ENDGAME

SCRABBLE
ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

Sherwin Rodrigues after his victory at the Delhi Open; he went on to become the first winner under the new All-India National Championship format

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Foreword

Dear Members,

The year gone by was highly eventful for Scrabble in India, as landmark feats, fascinating results, media exposure, and new initiatives kept the bandwagon rolling. There were 46 days of rated tournament play in the Indian Scrabble year, with a mix of major events and one-dayers providing players and fans with a sizeable range.

The last three months of 2025 encapsulated the essence appropriately, as close finishes at the Delhi Open and the Deccan Cup highlighted the ever-rising standards among players of all levels, not to mention the WSL, which displayed the vibrancy of the sport and the players. Newbie divisions held along with the majors, one-dayers, and club sessions attracted promising Scrabble talents across the country.

Following his historic title win at the World Youth Championship, Madhav Gopal Kamath clashed with Sherwin Rodrigues at the Delhi Open, where Sherwin came up trumps by winning the last three games. The duo faced off seven times there, adding to what has become the most keenly contested battle in Indian Scrabble. The final tourney of the year, the Deccan Cup, could not have been closer, as Irfan Siddiqui defended his title after a three-way scramble at the top was decided only by spread.

As the year drew to a close, a new format for India's National Championship was finalised, with an emphasis on performances across all major tournaments in the year. Besides, new initiatives such as the SAI Title System and rewarding the most improved players of the year will go a long way in incentivising established and upcoming players alike. On the global front, the election of Sudhir Kamath as the WESPA Treasurer and Indian presence in WESPA sub-committees bodes well.

As far as the number of editions is concerned, Endgame is out of its teens, so to speak, with this being its 20th edition. Here's thanking all the contributors.

Wishing you all a happy and Scrabble-filled 2026!

Rustom Deboo
Editor

Scrabble reminiscences with GM Sherwin

by Rustom Deboo

*If there is one name that has been synonymous with Scrabble in India over the best part of the last two decades, it is that of **Sherwin Rodrigues**, India's most prolific Scrabbler. Nearly 25 years after playing his first international tournament as a 12-year-old, he continues to be one of the world's top players – he was recently among 25 players to be awarded with the title of Grandmaster in the inaugural list of WESPA titles.*

In this detailed chat with Endgame, Sherwin shares about his Scrabble journey and the moments that were instrumental in his rise towards the top, among other insights.

Your first ever WESPA-rated tournament was back in 2001, which means you have been playing international tourneys for nearly 25 years now... but your first tournament overall was even before that... can you share how you became acquainted with Scrabble, and about your very first tournament experience?

I remember that as a kid, I would enjoy solving the jumbled words in the newspaper along with my mom. I always had a liking for anagramming and word building. During one of my summer vacation visits to Mumbai, while observing my grandparents and mom playing Scrabble, I suggested a

move to my grandfather. He was impressed as it scored more than the options he thought of, and he encouraged me to start playing the game.

Sherwin at the 2013 Scrabble Champions Trophy (World Scrabble Championship) in Prague

Soon after, my dad saw an ad in an Omani newspaper about Oman's National Scrabble Championship in March 1999, and thought it would be a good opportunity for me to take part. That was my first tournament. I was in the under-10 category and didn't quite know what to expect, but I managed to win all seven games with a record spread at that time. Winning this tourney in a convincing manner made the experience exciting,

and motivated me to pursue Scrabble further.

A newspaper cutting featuring a report on Oman's National Championship in 1999. Sherwin made his tournament debut here, in the under-10 category

Your win at the 2025 Delhi Open happened to be your 20th WESPA-rated tournament title... it speaks about your undeniable consistency over the years. What does it take, in your opinion and experience, to consistently maintain this level and further improve upon the gains?

Thanks for letting me know... I had no idea it was my 20th WESPA title!

I think it's extremely important to have a solid foundation when one starts playing Scrabble. Word study in the formative years is imperative. Strategic thinking in the game becomes a lot easier when you know more words because the other aspects of the game (rack balancing, endgame planning, bingo spotting, setups, and so on) become much easier to manage. Word study usually pays off in the long run. So, the earlier you put in the effort to learn the important

lists, the better it works for you over time. Apart from word study, it's important to be able to analyse board situations well.

Beyond word study and strategy, I believe having good tournament temperament is crucial. It's very easy to get affected by a loss because of a costly mistake or to get carried away with some big wins, but the ability to remain emotionally steady from game to game does support long-term consistency.

From the 2000 Oman National Championship, where Sherwin won the Junior First Division. He is seated in the middle row, second from left

You came within 94 points of winning the recent Deccan Cup on spread... has this been your closest near-miss, or do you recall a closer instance that particularly sticks out in memory?

I can't seem to remember if I've had a closer miss; I believe this might have been my closest. Had a fun last game with Irfan Siddiqui too – got the chance to play the eight-letter word in XBLNO?HC.

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Can you share about your first tournament victory? What do you remember most about it?

My first major tournament win was back in 2003, when I became the Oman National Champion at 13. It was a one-day tournament, and I think I won eight out of nine games. At that time, I was simply thrilled to have played well and defeat the top players; I had been competing with the adults for a year, but had never won a tournament. So, it felt really special winning the title and the rolling trophy.

Tell us about your breakout moments over years, which you think were instrumental in catapulting you into the top tier of world Scrabble...

The top three moments would probably be:

- **1ˢᵗ Mumbai International, 2003**

This was one of my earliest major international tourneys. Competing against a bunch of leading Indian and international players was a huge step up. I finished third, and as it turned out, gained nearly 400 WESPA rating points. This performance significantly boosted my confidence and standing.

- **Scrabble Champions Trophy (World Scrabble Championship), 2013**

This will always remain one of my favourite tournaments. I remember struggling on the initial couple of days of the tournament, and it was really hard to stay in the game. But I had a thrilling comeback, winning 11 out of my last 12 games to eventually finish ninth. This was my first top-ten finish at the Worlds, and it couldn't have come in better fashion.

- **iGATE International, 2010**

This tournament featured the world's No. 1 (Nigel Richards) and No. 2 (Pakorn Nemitrmansuk) at the time. Going into the final game, the three of us were two wins clear of the field. I eventually finished second, and the experience of competing so closely at that level was incredibly exciting.

Sherwin along with fellow players Nigel Richards, Pakorn Nemitrmansuk and Komol Panyasoponlert, and a few Scrabble enthusiasts, after the 2010 iGATE International in Bangalore, where he finished second to Nigel

Congratulations on becoming the first All-India National Champion under the new National Championship system... combining the old and new systems, this is the tenth time that you have earned the title of India's national Scrabble champion...

Congrats as well on being one of only 25 Grandmasters in the first list of global titles released by WESPA... how does it feel to achieve these milestones?

Thank you! It feels very satisfying, especially after a few challenging years at the Nationals, where I struggled to keep pace with the top players. This is a strong source of motivation to continue improving. It was also a pleasant surprise for me because I didn't know a new system was being designed.

Likewise, it's definitely a special feeling to be awarded the title of Grandmaster, and knowing that only 25 players made the inaugural list makes it even more meaningful. However, there's still a long way to go for me. I've got to keep studying and working harder, as the standards at the top keep rising. There's always room for improvement.

Winning the KSSA Indian Open in Bangalore in 2023

What are your views about the new National Championship system, which takes into account the performance at all major tournaments in the SAI calendar year? How do you compare it with a standalone National Championship, which had been the norm for many years until now? From the perspective of a player who has won this championship a record number of times, how significant is this change?

I think the new system is excellent. I've never felt that just a single tournament should determine the year's national champion. That's why I previously relied more on rating-based consistency, and believed that it was a better approach to assess representation at the world championships.

This new structure is ideal because it evaluates performance across multiple major tournaments, incorporating consistency as well as peak performance. In my view, this is a balanced and meaningful way to determine the national champion, and definitely the right direction for the sport.

How do you keep in touch with Scrabble practice? What are your preferred study methods and approaches? Does your method change or intensify in the lead-up to a tourney?

Nowadays, I just try to play a few games with HastyBot on Woogles or spend some time solving the daily

challenges on Aerolith. For study, I am old school and have always preferred printouts. However, I have recently discovered WordVault on Aerolith, so I hope to be able to put in some time studying lists there.

When I was younger, I would try to revise certain word lists before tournaments. Now it's harder to devote time towards word study before tournaments.

Who have been your fiercest Scrabble opponents over the years? Which are the players with whom you have enjoyed sparring the most?

The fiercest opponents considering a fair number of games played would be – Alastair Richards, Nigel, and Thacha Koowirat. It goes without saying that Nigel is the GOAT, but I've had exceptionally tough games with both Alastair and Thacha.

In terms of the most enjoyable sparring partners, I've had many fun games with Varisht Hingorani and Udayan Grover. We've played numerous games over the years, and those encounters have always been a pleasure.

Which have been your most memorable or standout words, plays, or moments during a game, across the many games you have played over the years... if you were to pick a few such instances?

For me, the most memorable moments almost always involve spotting longer words on the board.

I enjoy looking for them – there's something incredibly satisfying about seeing them fall into place. A few notable ones would be:
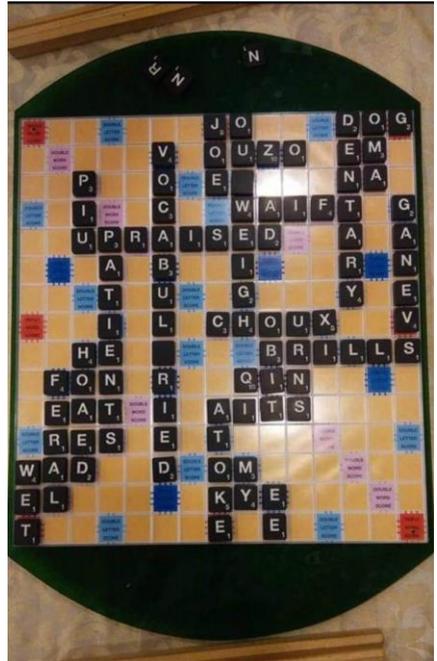
The board featuring the stunning (VOCAB)ULARIED from Sherwin, at Delhi in 2015

- Extending VOCAB to (VOCAB)ULARIED

- Playing (I)DEAL(I)T(I)ES through three Is as a master bingo

- Playing other fun disconnected nines – ME(I)OCY(T)ES, Q(U)I(V)ERIER UNI(T)ARIL(Y) FER(T)ILI(Z)E,

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HA(E)MATE(I)N –
to name a few

- Playing MULTIJET and EXOGAMIC en route to a score of 708

- Spotting the nine-timer with AEGLN?? + F
  (_ _ _ _ F _ _ _)

- And this play… can you spot it? (answer below)

What things about Scrabble do you like the most; what about it keeps bringing you back to better yourself, tournament after tournament?

