

ENDGAME

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SCRABBLE
ASSOCIATION OF INDIA



The Premier Division podium at the 2023 National Championship

In this issue:

- **Aditya secures the Nationals again**
 - **Pune Scrabble Club turns 25**
 - **An Aussie Scrabble story**
 - **Return of the Goa Open**

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Foreword

Dear Members,

The first half of the calendar year is past us, and it has produced a gamut of thrills and spills on the Indian Scrabble tournament scene.

The quarter gone by kicked off with the return of the Goa Open, which welcomed Scrabblers after a gap of four years. Much to the gladness of the participants, the picturesque beach state's annual tournament was finally back on track.

The Goa tournament went down to the wire, with Aditya Iyengar coming back to win the last three games to narrowly pip Ishika Shivalingaiah to the title. Four weeks later, Aditya set out to defend his title at the 23rd edition of the National Scrabble Championship in Mumbai, which saw 63 players in action across two divisions.

The Premier Division at the Nationals was as demanding as it got, and it was Aditya who came up trumps after 25 rounds, this time staving off Rahil Parkar's challenge to become the fourth player to win consecutive titles at the blue-riband event.

The Scrabble caravan rolls on as the monsoon progresses – come July, the Pune Scrabble Club is set to mark its 25 years in the form of a celebratory Poona Club tournament. This landmark tourney will be followed by the annual Vadodara and Delhi tournaments, rounded off by the IIT Bombay Open. Indeed, there is a lot to look forward to in the coming three months!

As Scrabble in India seeks to spread its wings further and aims to broaden its player base manifold, the focus going forward will continue to be on welcoming fruitful initiatives and bringing in more youth to embrace the game competitively.

Endgame hits double figures with its tenth edition, and as always, thanks to all the contributors for sharing their words. Here's hoping it makes for an engaging read!

Best wishes,

Rustom Deboo
Editor



‘Winning at the Nationals is hugely special’

*Having successfully defended his title at the 2023 National Championship in Mumbai, 22-year-old **Aditya Iyengar** shares with Endgame his most memorable moments from the tournament, as well as his thoughts on other things Scrabble:*

His feeling at winning the title this year compared to his maiden win last year, and his expectations coming into the 2023 Nationals...

Winning at the Nationals is hugely special, that's definitely something you can never get tired of. But if I were to compare last year with this one, I'd say that last year came as a big surprise, due to the manner of the victory as well as the fact that I had never won any tournament before. This year was a little more expected, if I can say that, since I was on Table 1 from Round 4 or 5 right until the end.

I would be lying if I said that I didn't come into the tournament more confident than last year, probably due to being more in touch with the game and having won a few other tourneys since. Despite that, the field being the strongest in a while and the simple fact that it was the Nationals, ensured that I entered the tournament having a few butterflies in my stomach.

Whether it has been his most satisfying title win till date, given that this was arguably the toughest field in a tournament in India in recent memory...

I would definitely say that, as I managed to get Gibsonised (my first time for the first place) in such a tough field, as well as consistently be around the top table throughout the tournament. I've grown up learning from and looking up to several top players who graced this event, and to win a tournament in their midst has to be a great moment! While arguably it's more fun to win in a nail-biting winner-takes-all final (as I have somehow done several times of late), this manner is surely more satisfying and also easier on the heart!



A high-scoring thriller – Aditya's 515-511 win over Sherwin Rodrigues

On his study regime between tournaments, and whether it is any different in the lead-up to the tournament, or during the tournament...

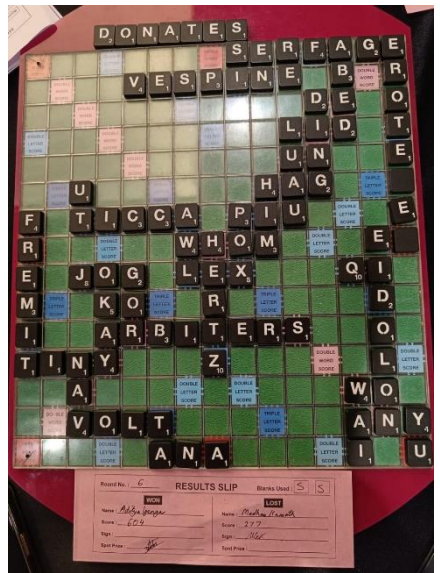
I might raise a few eyebrows for this, but I honestly haven't been able to put in any study during the last two years, owing to work and other commitments. However, I would definitely attribute my performance to the long hours of study I managed to put in between 2018 and 2020, during which I used to devote at least an hour of studying word lists daily, say about 500-750 words (printed out on paper – yes, I'm old school!). I'd also test my previous day's study on Zyzzyva, which would typically take about 30-45 minutes. Following this systematic routine over almost three years helped me complete the entire list of two-letter to eight-letter words.

Just before tournaments, I would recommend doing shorter words, the threes and the fours. And definitely no studying during tournaments! Of late, the only thing I'm fairly regular at is Aerolith, where you can usually complete about seven to eight 'word walls' in your lunch break. Coupled with that, I've been trying to work on my nines, purely for the academic thrill as well as the real-world thrill of playing a disconnected nine or an exotic extension every now and then!

His advice to upcoming players – especially the budding youth players – keen to improve their game and become consistent...

If I were to pass on a piece of advice, it'd be that while word knowledge is good to have, temperament is king! Statistically speaking, knowing any more bingos than the ~5000 most probable sevens and eights has a pretty small impact on your overall

performance, and that's something almost all the top to mid-level players know with fairly good recall. What really distinguishes the few players who consistently win tournaments or make the podium from a few others with a similar word knowledge is temperament! At the risk of resorting to cliches, you absolutely need to develop a 'winner's mentality' in order to succeed at any sport, not just Scrabble. Having had way too many near-misses until my first title win, I'd say I've learnt this the hard way.



A freakish result – Aditya's 604-277 win over Madhav Kamath, without getting any of the blanks!

What does this mean in terms of actionable advice? Firstly, and most importantly, always play the game, not the opponent. It doesn't matter whom you're playing – all you need to process is the board and the seven tiles in front of you.

Secondly, disconnecting between games is super important, especially on the last day. All of us have been guilty of overanalysing that close loss at some point, and then taking those thoughts into the next game. I've found that 'factory resetting' your mind between games makes a big difference, especially when the stakes are high towards the fag end of the tournament. I like to do this with music, but everyone has their own way – a quick walk outside the venue, splashing water on your face, or whatever else that fits your bill to take your thoughts away from the game.



*Aditya's winning board – 523-416 against
Rahil Parkar in the penultimate round*

And finally, the undeniable power of mental conditioning and positive reinforcement cannot be overstated enough. While being stoic and taking one game at a time can indeed do you a great deal of good, what I also find

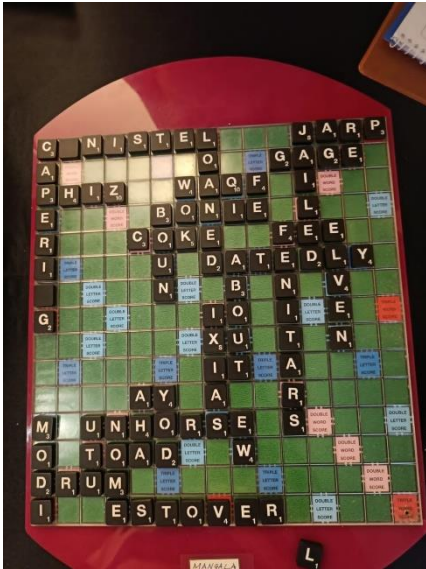
extremely useful, before the tourney, is visualising the entire sequence of events in my head, exactly the way I want it to go. I must apologise for 'mystery boxing' this last bit of advice, but the simplest way I can put it is, you've got to really want to enter every game with a 'can-do' attitude.

Don't get me wrong though – word knowledge is undoubtedly a very important part of your game, but there's advice available dime a dozen on how to study words and get better at recall. Since the mental aspect is something that I've seen very few players talk about, I wanted to base my advice on the same.

His most memorable games and plays at the Nationals...

A clear candidate for the best game of the Nationals has to be my game against Sherwin Rodrigues, the serial tournament winner and India's best player for a reason. He opened with three bingos - PIGWEED, GLADLIER and REDYEING – back-to-back to race into an early lead. I kept up with his flurry with my own FOVEATED and the nine-timer TINWARES. Buoyed by a few heavy X and Z scores, we were fairly level towards the end when I emptied the bag with CONNOTE to go into a 90-point lead. On a pretty open board, Sherwin then put down the beautiful MELTEMIS, but could only score four points less than he needed to force a tie, thus ending the game at 515-511! While it is always thrilling to beat Sherwin, against whom I have a rather dismal record, doing so in this fashion was just incredible!

I also had great fun battling wits against Rahil Parkar, whom I ended up playing ten times! We had a couple of wild swings in fortune, with each thumping the other by over 100 points multiple times (I let two of his phoney bingos go in our last game!)



A huge win for Aditya on the final day – 606-367 against Rahil Parkar

Aside from these games, I felt I had a very enjoyable tournament overall, at least as far as the rub of the green went. Managing two 600+ scores and eleven 500+ scores, and averaging ~474 across 25 games was quite the testament to my general luck (and also a fairly staunch adherence to not phoneying!). While very few plays were distinctly game-changing, there were several cool words I managed to put down, notably GANNETRY, TSAREVNA, DORNICKS, and finding DAMNDEST on a blocked board with a rack of DDMNST? through an E!

Having been 11 years since he began his Scrabble journey, the key factors for his rise thus far...

While a significant part of it would be a direct by-product of rigorous word study and mental fortitude, the actual backbone of my story would be the several sources of mentorship and support over my fledgling Scrabble ‘career’ so far, starting from my early days at the Pune Club under the able guidance of many seasoned players, especially Romilla Thakur. Further, I owe a large proportion of my success to the multiple senior players I’ve reached out to over the years to open my eyes towards systematic word study – something I started doing quite late. A pivotal role has also been played by my parents, who’ve been the single biggest source of support, from chaperoning me to tournaments to helping me stay poised during tournaments and organising my Scrabble schedule around academic commitments.

Now being only 61 points away from from being the top-ranked player in India, his take on the importance of ratings...

There was a time a few years back when I was competitive about ratings and would closely monitor every rise and fall. However, with time I’ve grown to realise that the number, while being a decent indicator of your prowess, has little meaning towards the outcome of a tournament. Having said that, it is extremely humbling and gratifying to be mentioned in the same breath as other top players who’ve been at the helm for years.

My experience at the German Open 2023

by Nakul Prabhu

After a three-year hiatus from playing Scrabble in person and missing the Indian Scrabble camaraderie, I was excited to finally break my drought at the German Open, which was held in Berlin from 29th to 30th April 2023.

During the last three years, I had only managed to play a couple of online tournaments. After having moved to Switzerland, Scrabble initially took a back seat, as there are not too many active English Scrabble players here. But then I met Alan Abela from Malta, who used to play in the UK tournaments. We now meet up on weekends for practice sessions at a café. At last, there is some Scrabble to look forward to!



The venue for the 2023 German Open

Coming back to the German Open 2023 – the tournament was held at an airy and bright venue on the top floor of an educational institution. We had 24 participants from as many as 13 different countries – Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, England, India, Pakistan, Scotland, Switzerland,

Belgium, Hungary, Israel, Poland,
and Romania.

The two-day tournament featured 15 rounds and was hosted by Peggy Fehily from Germany, who was very hospitable and warmly welcomed all the participants. The tournament director was Catalin Caba from Romania, who did a great job with the pairings and projections.

