

ENDGAME

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SCRABBLE
ASSOCIATION OF INDIA



A sea of Scrabblers in action on the final day of the 2026 Causeway Challenge in Bangkok – making a comeback after a decade, the highly anticipated tournament saw 440 players, including 50 from India, across five divisions

In this issue:

- **Krishnan on his Causeway high**
- **Aditya's Causeway moments**
- **Chennai returns to the circuit**
- **Blistering boards of the summer**

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Cover picture courtesy: Causeway Challenge 2026

Foreword

Dear Members,

The unbounded mania for the competitive game kept bringing India's thriving bunch of Scrabblers to the boards more than ever before in the past three months, with the Causeway Challenge in Bangkok featuring as many as 50 Indian players on the five-division roster – by far the largest Indian presence seen at an overseas Scrabble tournament.

Indeed, Causeway made for an excellent Scrabble experience for each member of the Indian contingent, with a few of them playing their first tournament outside India. Playing 36 games in four days, in the midst of a plethora of players across countries and divisions – one had to be there to feel the thrill of it all. Moreover, an Indian player went all the way, what with A Krishnan bagging the Division 1 title.

While Causeway was the showpiece event of the bumper Scrabble summer, the action on the home front was equally riveting. Akshay Bhandarkar completed a hat-trick of titles with wins at the Goa Open and Mumbai's Gateway Cup – the latter in particular being one of the most emphatic winning performances seen at a tournament in India – to extend his lead in the National Championship table.

Chennai's return to the tournament circuit saw a hard-fought joust, as Madhav Gopal Kamath clinched the Chennai Open – the first national-level Scrabble tournament in India to receive support from a government body – in a gripping finish. The first Tirthan Scrabbcation was played in the picturesque Tirthan Valley within the Himalayas, where Siddharth Nithyanand claimed a maiden title win.

The All-India School Scrabble Championship saw its first regional round in Chennai – the first of many regional rounds to follow, in the lead-up to the finals to be held towards the end of the year. With an aim to build a pipeline of budding youth Scrabblers, the school tournament structure is slated to be a key component under the newly elected SAI Managing Committee, with Siddharth as the President.

As the year glides into its second half, the World Youth Scrabble Championship in Nairobi in August will see Madhav defend his title and aim for an encore; once again, he and Suyash Manchali will be among the frontrunners. The annual tournaments in Vadodara and Delhi are expected to be as vibrant as ever, while Kolkata is set to mark its arrival on the calendar with the inaugural Kolkata Open.

As always, thanks to all the contributors to another engaging edition of Endgame!

Best wishes,

Rustom Deboo
Editor

Causeway Challenge: A journey through chaos, comebacks, and triumph

by A Krishnan

India's A Krishnan produced a stellar performance to clinch the Division 1 title at the 2026 Causeway Challenge in Bangkok. Seeded 36th, he emerged victorious in a field of 88 players after winning the last round against the top seed, finishing with 25 wins from 36 games. He shares with Endgame about his journey towards top honours.

The 2026 Causeway Challenge in Bangkok was one of the most surreal experiences of my life as a Scrabble player and as someone who serves this community. To see 450 players from across the world gathered under one roof, in a single vast hall, all united by their love for the game, was overwhelming in the best possible way. The energy, the focus, the quiet intensity – it was extraordinary. And at the centre of it all was the tournament director, Michael Tang, whose calm authority and complete control over such a massive event was simply remarkable to witness.

My journey to this tournament began about four and a half months earlier. I threw myself into preparation with full intensity. Word study, as most players know, can be both boring and mind-numbing – and I experienced plenty of both – but it is something we must endure and overcome.

About two weeks before departure, I was hit by a severe bout of flu. I

was bedridden for five days, and for the next three, I could barely walk. From day one, I began a course of antibiotics, and somehow, just in time, I recovered enough to travel. It felt nothing short of a small miracle that I made it to Bangkok, ready to compete.



