC he designates, may re-attempt a roll that failed the previous round (for instance, a failed recover the body or spell check).

Disapproval: Disapproval results are standardized to reduce the variation between teams.

Sacrifices: Due to the limited divine influence, a cleric may not make sacrifices to his deity in order to regain favor.

Lay on hands: If a cleric's lay on hands effect has more HD than the PC, all HD are rolled with the best result(s) being taken.

Invoke patron: Your experience tells you that patrons are loathe to directly intervene in the affairs of men under such conditions that are present in the tournament, limiting what aid they will provide. On successful casting:

- The caster receives +2d to a single roll of their choice. This cannot be given to another PC.
- OR the caster regains one lost spell.

Manifestations: Manifestations are not used for wizards or elves.

Mercurial magic: Mercurial magic effects are not used for wizards or elves.

Spell checks: Wizards and elves may choose lesser manifestations of a spell by burning a point of Luck if not normally allowed.

Corruptions: Are used but have no mechanical benefits or penalties.

Healing and recuperation: The frantic push of the peasant horde into the keep prevents the party's ability to rest and recuperate. You will not be able to sleep or recuperate in the tournament or during rounds to heal or regain spells.

Death and dying: A bleeding-out character can be saved from death by either applying a magical means or by staunching his wounds. Both these life-saving methods require an action by an ally working to save the dying character. If a magical means is applied, the PC regains the normal number of hit points (starting from zero) and is pulled back from the precipice of death. He awakens and may act normally on the following round.

A bleeding-out character saved by another staunching his wounds remains incapacitated and is considered to be at zero hit points and unconscious. He cannot take any action and is at the mercy of his enemies. An unconscious PC with zero hit points is utterly defenseless and can be killed by an enemy administering a coup de grâce.

Remember that a PC who is saved from bleeding out loses 1 point of Stamina. A PC who has died is eligible for recovering the body, unless eaten, utterly disintegrated, or otherwise mentioned in the adventure text. The PC must succeed on a Luck check. If successful, they are restored to 1 hp, lose 1 point of Strength, Agility, or Stamina (determined randomly), **and** suffer a -4 penalty to all rolls for the rest of the tournament round.

Ability loss: Whenever a character suffers a loss to an ability score such as through a critical hit, being reduced to 0 hp, or spellburn, the new ability modifier applies to all future actions and saving throws that are based on that ability. However, character traits such as max hit points, known spells, and languages that were determined by the original ability modifier are not retroactively impacted. For tournament play, ability scores of 3 or less are considered to have a -3 ability modifier.

A character who has an ability score reduced to 0, by whatever cause, is considered slain and irrecoverable. This includes players who voluntarily expend ability points through spellburn or by burning Luck. In those cases, the character is considered to have expended themselves to perform whatever last action the ability loss was directed into (e.g., casting a spell or burning Luck to add to a die roll).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I didn't get in a game! Will you add more slots?

Possibly. We are currently limiting the games to the round one games listed in the tabletop event grid. However, check the event listing to see if additional game slots have been added.

In addition, individual teams may have no-shows in the first round. If teams are able to add players, we will fill them on a first-come, first served basis. Events will be updated as close to game time as possible to allow for late drops and registrations. Filling no-show seats is not permitted in the second round.

How do I advance in the tournament?

Advancement is based on points scored in the round. The highest-ranked team(s) from each flight will advance. Teams that quit early are eliminated regardless of points.

How do I score points?

Points are scored for exploring the levels, solving puzzles, defeating monsters, avoiding obstacles, acquiring items, and learning the secrets of the adventure.

When is an area "explored"?

Your judge determines this, but in general it means you interacted meaningfully with the encounter of that area. Poking in your nose and leaving does not count as having "explored" the area.

Do I need to preregister for later rounds?

No. Round 2 appears in preregistration strictly for scheduling purposes. You do not need to preregister.

Do I need a generic event ticket for later rounds?

No. Advancement automatically qualifies the participants for the following round.

What if I have a time conflict with the Round 2 slot?

This is a team tournament, and advancement occur as a team. The minimum number of players for a team to advance is three, otherwise that team forfeits its slot. The slot is filled by the next-highest scoring team from the previous round.

Can someone take my place on the team?

No substitutions are allowed. Sorry.

What happens to my character(s), then?

If you're absent, your character is considered lost in the adventure forever. You lose points for his or her death, and the character is out of the game.

What if I'm late?

There is a ten-minute grace period after the official round start time. After it passes, the game either starts with whichever players are present or is forfeited and passed on to the alternate team if insufficient players are present.

How do I know if my team is an alternate team?