I am sharing below a few of my memorable boards and experiences during the tournament:



Round 5: A 488-363 win against Brigitte Brath from Germany. My two bingos were COMEDIEs (98 points) and TALWEGS (73 points)



Round 7: A 454-353 win over Jennie Frizelle from Ireland. Three bingos to me: ERUPTION (68), ERLKINGS (64), and YAUTIaS (77)



Round 9: A 464-423 win over Anand Buddhdev from the Netherlands. Four bingos to me: HOISTED (78), PATTIES (78), ENTAYLES (74), and INTONED (74)



Round 12: A 550-342 win over Ferenc Gerlits from Hungary. Three bingos to me: LOITERS (66), OVERGEAR (86+5), and STEWPAN (81+5); one bingo to him: ISATINE (75)

It was nice to meet Anand Buddhdev, wearing a bright pink hat that was gifted to him at the tournament. I first remember playing with him at the Causeway Challenge in Malaysia in 2010, which was one of the most memorable and longest tournaments I have played. It felt good to see a known Scrabble friend with whom I had played with in the past. Anand had a very nice play of BENZYL (56 + 5) in the game above, but had no bingos. Considering that, he played well to narrow down the margin to 41.

I had only one evening to spend in Berlin, so after the games on the first day, I decided to visit Berlin's most famous and historical landmark: Brandenburg Gate. It was a beautiful

sight, with the sun setting down in the skies and lights illuminating the gate in the late evening.



Brandenburg Gate: A beautiful sight

I was looking forward to playing Pakistan's Moiz Ullah Baig in this tournament, and was drawn against him in Round 10. He is the former youth world champion and was also the top seed in the tourney. We had a rather low-scoring game, with a scoreline of 363-329 in my favour. My two bingos were aGENISE (73) and DRONEST (70), and I was also happy to spot OILBIRD for 40 points, a four-timer with a rack of BDLIORR.

I faced off with Anand again in the final game (Round 15). Chris Vicary from England was already Gibsonised and four of us (Naomi Landau, Moiz, Anand, and I) all still had a chance to finish second based on our respective game outcomes. Unfortunately, it didn't work out for me in the last game, but it was an interesting and close game nonetheless.

Besides our bingos as mentioned below, we also had a couple of nice plays towards the end. Anand had COEQUALS/SERF (44), while I had DAEMON with AM/MI/ON/NY (43).



Round 15: A 400-436 loss to Anand. His bingos: TlCKINGs (72+5), AUDITEE (70); mine: OVERTIRE (86)

I finished with a tally of 9-6 (+520) in the fifth position. I went into this tournament with no expectations, and was only glad to play in an in-person tourney after three years.

The tourney was greatly organised, and the tournament director didn't have a single adjudication or issue to be resolved, which showed the great spirit with which the players played.

I would certainly recommend playing the German Open once for the great experience and friendly atmosphere. I hope to be there next year as well!

I dearly miss my fellow Scrabblers from India and the poker sessions with them, and I hope to be back in the near future. Thanks for reading, and till we meet again... Cheers!

The Pune Scrabble Club completes 25 years

The Pune Scrabble Club and the Poona Club tournament, typically held in the monsoon every year, complete 25 glorious years this year – the silver jubilee tournament is set to be played from 7th to 9th July 2023. As Scrabble in Pune touches a significant milestone, Scrabblers from Pune share with Endgame what the Pune Scrabble Club and the Poona Club tournament have meant to them.

‘A special place in my heart’

For me, it has always been not just about playing the game, but also about the amazing bonds we have built over the years with people from various walks of life over a board, a bag of tiles, and the highs and lows of the game... saying ‘kadun tak!’ when a word is challenged off, the endless discovery of new exotic words (which invariably one never gets a chance to play!), and so many moments of pure serendipity when voila, you find your bingo and the perfect place for it!

Then of course, the moments when you could kick yourself for not seeing the bingo on your rack....and the story goes on and on! The camaraderie, the two-day tournaments we had at many weekend resorts, picnics, and our Diwali dinners, all hold a special place in my heart. Our WhatsApp group is called ‘Futzers’. “Yo soy un poco de un futzer” (Spanish for, ‘I’m a bit of a futzer’). It can also mean, unique, different, or visionary!

~ Neena Shahani



Down memory lane – Former international cricketer Chandu Borde presenting Meena Bakhru with the second prize at the first tournament to be held in Pune in 1998, for which V.R. Damaraj, the Scrabble mentor of the club, ably guided the organisers

‘Glad and grateful to play’

I have been playing Scrabble since 1998, when my dad played a key role in starting Scrabble sessions at the Poona Club every Tuesday – the group began to expand thereafter. Not only do I love playing Scrabble, but also meeting new people. I’m really glad and grateful to play there and be a part of the Pune Scrabble community – learning the two-letter and three-letter words is a must!

~ Priya Kshirsagar

‘Given me immense pleasure’

I’m a newbie among the happening ‘Futzers’. When I learnt about the Scrabble sessions at the Poona Club, I came, I saw... but have not conquered the hearts of the wonderful people there yet, because I’m not able to play every Tuesday! But just a couple of visits to the club have given me immense pleasure and satisfaction. I look forward to make it on most Tuesdays from now, and gain more and more of enjoyment and learning.

~ Deepa Kumar



The Futzers having fun on a picnic

‘Loved the company there’

Having played Scrabble only with family and friends at home, I thought I was good until I encountered the Pune Scrabble Club! In 1998, there was a notice on the Poona Club board announcing a Scrabble tournament. I decided to enter for a lark, and first met Manju Pai, Neena Shahani and Romilla Thakur, the organisers, and Priya Karkhanis, who was one of the other competitors.

I don’t remember how I fared (I presume with good reason), but I loved the company and was hooked! I played regularly until the pandemic

struck, but since then I have not been able to get back to playing due to time constraints. But I still love the group, and stay in touch through the Pune Scrabble Club’s very active WhatsApp group!

~ Milon Nag



At one of the regular Tuesday meetups at the Poona Club

‘Helped me find myself’

Scrabble helped me find myself. In 1998, I was going through many personal problems and had a tough time sorting things out, when I was told about a tournament to be held at the Poona Club. For once, I was sure that I would fare very well (borderline cocky), as I was proud of my vocabulary. But then I came to know about the likes of QI, ZO and EUOI, and fell flat on my face. That was the turning point.

I learnt the twos and threes within a couple of days and landed again at the Poona Club the following Tuesday – I have continued to do so ever since. My attention span gradually grew, and I went on to meet like-minded word freaks and make friends for life. I met Manju, Neena, Romilla,

Milon Nag, Mahesh Ramanathan and Meena Bakhru at that first tourney 25 years ago, and have been part of this one big family ever since. I hope this clan keeps growing... here's to the next 25 years of glorious Scrabble!!

~ **Priya Karkhanis**



The ladies of the Poona Club at their shining best for a Diwali get-together...

‘Thanks to all the Futzers’

I initially started playing Scrabble just like a normal board game, and only later realised that it can also be played competitively, the journey for which began with academy-level and state-level tournaments in Delhi. Sadly, I had to give up playing in Delhi due to higher studies. I later got admission at AFMC, Pune, and came to know about the Pune Scrabble Club. Romilla ma’am introduced me to everyone, and I began playing on some Tuesdays.

I will keep playing this game till the end of my life, as meeting new people and interacting with them is the best thing you can do, and plus I think I am the youngest one here! Though I’ll be in Delhi again for my internship, the Pune Scrabble memories will

always be close to my heart. A big thank you to each of the Futzers, especially Romilla (the biggest motivator), Caryl Gonsalvez, Meena Bakhru (thank you for making me practice), Neena, Manju, and Amit Sood (who is also from AFMC).

~ **Dev Garg**



...and the guys trying to outshine them!

‘An important part of my life’

Few things can be as thrilling as the rush you get when you succeed at Scrabble – be it my opening move of EQUINOX with Q on the double letter square for 116 points in a game at one of the Poona Club tourneys, or my first nine-timer – BRUNCHES – at the Nationals in Mumbai in 2022, or the 2017 Poona Club tournament, where there was only one category and 12 prizes, and I finished 11th – fulfilling my desire to win a prize before completing 70 years of age!

Up to the time that I joined the Poona Scrabble Club in 2008, I had only played Scrabble at home. I was battered and bruised emotionally and mentally every Tuesday, losing all my games by 200-250 points. I was ready to give up and leave the group! But

Romilla encouraged me to stay on, and Neena was also extremely helpful in developing my understanding of tournament Scrabble. If I made a wrong word, she would say, “Take it off!” I want to say that this group is truly a very important part of my life, especially Romilla, Neena, Manju and Meena. We are a close-knit group and have fun when we are together. The newbies who have joined recently are enthusiastic, and it is a pleasure to have as members. They are eager to learn and improve, which bodes well for us. Here’s to a bright future for our beloved Poona Scrabble Club!

~ *Caryl Gonsalvez*



Celebrating the 20th year of the Pune club

‘Kudos to Pune Scrabble Club’

Since my salad days, I have been interested in Shakespeare and words, words, and words. But after I started playing serious Scrabble with the Pune Scrabble Club, I approach new words exclusively as an anagrammer – how many words I can make is what matters. The meaning is secondary – you can define them as roses for all I care – they would be as sweet! Kudos

to the Pune Scrabble Club on the completion of 25 years!

~ *John Kurien*

‘We look forward to Tuesdays’

I have been playing Scrabble since my childhood. When the idea of forming a Scrabble club in Pune was discussed between Neena, Manju and me, we decided to go ahead and play at the Poona Club. The Poona Club was kind enough to make it a club activity. Since then, all of us have been looking forward to our Scrabble Tuesdays each week. Learning new and difficult words is both challenging as well as exciting... oh, what a pleasure it is to actually play them in a game. Long live Scrabble!

~ *Romilla Thakur*



Games in progress at the 2013 Poona Club tournament

‘Like one big family’

I feel very happy and proud to have started the Poona Scrabble Club along with the others. Celebrating 25 years of the club and the tournament is a huge moment for us. All the members of the club are like one big

family, sharing a common love and passion for Scrabble.

~ **Manju Pai**

‘An exhilarating journey’

Pune was where my romance with competitive Scrabble began – it was indeed love at first sight. Romilla had arranged a one-day event having six games for new players at the club. Though I knew the game, the rules of challenge and spread were things I learned. I didn't make it to top five, but it was very exciting and I enjoyed myself. Even after a decade of playing tournaments, I still get the same feeling of excitement when I enter the venue on the first day.

Now, I can add to the energy, with my own delight at seeing my friends. The Poona Club will be my favourite venue, as in my heart it is associated with my first time. The vastness of the area, the milling around after games, the chilling with friends during the lunch and tea breaks... it has been an exhilarating journey, and Pune is the station where my trip was flagged off.

~ **Meena Kalyan**

‘A wonderful feeling’

Scrabble means passion – there is no other way to describe it. I have been a part of this fraternity since inception, and it's the most wonderful feeling to be celebrating the silver jubilee of the Poona Club tournament this year. It is a big achievement, and I'm hugely proud of Manju, Neena, and Romilla for the same.

~ **Meena Bakhru**



The prize distribution at the 2015 Poona Club tournament

‘The addiction continues’

My addiction to play Scrabble was pretty high when the first tournament at the Poona Club was announced. So, that's when it all started, and the addiction continues even today, not only for the game but also for the lovely relationships I have built with the Scrabble club members in the 25 years. To sum it, it's less about the game and more about the fun times for me. Even after 25 years, my game remains as bad, ha ha ha!

~ **Suchi Kudale**

‘Scrabble is a unifying game’

I moved to Pune from Hong Kong in 1995, and Pune in its special way gave me a welcome gift in the form of the Pune Scrabble Club! For many years, Tuesday evenings meant Scrabble... we have enjoyed so many challenging sessions, tournaments, meetups and picnics together! Scrabble is indeed a unifying game that spans across ages – we have equally challenging games involving 12-year-olds as well as

70-year-olds. Viva la Pune Scrabble Club!