The fact that each move in a game has interesting options to choose from, the thrill of spotting and playing those low-probability and once-in-a-lifetime words, the chances you take playing words you're unsure of and hoping they stay on the board, the tense moments planning the endgame victory with few seconds left, the comeback games, the thrill of hoping to pick that one tile you need the most and just that happening, the adrenaline rush when you're hoping your opponent does not block your only bingo place… and so many more exciting moments!
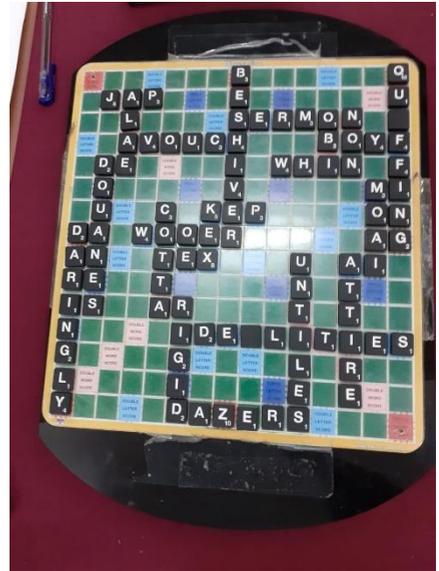
*Peak Scrabble, Sherwin style:
(I)DEAL(I)T(I)ES as a master bingo*

But most importantly, the people. I have had the privilege of meeting an incredible community of players over the years, which make Scrabble tournaments even more fun than the game already is!

Compared to say two decades back, in what ways do you feel Scrabble has evolved as a whole? At this point, what do you feel about the future of Indian Scrabble and global Scrabble, in terms of becoming a mind sport in its own right?

It's great to see how much the game has progressed over the past couple of decades. I believe this is one of the best times for anyone interested in pursuing Scrabble seriously. The availability of resources has grown tremendously; there are powerful study tools, high-quality online content, instructional videos, and global streaming of tournaments. Both internationally and in India, competitive opportunities have expanded significantly, with regular monthly tournaments giving players consistent exposure and match practice.

Second place at the 2024 Sri Lanka Open

In India, SAI and various local clubs have undertaken initiatives to nurture and grow the game, and it's especially encouraging to see young players performing strongly and joining the competitive circuit in increasing numbers.

That said, when it comes to Scrabble being universally recognised as a mainstream mind sport, I feel we are still searching for the right formula to make the game more accessible and engaging for a wider audience.

However, with youth participation steadily rising, there is genuine potential for Scrabble both in India and globally, to continue growing in stature and recognition in the years ahead.

Answer: MECHIT(ZAS)

Endgame Extra:
Indian Scrabble in the news

The Times of India (TOI) featured a detailed article covering various aspects of tournament Scrabble in India on 19th October, with a number of players having been interviewed during the Delhi Open held earlier.

Article on Scrabble in India in the print version of Times of India on 19th October

The article can be read at this link: *Gyttja, Caziques, Mbaqanga Scrabble's now a competitive sport | India News - The Times of India*

Indian Scrabble's Doc and his game recipe

by Anika Dalwani

*One of the pioneers and stalwarts of the competitive Scrabble scene in India, **Varisht Hingorani** continues to be among the topmost Scrabblers in the country and is also an esteemed Scrabble coach. In this interview for Endgame, the Doc, as he is fondly referred to in the Scrabble community, shares about his Scrabble story and his views on mastering the game.*

When did you start playing Scrabble? How were you introduced to it?

I got to know about the existence of tournament Scrabble in December 1997 and started playing then. I had played Scrabble at home with family and friends before that, but never competitively. I saw an ad in the newspaper about a Scrabble tourney in Juhu, Mumbai. I lost two out of the three games I played on a Saturday, and didn't go back the next day. But the spark was lit. I found out more about the game, the words and the rules, and started playing with Mimi, my wife, at home. Luckily, she also loves the game, and we embarked on our Scrabble journey together.

Which was the one key moment in your life that made you want to pursue Scrabble?

In January 2000, I helped organise a two-day tourney in Juhu, which was won by Mohan Chunkath – India's best player by a long distance in those days. Mohan won 14 out of 15 games, and his only loss was to me. This gave me the confidence that I could become a good player and compete with the best.

From the archives – Varisht during his early years of Scrabble

Which is the most memorable game you've played and against whom?

I do not dwell much on my past games, so I don't really remember any particular game that stands out. One of the memorable words I remember is EVERYDAY, which I played as a nine-timer at the 2016 Causeway Challenge and ended up as the highest scoring play of the

tournament. I won a Scrabble bag, which I have been proudly carrying to all tourneys since then.

What are your ideal strategies while playing a game?

Think of a game as a set of puzzles. If you can find the best or one of the top solutions for each puzzle, then you will win more often than you will lose. And, you will at least have the confidence of having done your best.

In a tournament, don't get ahead of yourself. Don't start thinking, 'I need to win by n number of points' or 'XYZ should lose, and then I can climb up in the standings'. Try to apply the mantra of 'one move at a time' and 'one game at a time'. Play the best move you can think of within a reasonable timeframe, keeping time for endgame strategising. Don't dwell on the past, and don't imagine what the future will bring.

What do you consider while practising?

When I play practice games, I try to make sure that I track and score as accurately as I can, because these are the skills that I need to perfect.

Do you prefer playing or teaching Scrabble?

Obviously, I prefer playing Scrabble to teaching, but if I can't play myself, which happens often as my work as a doctor does not permit me to take time off very often, then following a tournament where my students are playing makes up for it. Teaching is slightly frustrating at times.

A newspaper cutting highlighting Varisht's win at the 2007 National Championship in Mumbai

How do you balance Scrabble with work?

I often struggle to balance work and Scrabble. My responsibility towards my patients makes it very difficult for me to take frequent leaves for playing tournaments, so I end up playing very few tournaments. This has always been my regret throughout life.

With fellow Indian players at the 2019 WESPA Championship in Goa

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Has there been anything that made Scrabble difficult for you at any point in your life?

Yes. I have taken two complete breaks from Scrabble, once in 2003-2004 and then in 2009, when I took a break until 2014.

In 2003, I wanted to improve my radiology skills and so took a break, while in 2009, my father's health deteriorated and I could not devote as much time to Scrabble as I would have liked. I resumed playing in 2014 so that I could teach my students better.

I have taken shorter breaks when my mother was not well, but I couldn't miss the WSL (Wordaholix Scrabble League), so kept on playing.

Varisht at the 25th National Championship in Mumbai in 2025 – he was the winner in 2006 and 2007

What advice would you like to give to the younger Scrabble generation?

Scrabble teaches you about the vagaries of life very nicely. You have to ensure that you prepare solidly and do the basics well. You learn very fast that life can turn in any instant. You could draw three Is or the only blank from the bag. You have no control over these things. You learn to face disappointments and also learn tips and tricks to perform better.

You can make umpteen mistakes and yet win by a big margin, while you can play perfect Scrabble and still lose by a mile. You learn to separate the result from the effort and the skill.

Endgame Extra: Know the sevens and eights starting with VAR

Sevens (21)

VARDIES, VARECHS, VAREUSE, VARIANT, VARIATE, VARICES, VARIERS, VARIETY, VARIOLA, VARIOLE, VARIOUS, VARLETS, VARMENT, VARMINT, VARNISH, VAROOMS, VARROAS, VARSITY, VARUSES, VARVELS, VARYING

Eights (30)

VARACTOR, VARENYKY, VAREUSES, VARGUENO, VARIABLE, VARIABLY, VARIANCE, VARIANTS, VARIATED, VARIATES, VARICEAL, VARICOID, VARICOSE, VARIEDLY, VARIETAL, VARIFORM, VARIOLAR, VARIOLAS, VARIOLES, VARIORUM, VARISTOR, VARITYPE, VARLETRY, VARLETTO, VARMENTS, VARMINTS, VARNISHY, VAROOMED, VARTABED, VARYINGS

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All about the new National Championship format

In a significant shift, the Scrabble Association of India (SAI) rolled out a revamped format of the National Scrabble Championship on 5th January 2026.

Until now, the title of India's National Scrabble Champion had gone to the winner of the standalone National Championship tournament (the 25th edition of which was held in Mumbai in May 2025). However, from this year, there will no longer be a solitary tournament to determine the Indian national champion. Instead, consistent performance across all major tournaments in the Scrabble calendar would be considered, with the year's national champion (the 'All-India National Scrabble Champion') being declared after the last tournament of the year. The complete details of the new policy can be found here: *https://indianscrabble.com/national-scrabble-champion-policy/*

Here's a lowdown on how the National Scrabble Championship would shape up henceforth:

Why has the National Scrabble Championship been revamped?

The need was felt to award the title of National Champion to the player demonstrating the highest level of consistent performance across nationally recognised Scrabble tournaments conducted in India during a calendar year, instead of relying upon a solitary tournament, as had been the case from 1999 to 2025. Under the new system, the champion will now be determined using a placement-based points system designed to reward sustained excellence while allowing flexible participation, because a player may not play all the tournaments in a year.

Has the new system been implemented already?

Yes. Performances across the year 2025 were considered to calculate the standings to determine the first All-India National Scrabble Champion under the revamped system. Under the new format, Sherwin Rodrigues won the title of the All-India National Scrabble Champion for the year 2025 (as per standings with points below). The last National Championship under the old format (of a standalone tournament) was held in Mumbai in May 2025,

which was won by Madhav Gopal Kamath.

Therefore, Madhav won the 2025 National Championship under the old format, while Sherwin won the same under the new format. Starting from 2026, only the new format will be implemented to determine the All-India National Scrabble Champion.

Which are the eligible tournaments?

All Scrabble tournaments conducted in India during the calendar year are eligible, provided they:

• Are SAI-rated tournaments
• Are 3-day or 4-day tournaments
• Have a minimum of 16 participating players

The following tournaments met these criteria in the year 2025:

Tourney and Division	Games
Mu Sigma KSSA Indian Open, Bangalore (A)	33
Kaizen Open, Pune	25
Goa Open	24
Mumbai Nationals (A)	32
June ka Junoon, Bangalore	24
Pune Club Open	24
Vadodara Open	24
Delhi Open (A)	24
Deccan Cup	25

What is the player eligibility?

To be considered for the title of All-India National Scrabble Champion:

• A player must participate in at least M tournaments during the year
• M = [Total Number of Eligible Tournaments ÷ 2] i.e. 4 out of 9 tournaments, in the case of 2025.

The player should hold Indian citizenship, to be considered as a candidate for the title.

What is the concept of ranking points?

Ranking Points are awarded based on final standings within the relevant division of each tournament.

International participants are included in tournament play and final standings; however, for championship calculations, points are reassigned based on the relative finishing positions of eligible Indian players only.

Place	Points
1	100
2	80
3	65
4	55
5	45
6	35
7	25
8-10	15
11-15	5

The tournament points allocation is designed to balance two equally important objectives:

– Reward winning and top finishes meaningfully
– Recognise sustained, consistent performance across a season

Best-N results rule

Only a player's best N tournament results are counted, where N = M = 4 (for 2025). This ensures that players who have played more tournaments do not get an undue advantage. The same number of tournaments is considered for all players.

Determination of the All-India National Scrabble Champion

The eligible player with the highest cumulative total of their best N tournament scores is declared as the All-India National Scrabble Champion of the year.

Use of multipliers

To account for the toughness of the field and size of the field in a tournament, relevant multipliers have been used.

What are the final standings of the 2025 National Championship under the new system?