A 453-426 win against Bob Jackman in Round 4, featuring YTTERBLA as one of my bingos

Game 1, Division 1. I was up against Benjamin Tachney of the USA, currently based in the Philippines. I had no expectations of winning, but the manner of the loss was unsettling. The game opened evenly, both of us balancing racks and holding bingo tiles. He struck first with INOCULA. I

responded with WARIEST. Then I made a rather dull opening with DON for 28, which gave him the triple lane – he punished it brilliantly with SKOLLIE for 102. I fought back with LISTENER for 68 and ZEBRA for 75, and for a moment, I felt I was back in control. But then came DEXTRINS for 100, and that sealed it. Final score: 415-509.

After that, I settled down. One of my standout games came in Round 4 against Australian star Bob Jackman, the former WESPA ratings officer. The game was balanced early on, but I broke away with YTTERBIA, CAVILED, and QUITTING (though I later realised that I had missed QUIRTING). That combination gave me a satisfying 453-426 win.



Gaining the blanks late helped me to a tense 413-377 win over Natchaya Sritharo in Round 8

Round 8 saw one of the tightest games I've ever played, against Thailand's Natchaya Sritharo. The board was extremely closed. By move 12 of 14, the only significant scoring plays were her MARLIEST for 72 and my QUENA for 61. I was fortunate to draw both blanks towards the end, which helped me edge out a narrow 413-377 win.

In Round 9, I faced the top seed, Olaribigbe Hakeem from Nigeria. There was no escape for him, as I sealed the game with OUTLOVES, VACUITY, and SWARDING to post a 507-390 win and cross the 500 mark for the first time in the tournament.

Day 2 ended on a frustrating note. I lost three of my last four games, including one to Thailand's Sinatarn Pattanasuwanna in Round 20, where I made a critical strategic error. Holding a blank, I closed the board too tightly and blocked my own chances of going out. It was a painful, self-inflicted 365-391 loss. Still, I ended the day in second place.

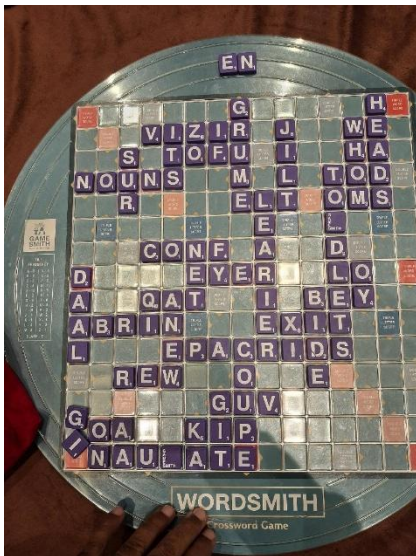


Plotting my next move on the opening day of the Causeway Challenge

Day 3 was a mixed bag, with tougher pairings and repeat opponents. I faced Sinatarn again in Round 21.

He opened with FREEING, and I responded strongly with CHAPRASI for 104. I maintained control and won 513-461.

Game 23 was a fortunate escape. My opponent played the invalid word DEVAN*, allowing me to secure a 400-384 win. Earlier in the game, I had hesitated to play TARTNESS, mistakenly second-guessing it as TARTINESS. That hesitation could have cost me the game, had my opponent not erred.



An agonising 433-434 loss to Wolfram Poh in Round 26

Game 26, against Wolfram Poh of Singapore, was memorable for multiple reasons. Wolfram has Tourette syndrome, and I noticed some players criticising him without understanding his condition. I felt it was important to step in and explain, and then continue the game. Wolfram was composed, focused, and

entirely professional. He expects strict adherence to WESPA rules and plays with great discipline. I lost by a single point, 433-434. I was holding bingo-prone racks for several turns, but without openings. I had to settle for incremental scoring while he held control with precise plays.

In Game 30, I crossed 500 again, winning 504-423. There was a tense moment early when I played MUSTING, unsure of its validity. When my opponent challenged, my heart raced – but it held, giving me 69 points and momentum for the rest of the game.

At the end of 30 games, I found myself once again in second place, just behind compatriot Sunny Bhatia.



Round 31 against Sunny Bhatia – holding my nerve to seal a 452-426 win

Game 31 saw me up against a charged-up Sunny, who was clearly

pushing hard for the title. He came out firing with JEFFED and IODATING. I held my nerve and managed a 26-point win with ENTERATE, EMERAUDE, ATROPIA, and CINQ.