~ *Sanam Mirpuri*



Padmaja Iyengar with her two prodigies Aditya (left) and Arvind, who honed their skills under Romilla Thakur's able guidance

‘Made me feel a part of them’

I am not a Scrabbler, but my strong connection with the Pune Club and the Scrabble group there has multiple shades. My first encounter was when Romilla introduced my elder son Aditya to the club and got him to play every Tuesday. I would love the little squabbles among the players for the challenged words, and also how they would all huddle over an interesting board and discuss the words. Five years later, I used to do the same with my younger son Arvind.

I never imagined Arvind could sit in one place for more than five minutes, but was amazed at how much he enjoyed playing at the club. And of course, the naughty happy smile he used to beam with, after beating an adult! The prize was a sandwich from the club bakery shop every time. And then the three-day tournaments at

the club were an absolute delight – it was a picnic for the boys every time.

The Scrabble fever caught me soon as well, and I started volunteering to assist Ashok Bhandarkar ji with the admin work. As an onlooker at the tournaments, it was wonderful to see the expressions of players while winning or losing, or the spark in their eyes when they saw a bingo on the rack. I have never been part of the Pune Scrabble gang as a player, but they have always made me feel a part of them. As promised to Romilla, someday I will be playing Scrabble, and know where it all started.

~ *Padmaja Iyengar*

Endgame Extra

POONA??

COCOPAN, HARPOON,
LAMPOON, NAPOOED,
PANDOOR, PATROON,
PLATOON, POBLANO,
POGONIA, POINADO,
POLARON, POMPANO,
POONACS, PRONAOI,
PRONAOs, PRONOTA,
SOPRANO, VANPOOL

SILVER?

CLIVERS, DRIVELS,
LEVIERS, LIVIERS,
LIVYERS, OLIVERS,
RELIVES, REVILES,
REVISAL, SERVILE,
SHRIVEL, SILVERN,
SILVERS, SILVERY,
SLIVERS, SURVEIL,
VEILERS, VERMILS, VIOLERS

My world and Scrabble

by Joanna Moss

When Rustom approached me for contributing to Endgame, reflecting on Scrabble and how it came into my life, I initially thought to myself, “Who would want to hear from a drongo (in Oztralya, a silly person) like me?” Then I thought, “Hell yes, I think I have a small story to tell!”, and hence, have put fingers to my QWERTY.

I have to take you back to when I was little. My family (mum, dad, brother and myself) were ‘Ten Pound Poms’ (Google it) and emigrated from England to Australia in 1966. Upon arrival, we were homed in a hostel in Melbourne until employment was found. Within six months, my dad had picked up a job with a company called Hamersley Iron, which was based in the north west of Western Australia – 2000 km north of Perth.

Yearly we would go to Perth for our holidays. Heading to Perth was a long-haul, badass trip – the 2000-km road was dirt a lot of the way, so it was slow going with us camping along the road all the way down, blowing many tyres, dodging roos and emus. My very first, vivid recollection of Scrabble comes from one of our return trips. My brother and I would be in the back seat of our Holden Commodore, where mum had placed the esky (ice cooler) between us, to stop us from squabbling and to use it as a table to play games on. Now, this is where Scrabble made its debut.

She had purchased in Perth a children’s set – an old cardboard version (like the one in the picture below), which had small pictures on tiles and squares to help your brain along (geez, I think I need that set now – my old brain is very lacking).

My mum pulled out this blue box of loveliness with shiny cardboard tiles, plonked it on the esky, and asked us to “be nice and not to fight.” Yeah nah! (in Oztralya this means, yeah, sounds like a good idea but it ain’t gonna happen). Well, play games we did – for 2000 km – and it did prove a bit wobbly at times. The little tiles slightly wobbled off the board, but how good was it when you put them back and announced, “yes, it was on the triple letter score... mum, he is cheating!” Fist pump moment for me, but he got his fair share back!

During my primary school years, I would play on and off with my trusty, shiny tiles with whomever I could rope in. My dad was Polish and his spelling was terrible, so he was always a good pick. Once I was a teenager, we got a real set – we’d graduated from the cardboard version and now we had wooden tiles, wooden racks and a firmer board. School holidays would be filled with games with my friend, Sandra – often Monopoly, with the odd game of Scrabble.

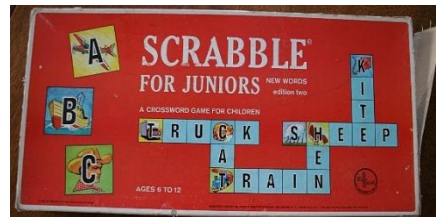
As teenage years started to depart and I headed into a working life, Scrabble took a back seat – back to

where it had started when you think about it (the Holden Commodore). There were many more things to be interested in – starting my first job, getting a driving license, having young adult fun, going out dancing – getting your boogie on. I tried to get my then boyfriend (who soon became my husband) to play – yeah nah. I soon started having children – that’s a busy time of life – and Scrabble fell by the wayside. The board still rattled around in that back seat, collecting cobwebs, spiders, snakes, red back eggs – and all the lovely poisonous things Australia is famous for.

The ‘kiddywinks’ (my two boys from the hood) started growing up and it was off to school. The oldest was starting preschool when I met a great bunch of ladies – with whom I am still friends (well, most of them – you do weed your garden along the way). And guess what – Scrabble was back! At first, we would meet for about two mornings a week, but then with the younger ferals finally headed to school, we would plan a full day of ‘scrabbling’ with something easy for lunch in the oven. Cue many fist pump moments of stunning moves, strategic setups (hoping they would come off), lots of laughs and giggles, cups of coffee, and cake (can’t forget the cake!). The day would end with us all rushing back to school to pick the kids up, ready for the afternoon onslaught of exhausted, smelly children, along with homework and after-school activities.

A particularly memorable move of mine was CANOEING, which ran from triple to triple. I also remember

scoring 240-odd once with the Q on a triple – can’t remember the word! Many a week would see us getting together to play three to four days – we were hooked. We didn’t know of Scrabble clubs – it hadn’t even dawned on us – but we had our own secret – the ‘mums club’! Numbers varied, but generally there were three regulars. Once we realised all the really cool two-letter and three-letter options, the game was well and truly on – who doesn’t love a good ZO, JO, XI, XU, ADZ, DZO – you name it.



As the years went by, the scrabbling rolled on, with new converts coming in. I was lucky enough to get another Scrabble board upgrade – one special birthday present was a superb Deluxe Edition rotating board with a timer to boot – just too exciting! We played many a hilarious, one-minute timed game – this would usually be the last game, before we had to grab the kids – it was frantic, like a game show on a caffeine high. Think a mad scramble into a special basket at the grocery shop – that was us.

Times were about to change. My family had the opportunity to go to Texas, USA for work. My rotating board was packed and off we went (yes, the kids and the rest of the house as well). Back to square one – into the back seat again. But then,

surprise, surprise... suddenly there was a notice in the local paper, The Victoria Advocate, announcing a Scrabble competition. There wasn't a club as such, but someone had decided to get this sorted. I was in like Flynn (in Oztralya, it means to act quickly). I pulled out my dusty board and made the family play with me, trying to get my Scrabble on. I was rusty, having not played for a year and a half, but went into the local, timber-floored, community hall holding my head up high, hoping I wouldn't disgrace myself. This was the first real competition I played in.

They weren't really being super strict, and from memory, they didn't even have timers, though they had a time limit for the whole session. While some players were excruciatingly slow, others flew. The scores were going up from time to time – I had mentally noted I had been winning by quite large margins. One big Texan came up, saying how he thought he'd pulled it off with the scores he'd been making – good on ya, mate! As the evening grew, they started naming the winners. As we were getting up there, I kept thinking, "That's odd, where is my name...", and soon it was down to the three of us – me, the Texan and another dude. Well, stone the crows... (surprise and amazement in Oztralya) They swept in to announce the winner with the Texan about to stand up – but it was me! I was like, "Whoop, whoop! Sorry, Big Tex", as I walked by. I won a lovely bird house, which I have to this day.

Once again, we were on the move – back to Australia. Upon returning, I

found a Scrabble club at the local Senior Citizens Association. They played every Wednesday morning. I started going and dragged two of my fellow local Scrabblers along. We persevered for a year or so, but those oldies were vicious! You also can't challenge an oldie, as no matter what – if they think it's a word, it's a word, and no argument will be entered into. It was more of a social oldies thing and we didn't really fit the mould at that stage (probably do now though). Life changed again – our kids headed into teenage years and a few of us restarted our careers, with pretty much all of us managing to find some employment. Back to the back seat!

Then, like a bolt out of the blue, another move was upon us – we were now off to Saudi Arabia, packing the kids, the house and my trusty board. I managed to get a 'Scrabble Day' going for a few years, which was great. A few of the ladies would come to help the participants learn English – as you would imagine, there were many from many different countries. By the end of our five years there, online options began to appear. Facebook opened up a new world of virtual word games, and it was wonderful. I started playing Lexulous (I know, it's different, but hey, it worked for me).

I didn't realise then that there were Scrabble clubs all over the world – I since found out there was one in Bahrain, which I may have been able to get to. It was only upon returning to Australia, and after Google had become a thing, that this world then opened up more for me. I found there was a West Australian Scrabble Club,

which met monthly in South Perth. I dragged my dippy brain to join in.

Perth has several clubs in different suburbs, and I ended up playing at the Melville Club. It has been going for many, many years, with a great location and friendly and welcoming members. It was actually here, while chatting with a couple who used to live in the Middle East, that I heard about the local clubs around the Middle East. If only! My boys were now in or done with University, and I had my own small business, called The Tasty Date (you may Google it – the Instagram page is still there). I would get to the club on game days, whenever able, and thoroughly enjoyed. But running a small business is hugely time consuming, so it wasn't as doable as I would have liked.

Then came the next big change – my husband had been retired for five years and I had been diligently growing my business – when a phone call spiked our interest. India! Hmmm – first thing I did was search for Scrabble clubs, of course. This was just after Covid had receded and the world was opening up again. Little did I know about the challenges I would have to address to attend tournaments from my location. However, I have leapt past those obstacles and managed to get to two tournaments so far. My first was the Bangalore international tourney in January 2023, where I met some lovely people, including a few from the USA and a small group from Sri Lanka. The second followed in May, in Mumbai. The people here have been so welcoming and enthusiastic

with each of the tournaments being extremely well-organised. Once again, I have no one to play with where I am – the only option is online, which is okay, but playing in person is a different kettle of fish.

I do hope to attend more weekend competitions while I am here, but the logistics of me getting to these places is proving very hard. For example, my last return was an 80-minute flight followed by a seven-hour drive! I don't know why it took so long, but when you are dodging cows, potholes, trucks, cars, carts and everything else, it becomes exhausting. At least with the last tourney I managed to lift off my base rating – only by a smidgen.

There are many countries where Scrabble is big – I can never work out why there aren't more people playing. I just put it down to life, the stresses and commitments we all have. If you have ever thought about it – look up your local area and see what is around. Also, there are some who just travel the world while playing. It does give them an option for a holiday destination, to see different places, experience different cultures, and meet different people.

Playing all over has opened up my vocabulary – I have learnt words that now stick in my mind. Hey, and guess what – I have a Scrabble board upgrade again – a foldable, travel one – that now comes in my case. Heads up, the Indians are brainy and clever with their Scrabble – I think they study their word lists in their sleep. Way too good for me... but the party ain't over until the fat lady sings!