The top ten finishers (among players who met the eligibility criteria) along with their respective absolute points for 2025 are as follows:

Rank	Player	Absolute Points
1	Sherwin Rodrigues	380
2	Madhav Gopal Kamath	360
3	Aditya Iyengar	325
4	Ishika Shivalingaiah	250
5	Udayan Grover	235
6	Goutham Jayaraman	205
7	Sujana Somasekar	205
8	Sunny Bhatia	185
9	Suyash Manchali	170
10	Nidhi Singhvi	110

National Championship winners	
Year	Winner
1999	Mohan Chunkath
2000	Shaik Ahmed
2001	Mohan Chunkath
2002	Akshay Bhandarkar
2003	Akshay Bhandarkar
2004	Akshay Bhandarkar
2005	Akshay Bhandarkar
2006	Varisht Hingorani
2007	Varisht Hingorani
2008	Sherwin Rodrigues
2009	Sherwin Rodrigues
2010	Sherwin Rodrigues
2011	Sherwin Rodrigues
2012	Irineu Gonsalves
2013	Sherwin Rodrigues
2014	Sherwin Rodrigues
2015	Mohan Chunkath
2016	Sherwin Rodrigues
2017	Sherwin Rodrigues
2018	Nakul Prabhu
2019	Sherwin Rodrigues
2022	Aditya Iyengar
2023	Aditya Iyengar
2024	Aditya Iyengar
2025	Madhav Gopal Kamath
2025*	Sherwin Rodrigues

Title given as per new system

National Champions by number of titles	
Player	Titles
Sherwin Rodrigues	10*
Akshay Bhandarkar	4
Aditya Iyengar	3
Mohan Chunkath	3
Varisht Hingorani	2
Irineu Gonsalves	1
Madhav Gopal Kamath	1
Nakul Prabhu	1
Shaik Ahmed	1

Including the 2025 title under the new system

Board closure lessons from the Deccan Cup

by Ramchander Koushik

From sponsorship to control: Learning to close games in competitive Scrabble

In the world of competitive Scrabble, improvement rarely comes from learning new words alone. More often, it comes from unlearning habits that once felt like strengths.

After the 2025 Deccan Cup, my second competitive tournament, one such habit stood out clearly: sponsorship — the instinct to keep the board open, even when doing so benefits the opponent.

This article is not about abandoning creativity or fearless play. It is about discipline, timing, and learning when openness becomes generosity — and generosity becomes a game lost.

The seduction of the open board

Many improving players develop their game in open-board environments.

Open boards reward:

- Strong word knowledge
- Rack management
- Recovery skills
- Creative vision

For a long time, this feels like real Scrabble. You trust your ability to outplay opponents over time. You believe that if both players have chances, skill will prevail.

In casual or club play, this philosophy often works.

In tournaments, it quietly backfires.

The competitive reality

Open boards favour the player who is behind.

A crucial competitive truth is this:

Open boards reduce the advantage of being ahead.

A board from the Deccan Cup, featuring GRAVITON, NASALIZE, RECANING, MONGREL, and SALUTER

When the board is open:

- The trailing player gains volatility

- One bingo can erase several turns of good play
- Variance, not consistency, decides outcomes

In short, sponsorship helps the player who needs help.

If you are equal or ahead, you are effectively donating opportunity.

The rule that changes everything

A single rule can dramatically improve tournament results:

If I am ahead or level after move 8, I do not sponsor the board.

No conditional clauses.

No "just one lane."

No emotional exceptions.

This rule alone can convert close losses into quiet wins.

A board from the Deccan Cup, featuring CIVILIZE, PATINAS, and ATRIUMS (MORULES is a phoney)*

Controlled aggression: Closing without killing your style

Closing the board does not mean playing passively or defensively. For players who dislike 'dead' positions, the key is active blocking, not suffocation.

1) Score while you block

Choose moves that:

- Score a solid 25–35 points
- Occupy premium squares
- Prevent extensions

This keeps momentum, while denying access.

2) Kill bingo zones, not creativity

Instead of sealing the entire board, ask:

Where can my opponent bingo next turn?

Block those zones specifically.

Precision beats paranoia.

3) Late-game mindset shift

In the last 7–8 turns, replace aesthetic goals with practical ones:

"I don't need to win beautifully. I need to win."

Tournaments reward closure, not elegance.

When is sponsorship correct?

This is not an argument against open boards — it is an argument for timing.

Open the board when:

- You are behind by 25 points or more
- The opponent's rack seems constrained
- You can open safely without exposing premium squares

This is where creative aggression belongs.

A simple training drill

The No-Sponsorship Drill (ten minutes a day):

Play a practice game. From turn 9 onward, forbid yourself from opening new lanes, unless behind.

After the game, note:

- One move you wanted to sponsor
- What actually happened because you didn't

Most players are surprised how often opponents stall when denied space.

The psychological shift that seals games

Many players sponsor boards not out of necessity, but emotion:

- Boredom with slow positions
- Overconfidence in recovery ability
- Discomfort with grinding wins

The reframe is simple and powerful:

Closing the board is not fear. It is authority. You are not limiting yourself — you are forcing the opponent to beat you on your terms.

With fellow KSSA committee members at the Deccan Cup (I'm in the middle)

The competitive evolution

An improving tournament player does not abandon their strengths. They refine them.

The evolution looks like this:

- From fearless → fearless with a plan
- From creative → creative but disciplined
- From open → selectively open
- From generous → ruthlessly fair

That transition is often worth several tournament wins — without learning a single new word.

Final thought

In competitive Scrabble, progress is not always loud. Sometimes it is the quiet satisfaction of a board that never quite opens — and a scoreline that never quite slips.

Winning, after all, is not about giving chances.

It is about knowing when not to.

Peridote punch: A team triumph to cherish

by Rustom Deboo

Embarking on my third Wordaholix Scrabble League (WSL) experience (after 2019 and 2022), I was eagerly looking forward to having another taste of this one-of-a-kind team tournament, which was witnessing its 11th edition in 2025. Drawn into Team PERIDOTE, led by the astute Varisht Hingorani, I was feeling optimistic about our team's chances.

Being the second seed in our team this time also spurred me on to shake off the rust that had gathered since my previous tournament nearly five months earlier. Often guilty of losing steam on the study front during long gaps between tournaments, I decided to dig deeper, backed by the belief I had in our team ever since our first virtual interaction.

Peridote

Our motley ennead comprised, in order of rating: Varisht, myself, Mangala Bhandarkar, Ela Ghose, Rajiv Antao, Rehet Singh Bhatia, Asha Kamath, Jyoti Budhia, and Rekha Sanzgiri. Varisht's assured leadership and steadfast guidance shepherded the team during the pre-tournament sessions, with many a doubt being clarified and many an apprehension put to rest. The Peridotes were being polished, and there was no reason why they wouldn't shine through till the end of the all-important weekend!

We got off the blocks in solid fashion, perching ourselves into the second place at the end of the opening day. The second day saw the bulk of our games with TURQUOIS, captained by Ishika Shivalingaiah. Up against what was arguably the strongest team on paper, this phase was as vital as it got.
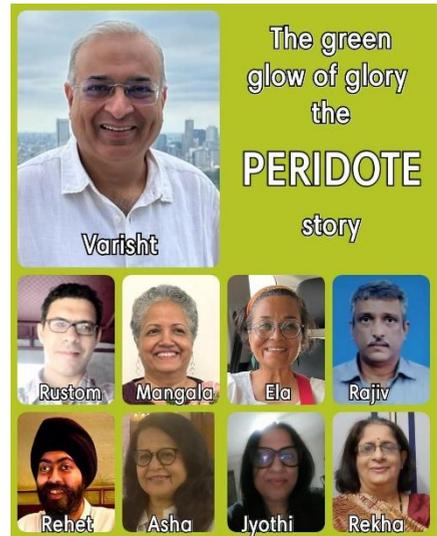
The purposeful Peridotes

As it happened, we were more than up to the task. Someone or the other from our team kept pinching handy wins in every round, and we kept our spirits high between games. Past the halfway mark, by Round 14, we had

risen to the top with 72 wins, 6.5 clear of TURQUOIS.

We just about held on to our lead as the day went on, before TURQUOIS edged ahead by just half a win (89.5 to 89) going into the final day. It was becoming clear that this could well shape up to be a two-horse race as the league approached its denouement.

Team PERIDOTE pose ahead of the final day's proceedings at WSL XI

With all to play for, the last six rounds presented plenty of scope for twists and turns, not to mention the ability of out-of-the-reckoning teams to play the role of party poopers! We focussed on keeping our guard up – every avoidable error could come back to bite us eventually. '*We will strive to play better Scrabble, and the victories will be the by-products*', Varisht rightly remarked to us.

Facing different opponents, it was nip and tuck for both TURQUOIS and PERIDOTE. At the end of Round 19, TURQUOIS stayed afloat, leading 94.5 to 94. Round 20 saw them open up their lead, 100.5 to 99. PERIDOTE pulled it back a wee bit in Round 21, but TURQUOIS were still up 104.5 to

104. Down to the last three rounds. Who would blink first?

The winning feeling: Team PERIDOTE with the WSL XI trophy

TURQUOIS stole a couple of marches in Round 22, and now sat well poised with 111.5 wins to our 108. Another such round, and our campaign would have most certainly ended. But true to form, decisive contributions came in from our members, and assisted by timely wins by LAZULITE, the opponents of TURQUOIS, we turned the tide in Round 23. Heading into the final round, TURQUOIS were still ahead, but the lead was back to where it was – 113.5 to 113.

Down to the wire, then. As the results of our games came trickling in, the battle was still on. With eight out of nine games done, it hinged on my game against Nidhi Singhvi of ADULARIA – winning which would give PERIDOTE glory by half a win.

As expected, it had to be a tense affair – needless to say, among the tensest games I've played. An early R(E)NEWALS (65) gave me a good start, but she came right back with NIDATEs (78) a few moves later to sneak ahead. Trailing 157-228 and holding the second blank, I was assuaged by MAuVINS (90), which

swung the game towards me, albeit marginally. My objective now was to hang in there and close the game out.

By the barest of margins:
PERIDOTE 118, TURQUOIS 117.5

The late arrival of the Q added to the drama, but luckily, I was able to play it off – it seemed that the rub of the green was favouring the green shirts! Final scores: 414-385 in my favour. There was immediate relief at having ended up at the right side, quickly followed by the sweet satisfaction of a remarkable triumph – PERIDOTE had clinched WSL XI by half a win!

As we indulged in the cheers and congrats, my mind went back to a game on the first day, which I won by ten points after my opponent went into overtime – and I was just a couple of seconds away from going into overtime myself. Had that game been tied, we would have had an even closer result – a loss for us on spread! But then, the ifs and buts would be endless. A point here, a challenge there, an endgame gone awry… that is but par for the course in Scrabble.

Varisht masterly led from the front, putting in a tremendous individual performance by notching 20 wins – the most by any player at the tourney. His single-mindedness towards playing the perfect game as much as possible was indeed an inspiration to his team members, who took his cue to the best of their abilities.