Game 32 was, without a doubt, my luckiest – and perhaps most chaotic – game of the tournament.

Despite playing well overall, I made two unforgivable errors. First, I allowed ADMITTAL* and opened the board with THEFT for 26. My opponent immediately punished me with PHOTINAS* for 158. I hesitated, ran through possibilities, confused PHOTINIA, PHOTINO and PHOTINOS, and convinced myself that it was valid. I let it go.



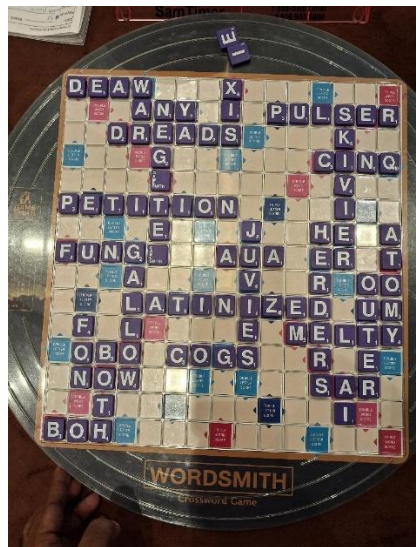
A crucial 458-444 win against Tan Zi Kang in Round 34

Had I lost this game, I might well have lost the tournament. But I mounted a strong comeback with

multiple bingos and somehow won 526-443 – nothing short of a miracle. To add to the chaos, I also got away with a phoney GLASSER*, when the valid play was LARGEES.

With that nightmare behind me on the streets of Bangkok, I lost Game 33 to Tan Zi Kang of Malaysia by 28 points. Despite him playing a phoney, I couldn't unload my Q, J, and K in successive turns, which proved costly.

Game 34 was a rematch against Tan Zi. This time, he dominated early with a series of bingos, while I stayed in touch with strong scoring plays and a few bingos of my own. I was clearly behind until his final move – he chose to play a phoney instead of safely going out in two turns. That gave me an opening, and I capitalised to hang on for a 458-444 win.



An 88-point loss to top seed Olaribigbe Hakeem in the penultimate round, setting up a winner-takes-all rematch

Game 35 brought me back against Hakeem. We both opened strongly with bingos, but I made a critical mistake by missing DOMATIA. That miss proved decisive, and I went on to lose 398-486.

And so, it all came down to Game 36.

Hakeem had to win to secure the tournament. I had to win as well. There was no middle ground.

I began with an exchange, dumping J, M, M, R and keeping COR. He opened with GAY. Soon after, I picked up a blank. I played COOKY for 19, and shortly after, found my first bingo – STORAGE for 86. A little later came RIGATONI. The board began to tighten, and both of us were forced into pint-sized scoring with clunky tiles.



Tension, relief, and delight – playing EPITASES in the final round against Hakeem, en route to a 408-381 win

I built up a lead of around 50 points and closed yet another opening. Hakeem was then forced to open the board with ZESTER for 41. That gave me my chance.

I had EPITASES up for grabs.

This was the defining moment. My calculations told me that there were seven tiles left in the bag, including a blank – 14 unseen tiles in total. If I played EPITASES and he had a bingo, he could go out, and I would lose because I would empty the bag. If I held back and tried to balance, I risked not finding a bingo at all – and possibly not even having a scoring lane.

I chose to trust the moment.

I played EPITASES.



Winning Division 1 at the world's most challenging tournament, marking my first international title triumph – a surreal experience

The tension was immense. And then, almost instantly, Hakeem smiled and congratulated me. That told me everything. He had no bingo. I ended up winning 408-381.

Relief. Disbelief. Joy.

Winner, Division 1. My first international tournament victory.

This feels like the right moment to acknowledge the people who shaped my journey.

Irineu Gonsalves was the first to tell me – after a game in an IIT Chennai tournament, when I was still in the C Division – that I belonged in the A Division. That belief stayed with me.

Mr. V. Ramachandran has been a constant source of guidance – analysing my games, sharing knowledge, and helping me grow my vocabulary.