Mean reversion is yet to happen

by Aaradhya Srivastava

During my limited experience of competitive Scrabble (about 18 months so far), I have often found myself consistently battling not top-rated players, but luck. Luck is an integral part of Scrabble, and the only countering weapon I have found so far, which seems to work at times, is studying. Luck can be minimised if you know enough words, but it still won't disappear completely. It can propel you to win games you had no right to win, or plunge you into a chasm of sorrow.

I don't think I can thank luck enough for making me win Division B (Open Division) of the National Scabble Championship in Mumbai, or curse it enough for making me lose countless games over the years. The following stories can be read as exercises in minimising luck, and tales of when luck favoured me over my opponent (in most cases):

Pre-tournament preparation

Having played three tournaments prior to the Nationals, I had come to realise that luck will always keep me from scoring as much it could if I didn't work harder. A month before the tournament, I had reached a point where I knew the top 2000 sevens, the threes, the power-tile fours and fives, as well as a good few odd words I had picked up during the weekly Doolally sessions (the Mumbai club meetups at Doolally Taproom).

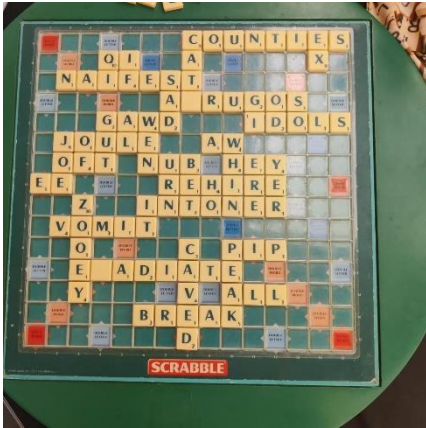
I set myself a target of memorising 2000 eights as well as a good chunk of the fours. Within ten days, I had to drop my target to 1000 eights. The guilt of knowing that I would not be able to finish my target set of bingos before the tournament propelled me to simply go all out and finish all the fours at least once. I spent quite a few hours on Aerolith and Zyzzyva before the tournament, finishing the quizzes on fours. It was mind-numbing, but once I reached an accuracy level of 90% or so on Zyzzyva, I had some satisfaction that I knew enough.

Phoneying sucks, but only if you get caught!

I was quite lucky to have gotten away with TWEENIER* (WINTERER was playable at the time but it was beyond my knowledge level then) in the first game itself, and it was an amazing foreshadow for some crazy plays to come. In one round, I remembered about TRANTED being good while TRANTING was playable. I took a leap of faith and tried it, and thanked every god imaginable when it turned out to be valid. Similarly, I knew for sure TRAPEZED was good, and thus decided to take a bet on TRAPESED.

Trying words like these is something I do not advise in general if your sole concern is winning the game, but it definitely adds a level of thrill to the game that I hadn't experienced in a while. There were times when I screwed up as well, and realised it in

the middle of the game. In one game, my opening play of FEILD* was left unchallenged, and I realised how stupid it looked by my next turn itself. I kept praying that my opponent would add an S to it for a hilarious challenge, but luck was not so kind!



A highly satisfying play of INTONER with six tiles overlapping in one of the games at the National Championship

Board development is crucial

Knowing all anagrams of TOERAGS could be the difference between being hit with a nine-timer, getting five points off a challenge, or opening up a choked board when you're losing. Thankfully, having memorised a large number of bingos through Zyzzyva (which brutally punishes you for missing even one anagram), I was fairly confident in my knowledge here. I spent a fair amount of time analysing the kind of board I wanted once I drew into a high probability set. I remember having NEGATOR on my rack with an S on the mid-right triple word spot, which would have given me NEGATORS for a healthy

number of points. But it would also have opened up the top right region. Since any bingo would have given me a lead of 60 towards the end of the game, I played STONERAG instead. This gave me not just a handy lead with the board now choked for my opponent, but also the five points off the challenge for extra satisfaction.

Count your openings

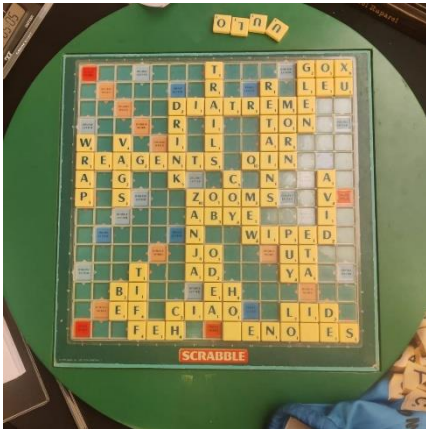
I generally enjoy playing open boards with tons of scoring opportunities. A lot of players tend to aggressively close the board as soon as anything is opened up, making it very difficult to score. I do this myself towards the end of a game, but in the early stages, it's very important to keep an open board. While competing against ultra-defensive players, I found it crucial to keep a count of the number of openings on the board at any time.

When my opponent opened a section of the board or created a new hook that I couldn't block, I ensured my next move created another separate section or scoring spot that was not blockable. Knowing the four-letter words helped tremendously here. This didn't always work in my favour though – I remember a few drubbings I have received not just in the tourney but in other games as well. A great defensive player will ensure that it's extremely unfavourable to open the board. I hope to battle this strategy by learning the fives too, but that will take even more time.

Staying level

During the tournament, whenever people would come up to me and say,

“Good going, go and win it!”, I would reply with, “Mean reversion is yet to happen” ... a small acknowledgement that I had been lucky and could lose at any minute to anyone! On the final day, with two wins required to win from six games, I found myself with just one win and three losses with two games left. I saw the South African cricket team and the English football team before me. I told myself, “Mean reversion in yet to happen”, and thankfully won the tournament with a round to spare.



The title-clinching final board – knowing that SERGEANT anagrams to REAGENTS helped me win here, while knowing DIATREME as an anagram of DIAMETER helped me open up a rather closed board

General tips

Due to me being relatively new to the circuit, I unfortunately still don't know enough people to be able to gauge the skill level of a player by name. But I consider it to be a big reason for my success so far. Giving **equal importance to everyone**

who faces me gives me a mental edge before every battle. A mental note I made to myself was not to look at the ratings chart before the tournament at all. I think this helped me immensely throughout.

I make it a practice to meditate daily. I don't intend to proselytise anyone towards mindfulness meditation, but this helps me **clear my mind** and not be consistently bogged down with words and anagrams. Even between rounds, I would take at least 30 seconds to calm down and try to empty my brain of anything that may have been lurking from the previous round.

Never miss a day of '**Cardboxing**'. Ever. It could be a rainy day, I could be hungover, I could be travelling – but Zyzzyva blocks an hour of my day and it will continue to, until the entire dictionary resides within Cardbox 7 and 8. I've tried to ensure this rule exists in my daily life, and hopefully I will continue to maintain this in the future as well.

Speed revision helps. I did the entire set of threes on Aerolith before the start of each day of the tourney. I had also revised everything I had memorised till then at least once the week before the tournament. This might not have made a great impact, but it made me feel armed and ready.

Special mentions

I could not have achieved this barely believable feat of coming out on top in my fourth tournament without the guidance and support of the Mumbai Scrabble community. As it happens,

The National Championship was my final tournament in India, and I feel especially emotional saying goodbye to the community which has given me so much purpose and companionship over the last two years. The following are shoutouts to people who were instrumental in my journey here:



Striking a winning pose at the 2023 National Championship along with Aditya Iyengar (left), who won the Premier Division

Aditya Iyengar, who convinced me by giving me an ‘IIT senior’ talk to play at the IIT Bombay Open in August 2022 – my first tournament;

Neeta Bhatia, who never stopped believing in my abilities and backed me to participate at the Wordaholix Scrabble League (WSL) last year;

Sonal Merchant, Hriday Samtani, Samrath Bhatia, Rehet Bhatia, Harry Bhatia, Sanjay Bijlani, Alan De Mello,

Rahil Parkar, Ritu Chadha, Sumeet Sachdev, Mehjabeen Peeradina, and anyone else whose name I have forgotten, for being real troops when it comes to showing up at Doolally;

Karan Khanna, for being my sparring buddy in office and never being shy to play multiple games in a row during office hours!

Pranjal Chokhani, without whom I wouldn’t have picked up Scrabble to begin with, and whose crazy attitude of ‘one more game’ ensured that we played nine games of Scrabble on Sundays, which led to me never feeling tired of playing in any tourney I have been to thus far.

I will be moving to Australia in September this year to pursue an MBA, and hope to find my own ‘Doolally’ in Melbourne soon. When I’m able to visit Mumbai, I’ll try to ensure that even if it’s for one day, it’s a Saturday and I can make it for a 2 p.m. session at Doolally!

Endgame Extra: Know the 40 four-letter words ending with C

ABAC, AESC, ALEC, ATOC,
BANC, BLOC, CHIC, CHOC,
CROC, DISC, DOUC, DRAC,
EMIC, EPIC, ERIC, ETIC,
EXEC, FISC, FLIC, FLOC,
FUSC, HUIC, LAIC, MARC,
MERC, NARC, ODIC, OTIC,
OXIC, PERC, PYIC, SAIC,
SPEC, SYNC, TALC, TORC,
URIC, WAAC, ZINC, ZOIC

You're better than you think!

by Sumeet Sachdev

In the weeks leading up to the 2023 National Championship, I was overly burdened with a new show I had started on television after long. As I had worked very hard to get into shape – physically and mentally – for the new character I was portraying, I opted to keep myself away from any kind of Scrabble study, as that would have deviated my mind and I didn't want any distraction. Moreover, getting three consecutive days off was seemingly out of the question.

Then comes the 5th of May, and an unexpected bombshell is dropped, as I'm informed that the show would be going off air at the end of the month – a rather surprising and strange decision. Deeply disappointed, I informed the organisers the next day that I may make it for the Nationals, depending on whether my shoot is wrapped up by then, and more importantly, on how I feel about playing closer to the tournament dates, because I was nowhere near being 'tournament ready'.

My shoot eventually wrapped up on 17th May – two days prior to the start of the tournament – and after deep deliberation, I decided to give it a shot, confirming my participation just a day earlier.

I wasn't supposed to be there, but there I was at the venue on the first morning. I was supposed to be busy recollecting my dialogues, but instead I was recollecting words that were

read ages ago! Nevertheless, I decided to stay composed, keep a cool mind, and not put any pressure on myself – I thought the best way to go would be to 'try' to enjoy myself, even if I ended up losing most of my games.



Enjoying the moment – during a game at the 2023 National Championship

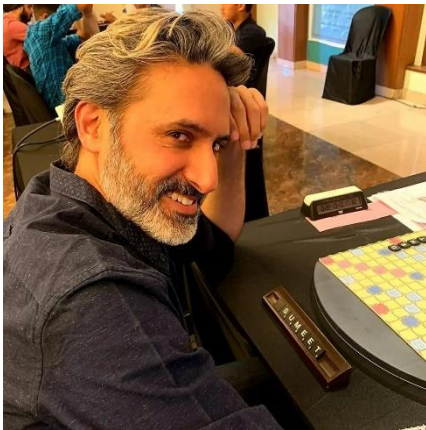
As the tournament went on, that wasn't exactly how it panned out, much to my jubilation. I started off with just four wins out of nine games on the first day, but was happy with the way I was playing. I was placed 19th at the end of Day 1, and climbed up the ladder to 13th after Day 2.

The best was reserved for the last – I felt unstoppable on the final day, and won five out of six games against the tough nuts – players of very high calibre – to finish sixth out of 30. It was indeed a wonderfully ecstatic feeling to defy my own expectations and succeed in a hugely challenging

Premier Division, which featured the topmost players in the country.

There were quite a few memorable games – in one game my opponent put down a golden bingo (JOWLERS) for 76 points, and got a further 32 from my rack on countback. I did the math five times to let the word stay, even though I wasn't sure of it. As it happened, a recount confirmed that I had edged a win by a solitary point!