The final frontier – an intense and
rewarding 414-385 win in the last round

While I felt my overall showing was slightly under par, winning the final game ensured that WSL XI became an experience to savour for a long time. The camaraderie in PERIDOTE, backed by our motive to give our best while enjoying; the back-and-forth with TURQUOIS, with both teams refusing to give an inch; and the culmination of it all, will stay among my best Scrabble memories. It only felt apt that one of our catchphrases, coined by Mangala, was: *'In calm we find our sparkle, in words our shine!'*

Speaking of catchphrases, in the aftermath of PERIDOTE's victory, I was reminded of Ian Smith's iconic piece of commentary as the epic 2019 Cricket World Cup final reached its crescendo:

'By the barest of margins… by the barest of all margins!'

My Big Bad Bingos from the Delhi Open

by Sudhir Kamath

When I started playing a few years back, I used to see a few players (mostly from the UK) sharing lists of their played bingos on Facebook. The idea would be to share every single one they played in a tournament, and sometimes those played by their opponents as well.

The players sharing these lists of 'Big Bad Bingos' were of different rating levels, and thus it provided a fascinating insight into the quantity as well as quality of bingos that people played. Since a few words appeared more frequently than others, it was a good crash course into which were the most high-probability bingos that needed to be on top of my study lists (words like TAENIAE!).

And, by counting that they bagged X bingos in Y games, it provided a quick metric on bingos per game – at that point I probably averaged 1 or 1.5 bingos per game, so I could see the gap from the better players.

So, with that background, here are my BBBs from the 2025 Delhi Open, across 25 games. I've separated each game into a separate row below:

DASHEEN

NEUROMA, LEANERS

ENTROPY, DEVOUTLY, RESCREEN, BRANDIES

ANOINTED

MINORED

DARKEST, SINFONIA

SEXTING, OUTPACED

HONORARY, INTEGRAL

SWANNIER, INTRADAY, HAIQUES

RAISINS

SULTANA, TENSIVE

READILY, TOUGHLY, NOODLING

GLOATER

SURETIES

DOMICILE, LATEENER

OLEATES

DICKIER, SEICENTO

DOTIEST, ABSENTED

PRONATES, ARANEIDS, WIGWAMS

REMORSE, MONETISE, DELUSIVE

DERISION, RESENTED

LORRIES, RIPOSTE

IRENICAL, AUGITES, ATOMISED

TETANUS

OTTERED, LAITIES

Some observations:

- Overall, I got 49 bingos in 25 games, almost exactly 2 per game. This seems to be my

average in the last few tournaments I've played. Ace players average around 3 bingos per game, I would believe… perhaps that's why they have higher ratings!

- I averaged 2.0 bingos per game on Day 1, 1.66 bingos per game on Day 2, and 2.3 bingos per game on Day 3… looks like normal variation, and I haven't observed any general trends on whether I tend to score more bingos at the start of a tournament (when I might be fresher) or at the end (when my brain is more tuned to spotting patterns!).

- There's a fair sprinkling of bingos from my 'natural' vocabulary, words that I'd have known before I started playing Scrabble – like SULTANA, DEVOUTLY, DOMICILE, and WIGWAMS.

- Then there are the 'high probability' learned words like LEANERS, INTEGRAL, OTTERED, INTRADAY, and PRONATES… I might have

known some of these before I started playing Scrabble, but I definitely wouldn't have spotted them instantly, or played them with confidence.

Most of these are in the top 2000 words by playability, so newer players should be easily able to add them to their arsenal within their first year of competitive play (once they decide to study for Scrabble – which was a mental block that took me a couple of years to overcome when I started playing).

- Lastly, there are words which are further down the pecking order on probabilities… IRENICAL, LATEENER, SINFONIA. None of these would have been in my natural vocabulary, so the scores from these are directly attributable to studying.

  During the last 12-18 months, that's been the biggest change in my game, where I've actively started studying words again, and gone past the top 2000 and covered the top 5000 sevens and eights (or a bit beyond).

Hope you found this list of BBBs useful… and if you did, go study some words that you haven't studied before!

Launch of the SAI Title System

The Scrabble Association of India (SAI) announced the much-awaited SAI Title System in India on 17th November 2025 – a landmark step in recognising player excellence. Indian Scrabble players will now be awarded official titles such as National Grandmaster (NGM), National Master (NM), and National Expert (NE), based on their consistent performance in SAI-rated tournaments.

The idea of a title system, along the lines of similar title systems existing in chess and other national Scrabble associations such as the UK's ABSP, was conceptualised by Vraj Jain in 2021, and the initial proposal was worked upon by him along with Rahil Parkar and Aditya Iyengar. The same was elaborated upon towards the eventual launch of the system by Siddharth Nithyanand from the current SAI Managing Committee.

Why a Title System?

The Title System has been created with two key goals:

1. Recognise consistent performers with official titles of excellence.

2. Encourage greater participation in tournaments by rewarding sustained performance rather than one-off peaks.

How it works

- Titles are awarded based on performance in major SAI-rated tournaments.

- Only tournaments with 15 or more games are considered for the title computation.

- Each tournament provides players with an updated SAI rating (end-of-tournament rating), called a mark.

- To earn a title, a player must achieve five marks at or above the threshold within a rolling 24-month period.

- One-off strong or poor performances do not determine a player's title — consistency does.

- Eligibility criteria: A player must be an active SAI member and must have played at least 500 SAI-rated games to date.

- The titles are permanent once awarded, but may be revoked if a player is found guilty of ethical misconduct.

Titles and thresholds

- National Grandmaster (NGM): Rating ≥ 1600

- National Master (NM): Rating ≥ 1400

- National Expert (NE): Rating ≥ 1200

Illustrative example:

To earn the title of National Expert, the following criteria must be met:

- The player must finish at or above a SAI rating of 1200 in at least five separate SAI-rated tournaments (each with 15+ games) within a rolling 24-month window.

- For example, Siddharth Nithyanand finished with the SAI rating of 1268, 1348, 1347, 1324, and 1308 respectively in five tourneys held between January 2023 and December 2024.

List of title holders (2025)

The inaugural list of title holders was computed using either:

- Consistent performance (as defined above) during January 2023 to December 2024, covering 21 tournaments, or

- Consistent performance (as defined above) during any two-year period between January 2015 to December 2022.

This list will be updated annually (in February or March). The next update will be published in March 2026.

The inaugural list of SAI title holders is as follows:

National Grandmasters (NGM)
Aditya Iyengar
Madhav Gopal Kamath
Mohan Chunkath*
Nakul Prabhu*
Sherwin Rodrigues
Udayan Grover
Varisht Hingorani*

National Masters (NM)
Carolann Pais*
Charles Carnerio*
Douglas Lobo*
Hriday Samtani
Ishika Shivalingaiah
Manju Sood*
Rahil Parkar
Samrath Singh Bhatia
Sanjoy Gupta
Selwyn Lobo
Sunny Bhatia
Vraj Jain*

National Experts (NE)
Amit Sood
Arindam Basu
Bhushan Pradhan
Kala Ganesh
Mangala Bhandarkar
Nidhi Singhvi*
Pankaj Bolaki
R Nalini*
Radhika Mahalingaiah*
Rajiv Antao*
Rajeev Menon
Rustom Deboo
Siddharth Nithyanand
Suchindra Potnis
Sudhir Kamath
Sumeet Sachdev*
Sujana Somasekar

Players with an asterisk were awarded their titles retrospectively based on performance in any two-year window between January 2015 and December 2022.

Off the beaten rack

by Rustom Deboo

Here are 15 select sevens and eights found within 'JOYS OF TRAVELLING' to help you have a smooth ride at your next tournament:

FELONRY – a body of felons

FLAVINE – a brownish-red crystalline powder

FOLIOLE – one of the distinct parts of a compound leaf

INJELLY – to bury in jelly

Foliole

INTROFY – to increase the wetting properties of

JARGONY – typified by jargon

JELLIFY – to become or make into jelly

LIVELONG – having a long life

LONGEVAL – long-lived

OVERGALL – to greatly blister

ROLFING – applying the Rolfing massage technique

Tolarjev

SITOLOGY – the department of medicine which relates to the regulation of diet

TOLARJEV – a state currency formerly used by the Republic of Slovenia between 1991 and 2006

Vongole

VINOLOGY – the study of wine and winemaking

VONGOLE – in Italian cooking, small clams

Continuing with the theme... here's a rambling board with words related to travel, featuring all 100 tiles:

Know the 52 sevens and eights starting with TRIP:

TRIPACK, TRIPART, TRIPERY, TRIPIER, TRIPLED, TRIPLES, TRIPLET, TRIPLEX, TRIPMAN, TRIPMEN, TRIPODS, TRIPODY, TRIPOLI, TRIPPED, TRIPPER, TRIPPET, TRIPPLE, TRIPSES, TRIPSIS, TRIPTAN, TRIPACKS, TRIPEDAL, TRIPHASE, TRIPHONE, TRIPIEST, TRIPLANE, TRIPLETS, TRIPLIED, TRIPLIES, TRIPLING, TRIPLITE, TRIPLOID, TRIPODAL, TRIPODIC, TRIPOLIS, TRIPOSES, TRIPPANT, TRIPPERS, TRIPPERY, TRIPPETS, TRIPPIER, TRIPPING, TRIPPLED, TRIPPLER, TRIPPLES, TRIPTANE, TRIPTANS, TRIPTOTE, TRIPTYCA, TRIPTYCH, TRIPUDIA, TRIPWIRE

Know the 51 sevens and eights containing CAMP:

CAMPANA, CAMPERS, CAMPERY, CAMPEST, CAMPHOL, CAMPHOR, CAMPIER, CAMPILY, CAMPING, CAMPION, CAMPLED, CAMPLES, CAMPONG, CAMPOUT, DECAMPS, ENCAMPS, OILCAMP, SCAMPED, SCAMPER, SCAMPIS, CAMPAGNA, CAMPAGNE, CAMPAIGN, CAMPANAS, CAMPFIRE, CAMPHANE, CAMPHENE, CAMPHINE, CAMPHIRE, CAMPHOLS, CAMPHONE, CAMPHORS, CAMPIEST, CAMPINGS, CAMPIONS, CAMPLING, CAMPNESS, CAMPONGS, CAMPOREE, CAMPOUTS, CAMPSITE, CAMPUSED, CAMPUSES, DECAMPED, ENCAMPED, MINICAMP, OILCAMPS, SCAMPERS, SCAMPIES, SCAMPING, SCAMPISH

Know the 38 sevens and eights starting or ending with PACK:

PACKAGE, PACKERS, PACKETS, PACKING, PACKMAN, PACKMEN, PACKWAX, PACKWAY, CALPACK, DAYPACK, ICEPACK, JETPACK, MANPACK, MUDPACK, PREPACK, RATPACK, TRIPACK, PACKABLE, PACKAGED, PACKAGER, PACKAGES, PACKETED, PACKFONG, PACKINGS, PACKMULE, PACKNESS, PACKSACK, , PACKWAYS, BACKPACK, BRATPACK, DIGIPACK, FLATPACK, HARDPACK, OVERPACK, SHOEPACK, SNOWPACK, WINDPACK, WOOLPACK

Tournament round-up

Delhi Open

by Shalini Sahdev

The 2025 Delhi Open was all about words, warmth, and winning spirits. Hosted by the Scrabble Association of Delhi (SADel), the tournament was played at Hotel Africa Avenue in Greater Kailash, New Delhi from 3rd to 5th October. Over three days, the capital turned into a hub of vibrant wordplay and buzzing wit as Scrabble enthusiasts from across the country gathered for one of the most eagerly awaited events on the Indian Scrabble calendar.