We will announce alternate teams with the advancement information.
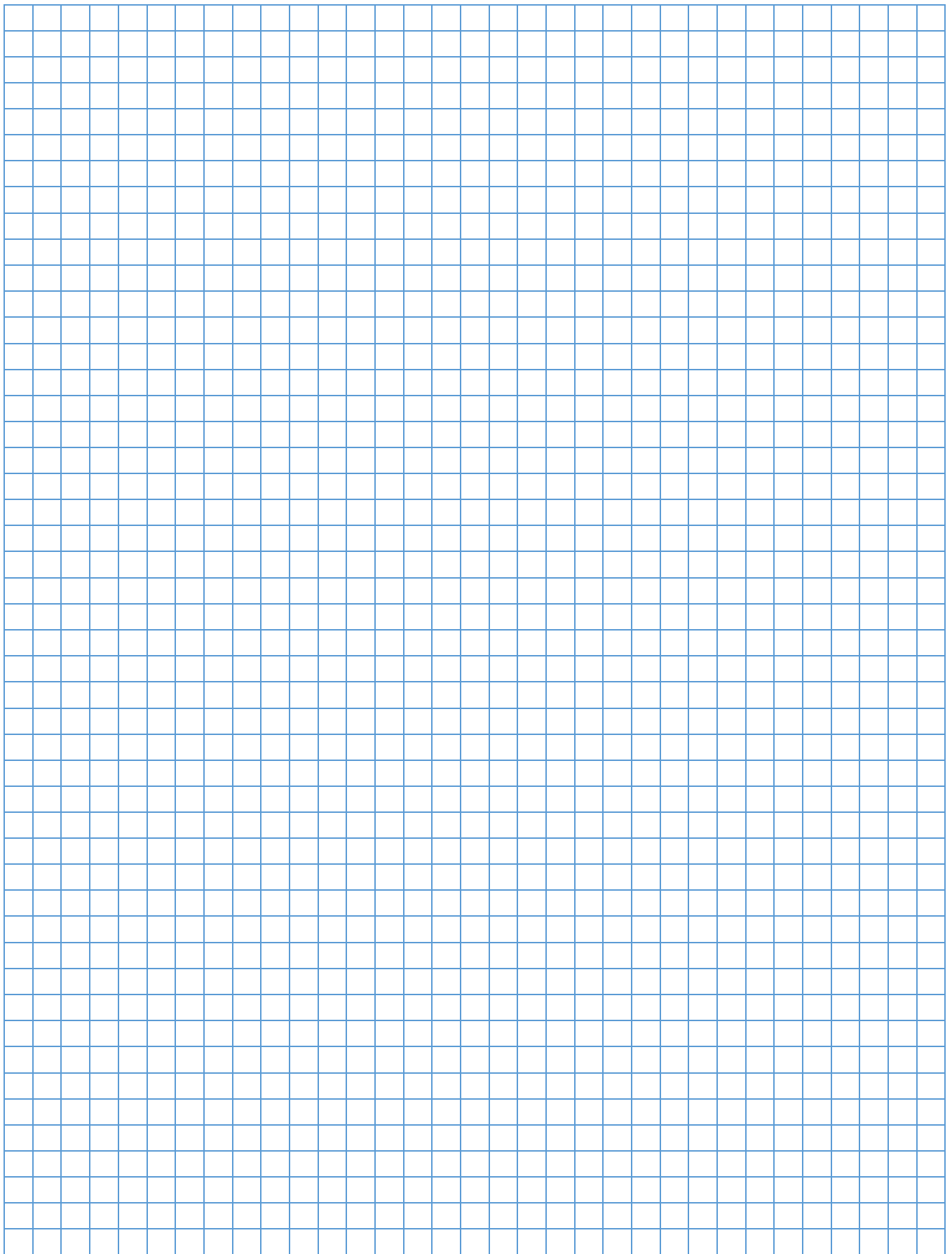
When do results get announced?

Advancement will be posted in the tournament Discord channel and emailed to all teams. As advancement is flight-specific, Round 1 advancement will be announced after each flight, usually within an hour of the end of the flight.

What if I spot an error on the character sheet?

Any errors are unintentional, but the pre-generated characters are played as they are.

What if I disagree with my judge?

Judges have the final say and the full support of the Tournament Organizer. If you disagree with your judge, accept his or her ruling. Afterward, feel free to bring it to the attention of the tournament organizer. Disruptive or disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. The judge reserves the right to disqualify a team or individual that gets out of hand. That said, we've never had to disqualify a team, which says much about the caliber of sportsmanship the tournament teams display.

NOTES