Then, in two of my last three games, I was chuffed to notch up decisive plays that fetched 90-plus points each (JAGGIEST & NIDGETS) in the penultimate moves.



Sitting with my name (and a blank) on my rack – a good omen?

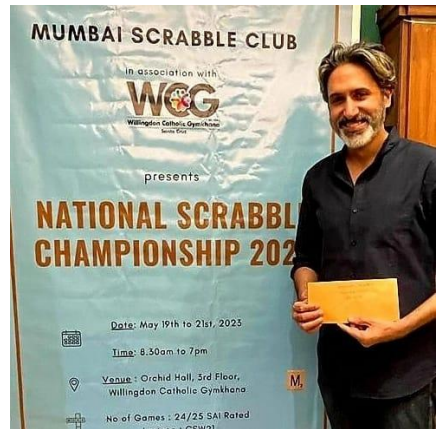
In another game, I found myself with my rack featuring my name and a blank (?EEMSTU). I decided to play TUMEScE, which was challenged and fetched me the extra five points.

And not to forget the only game I lost on the last day, where I made a tile tracking error that led me to play a sub-optimal ten-point play to block a

possible 50-pointer in the crucial penultimate move. I ended up losing the game by only six points. The joke went around that I was actually still unbeaten on the last day, because I had beaten myself in this game!

Was it the cool-headed attitude that paid off? Cannot exactly vouch for it. Not sure if it would yield positive results every time! I feel I'll have to play a few more tournaments with this same 'mindset' to know better. But yes, in my quest to repeat such performances more often, it definitely seems to be the correct starting point.

I cannot really say that I was happy to be there at the start of the tourney, but when it ended, you bet, I very much was!



An unexpectedly sweet success – finishing sixth in a tough Premier Division

Soaking in the sweet success of my performance, my favourite hashtag from now on – applicable to Scrabble as well as life itself – is #yourebetterthanyouthink.

My first tournament away from home

by Monica Agarwala

My first tournament out of Bangalore was the 17th Goa Open, which took place from 21st to 23rd April 2023 in Panaji. I had initially thought of registering for the tournament in March, but started contemplating whether I had what it takes to hold my own against the ace players. My heart told me to go for it, but my head wasn't ready for it yet!

After days of thinking, I finally got the courage to register, and the tourney turned out to be one of the best experiences of my life! There were a few particularly memorable games during those three days that I will never forget.

When I saw myself being paired with Rajiv Antao for my very first game of the tournament, I had butterflies in my stomach. I had not anticipated this, and was pretty nervous. But I kept telling my mind to calm down and focus on the board, and couldn't quite believe it when I finally won the game by 21 points. I managed to make two bingos – PATTIES and BEDOUINS. With this exhilarating start, I was on cloud nine already!

My second game was with Asha Kamath – another player to reckon with on the Scrabble circuit. Lady Luck was on my side, and I won another close game, this time by just 13 points. I added two more bingos to my bucket, BIPLANE and MATRICE. I must mention that in my final game of the tournament with Asha, she

thrashed me badly and won by a whopping 279 points!

One of my most memorable games was with Rustom Deboo. We both were tied twice during the game, when our scores were 253 each and then 270 each. In the penultimate turn, I was leading by 39 points and had very high hopes of winning this game. Just then, he surprised me with DOULEIA for 71 points and that was it, as he ended up winning by 38!



A 371-420 loss to Siddharth Nithyanand

Another fascinating game was with Siddharth Nithyanand. After my third move, my score was 39 points and his was 196! At this stage, I thought there was no way I could catch up with him – I just wanted to give up and run

away. But the gap narrowed as the game progressed, so much so that I reached 349 to his 354. I eventually lost by 49 points, but importantly, this game taught me that anything can happen during a game and one shouldn't get discouraged.

My game with Mayank Khandelwal was also very enthralling. My bingos of AENEOS and MAUSIER helped me to a handy lead of 120 points in the closing stages, but he ended the game with a golden bingo DAINTIES for 99 points. Still, I managed to win the game by 34 points.

I got an opportunity to play against the crème de la crème of the veteran players such as Manju Sood, Lennie D'Souza and Bhushan Pradhan – games that I unsurprisingly lost. Since it was a single division, I was often paired with high-level players, making for an invaluable experience. All the players were very supportive, and made me feel great in spite of my losses.

This tournament was an eye opener for me, as I learned a lot from my mistakes during the games and also got a chance to interact with and get some tips from the expert players. I ended up with ten wins from 24 games, and was glad that the study I had done for the tournament did bear some fruit. Even if the tile fairy was on my side, I wouldn't have been able to make certain bingos had I not studied them, which underlines the importance of regular word study.

I am grateful to my initial mentors Archana Aggarwal and Hema Shah,

whose daily morning study sessions have served as invaluable guidance. Also, attending an advanced Scrabble workshop by Sanjoy Gupta and Prashanth Seetharam just before the tournament helped me a lot.



A 403-369 win over Mayank Khandelwal

There was a spot prize for the highest 'J' letter word that I was expecting to win, and readily went up to receive it. Just when I was sitting back in my chair, I was taken aback when my name was announced again. I thought I had heard it wrong. When people sitting around me started telling me to go on the stage, I was in a daze. I soon realised that I was getting the band prize in my rating category! It was a pleasant surprise, as I had least expected it. This has encouraged me a lot, and I now earnestly look forward to participating in more tournaments, both in my home city of Bangalore as well as outside Bangalore.

All aboard the Scrabble Express

by Rustom Deboo

Here are 20 railway-related bingos to help you chug along in your next tournament:

AXLETREE – a bar connecting the opposite wheels of a carriage, on the ends of which the wheels revolve

CABOOSE – the last car of a freight train

COCOPAN – a railway wagon used in mines

CROSSTIE – a beam that connects and supports the rails of a railway



Caboose

FLATCAR – a railway freight car without sides or a roof

GANTRIES – structures for supporting railway signals

GAUNTLET – to overlap railway tracks, also GANTLET

HIGHBALL – a railway track signal permitting the engineer to proceed at full speed

MAGLEVS – high-speed trains that operate by magnetic levitation



Maglev

MONORAIL – a railway system where the trains run on one rail

PILOTMAN – a railway employee assigned to guide trains

PULLMAN – a railway sleeping car

RAILCARD – a card allowing reduced fares for travelling by train



Pullman

RAILHEAD – the end of a railway line

ROADBED – the foundation of a railway track

ROOMETTE – a small private compartment in a railway sleeping car

TRACKAGE – the track system of a railway



Trestle

TRAINFUL – as much as a railway train can hold

TRAINMAN – a railway employee

TRESTLE – a framework for supporting a bridge

Continuing with the theme... here's a railway board featuring all 100 tiles:



The 24 sevens having T, R, A, C, K:

AKRATIC, AMTRACK,
BRACKET, CRACKET,
HATRACK, KARSTIC,

PATRICK, RACKETS,
RACKETT, RACKETY,
RATPACK, RESTACK,
RETACKS, RETRACK,
STACKER, TACKERS,
TACKIER, TACKLER,
TARROCK, TRACKED,
TRACKER, TRACKIE,
TRIPACK, UNTRACK

The 20 sevens having E, N, G, I, N, E:

BEGINNE, EEVNING,
ENEWIN, ENGINED,
ENGINEER, ENGINES,
EVENING, GENNIES,
GENUINE, INGENDER,
INGENUE, KEENING,
KNEEING, NEEDING,
NEESING, NEEZING,
PEENING, SNEEING,
TEENING, WEENING

The 41 eights having E, N, G, I, N, E:

ANTIGENE, BEGINNER,
BEGINNES, BENIGNER,
EEVINGS, EMENDING,
ENDEWING, ENERVING,
ENGINEER, ENGINEERS,
ENGINEERY, ENMEWING,
ENRINGED, ENSEWING,
ENSIGNED, ENTERING,
EVENINGS, EVENTING,
GREENING, INDIGENE,
INGENERS, INGENUES,
KEENINGS, KNEELING,
MENINGES, NEEDLING,
PEENGING, PEENINGS,
PFENNIGE, PREENING,
QUEENING, RENEGING,
RENEWING, RENEYING,
SERENING, SHEENING,
SNEERING, SNEEZING,
STEENING, TEENDING, UNSEEING

Tournament round-up

National Championship, Mumbai

by Rustom Deboo

The 23rd edition of the National Scrabble Championship was held at the Willingdon Catholic Gymkhana (WCG) in Mumbai from 19th to 21st May 2023. A healthy turnout of 63 players across two divisions – 30 in the Premier Division and 33 in the Open Division – made for a highly competitive and memorable event.



Let the games begin... outside the venue, the Willingdon Catholic Gymkhana

Organised by the Mumbai Scrabble Club (MSC), the tournament saw the players battle it out over the course of 25 hard-fought rounds. The Premier Division featured arguably the most challenging field at any National Championship in recent memory, as defending champion Aditya Iyengar

sought to retain the title in the face of other top-rated players from India.



Players in the thick of the action at the 2023 National Championship

The first day witnessed nine games, at the end of which Aditya and Rahil Parkar led the charts in the Premier Division with eight wins apiece. In an equally challenging Open Division, Aaradhya Srivastava ran riot early by winning all nine games. As the second day progressed, Aditya and Rahil kept taking turns to occupy the top spot, even as the scramble for the spots just below remained volatile.



Aditya Iyengar, winner of the Premier Division, receiving the trophy from former hockey Olympian Joaquim Carvalho

Both Aditya and Rahil finished the second day with 15 wins from 18 games, two wins clear of the next best. Meanwhile, Aaradhya stayed in control of the Open Division, going into the final day with 16 wins, three wins clear of anyone else. There was all to play for in the last six rounds on the final day, what with the 'King of the Hill' (KOTH) format, which had begun from Round 17 on Day 2.



Aaradhya Srivastava receiving the winner's trophy for the Open Division

Not too surprisingly, Aditya and Rahil faced off in eight consecutive rounds starting from Round 17 – they played each other as many as ten times in the tournament. The gripping tug of war resumed on the final day, with Aditya securing a huge 606-367 win in Round 20, before Rahil won two on the trot (397-331 and 597-433) to edge ahead with three rounds left. Needing to win two more games, Aditya won 560-398 and 523-416 in Rounds 21 and 22 respectively to seal the title with a round to spare.

Aditya ultimately finished with 19 wins at a spread of +1476, becoming the fourth player, after Akshay Bhandarkar, Varisht Hingorani and record nine-time winner Sherwin

Rodrigues, to successfully defend the National Championship title. Rahil followed in second place with 17 wins (+474), while Sherwin finished third with a tally of 16 (+1010).



The Premier Division podium – champion Aditya Iyengar (centre) with Rahil Parkar (left) and Sherwin Rodrigues

Likewise, the Open Division also saw the winner secure the top spot in the penultimate round, as Aaradhya, playing only his fourth tournament, finished with 18 wins (plus a bye) at a spread of +1228. The second and third places were taken by Sushanto Bhattacharya (17, +725) and Nikheel Ruparel (16, +1010) respectively.

There were prizes for the top ten in each division, in addition to spot prizes in select rounds. There was also a prize for the best under-18 player of the Open Division, which was won by Aarush Jotwani. The prizes were handed over by Joaquim

Carvalho, former hockey Olympian and the sports secretary of WCG.



Aarush Jotwani, the best under-18 performer in the Open Division

Thanks to WCG for providing the spacious venue, Ashok Bhandarkar for effectively directing the tourney, and volunteers Vedika Hingorani, Eulalia Fernandes and Kanchan Pradhan for their valuable assistance. Beyond the frenzy of Scrabble, the players indulged in get-togethers following each day's play, with Ritu Chadha, and Neeta and Harry Bhatia, being generous enough to play hosts.