Mr. Mohan Chunkath, with whom I've played close to a thousand games, has been instrumental in shaping both my game as well as my mental approach.

Ishika Shivalingiah helped me organise my study and pushed me to elevate my vocabulary to levels I hadn't reached in over 15 years.

And Michael Tang – not just a world-class tournament director, but a close friend – who always believed in my ability.

I am also deeply grateful to the many well-wishers in the community: Mangala Bhandarkar, Sudhir Kamath, Pramit Kamath, Asha

Kamath, Jayanthi Kannan, Neeta Bhatia, Rajveer Rawlin, Triambak Eashwar, Vimisha Patel, Radhika Mahalingaiah and recently, Siddharth Nithyanand.

Chaos, comebacks, and a triumph to cherish – Causeway was truly a Scrabble expedition unlike any other!

Endgame Extra: Know the 87 eights starting with EPI

EPIBLAST, EPIBLEMS, EPIBOLIC, EPICALLY, EPICALYX, EPICARPS, EPICEDES, EPICEDIA, EPICENES, EPICIERS, EPICISMS, EPICISTS, EPICLIKE, EPICOTYL, EPICURES, EPICYCLE, EPIDEMIC, EPIDERMS, EPIDOTES, EPIDOTIC, EPIDURAL, EPIFAUNA, EPIFOCAL, EPIGAEAL, EPIGAEAN, EPIGAMIC, EPIGENIC, EPIGEIOUS, EPIGONES, EPIGONIC, EPIGONUS, EPIGRAMS, EPIGRAPH, EPIGYNES, EPIGYNUM, EPILATED, EPILATES, EPILATOR, EPILEPSY, EPILOGIC, EPILOGUE, EPIMERES, EPIMERIC, EPIMYSIA, EPINASTY, EPINOSIC, EPIPHANY, EPIPHYTE, EPIPLOIC, EPIPLOON, EPIPOLIC, EPISCIAS, EPISCOPE, EPISCOPY, EPISEMON, EPISODAL, EPISODES, EPISODIC, EPISOMAL, EPISOMES, EPISPERM, EPISPORE, EPISTASY, EPISTLED, EPISTLER, EPISTLES, EPISTOME, EPISTYLE, EPITAPHS, EPITASES, EPITASIS, EPITAXES, EPITAXIC, EPITAXIS, EPITHECA, EPITHEMA, EPITHEMS, EPITHETS, EPITOMES, EPITOMIC, EPITONIC, EPITOPES, EPITRITRITE, EPIZOANS, EPIZOISM, EPIZOITE, EPIZOOTY

‘The field grounded you at every moment’

Aditya Iyengar was the second highest finisher for India in the Premier Division at the 2026 Causeway Challenge in Bangkok, notching 22 wins to finish tenth – 34 places above his seeding – in a star-studded field. He shares with Endgame about his notable games and moments from the tournament.

Congrats on finishing tenth at Causeway 2026. Do you think this was the most challenging tournament you have played so far?

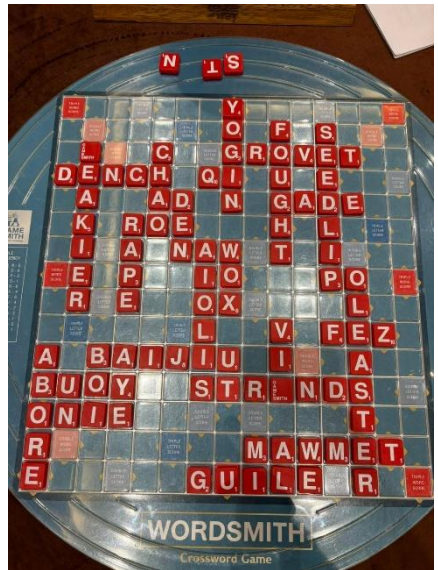
Yes, definitely. Just in terms of the strength and depth of the field, I don't think I've played a tournament quite like it. More than half of the world's top 100 players were there, so there really weren't many easy rounds. And then you factor in the format, 36 games over four days, which makes it as much an endurance test as a Scrabble one.