This year's event featured three divisions:

- Division A: 22 players (25 games, ratings 1151 and above)

- Division B: 20 players (25 games, ratings 601 to 1150)

- Enthusiast Division: 16 players (7 games, unrated, aimed for beginners)

The blend of experienced masters, rising competitors, and first-time enthusiasts created a perfect balance of intensity and camaraderie.

Pre-tournament buzz and Delhi hospitality

Even before the first tile was placed, the Delhi Open began with high energy. Players started arriving in

Delhi days in advance, and the excitement built steadily. The Delhi Scrabble community, known for its warmth, ensured that visiting players got a taste of the city's charm not only through the games, but also through its famous food.

Sherwin Rodrigues poses with his winning board after clinching the 2025 Delhi Open

Participants bonded over butter chicken, mutton curry, kebabs, and chaat; sharing laughter, stories, and strategies. The friendly pre-tourney atmosphere made it clear that beyond the competition, the Delhi Open is about friendship and a shared passion for words.

The spirit of culture – Ethnic Day celebration

A highlight of the tournament was the Ethnic Day, where participants arrived in colourful traditional outfits, showcasing India's cultural diversity.

- Dipankar Chatterjee was recognised for his sparkling enthusiasm, which lit up the event.

- Madhulekha Hazarika was awarded for her beautifully draped Mekhela, worn in the classic Assamese style.

Ethnic Day added a festive touch to the proceedings, and reflected how the Delhi Open celebrates both words and identity. It was a delight to see our little wonders Suhaas Khandelwal and Samarth Manchali getting into the swing of things and wearing kurtas!

The top three from Divisions A and B

Division A – The battle of titans

Division A witnessed a display of world-class skill and determination. Every game was hard-fought, with players demonstrating deep word knowledge, steady nerves, and sharp strategy.

After three days of challenging play, Sherwin Rodrigues emerged as the champion with 18 wins, reaffirming his reputation as one of India's all-time great Scrabblers. In an exciting finish, he won the last three games against the defending champion and newly crowned world youth champion Madhav Gopal Kamath to secure the title.

The next few players were tightly packed with 16 wins each, separated only by spread differences, showing just how closely fought the race was. Madhav finished second this time, followed closely by Udayan Grover. Ishika Shivalingaiah lost out on a podium place by the narrowest of margins – same number of wins as Udayan and only 27 spread points behind him – barely a point a game!

Vimisha Patel, winner of Division B

Division B – Neck-and-neck finish

In Division B, the drama was no less thrilling. The top two players finished with 18 wins each, and the title was decided by spread. Vimisha Patel clinched the crown, while Mayank Khandelwal claimed second place. Interestingly, Mayank dedicated his success to his recent practice on 'Shabble', the innovative Scrabble training app created by Sudhir Kamath of SADel (you can check it out at the *shabble.club* website).

This division perfectly captured the blend of fun, skill, and learning that defines the Delhi Scrabble scene.

Enthusiast Division – New energy and fresh faces

The top three from the Enthusiast Division (L-R) – Kavit Nanavati, Samaira Jotwani, and Khanak Singhvi

The Enthusiast Division, held on 4th October, provided an excellent platform for new players as well as hobbyists to experience the thrill of tournament play. The participants showed remarkable enthusiasm, competitive energy, and an eagerness to learn from senior players. Kavit Nanavati ended up as the winner.

The day ended with smiles all around, as the newcomers received certificates and encouragement to continue playing in rated events in the future.

Games in progress at the Delhi Open

Creative spot prizes – A fun and thoughtful twist

This year's Delhi Open added a creative dimension by awarding spot prizes not just for high scores, but for thematic word categories. Players were recognised for imagination and wordplay that reflected humour, creativity, or originality.

Among many others, a few winners were: DAD by Suhaas Khandelwal (love/friendship category), BAASKAP by Samrath Singh Bhatia and IZVESTIA by Sherwin (foreign words category), BRUISES by Ishika Shivalingaiah (sports category), and BEIGY by Siddharth Nithyanand (colour category).

This system brought laughter and delight to the tournament, showing that Scrabble is not just about big scores, but also about storytelling and creativity through words.

SADel members (L-R) Shalini Sahdev, Sudhir Kamath, Sunny Bhatia and Archana Aggarwal in the Ethnic Day spirit

Honouring dedication and memory

The year 2025 marked the tenth anniversary of the Delhi Open tournament organised by the SADel.

Tournament Directors Rajiv Antao and Siddharth Nithyanand were honoured with traditional kurtas as tokens of appreciation for their tireless efforts in running the tournament with warmth and professionalism.

One of the most touching moments of the event was the presentation of the Vandana Grover Rolling Trophy, instituted in memory of Vandana Grover, a beloved player whose passion for the game continues to inspire. This trophy for the Most Improved Player was jointly awarded to Gajanan Patil and Ganesh Ramakrishnan. A family member from Vandana's family always joins us to award the trophy, and this time it was her daughter, Paritosha.

Participants at the Delhi Open

Band prizes and special recognitions

To recognise impressive performance across rating ranges, band prizes were given to:

- Division A: Sudhir Kamath and Rajiv Antao

- Division B: Gaurav Bhargava and Vimarsh Pandita

A celebration of words and friendship

As the final word was played and the boards were packed away, players reflected on three days of intense competition, laughter, and learning. The Delhi Open once again proved that Scrabble is not only about vocabulary and mathematics, but about friendship, patience, and the shared love of language.

Every player left with memories to treasure, whether from thrilling games or conversations over Delhi's delicious food.

Closing note

In Scrabble, as in life, every word has power, and every player has a story. The adage, *'Play hard, play fair, and play with heart'* was evident throughout the tournament. From the first move to the last, every player embodied the true spirit of sportsmanship. On behalf of the organising committee of SADel, we wish you luck for the future, and look forward to hosting you next year!

Final standings – Division A

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Sherwin Rodrigues	18	1208
2	Madhav Gopal Kamath	16	902
3	Udayan Grover	16	768
4	Ishika Shivalingaiah	16	741
5	Irfan Siddiqui	15	1007
6	Samrath Singh Bhatia	14	1120
7	Gajanan Patil	14	-219
8	Sunny Bhatia	13	307
9	Amit Sood	13	-232
10	Rajiv Antao	13	-822
11	Siddharth Nithyanand	12.5	92
12	Sudhir Kamath	12	-25
13	Pramit Kamath	12	-77
14	Samarth Manchali	12	-112
15	Sujana Somasekar	11	107
16	Komal RG	11	-526
17	Shubha Shivashankar	11	-531
18	Suthiraphan Assarat	10.5	-331
19	Danish Shahna	10	-843
20	Mohan Chunkath	9	44
21	Rehet Singh Bhatia	8	-1161
22	Sushanto Bhattacharya	8	-1417

High game: Siddharth Nithyanand   646

Final standings – Division B

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Vimisha Patel	18	1365
2	Mayank Khandelwal	18	1063
3	Ahana Goyal	16	1152
4	Abhijit Shilotri	16	728
5	Ganesh Ramakrishnan	15	829
6	Ritu Chadha	15	796
7	Arvind Lath	15	438
8	Vignesh S	14	531
9	Gaurav Bhargava	14	-363
10	Dipankar Chatterjee	13	706
11	Archana Aggarwal	13	23
12	Suhaas Khandelwal	12	278
13	Asha Kamath	12	42
14	Tanvi Binani	12	-939
15	Vimarsh Pandita	11	143
16	Shalini Sahdev	9	-438
17	Aruna Grover	9	-783
18	Madhulekha Hazarika	8	-1106
19	Akshay Hiremath	6	-1736
20	Bhanumathi Ganesh	4	-2729

High game: Archana Aggarwal   609

WSL XI

by Neeta Bhatia

The Wordaholix Scrabble League (WSL) XI unfolded from 7th to 9th November 2025 at The Bark in Lonavala, bringing together its trademark competitive team play

and high-spirited celebration in equal measure. This edition sparkled with a unique theme — six teams named after gemstones, each one adding its own colour and character to the league: ADULARIA (moonstone), PERIDOTE (yellow-green gemstone), LAZULITE (azure-blue gemstone), EMERAUDE (green gemstone), SARDONYX (reddish-brown quartz), and TURQUOIS (blue-green gemstone).

A board themed around the spirit of WSL XI and featuring all 100 tiles, created by Rustom Deboo

A total of 24 rounds were played over three action-packed days, with 54 players divided on the basis of their SAI ratings into six balanced teams of nine players each. Like rough gemstones polished to shine on the game board, the teams were ably shaped and led by their respective captains — Sherwin Rodrigues (ADULARIA), Varisht Hingorani (PERIDOTE), Suyash Manchali (LAZULITE), Udayan Grover (EMERAUDE), Samrath Singh Bhatia (SARDONYX), and Ishika

Shivalingaiah (TURQUOIS), whose leadership brought out sharp gameplay and strategic depth across the tournament. Friendly rivalry defined the action, but make no mistake... there was a fierce fight for the top position from the first round.

Day 1 opened with the following playing eight games against each other – ADULARIA-TURQUOIS, PERIDOTE-SARDONYX, and EMERAUDE-LAZULITE. By the end of the day, TURQUOIS led with 38.5 wins (+497 spread), followed by PERIDOTE with 38 wins (−499). EMERAUDE, LAZULITE, SARDONYX, and ADULARIA followed closely, keeping the leaderboard tight.

The evening was a perfect time to unwind with a 'Casino Night' where there were tables for games like poker, flush, and rummy.

All the participants at WSL XI

Day 2 saw ten games being played. After a total of 18 games by the end of Day 2, TURQUOIS maintained their lead with 89.5 wins (+1052), narrowly ahead of PERIDOTE at 89 wins (+872). LAZULITE trailed at third with 80 wins (+909), while the remaining teams continued to jostle for bettering their position.

'The Famous Personality Night' later in the evening was bustling with music, colour and creativity, with players slipping into the shoes of vibrant characters ranging from actors to singers to fictional and movie characters. It was indeed a memorable evening filled with fun, music, dancing, and great food!

The final stretch on Day 3 was set for a thrilling finish with TURQUOIS and PERIDOTE nearly inseparable at the top. In a dramatic twist with shifting dynamics, PERIDOTE emerged as champions with 118 wins (+1369), just edging out TURQUOIS with 117.5 wins (+1378). They were followed by SARDONYX (110, +1095), LAZULITE 106,+477), ADULARIA (99, -2034), and EMERAUDE (97.5,-2285).

Team PERIDOTE with the WSL XI trophy after a gripping fight to the finish

Thanks to our partners, Essar Foundation, we were even able to subsidise accommodation for all to a small extent. A prize pool of Rs.2,70,000 ensured that every single participant of the league received something at the end of the tournament. An anonymous donor sponsored the spot prizes. Team jerseys, steel bottles, and bead bracelets were handed out to each participant. Like every year, Vimisha Patel came bearing badges for all the teams. Siddharth Nithyanand sponsored the 'Rising Star of the Tournament' prize which was awarded to Gajanan Patil this year for his outstanding performance at the tournament. Over and above all this was the scrumptious food and hospitality extended by our very own Ritu Chadha.