Final standings – Division A

| | Player | Wins | Spread |
|----|----------------------|------|--------|
| 1 | Aditya Iyengar | 19 | 1476 |
| 2 | Rahil Parkar | 17 | 474 |
| 3 | Sherwin Rodrigues | 16 | 1010 |
| 4 | Samrath Bhatia | 16 | 289 |
| 5 | Akshay Bhandarkar | 15 | 1754 |
| 6 | Sumeet Sachdev | 15 | 159 |
| 7 | Ishika Shivalingaiah | 14 | 718 |
| 8 | Madhav Kamath | 14 | 70 |
| 9 | Udayan Grover | 14 | -200 |
| 10 | Hriday Samtani | 13 | 885 |
| 11 | Douglas Lobo | 13 | 530 |
| 12 | Charles Carneiro | 13 | 314 |
| 13 | Rajiv Antao | 13 | -62 |
| 14 | Sudhir Kamath | 12.5 | -356 |
| 15 | Sunny Bhatia | 12 | 651 |
| 16 | Varisht Hingorani | 12 | 477 |
| 17 | Amit Sood | 12 | 40 |

| | | | |
|----|----------------------|-----|-------|
| 18 | Rajeev Menon | 12 | -241 |
| 19 | Rustom Deboo | 12 | -325 |
| 20 | Sujana Somasekar | 12 | -433 |
| 21 | Bhushan Pradhan | 11 | 63 |
| 22 | Mangala Bhandarkar | 11 | -286 |
| 23 | Kala Ganesh | 11 | -507 |
| 24 | Suchindra Potnis | 11 | -860 |
| 25 | V Ramachandran | 10 | -302 |
| 26 | Rehet Bhatia | 10 | -574 |
| 27 | Joe Rodrigues | 10 | -1505 |
| 28 | Shaikh Ahmed | 9 | -1188 |
| 29 | Siddharth Nithyanand | 8 | -804 |
| 30 | Prithwiraj Mukherjee | 7.5 | -1267 |

High game: Charles Carneiro 651



Australia's Joanna Moss (left) and Madhulekha Barkakati share a light moment after their Open Division game

Final standings – Division B

| | Player | Wins | Spread |
|----|---------------------|---------|--------|
| 1 | Aaradhya Srivastava | 18 (+1) | 1228 |
| 2 | Sushanto B | 17 | 725 |
| 3 | Nikheel Ruparel | 16 | 1010 |
| 4 | Abid Hussain | 15 (+1) | 533 |
| 5 | Danish Shahna | 15 | 1250 |
| 6 | Swagat Nukala | 14 (+1) | +458 |
| 7 | Patrick Pereira | 15 | 303 |
| 8 | Vignesh S | 14.5 | 696 |
| 9 | Asha Kamath | 14 | 631 |
| 10 | Neeta Bhatia | 14 | 492 |

| | | | |
|----|---------------------|---------|-------|
| 11 | Abhijit Shilotri | 14 | 186 |
| 12 | Viji Ramachandran | 13 (+1) | 79 |
| 13 | Radhika M | 14 | -97 |
| 14 | Aarush Jotwani | 14 | -108 |
| 15 | Caryl Gonsalvez | 13 | 292 |
| 16 | Ritu Chadha | 12 (+1) | 227 |
| 17 | Harvinderjit Bhatia | 12 (+1) | -42 |
| 18 | Gaurav Bhargava | 12 (+1) | -711 |
| 19 | Sonal Merchant | 12.5 | 348 |
| 20 | Ela Ghose | 12 | 642 |
| 21 | Aruna Grover | 11 (+1) | 233 |
| 22 | Karan Khanna | 12 | 124 |
| 23 | Anika Dalwani | 11 (+1) | -362 |
| 24 | Arhav Thakkar | 10 (+2) | -784 |
| 25 | Ishika Poddar | 10 (+1) | 143 |
| 26 | Mehjabeen P | 10 (+1) | -23 |
| 27 | Madhulekha B | 10 (+1) | -72 |
| 28 | Joanna Moss | 10 (+1) | -251 |
| 29 | Viral Kansara | 10 (+1) | -662 |
| 30 | Bhushan Sarmalkar | 9 (+2) | -1330 |
| 31 | Raksha Tanna | 7 (+2) | -1252 |
| 32 | Dirgha Sampat | 5 (+2) | -651 |
| 33 | Ark Kansara | 4 (+3) | -3255 |

Bye treatment explained in brackets

High game: Danish Shahna 639

Goa All-India Open

by Ela Ghose and Rajiv Antao

After a four-year Covid-prompted hiatus, the annual Goa – one of the most fancied locations on the Indian Scrabble circuit – tournament was set to resume.

Fortunately, from September 2022, the Scrabblers in Goa had been getting together for a few one-dayers, reviving a semblance of the club and getting the Scrabble Association of Goa back on track! A decision was taken by December 2022 to revive the Goa All-India Open. There were many challenges: the old sponsors were no longer available; bank accounts had become dormant due to non-usage,

but everyone chipped in to help. Rajiv Antao coordinated and put the overall plan together. Selwyn Lobo provided the trophies, and several members contributed cash, as there were only two small external sponsors.



Games in progress at the 17th Goa Open

Even with this, we had to trim the prize money distribution plan (we did not want to increase the entry fee further, as people were already finding it dear). This was however compensated by some great hotel vouchers (stay and dinner at Cidade De Goa) to the top two winners, thanks to the Fomento Group.



Rex D'Souza (left), who stepped in to assist with the direction of the tourney, and Rajiv Antao at the prize distribution

There was a total of 36 players (including four of the top ten in India) who came in from various parts of India such as Kolkata, Delhi,

Bangalore, Mumbai, Pune and Kochi, to compete over three days – 18th to 21st 2023 – at the 17th Goa All-India Open. Though the tournament director had to pull out at the last moment due to health issues, the designated playing TDs, with the help of the volunteer invigilators and scorekeepers, did a great job. All players were extremely happy with a smooth, well-run tournament.

Aditya Iyengar, the top seed, ended up as the winner – requiring to win his last three games, he did just that. Ishika Shivalingaiah, the top rated female player in India, took second place, while young Madhav Gopal Kamath took the third spot.



*The top five at the Goa Open 2023 (L-R):
Udayan Grover (fourth), Ishika S
(second), Aditya Iyengar (winner),
Madhav Kamath (third), and Douglas
Lobo (fifth)*

Held on the fourth floor of the Caculo Mall in Panaji, just off Miramar Beach, players were treated with traditional Goan hospitality in terms of food and drink: great Goan food at each lunch – and beer as well! The beer was Sudhir Kamath's gift to the players, though it was taken up more by those who were looking to console

themselves over losses than the serious competitors at the top tables.

Post the games, there was drinking and dancing (as is the wont at every tournament). The evenings had lots of butt waggles, drinking of coloured, flammable liquids, and good-natured bonhomie. The last evening was a 'till you catch your flight back' at Rajiv's home. His wife, Desiree, generously cooked up a storm; over good drinks, Desiree's delicious food, and masses of ice-cream, dumb charades was played with much hysteria and eye-rolling on the choice of films.



*When in Goa... Rustom Deboo (left) and
Sudhir Kamath enjoy a cold one each
during their game at the Goa Open*

Some of us even got an early-morning beach walk the following day, with breakfast at Treebo Hotel generously hosted by Sunny Bhatia.

All in all, a memorable tournament!

Final standings

| | Player | Wins | Spread |
|---|----------------------|------|--------|
| 1 | Aditya Iyengar | 18 | 1947 |
| 2 | Ishika Shivalingaiah | 17 | 795 |
| 3 | Madhav Kamath | 16 | 1127 |
| 4 | Udayan Grover | 16 | 1120 |
| 5 | Douglas Lobo | 15 | 906 |

| | | | |
|----|----------------------|------|-------|
| 6 | Sanjoy Gupta | 15 | 702 |
| 7 | Selwyn Lobo | 14 | 904 |
| 8 | Bhushan Pradhan | 14 | 802 |
| 9 | Sujana Somasekar | 14 | 571 |
| 10 | Kala Ganesh | 14 | 481 |
| 11 | Pankaj Bolaki | 13.5 | -141 |
| 12 | Siddharth Nithyanand | 13 | 663 |
| 13 | Sunny Bhatia | 13 | 442 |
| 14 | Ela Ghose | 13 | 236 |
| 15 | Rustom Deboo | 13 | 153 |
| 16 | Joe Rodrigues | 13 | -360 |
| 17 | Arindam Basu | 13 | -622 |
| 18 | Sudhir Kamath | 12 | 659 |
| 19 | Manju Sood | 12 | 183 |
| 20 | Rajiv Antao | 12 | -4 |
| 21 | Neeta Bhatia | 12 | -143 |
| 22 | Lennie D'Souza | 12 | -494 |
| 23 | Anthony Gomes | 11 | 190 |
| 24 | R Nalini | 11 | 143 |
| 25 | Asha Kamath | 11 | -166 |
| 26 | Jacky Fernandes | 11 | -476 |
| 27 | Vignesh S | 10.5 | -336 |
| 28 | Harvinderjit Bhatia | 10 | -492 |
| 29 | Monica Agarwala | 10 | -908 |
| 30 | Ritu Chadha | 9.5 | -286 |
| 31 | Aruna Grover | 8.5 | -420 |
| 32 | Ronilla Kataria | 8.5 | -553 |
| 33 | Mayank Khandelwal | 8.5 | -559 |
| 34 | Bhushan Sarmalkar | 7 | -1828 |
| 35 | Suhaas Khandelwal | 7 | -2761 |
| 36 | Sylvia Coelho | 4 | -1475 |

High game: Sudhir Kamath 663

June ka Junoon, Bangalore

by Monica Agarwala

To make the dull summer month of June interesting, the Karnataka State Scrabble Association (KSSA) planned a two-day rated tournament in the city of gardens, Bangalore. It was held from 17th to 18th June 2023 at the Karnataka Badminton Association.

There were 32 contestants from Bangalore, which was the highest ever turnout for a two-day tournament organised by KSSA. One of the unique

features of this tourney was that all the players played a single division even though they were classified in different divisions, with the prizes given based on their final standings within their respective divisions.

It was great to see many enthusiastic new players playing in their first rated tournament, among them being Arvind Iyer, Moksh Datta, Abhyuday Krishna, Ikksheta Sharma, Pranav Ramkumar, Anjali M, and Rama Gomatam. Pranav had played for the first time in the unrated enthusiast division (which he won) at the KSSA Indian Open in January 2023, and it is a matter of pride for KSSA that he went on to perform astonishingly well at this tournament.

There was great camaraderie among all the participants. There were three divisions (A, B, and C), with their respective rating cutoffs being 1050, 650 and below 650. We played 15 rounds, with the last five in the KOTH format with repeats. Rex D'Souza was the Tournament Director, while my fellow KSSA committee members Radhika Mahalingaiah and Ishika Shivalingaiah addressed the audience after the tournament, encouraging the newbies to come forward and play more games.



The participants at the June ka Junoon two-day tournament in Bangalore

Following were the prize winners:

Division A

The first prize of INR 3500 was won by none other than Sanjoy Gupta.

The second prize of INR 3000 was clinched by our 'bingo rani', Ishika.

The third prize of INR 2000 went to our under-18 champion, Suyash Manchali.

Division B

The first prize of INR 3000 went to our quiz master, Abhijit Shilotri

The second prize of INR 2500 was won by our globe trotter, Saraswathi Rammanohar.

The third prize of INR 1500 was bagged by our inimitable Dipankar Chatterjee.

Division C

The first prize of INR 2000 was given to the most promising newbie, Pranav Ramkumar.

The second prize of INR 1500 went to our ten-year old upcoming star, Suhaas Khandelwal.

