

Formalizing A Ladder Tournament: Revisiting Rokoszk's Proposal

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In the Winter, 1989 issue of the **NIRSA Journal**, Francis Rokoszk made a most interesting proposal toward formalizing a ladder tournament. Rokoszk suggested that "the formalized ladder is a fun alternative to traditional tournament formats, and it is particularly useful in recreational and instructional situations where participants play people of their own abilities and no one is eliminated from play" (p. 18). This author's experience with the use of his proposed format supports his position. His proposed point system, however, has some major difficulties that need revision, and some of the procedural suggestions could be improved to facilitate ease of implementation.

Rokoszk recommended placing players on the ladder by random draw. This idea was tested. The test of any proposal is to see how well it stands when pushed to an extreme situation. For example, in the case of seeding for this tournament, what would happen if the seeding order happened to position players on the draw sheet in the exact opposite order than they are likely to complete the tournament? If the last place player is placed on the top of the draw, while the number one player is placed on the bottom, the second best player is placed on the second rung, and so on, to achieve results which best reflect the players abilities, the tournament would require many rounds. This is because some of the lower level players earn many undeserved points while the higher seeded players earn inordinately few points in the opening rounds. In a 20 entry tournament, as is shown in Figure 1, 98 rounds would be required. Obviously this is undesirable.

A solution to this problem can be developed if the earlier rounds are seen somewhat as qualifying rounds and, therefore, are scored lower. Calculations were performed using three solutions. One method, if there are 20 rounds, involves giving point value for the first ten rounds (half way through the tournament), and then

doubling the point value for the remainder of the tournament (referred to as "1 then 2" in Figure 1); A second solution would make the first four rounds worth the original point value, the next four rounds double, the next four rounds triple, and so on (referred to as 11112222 in Figure 1); The third solution would involve making the first two rounds worth one point, the next two rounds double, the next two rounds triple, and so on.

The findings, as illustrated in Figure 1, show that the first proposal significantly decreases the number of

games required. The second proposal decreases the number of games required even more substantially, and the third proposal does not decrease the number of rounds from that calculated for the second. Proposal two appears to provide for the fewest games. It is of interest to note that, when using proposal two, the number of rounds required equals the number of entries.

When numbers were randomly

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assigned to the computer calculations, the number of games required is similar to the results received when the order was reversed. To keep the number of games to a reasonable number, a tournament director should use the scores as is for the first four rounds, double them for the next four rounds, triple them for the next four rounds and so on.

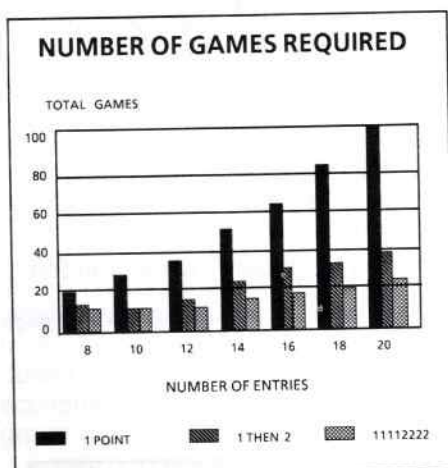


Figure 1. Number of games required using different scoring methods

The preparation of the draw sheet is also time consuming. To assist the tournament director, a draw sheet and a recording sheet have been provided for up to 20 entries. With some cutting and pasting the draw sheet can quickly be redesigned to accommodate a different number of entries. The recording sheet is scored the same way as in bowling; the score for each round is placed in the top corner with the cumulative score placed below.

When moving players on the draw sheet following their contest, it is best to have winners circle their names. Following this, the rule of thumb is that a winner will always move up one rung while losers move down to the next available rung. The only exception to this occurs when a player on the bottom rung of a bracket wins and the players on the top rung of the bracket above wins, then the lower winner will move up two rungs.

Finally, it should be noted that no numerical manipulation will place the players in their exact seeded position. An example of this, using four entries and counting points at face value, is shown in Figure 2. Since rounds 5 and

6 would be repeated, it is not possible for the second best player to achieve more points than the third best player since both receive one point every other round. Although players will finish close to their pre-tournament

seeding, this tournament should not be used where final position is of importance; otherwise some players may be unfairly positioned because of their starting position on the tournament draw sheet.

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		Player positions											
		Rounds	1	2	3	4	5	6					
Points	4	4	3	3	1	1	1	1					
	3	3	4	1	3	2	3	3					
2	2	2	1	4	2	3	2	2					
	1	1	2	2	4	4	4	4					
		Points											
Player													
1.	2	+	1	+	4	+	3	+	3	+	3	=	16
2.	0	+	0	+	2	+	1	+	0	+	1	=	4
3.	4	+	3	+	0	+	0	+	1	+	0	=	8
4.	0	+	0	+	0	+	0	+	0	+	0	=	0

Figure 2. Scoring for four entries

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Though Rokosz also presented a procedure for tournaments with an odd number of entries, this is to be discouraged. Not only does this mean that the top player and bottom player miss a game every other round, but the movement of winners and losers is rather awkward.

As a recreational tournament, Rokosz's formalization of a ladder tournament is hard to beat. It is hoped that the draw sheet and recording sheet will help the director implement and use this tournament format. With the suggested revisions, the format will certainly fulfill the purpose of "a fun

alternative . . . where participants play people of their own abilities and no one is eliminated from play."

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References

Rokosz, F. (1989). How to formalize a ladder structure for tournament play. *NIRSA Journal*, 13(2), 14-18.

TOURNAMENT: _____

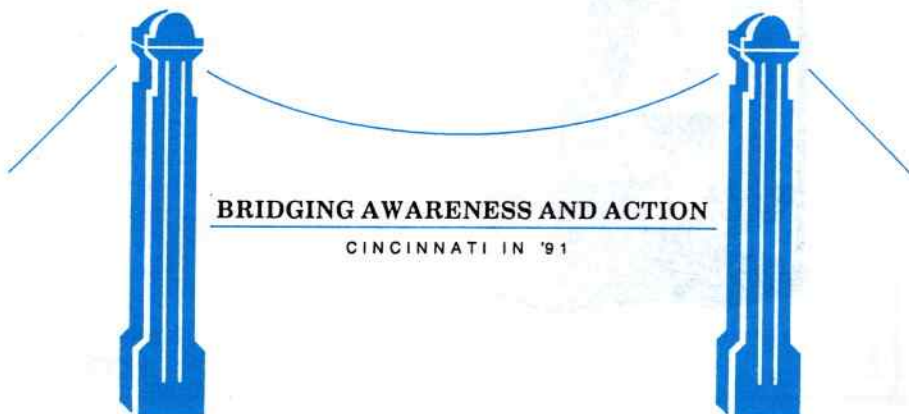
DAY: _____

100	80	60	40	20				
95	76	57	38	19				
90	72	54	36	18				
85	68	51	34	17				
80	64	48	32	16				
75	60	45	30	15				
70	56	42	28	14				
65	52	39	26	13				
60	48	36	24	12				
55	44	33	22	11				
50	40	30	20	10				
45	36	27	18	9				
40	32	24	16	8				
35	28	21	14	7				
30	24	18	12	6				
25	20	15	10	5				
20	16	12	8	4				
15	12	9	6	3				
10	8	6	4	2				
5	4	3	2	1				

Figure 3. Draw Sheet

NAME	Date																			Total
1																				
2																				
3																				
4																				
5																				
6																				
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Figure 4. Recording Sheet



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