Beyond the battles on the board, WSL XI was equally memorable for its atmosphere. More than just a competition, it was a celebration of words, friendship and unforgettable nights, where every tile played had a story and every win was shared in good spirit.

Final team standings

	Team	Wins
1	PERIDOTE	118
2	TURQUOIS	117.5
3	SARDONYX	110
4	LAZULITE	106
5	ADULARIA	99
6	EMERAUDE	97.5

Final individual standings
(Team in brackets)

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Varisht Hingorani (P)	20	2016
2	Udayan Grover (E)	19	1642
3	Gajanan Patil (T)	19	1527
4	Samrath Singh Bhatia (S)	18	1894
5	Sherwin Rodrigues (A)	17	1838
6	Suyash Manchali (L)	17	1823
7	Shubha Shivashankar (S)	17	1067
8	Carolann Pais (L)	17	649
9	Bhushan Pradhan (E)	16	693
10	Sonal Merchant (T)	16	250
11	Ela Ghose (P)	16	217
12	Mohan Chunkath (S)	15	1172
13	Sunny Bhatia (T)	15	1048
14	Pankaj Bolaki (L)	15	756

15	Anvay Shah (A)	14.5	287
16	Ishika Shivalingaiah (T)	14.5	247
17	Vignesh S (T)	14	628
18	Jyoti Budhia (P)	14	602
19	Rajiv Antao (P)	14	213
20	Rustom Deboo (P)	13	289
21	Nikheel Ruparel (S)	13	89
22	Kala Ganesh (T)	13	-132
23	Samarth Manchali (E)	13	-282
24	Neeta Bhatia (A)	13	-769
25	Abid Hussain (S)	12	202
26	Rohaina Tanveer (T)	12	77
27	Swagat Nukala (E)	12	-191
28	Selwyn Lobo (S)	12	-203
29	Rekha Sanzgiri (P)	12	-1040
30	Ritu Chadha (L)	11.5	236
31	Danish Shahna (A)	11	-427
32	Vimisha Patel (L)	11	-437
33	Nidhi Singhvi (A)	10	327
34	Neelanjana Bid (E)	10	-111
35	Mangala Bhandarkar (P)	10	-200
36	Sanjay Bijlani (L)	10	-214
37	Siddharth Nithyanand (E)	10	-298
38	Sushanto B (A)	10	-478
39	Asha Kamath (P)	10	-491
40	Saraswathi R (A)	10	-618
41	Komal RG (E)	9	-166
42	Rehet Singh Bhatia (P)	9	-237
43	V Ramachandran (S)	9	-565
44	Harvinderjit Bhatia (S)	9	-920
45	Mimi Hingorani (L)	9	-974
46	Monica Agarwala (A)	8	-263
47	R Nalini (L)	8	-445
48	Viji Ramachandran (T)	8	-766
49	Meena Kalyan (L)	7.5	-917
50	Teresa Joseph (T)	6	-1501
51	Aruna Grover (A)	5.5	-1931
52	Abhijit Shilotri (E)	5.5	-2209
53	Caryl Gonsalvez (S)	5	-1641
54	Shalini Sahdev (E)	3	-1363

Deccan Cup

by Swagat Nukala

The fifth edition of the Deccan Cup delivered three days of high-quality, edge-of-the-seat Scrabble action as it returned to the Casa Hotel, Hyderabad for the second consecutive year from 19th to 21st December. Featuring a single, highly competitive division, the tournament brought together 34 players from across the country and lived up to its reputation as one of the most keenly contested events on the calendar.

The Deccan Cup lived up to its billing as one of the most keenly contested tournaments on the calendar

The tournament turned into a true nail-biter, with the title being decided only during the final round of the gruelling 25-game schedule. In a remarkable occurrence, the top three players all finished with 17 wins apiece, making spread the ultimate decider. Bahrain's Irfan Siddiqui emerged as the champion for the

second time running, as he edged out Sherwin Rodrigues by a slender margin of 94 spread points. Ishika Shivalingaiah completed the podium as second runner-up, a mere 78 spread points behind Sherwin, underlining just how tight the contest was at the top.

Irfan Siddiqui successfully defended his title in a close finish on spread

The single-division format featured split prize pools for Division A (SAI rating above 1150) and Division B (SAI rating 900–1150), ensuring tough draws throughout, plenty of upsets, and intense battles beyond the podium places. In Division B, Swagat Nukala, Abid Hussain, and Vignesh S finished first, second, and third respectively, while Ritu Chadha and Ganesh Ramakrishnan claimed the band prizes on offer.

Adding to the weekend's vibrancy, the Deccan Cup also hosted an unrated Enthusiast Division, with a dozen new and aspiring players competing in a one-day, six-game format. Mehjabeen Peeradina topped the standings, followed by S. A. Munaff and Girija Nadagoudar in second and third place respectively.

Prize winners at the Deccan Cup

With enthusiastic participation from young children and first-time competitors alongside seasoned campaigners, the 5th Deccan Cup not only delivered thrilling competition but also offered an encouraging glimpse into the future of the Scrabble community in Hyderabad.

The top three from the Enthusiast Division

Final standings

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Irfan Siddiqui	17	1120
2	Sherwin Rodrigues	17	1026
3	Ishika Shivalingaiah	17	948
4	Suyash Manchali	16	875
5	Mohan Chunkath	16	718
6	Sanjoy Gupta	15	550
7	Selwyn Lobo	14.5	82
8	Sujana Somasekar	14	599
9	Suchindra Potnis	14	395
10	Sunny Bhatia	14	245
11	Sam Kantimathi	14	-51
12	Siddharth Nithyanand	13.5	74
13	Swagat Nukala	13.5	-209
14	Pankaj Bolaki	13	282
15	Abid Hussain	13	233
16	Nidhi Singhvi	13	-81
17	Kala Ganesh	13	-495
18	Mangala Bhandarkar	12.5	69
19	Vignesh S	12	30
20	Shaik Ahmed	12	-31
21	Danish Shahna	12	-39
22	Shubha Shivashankar	12	-97
23	Rajeev Menon	11	474
24	Gajanan Patil	11	359
25	Sudhir Kamath	11	93
26	Samarth Manchali	11	-46
27	Ritu Chadha	11	-541
28	Komal RG	10	205
29	Ganesh Ramakrishnan	10	-897
30	Krieshna Parmar	10	-1008
31	Raman Viswanathan	9	-426
32	Kavit Nanavati	8	-1596
33	Ramchander Koushik	8	-2099

High game: Danish Shahna 641
Note: The standings do not include Dipankar Chatterjee, who withdrew after Round 18

Rated one-day tournaments

October Octaves, Vadodara (12th October, seven rounds)

Final standings

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Dhaval Rathod	6	292
2	Nandini Sonthalia	4.5	-177
3	Vimisha Patel	4	331
4	Dennis Balogun	3 (+1)	127
5	Jayant Sastry	4	54
6	Ark Kansara	4	48
7	Viral Kansara	3	79
8	Raza Naqvi	2 (+1)	-203
9	Utkarsh Lal	2	-210
10	Remya Mohan	2	-338
11	Kavit Nanavati	0.5 (+0)	-3

High game: Vimisha Patel 558
Bye treatment explained in brackets

Dhaval Rathod, winner of October Octaves

November Nuances, Vadodara
(23rd November, seven rounds)

Participants at November Nuances

Final standings

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Kalpana Sastry	6	591
2	Nandini Sonthalia	5	346
3	Dhaval Rathod	5	91
4	Vimisha Patel	4	219
5	Viral Kansara	4	191
6	Ark Kansara	4	-102
7	Jayant Sastry	3	139
8	Bhushan Sarmalkar	3	133
9	Raza Naqvi	3	-166
10	Dennis Balogun	3	-174
11	Apurva Barjatya	2	-285
12	Minu Hirode	0	-983

High game: Vimisha Patel   493

Kalpana Sastry, winner of November Nuances

Delhi (23rd November, eight rounds)

Final standings

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Ela Ghose	7	618
2	Sunny Bhatia	6	290
3	Sudhir Kamath	5	600
4	Shalini Sahdev	5	-59
5	Gaurav Bhargava	5	-217
6	Komal RG	4	459
7	Archana Aggarwal	4	258
8	Pramit Kamath	4	16
9	Manit Arora	3.5	-414
10	Akshay Hiremath	3	-208
11	Ira Bhargava	3	-271
12	Mohit Arora	2.5	19
13	Swapnil Dixit	2	-465
14	Prakhar Astana	2	-626

High game: Ela Ghose   637

Ela Ghose (second from left), winner of the Delhi one-dayer in November. At the far left is Ira Bhargava, who won a special prize for the highest ranked senior player

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Good Word Hunting, Mumbai
(7th December, eight rounds)

During the games at Good Word Hunting, which was held at Ritu Chadha's house

Final standings

Player	Wins	Spread

1	Varisht Hingorani	8	924
2	Hriday Samtani	6	466
3	Samrath Singh Bhatia	5	276
4	Rehet Singh Bhatia	5	202
5	Alan De Mello	5	-22
6	Kala Ganesh	4	278
7	Harvinderjit Bhatia	4	126
8	Bhushan Pradhan	4	15
9	Anvay Shah	4	-61
10	Sanjay Bijlani	4	-254
11	Neeta Bhatia	3	-47
12	Mimi Hingorani	3	-99
13	Viji Ramachandran	3	-372
14	Utkarsh Lal	3	-563
15	Neelanjana Bid	2	-166
16	Ritu Chadha	1	-703

High game: Neelanjana Bid 602

Varisht Hingorani receives the winner's prize at Good Word Hunting

----

Decemvir, Delhi (28th December, eight rounds)

Final standings

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Sunny Bhatia	7	800
2	Madhav Gopal Kamath	7	440
3	Sudhir Kamath	5	454
4	Ela Ghose	4	-176

5	Komal RG	4	-375
6	Vimisha Patel	3	259
7	Shalini Sahdev	1	-652
8	Archana Aggarwal	1	-750

High game: Ela Ghose 541

Endgame Extra: Scrabble at IIT Kanpur

by Neeta Bhatia

A one-day Scrabble tournament was part of the Literary Arts Cup at the Inter-IIT Cultural Meet at IIT Kanpur on 26th December. It featured eight rounds (six rounds Swiss pairing, two rounds KOTH) and 46 players (two each from 23 IITs). Wordaholix was invited to conduct the tourney, and Harry Bhatia and I travelled for it.

Players during the Scrabble tournament at the Inter-IIT Cultural Meet at IIT Kanpur

We shipped all the equipment for the tourney to Kanpur – 23 boards, tiles,

40

timers, and 46 racks. The pairings were conducted on Woogles, and to maintain strict compliance with the IIT policy, no participant names were disclosed. Each participant could only be identified with the code provided to them by the organising committee.

Budding Scrabble enthusiasts during a game at IIT Kanpur

There were a few participants who were rank newcomers, having been introduced to Scrabble for the first time, but in a pleasant surprise, there were also a few who were well versed with the game and knew their twos, threes, as well as other high probability lists.

It was good to see the Scrabble talent out there waiting to be tapped, and we do hope to see a good number of these emerging players on the tournament circuit soon.