The third prize of INR 1000 was awarded to our new entrant, Abhyuday Krishna.

The fourth prize of INR 500 went to our enthusiast, Chandru Bolaki.

The Promising Youth prize went to our promising 'chhota packet', Samarth Manchali.



The prize winners at June ka Junoon

KSSA received a very positive feedback from the participants, stating that it was a well-orchestrated and highly enjoyable tournament.

Final standings

| | Player | Wins | Spread |
|----|----------------------|--------|--------|
| 1 | Sanjoy Gupta | 12 | 1115 |
| 2 | Ishika Shivalingaiah | 11 | 897 |
| 3 | Suyash Manchali | 11 | 680 |
| 4 | Pankaj Bolaki | 10 | 593 |
| 5 | Sushanto B | 10 | 209 |
| 6 | Abhijit Shilotri | 10 | 178 |
| 7 | Suchindra Potnis | 9.5 | 870 |
| 8 | Prithwiraj Mukherjee | 9 | 576 |
| 9 | Saraswathi R | 9 | 128 |
| 10 | Dipankar Chatterjee | 9 | 79 |
| 11 | Radhika M | 8 | 502 |
| 12 | Shubha S | 8 | 431 |
| 13 | Mayank Khandelwal | 8 | 396 |
| 14 | Pranav Ramkumar | 8 | 181 |
| 15 | Monica Agarwala | 8 | -108 |
| 16 | Abid Hussain | 7.5 | 539 |
| 17 | Lennie D'Souza | 7 | 374 |
| 18 | Shankar Prasad | 7 | -65 |
| 19 | Vignesh S | 7 | -118 |
| 20 | Suhaas Khandelwal | 7 | -158 |
| 21 | Abhyuday Krishna | 7 | -237 |
| 22 | Suguna Dandi | 6 (+1) | -705 |
| 23 | Arvind Lath | 6 | 340 |
| 24 | Samarth Manchali | 6 | 276 |
| 25 | Manisha Mohite | 6 | -348 |
| 26 | Chandru Bolaki | 4 (+2) | -351 |
| 27 | Rama Gomatam | 6 | -409 |
| 28 | Anjali M | 5 (+1) | -421 |
| 29 | Ikksheta Sharma | 4 (+1) | -1404 |
| 30 | Moksh A | 3 (+2) | -1783 |
| 31 | Arvind Iyer | 2 (+1) | -1156 |
| 32 | Seetha Chari | 1 (+0) | -1101 |

High game: Abid Hussain 627

Goa one-day friendly

An unrated friendly one-day tourney was played in Goa on 17th June. The venue was the residence of Anthony Gomes at Corjuem Island, Aldona. Seven players played seven rounds, with Selwyn Lobo emerging as the winner with five wins (plus a bye).

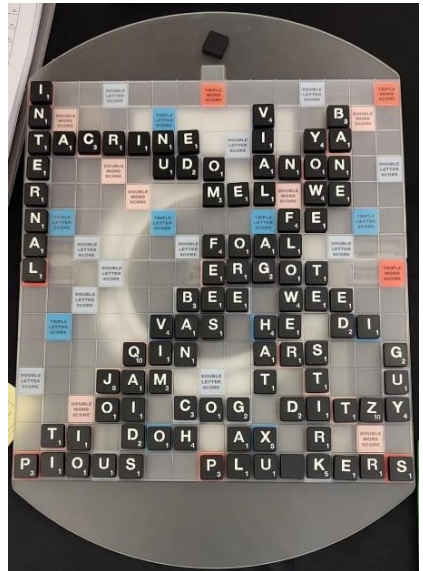


The participants at the unrated one-day tournament in Goa

Endgame Extra: Intriguing instances at the 2023 Nationals

- The Premier Division saw Sherwin Rodrigues finish third, while Nikheel Ruparel took the corresponding third place in the Open Division. Both players finished with 16 wins, and in an amazing coincidence, both ended up with the exact same spread of 1010!
- The top seed and the bottom seed in the Premier Division were unrelated players sharing the same surname – Sherwin Rodrigues and Joe Rodrigues.

- In a game between Swagat Nukala and Danish Shahna in the Open Division (board in the picture below), Swagat had the rare satisfaction of making two nine-timers, with the second of those, I(N)TERNAL, being a winning ‘golden’ bingo.



- In two separate games against different opponents in the Premier Division, Rustom Deboo made the word NETTLIER, and it was challenged both times!
- There were two games across both divisions that featured a losing score of 500 or more, and Sherwin was at the receiving end on both these occasions – he lost 513-579 to Charles Carneiro and 511-515 to Aditya Iyengar.

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:



United Kingdom

The 2023 edition of the UK National Championship was held in Hull from 27th to 29th May, with the winner being Scotland's Paul Allan, who topped Division A (having 44 players) with 17 wins from 21 rounds at a spread of 1825. Paul was Gibsonised with two rounds to go, and this was his third title win at the tournament.

Australia

The Victorian Championship, held over the second weekend of June, saw the top seed David Eldar – currently the third highest rated Scrabbler according to the WESPA rankings – clinch the title on the back of 16 wins out of 18 games at a spread of 1238. It was a highly dominating display from David, as no one else in the 38-player roster managed more than 12 wins.

Malaysia

It was business as usual for world number one Nigel Richards, as he won the two-day Word Wizard KLIA2 Challenge in early May. The New Zealander legend won 12 out of 17 games at a spread of 1362. A couple of weeks later, Nigel pocketed the ASCI 2023 Masters title too, this time with 14 wins out of 15 games (plus two byes) at an even better spread (1684).

Endgame Extra: When 591 wasn't enough to win!



The board above (picture courtesy: Collins Coalition Scrabble) is from a game between Alec Sjöholm and Dave Wiegand at the Memorial Day Oregon Coast Open (a tournament played under the CoCo ratings) in the United States in June. The final scoreline was 593-591 in favour of Dave – Alec's 591 is now believed to be the highest losing score in any tournament game.

Puzzles and quizzes

Anagram quiz – Name the country

by Rustom Deboo

In this anagram quiz, the clue in each question is the meaning of an eight-letter word valid in Scrabble, with the corresponding letter in brackets denoting a letter in the said eight-letter word, which, when removed from the said word, results in the seven remaining letters being the jumbled letters of a seven-letter country name (hint: none of these ten seven-letter country names have an anagram that is valid in Scrabble).

For instance, if the eight-letter word is found to be RAINCOAT and the corresponding letter is N, then the name of the country in this case would be Croatia. You can send in your answers to indianscrabble@gmail.com by 15th August 2023. One entry getting all ten countries right will win a cash prize of Rs. 500 in a lucky draw.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) Arranged in two rows (S) | 6) A dwarf tree (C) |
| 2) A European herb (A) | 7) An amino acid (N) |
| 3) A technique of playing a musical chord (P) | 8) A type of glassware (B) |
| 4) A light canoe (T) | 9) Rash; impetuous (E) |
| 5) A ballet jump (L) | 10) A type of horse leap (P) |

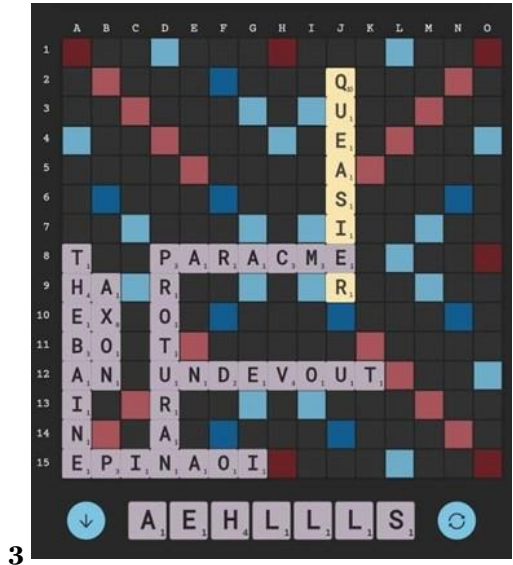


Find the best play

by Hriday Samtani

Find the best/highest-scoring play on offer in each of three board situations below:



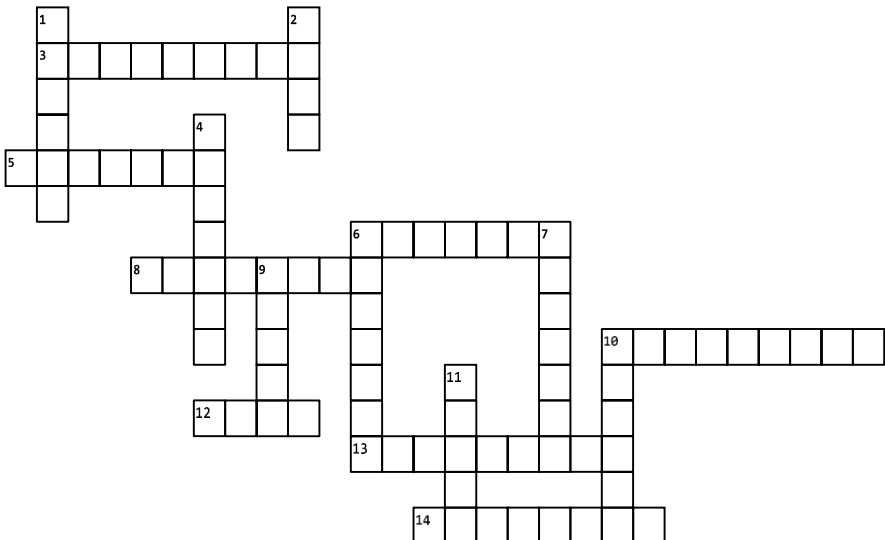


3

Identify the instrument

by Shubha Shivashankar

The objective of this quiz is to replace the numbers with letters corresponding to their point value in Scrabble in order to get a valid word, and fill them in the grid. For example, 1113311 would correspond to TRUMPET. Each of the words mean a musical instrument, with the hint given in brackets.



Across

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3) 411311131 (wind) | 10) 118134111 (wind) |
| 5) 3111331 (percussion) | 12) 1311 (wind) |
| 6) 3433111 (plate) | 13) 133112111 (keyboard) |
| 8) 11133111 (wind) | 14) 31121111 (stringed) |

Down

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) 241115 (percussion) | 7) 1111121 (stringed) |
| 2) 4113 (stringed) | 9) 31181 (stringed) |
| 4) 1111111 (stringed) | 10) 141111 (wind) |
| 6) 3111111 (keyboard) | 11) 41111 (stringed) |

Alphagram quiz – Eight-letter words

by Rustom Deboo

Given below are 14 ‘alphagrams’ (the letters of a word arranged into alphabetical order – note that ALPHAGRAM* by itself is a phoney!) of eight-letter words valid in Scrabble. Test yourself on how many you can get right, and within how much time.

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1) ABEILNTV | 8) ADEFLORV |
| 2) AACEINNT | 9) DELNOPRS |
| 3) ACEELRTU | 10) AEFLNOSW |
| 4) DEILMORV | 11) AALNOORS |
| 5) CEEIRRTU | 12) CDEINNOU |
| 6) DEEGINOP | 13) CEEINOTV |
| 7) AILRRSTU | 14) CIILNORT |

SAI round-up

- **SAI General Body Meeting**

A General Body Meeting (GBM) of SAI was conducted virtually by the Managing Committee of SAI on 28th May 2023. The hour-long meeting was held from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m., and was attended by 44 members. The Managing Committee apprised the members of the various efforts carried out by the committee members, and the roles played and tasks undertaken by each of them.