Endgame Extra: Finding home in the dictionary

by Ekansh Arora

I still remember watching David Eldar play GURDWARA on a live stream. It wasn't just the points that got me. It was this weird feeling of recognition. Like, wait, that's *our* word. That belongs here.

For the longest time, I treated the CSW24 like this massive foreign territory I needed to conquer. I'd drill 'Q without U' words, memorise weird botanical terms, study Welsh mining vocabulary... but then I realised something obvious: there are almost 2500 Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit, Punjabi, Tamil and Telugu words (plus from many more Indian languages) sitting right there in the official dictionary. Words I might actually hear at a family function or in the street. And I barely knew any of them.

So, I built something for myself and shared it with the Scrabble community. A learning tool called Tiles of India. It's just spaced repetition focused on South Asian words from the dictionary. You see a word, you rate how well you know it, and the algorithm figures out when to show it to you again. Simple stuff. I used Pandas to filter the words by language, built it in Next.js, and put it up online.

What I didn't expect was how much I'd enjoy the actual learning. Going through these words wasn't just Scrabble prep. It was like flipping through a linguistic photo album. Food words, religious terms, pieces of

history. Each one telling you something about where it came from.

I'm not saying this will suddenly make anyone a better player, though knowing RHANJAS or BHAVAN when your opponent doesn't is definitely useful. What's been more interesting to me is this feeling of the dictionary becoming less foreign. Like I'm not just a visitor in someone else's word list anymore.

Check out the tool at: *https://tiles-of-india.vercel.app/*

Endgame Extra: Most improved players of 2025

The new 'Most Improved Players of the Year' initiative by SAI aims at recognising exceptional progress and performance at rated tournaments during a calendar year, with cash prizes awarded to the winners (Rs. 2500, Rs. 1500 and Rs. 1000 to the respective three winners in each of three band categories). A player should have played a minimum of 50 rated games in the year to qualify for this recognition.

The most improved players for 2025 were as follows (rating jump from rating at the start of the year to rating at the end of the year given in brackets):

Rating band below 1000

- Ganesh Ramakrishnan (254)
- Gajanan Patil (252)
- Krieshna Parmar (217)

Rating band 1000-1300

- Triambak Eashwar (202)
- Jacky Fernandes (199)
- Rajiv Antao (164)

Rating above 1300

- Varisht Hingorani (84)
- Mohan Chunkath (65)
- Udayan Grover (64)

Congrats to all the winners!

Top 30 WESPA-rated scores in India in 2025		
Score	Player	Tourney
716	Aditya Iyengar	Goa Open
710	Goutham J	JKJ, Bangalore
660	Selwyn Lobo	JKJ, Bangalore
659	Sherwin Rodrigues	Nationals (A)
659	Vimarsh Pandita	Vadodara
648	A. Krishnan	Nationals (A)
648	Suyash Manchali	JKJ, Bangalore
647	Viji Ramachandran	Pune Club
646	Siddharth N	Delhi Open (A)
641	Danish Shahna	Deccan Cup
635	Amit Sood	Kaizen, Pune
635	Abhijit Shilotri	Pune Club
633	Aditya Iyengar	Goa Open
632	Udayan Grover	Vadodara
630	Komal RG	Nationals (B)
627	Gajanan Patil	Nationals (B)
626	Aditya Iyengar	Goa Open
621	Pankaj Bolaki	Kaizen, Pune
620	Goutham J	Goa Open
618	Gajanan Patil	Deccan Cup
618	Rajeev Menon	Deccan Cup
618	Suyash Manchali	Deccan Cup
617	Rustom Deboo	Nationals (A)
616	Sujana Somasekar	Nationals (A)
615	Udayan Grover	KSSA Open (A)
614	Aditya Iyengar	JKJ, Bangalore
614	Vimarsh Pandita	Pune Club
612	Goutham J	Goa Open
612	Aditya Iyengar	Pune Club
612	Vimarsh Pandita	Pune Club

Puzzles and quizzes

Mixed anagrams – Words of a feather

by Rustom Deboo

Below are ten anagrams, each of which has two eight-letter Scrabble words that are names of birds, which you might have come across during your word study or games. For instance, DEMOTE EDGE PATROL would yield the words DOTTEREL and MEGAPODE. Can you unscramble them all?

You can send in your answers to *indianscrabble@gmail.com* by 15th March 2026. One entry getting all ten answers right (i.e. both words in each question) will win a cash prize of Rs. 500 in a lucky draw.

Congrats to Nirupama Sivaraman for winning the lucky draw prize for the quiz featured in the September 2025 edition (answers are on page 50). The following also got all answers right: Ekansh Arora, Gajanan Patil, Pallavi Praveen, Priyakshi Bhattacharyya, Rahil Parkar, and Virendra Braganza.

1) UNWROTE LENS GRAPH

2) PLANT HARBOR LINGO

3) LIFT GRANDER ATOMS

4) AURAL PROMO POCKET

5) BEFORE SCANT LUNGE

6) WINTERLY NERD GARB

7) JAIL LENGTH TRAITS

8) ANOINT HAUTE COUPE

9) OBVIOUS WREN CARDS

10) HINGER BLEW MILDER

Endgame – The Twentieth   *by Nirupama Sivaraman*

All answers are seven-letter words Scrabble enthusiasts will recognise, created using only the letters from 'ENDGAME: THE TWENTIETH,' with no letter used more often than it appears in the phrase.

1. A cozy spot for meals
2. Roused, as an appetite
3. Easing of international tensions
4. Making of coins
5. Adulterated
6. Red pigment derived from blood
7. Kettle goes on now
8. Afternoon show
9. Bring opposite sides together
10. Limit looseness
11. Event in one's calendar
12. Mathematical ratio, or a digression
13. Incriminating, as evidence
14. Layer beneath enamel
15. Essence conveyed
16. Short-lived tattoo?
17. Twist together
18. One who's got your back (or side?)
19. Narrowed or watered down
20. Extreme success, or Prince of Persia cheat code

Guess the eight-letter word   *by Rustom Deboo*

The objective of this quiz is to identify four eight-letter words that are valid in Scrabble by using four shorter words to be derived from the given hints for each eight-letter word, in which the numbers would denote the respective positions of the letters in the said eight-letter word. Here is an example of a question:

8315 is an animal; 647 is a beverage; 62735 is a vehicle; 5738 is a body part

In the above example, the answer would be ORIENTAL, with LION, TEA, TRAIN, and NAIL being the respective shorter words to be derived from the hints.

1) 3428 is a dwelling
   821 is a body part
   62548 is a currency
   3746 is an element

2) 2564 is a country
   728 is a body part
   53418 is a foodstuff
   1267 is a clothing

3) 5832 is an instrument
   362 is a liquid
   16734 is an animal
   7864 is a body part

4) 5423 is a unit
   745 is a body part
   28517 is a country
   7462 is an animal

Animal anagrams   *by Shubha Shivashankar*

Find the animal hidden in each of the anagrams. For example: ANISOLE – SEALION.

1) AERY

2) ARCO

3) IAMBS

4) MINAS

5) DUKERY

6) BLAGUE

7) HAILING

8) MUTANDA

9) MONTARIA

10) PRETRAIN

Can you NAB them all?

by Rustom Deboo

In this quiz, each of the below combinations, when joined by the letters NAB, form seven-letter or eight-letter words that are valid in Scrabble. The number of words that could be formed from each combination is given in brackets. Can you NAB them all?

Sevens

1. DY?? (8)
2. RW?? (4)
3. HL?? (5)
4. EV?? (3)
5. AC?? (9)

Eights

6. IPR?? (4)
7. GOO?? (9)
8. ABL?? (3)
9. DHM?? (3)
10. IKT?? (4)

Endgame Extra: WESPA launches Titles System

As stated on 5th January 2026, WESPA is establishing a landmark Titles system to honour the highest achievements in global Scrabble. WESPA will now issue titles of Master (M), International Master (IM), and Grandmaster (GM) to players whose sustained performance merits recognition. Details on the process for the titles can be seen at this link:
WESPA_Ti-tles_Awards_Badges_20260105.pdf - Google Drive

The first list of WESPA titled players, as of 1st January 2026, can be seen at this link:
WESPA Titles - 1 Jan 2026.pdf - Google Drive

Following are India's WESPA title holders in the newly unveiled list:

Grandmasters
Madhav Gopal Kamath

Sherwin Rodrigues
Akshay Bhandarkar

International Masters
Aditya Iyengar
Ishika Shivalingaiah
Sanjoy Gupta
Suyash Manchali
Udayan Grover

Masters
Eeshan Malhotra
Mohan Chunkath
Nakul Prabhu
Rahil Parkar
Ranganathan Chakravarthy
Samrath Singh Bhatia
Sujana Somasekar
Sunny Bhatia
Varisht Hingorani

At just 15, Madhav is the youngest among the 25 Grandmasters.

Congrats to India's WESPA title holders, and we hope for many more!

Scrabble around the world

Here is a round-up of some of the key WESPA-rated tournaments and Scrabble happenings from around the world in the past three months:

Ghana

The 2025 edition of the WESPA Championship (WESPAC), the world championship of English Scrabble, was held in Accra from 11th to 16th November. After 127 players battled over 32 rounds, Canada's Adam Logan (23.5 wins at a spread of 1267) and New Zealand's Nigel Richards (22 wins at 1834) finished as the top two to contest the best-of-seven final.

Nigel and Adam before the final

Nigel, with a record six World Championship/WESPAC titles under his belt (2007, 2011, 2013, 2018, 2019, 2019), was unsurprisingly the top seed, while Adam, who won the world title two decades back in 2005, was seeded third.

Adam took the early lead in the final, securing a 450-375 win in the first game. Nigel bounced back to draw level, on the back of a 510-440 win in the second game.

The third game produced a riveting comeback from Adam, who first played a 103-point INFAMIES with four hooks and then hit DIOPTERS for 149 over the triple-triple to script a dramatic turnaround. Adam held on for a 515-499 win to edge ahead 2-1.

The fourth game was as dramatic, as Nigel reminded us that even the greatest could make jaw-dropping errors. He misplaced SHERIAT, phoneying with the now-famous SEHRIAT* instead. It did not cost him the game though, as he won 509-436 to poise the contest at 2-2.

Adam Logan, the new world champion

Adam claimed the lead yet again, winning another gripping game 467-448 to come within a win away from his second world championship title. He ensured that Nigel was kept at bay in the sixth game, which he clinched 455-379 to win the final 4-2 and confirm himself as the 2025 world champion.

The full games from the final can be viewed here:
WESPA Scrabble Championship: Day Six | WESPAC Best-of-7 Finals - YouTube

Thailand

As many as 142 players took part at the Autocar Bangkok International Championship from 11th to 13th October. Thailand's Komol Panyasoponlert, seeded seventh, won the tourney with 19 wins from 24 rounds, while top seed Hubert Wee of Singapore finished second. There were 12 Indian players in the fray, with Akshay Bhandarkar and Madhav Gopal Kamath finishing in seventh and tenth place respectively.

SAI round-up

- **National Championship revamp**

  In a significant shift, the format of India's National Scrabble Championship has been revamped, with the aim of rewarding consistency across major tournaments in the year. A brief writeup on the new format can be found on page 14, and the detailed policy at this link: *https://indianscrab-ble.com/national-scrabble-champion-policy/*

- **SAI Title System**

  With a view to recognise excellence and reward consistency of Indian Scrabble players, the SAI Title System was launched in November. A detailed writeup on the title system can be found on page 25.

- **Most improved players of the year**

  In another new initiative, cash prizes will now be awarded to the year's highest SAI rating gainers across three rating bands. The list of winners for 2025 can be found on page 42.

- **Sudhir Kamath elected as WESPA Treasurer**

  The WESPA Committee was reconstituted in November, with Ireland's Lukeman Owolabi elected as the new Chairman and the United States' Chris Lipe as the Secretary. India's Sudhir Kamath, a former SAI President, was elected as the Treasurer. Besides, several Indian players were elected to various sub-committees as well. The complete list of committees can be seen here: *https://wespa.org/about/teams*

New members

The following members were welcomed into SAI in the last three months:

1. **Kavit Nanavati** (Vadodara) was doing his PhD at IIT Hyderabad when

they organised an online competition on ISC during Covid. He enjoyed the experience, and eventually got to play at an inter-IIT tournament in 2023. He then discovered the in-person tournament scene through Vimisha Patel in Vadodara, and though he plans to move to Europe soon, he wants to play as many tournaments as he can while he is here, and compete with the best.

2. **Aayushi Kolhatkar** (Pune)

3. **Choudhury BP** (Mumbai)

4. **Krishna Kumar C** (Chennai) has retired from banking service, and is now an investment advisor. He always had a fascination for writing in English and learning new words. This led him to pursue Scrabble, which exposed him to words he never knew.

5. **Reshma Pramodh** (Trivandrum)

6. **Shilpa Pande** (Pune) is an architect, mum, and a Wodehouse fan – not necessarily in that order. She started playing Scrabble years ago, though now it is mostly limited to online games.

7. **Sunil Singhal** (Delhi)

8. **Sangeeta Almeida** (Mumbai)

9. **Dipti Kotian** (Mysore) is a media professional, having worked with organisations in India and overseas. She has worked extensively across print, broadcast and digital platforms, and has made documentary films. She currently teaches Media Studies to Cambridge AS & A levels students. Growing up in Bombay, Scrabble was a favourite board game for her. She has revived her interest recently, and hopes to start a Scrabble club in Mysore.

10. **Dhruv Singh** (Mumbai)

11. **Dahlia Verma** (Noida)

12. **Anuradha Varma** (Noida) hosts an independent podcast called Swishing Mindsets, and is also a mindset coach. She played Scrabble as a child, and now loves playing it with her nephew and nieces. She thinks it is great for vocabulary, mental agility, and of course, fun.

Solutions to puzzles and quizzes

Endgame – The Twentieth

1) DINETTE, 2) WHETTED,
3) DETENTE, 4) MINTAGE,
5) TAINTED, 6) HEMATIN,
7) TEATIME, 8) MATINEE,
9) MEDIATE, 10) TIGHTEN,
11) MEETING, 12) TANGENT,
13) DAMNING, 14) DENTINE,
15) MEANING, 16) MEHENDI,
17) ENTWINE, 18) WINGMAN,
19) THINNED, 20) MEGAHIT

Editor's note: If you haven't noticed yet, the first letters of the clues form 'A REMARKABLE MILESTONE'... hearty thanks to Nirupama for this delightful gesture!

Guess the eight-letter word

1) BILANDER, 2) COINMATE,
3) BLONDISH, 4) ANTIPOLE

Animal anagrams

1) EYRA, 2) ORCA, 3) SIMBA,
4) MANIS, 5) DUYKER,
6) BELUGA, 7) NILGHAI,
8) TAMANDU, 9) TAMANOIR,
10) TERRAPIN

Can you NAB them all?

1) ANYBODY, BENDAYS,
BLANDLY, BODYMAN, HAYBAND,
NAEBODY, SANDBOY, STANDBY

2) BRAWNED, RAINBOW,
RAWBONE, WEBINAR

3) BENTHAL, BLAHING,
HOBNAIL, LABNEHS, UNHABLE

4) BAVINED, BEKNAVE,
VERBENA

5) ANTIBAC, BALANCE,
BANCHAN, BARACAN, BARCHAN,
CABANAS, CANBANK, CARABIN,
CARBARN

6) BRAINPAN, PANBROIL,
PEABRAIN, PINBOARD

7) BARGOONS, BIGAROON,
BOLOGNAS, BOOGYMAN,
BOONGARY, GAMBROON,
LONGBOAT, TABOOING,
TOBOGGAN

8) BANKABLE, BANNABLE,
BEANBALL

9) HABENDUM, HAMBONED,
NUMBHEAD

10) BATIKING, BEATNIKS,
BETAKING, SNAKEBIT

**Mixed anagrams –
September 2025 edition**

1) POSAUNE – TONETTE
2) FLUTINA – SARANGI
3) KITHARA – TIMBREL
4) MARIMBA – VIHUELA
5) BALAFON – CELESTA
6) SHEHNAI – TIMPANO
7) CLARION – MUSETTE
8) KANTELE – MRIDANG
9) ALTHORN – OCARINA
10) BAGPIPE – MANDOLA

Ratings

Below are the official SAI ratings (top 80) as on 31st December 2025. Please visit *indianscrabble.com* for the full rankings.

	Name	Club	Rating	Games
1	Akshay Bhandarkar	OSI	1766	670
2	Madhav Gopal Kamath	DEL	1713	1169
3	Varisht Hingorani	MUM	1681	1498
4	Sherwin Rodrigues	MUM	1643	2063
5	Aditya Iyengar	MUM	1623	992
	Irfan Siddiqui	OS	1610	519
6	Udayan Grover	PUN	1565	2805
7	Charles Carneiro	OSI	1554	919
	Puneet Sharma	OS	1553	202
8	Suyash Manchali	BLR	1550	512
9	Ishika Shivalingaiah	BLR	1529	1033
10	Goutham Jayaraman	BLR	1511	682
11	Samrath Singh Bhatia	MUM	1500	1223
12	Sanjoy Gupta	BLR	1472	1811
13	Mohan Chunkath	CHN	1464	1366
14	Rahil Parkar	OSI	1448	804
15	Carolann Pais	MUM	1444	1624
16	Sunny Bhatia	DEL	1441	2030
	Michael Tang	OS	1440	466
17	Nakul Prabhu	MUM	1431	1599
18	Douglas Lobo	GOA	1426	1544
	Raghuram J	OS	1420	41
19	Hriday Samtani	MUM	1407	805
20	Rajveer Rawlin	BLR	1400	646
21	A Krishnan	CHN	1382	632
22	Amit Sood	PUN	1381	776
23	Sujana Somasekar	BLR	1380	1171
24	Bharath Balakrishnan	OSI	1352	133
25	Manju Sood	BLR	1343	984
26	Siddharth Nithyanand	BLR	1340	819
	Sumeet Sachdev	OS	1339	905
27	Rustom Deboo	MUM	1330	914
28	Pankaj Bolaki	BLR	1302	765
29	Shaila Amalean	OSI	1299	396
30	Jacky Fernandes	GOA	1285	1295
31	Sudhir Kamath	DEL	1283	1574
32	Ela Ghose	DEL	1282	500
33	Rajiv Antao	GOA	1281	1439
34	Bhushan Pradhan	MUM	1280	2537
35	Nidhi Singhvi	PUN	1271	1287
36	Selwyn Lobo	GOA	1270	707
37	Shubha Shivashankar	BLR	1270	588
38	Triambak Eashwar	CHN	1257	217
39	Gajanan Patil	BLR	1252	393
40	Mangala Bhandarkar	PUN	1251	2195
41	Rohaina Tanveer	OSI	1247	632
42	Ekansh Arora	DEL	1245	288
43	Shaik Ahmed	HYD	1241	2168
44	Kala Ganesh	MUM	1236	1919
45	Samarth Manchali	BLR	1235	336
46	Pramit Kamath	GOA	1232	635
47	Anvay Shah	MUM	1220	226
48	Arindam Basu	KOL	1215	631
49	Suchindra Potnis	BLR	1210	808
50	Danish Shahna	BLR	1179	1138
51	Abid Hussain	BLR	1172	738
52	Rajeev Menon	HYD	1169	1270
53	Aaradhya Srivastava	MUM	1166	98
54	Prithwiraj Mukherjee	BLR	1165	409
55	Sanjay Bijlani	MUM	1160	817
56	Vignesh S	BLR	1157	985
57	Abel George Mathew	BLR	1144	48
58	Alan de Mello	MUM	1136	203
59	Venkataraman Sridev	KER	1120	209
60	Sushanto B	BLR	1119	906
61	Rajnikant Singh	KOL	1110	355
62	Komal RG	DEL	1106	556
63	Swagat Nukala	HYD	1102	733
64	Shreyas Gupta	DEL	1102	105
65	Neeta Bhatia	MUM	1099	853
66	V Ramachandran	MUM	1090	1629
67	Rehet Singh Bhatia	MUM	1090	1100
68	R Nalini	BLR	1089	1181
69	Priya Karkhanis	PUN	1079	621
70	Harsh Sood	BLR	1060	240
71	Meena Bakhru	PUN	1054	477
72	Sonal Merchant	MUM	1054	337
73	Vimisha Patel	GUJ	1049	1024
74	Ahana Goyal	DEL	1026	355
75	Ritu Chadha	MUM	1021	1579
76	Dipankar Chatterjee	BLR	1019	853
77	Raman Viswanathan	CHN	1011	296
78	Nikheel Ruparel	MUM	1010	1362
79	Radhika Mahalingaiah	BLR	1009	1123
80	Pradyot Anand	OSI	994	103

BLR – Bangalore (KSSA)
CHN – Chennai
DEL – Delhi
GOA – Goa
GUJ – Gujarat (Vadodara)
HYD – Hyderabad
KER – Kerala
KOL – Kolkata
MUM – Mumbai
PUN – Pune
OSI – Indian national residing overseas
OS – Overseas foreign player (no rank)

ENDGAME

Let us know your feedback

What did you like about this edition of Endgame? What would you like to see more of in future editions? Would you like to contribute content for the next edition? Do you have any suggestions for improvement? We await your valuable feedback and submissions, which you can send across to *indianscrabble@gmail.com*.

About SAI

The Scrabble Association of India (SAI) is the apex governing body for Scrabble players in India and oversees the organisation and conduct of several tournaments in the country. It maintains a tournament rating system for every SAI-rated tournament and accords a SAI rating to all its members. It is affiliated to the WESPA (World English-Language Scrabble Players Association), the global body that oversees the competitive English-language Scrabble scene throughout the world.

How to become a SAI member?

If you are a Scrabble enthusiast or know someone who is, we welcome you to join SAI. Becoming a SAI member is easy. All you need to do is visit the SAI website and apply for membership at *indianscrabble.com/join-us/*. You can either become a life member or an annual member. We invite Scrabble lovers of all ages to join us.

Contact us

For details about Indian Scrabble, you can visit our website at *indianscrabble.com*.

For general inquiries about anything related to Indian Scrabble and feedback and submissions for Endgame, you can reach out to us at *indianscrabble@gmail.com*.

You can also follow the Scrabble Association of India Facebook page and Instagram handle (indianscrabble) to know about updates and happenings in Indian Scrabble.