In addition, the GBM was a means to reach out and connect with the members, and obtain their feedback and suggestions on various aspects surrounding Indian Scrabble. The recording of the meeting as well as the presentation can be found on the SAI website at this link: indianscrabble.com/gbm-28th-may-2023/

- **The Buddy Plan**

With a view to smoothly onboard new members into the Scrabble fold, the SAI Managing Committee has decided to initiate a 'Buddy Plan', by which every new member will be assigned a designated 'buddy' in the

form of an experienced SAI member, who will be guiding the new member on various facets of getting acquainted with the game for the first three months.

- **Other new initiatives**

A few other initiatives that are proposed to be initiated soon by the SAI Managing Committee include the following: i) Training and Mentorship Program, ii) Creating a pool of potential tournament directors, and iii) TSH Training Program. The Managing Committee invites SAI members who specialise in these areas to assist with the coordination of each of these programs.

- **Indian presence at WESPAC 2023**

As of 30th June 2023, Anuj Shetty is the only player confirmed to represent India in the main event of the 2023 WESPA Championship (WESPAC), set to be played in Las Vegas in late July. Though India was allotted seven spots for the global event, unfortunately they could not be filled due to constraints of the players. Here's wishing Anuj all the best for WESPAC 2023!

New members

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

1. **Shubhada Saxena** (Pune)
 2. **Karan Khanna** (Mumbai) started learning Scrabble in school under Wordaholix back in 2006. He lost touch with the game thereafter, but returned to playing last year with his first tournament, the IIT Bombay Open.
 3. **Ark Kansara** (Vadodara) is 11 years old, and recently played in the Open Division at the 2023 Nationals.
 4. **Joanna Moss** (Australia, currently based in Lanjigarh)
 5. **Leena Abraham** (Mumbai) likes Scrabble because she is fond of words, literature and linguistics. She first played Scrabble as a kid, when her older brother introduced her to the game. Many of her family members are avid players too, and they play whenever they get together. She picked up the game slowly, and now plays at least two online games every day.
-

Endgame Extra: With this being the tenth edition of Endgame, here are a few handy sevens and eights related to ‘ten’

TENTH?? (6)

ETCHANT, HUTMENT, SHOTTEN, TENTHLY, TIGHTEN, WHATTEN,

DENARY? (13)

ARDENCY, DEANERY, DEARNLY, DENTARY, DRAYMEN, RENAYED, REYNARD, TRAYNED, TYRANED, UNREADY, YARDMEN, YEAREND, YEARNED

DENARY?? (33)

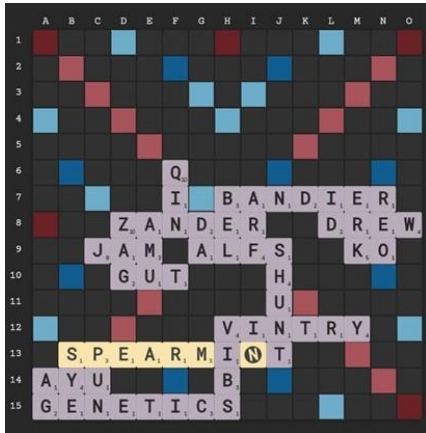
AERODYNE, ARDENTLY, AROYNTED, BARNEYED, BENADRYL, BONEYARD, BYLANDER, CALENDRY, CARNEYED, CRAYONED, DAIRYMEN, DEACONRY, DECENARY, DERAYING, ENDARCHY, PANDERLY, PEDANTRY, READYING, REPANDLY, REYNARDS, SYNEDRIA, TYRANNED, TYRANTED, UNDERLAY, UNDERPAY, UNDERSAY, UNDERWAY, UNPRAYED, VERDANCY, VINEYARD, WARDENRY, YEARDING, YEARENDS

DECADE? (6)

ACCEDED, CEDARED, DECADES, DECALED, DECAYED, DEFACED

Solutions to puzzles and quizzes

Find the best play



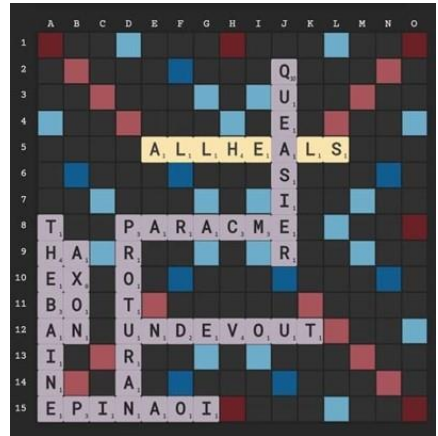
1) Three best moves:

- 13B – SPEARM(I)n(T) – 97
- 13A – MAP – 36 (ERS?)
- 13A – RAMP – 36 (ES?)



2) Three best moves:

- 15A – ZOETROp(E) – 101
- G13 – ZOO – 49 (ERT?)
- G13 – ZO – 46 (EORT?)



3) Three best moves:

- 5E – ALLHE(A)LS – 94
- 14F – HALLELS – 85
- 14D – (A)LLHEALS – 76

Identify the instrument

Across: 3) Harmonica,
5) Marimba, 6) Cymbals,
8) Trombone, 10) Saxophone,
12) Oboe, 13) Accordion,
14) Mandolin; Down: 1) Dholak,
2) Harp, 4) Santoor, 6) Celesta,
7) Sarangi, 9) Banjo, 10) Shenai,
11) Viola

Alphagram quiz

- 1) BIVALENT, 2) ANTIACNE,
- 3) ULCERATE, 4) OVERMILD,
- 5) URETERIC, 6) PIGEONED,
- 7) RURALIST, 8) FLAVORED,
- 9) SPLENDOR, 10) SNOWFLEA,
- 11) ORONASAL, 12) UNCOINED,
- 13) EVECTION, 14) NITROLIC

Ratings

Below are the SAI official ratings (top 80) as on 30th June 2023. Please visit indianscrabble.com for the full rankings.

| | Name | Club | Rating | Games |
|----|----------------------|------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Sherwin Rodrigues | MUM | 1801 | 1677 |
| 2 | Akshay Bhandarkar | OSI | 1757 | 612 |
| 3 | Aditya Iyengar | PUN | 1740 | 735 |
| 4 | Rahil Parkar | MUM | 1670 | 699 |
| 5 | Ishika Shivalingaiah | BLR | 1578 | 495 |
| 6 | Udayan Grover | PUN | 1577 | 2229 |
| 7 | Samrath Singh Bhatia | MUM | 1574 | 1061 |
| 8 | Prashanth Seetharam | OSI | 1564 | 384 |
| 9 | Madhav Gopal Kamath | DEL | 1559 | 779 |
| 10 | Mohan Chunkath | CHN | 1554 | 1144 |
| | Puneet Sharma | OS | 1553 | 202 |
| | Irfan Siddiqui | OS | 1535 | 380 |
| 11 | Charles Carneiro | OSI | 1533 | 870 |
| 12 | Suyash Manchali | BLR | 1517 | 294 |
| 13 | Sanjoy Gupta | BLR | 1498 | 1513 |
| 14 | Varisht Hingorani | MUM | 1481 | 1296 |
| 15 | Rajveer Rawlin | BLR | 1477 | 574 |
| 16 | A Krishnan | CHN | 1476 | 568 |
| 17 | Sunny Bhatia | DEL | 1469 | 1321 |
| 18 | Douglas Lobo | GOA | 1460 | 1470 |
| 19 | Hriday Samtani | MUM | 1459 | 667 |
| | Shaila Amalean | OS | 1443 | 307 |
| 20 | Nidhi Singhvi | OSI | 1431 | 982 |
| 21 | Selwyn Lobo | OSI | 1407 | 325 |
| 22 | Sumeet Sachdev | MUM | 1401 | 584 |
| 23 | Sudhir Kamath | DEL | 1393 | 1153 |
| 24 | Vraj Jain | MUM | 1391 | 593 |
| 25 | Pramit Rao | MUM | 1382 | 89 |
| 26 | Amit Sood | PUN | 1362 | 547 |
| | Rohaina Tanveer | OS | 1343 | 552 |
| 27 | Anuj Shetty | BLR | 1328 | 341 |
| 28 | Sujana Somasekar | BLR | 1318 | 635 |
| 29 | Pankaj Bolaki | BLR | 1298 | 439 |
| 30 | Rajeev Menon | HYD | 1288 | 890 |
| 31 | Sanjay Bijlani | MUM | 1284 | 632 |
| 32 | Manju Sood | BLR | 1279 | 936 |
| 33 | Yash Potnis | BLR | 1277 | 562 |
| 34 | Rajiv Antao | GOA | 1248 | 1099 |
| 35 | Rustom Deboo | MUM | 1245 | 656 |
| 36 | Bhushan Pradhan | MUM | 1242 | 2064 |
| | Supriya Devnani | OS | 1242 | 106 |
| 37 | Ekansh Arora | DEL | 1234 | 193 |
| 38 | Arindam Basu | KOL | 1231 | 478 |
| 39 | Pramit Kamath | DEL | 1227 | 523 |
| 40 | Kala Ganesh | MUM | 1226 | 1458 |
| 41 | Mangala Bhandarkar | PUN | 1219 | 1756 |
| 42 | Sridhar Paidikondala | HYD | 1217 | 940 |

| | Name | Club | Rating | Games |
|----|----------------------|------|--------|-------|
| 43 | Shaik Ahmed | HYD | 1208 | 1979 |
| 44 | Suchindra Potnis | BLR | 1198 | 515 |
| 45 | Shubha S | BLR | 1183 | 346 |
| 46 | Aaradhya Srivastava | MUM | 1166 | 98 |
| 47 | V Ramachandran | MUM | 1160 | 1395 |
| 48 | Rehet Singh Bhatia | MUM | 1158 | 990 |
| 49 | Sushanto B | DEL | 1157 | 518 |
| 50 | Shreyas Gupta | DEL | 1155 | 89 |
| 51 | Karthik Ganesan | DEL | 1154 | 210 |
| 52 | Prithwiraj Mukherjee | BLR | 1146 | 337 |
| 53 | Jyoti Budhia | CHN | 1120 | 81 |
| 54 | Siddharth Nithyanand | BLR | 1118 | 391 |
| 55 | Joe Rodrigues | GOA | 1114 | 1058 |
| 56 | R Nalini | BLR | 1111 | 980 |
| 57 | Alan De Mello | MUM | 1103 | 195 |
| 58 | Rajnikant Singh | KOL | 1101 | 289 |
| 59 | Radhika Mahalingaiah | BLR | 1095 | 982 |
| 60 | Amogh Bhamerkar | GUJ | 1095 | 80 |
| 61 | Abhijit Shilotri | BLR | 1090 | 765 |
| 62 | Danish Shahna | BLR | 1090 | 684 |
| 63 | Archana Aggarwal | DEL | 1081 | 608 |
| 64 | Srikrishnan TK | BLR | 1074 | 65 |
| 65 | Harsh Sood | BLR | 1068 | 183 |
| 66 | Neeta Bhatia | MUM | 1065 | 461 |
| 67 | Dipankar Chatterjee | BLR | 1058 | 680 |
| 68 | Brian D'Souza | MUM | 1055 | 235 |
| 69 | Vignesh S | BLR | 1046 | 459 |
| 70 | Nikheel Ruparel | MUM | 1045 | 1119 |
| 71 | Abid Hussain | BLR | 1033 | 471 |
| 72 | PC Jose | MUM | 1030 | 1408 |
| 73 | Meena Bakhru | PUN | 1027 | 380 |
| 74 | Yuvraj Dighe | GUJ | 1021 | 46 |
| 75 | Hemanth Achaya | BLR | 1013 | 299 |
| 76 | Sneha Thadhani | GUJ | 1005 | 152 |
| 77 | Jacky Fernandes | GOA | 999 | 1046 |
| 78 | Lennie D'Souza | BLR | 998 | 1293 |
| 79 | Asha Kamath | KER | 998 | 819 |
| 80 | Virendra Braganza | PUN | 996 | 486 |

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.

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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.

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