I haven't played a huge amount internationally and have only attended one World Championship, so I also haven't had too many opportunities to play some of the best players in the world. At Causeway, that became almost routine. Occasionally I'd look at the rows of tables below me and think, “These are some seriously elite players sitting here.” The field had a way of grounding you at every moment – no matter how well you were doing, you were constantly surrounded by

players who had achieved an enormous amount in the game.

That combination – the quality of opposition, the sheer number of games, and the need to mentally reset after every round – comfortably makes it the toughest tournament I've played.

Going into the tournament and considering your seeding, did you set any targets from the tournament in terms of wins or placing?



Beating Nigel Richards 387-321 in Round 23 – my first win against the wizard

Honestly, not really, and that was probably helpful in hindsight. I was seeded somewhere in the mid-40s in an 88-player Premier Division, and had had a fairly dire run of

tournament results over the previous year. I finished seventh in Goa and outside the top ten at both Mu Sigma (Bangalore) and Autocar (Bangkok), and had lost more than 70 rating points over that period.

At the same time, because of work and personal commitments, I simply hadn't been able to put as much time into Scrabble as I would have liked to, so those results weren't entirely surprising. I came into Causeway without a particular finishing position in mind. I mainly wanted the chance to play some of the world's best players, enjoy the experience, and try to take it one game at a time.

The funny thing is that even as the tournament started going well, it took me quite a while to process what was happening. The moment it really hit me was at the end of Day 3, when I found myself playing Madhav Gopal Kamath on Table 1 on the livestream. I remember thinking, "Hang on, what just happened?" I certainly hadn't envisaged being in that position three days earlier.

So, finishing tenth with 22 wins was miles beyond anything I'd expected going in.

Which were your most exciting and memorable games from the tournament, and why?

There were several, particularly during a surreal Day 3 when I went on a run against some incredibly strong players – including Toh Weibin, Nigel Richards, Komol Panyasophonlert, Khoo Beng Way, and Cameron Farlow.



Finding the disconnected AR(A)B(I)ZED during a 200-point win over David Webb

The obvious personal highlight was beating Nigel for the first time, at the sixth time of asking. However much I try to work on maintaining mental equanimity, playing someone who is widely regarded as the greatest Scrabble player of all time is still psychologically different. You can suddenly find yourself second-guessing high-probability words or decisions that you would make much more confidently against somebody else.

I've also had a few close shaves against Nigel in the past, which probably added to it. As I put down my final move and knew I had finally ticked it off the bucket list, I could actually feel the adrenaline coming through.

My final-round game against Michael Gongolo was another big one, with a

top-ten finish on the line. I was around 100 points behind in the early-to-middle part of the game on a fairly tight board. I managed to find a tight fit with TACHIs(T)E, and then bingoed again later to get back into the lead. To recover from that tricky position and eventually win by 50 was a pretty satisfying way to end the tournament.



Coming back to win 450-400 against Michael Gongolo in the final round

And then there was probably the strangest game of my tournament career, against Sammy Okosagah. I was behind on a tight board in the pre-endgame, while Sammy had the Z and several lucrative scoring spots available. With the win in his hand, he accidentally picked up a tile that was already on the board and used it as part of a new word elsewhere. I challenged the play off, and suddenly the whole complexion of the game

changed. I then spotted (E)KUELE, and somehow managed to eke out a narrow win.

It was such a freakish sequence of events, the sort of thing you almost never see in a serious tournament game, that I remember coming away from it thinking, “Maybe this tournament really is going my way.” In a 36-game event, you’re obviously going to need some luck at various points, and that was certainly one such moment of mine.

What were some of the standout words or plays that you were pleased to spot at the tourney?

I was pleased to spot (L)IMELESS against Josh Castellano, even though I ended up losing that game very narrowly. Another satisfying one was mE(A)GRELY, particularly because it effectively sealed my win against Komol. And against David Webb, on a very tight board, I found the disconnected AR(A)B(I)ZED for 64, which helped me accumulate some crucial spread points.

But the more interesting thing for me was, that it was less about individual words and more about the style of Scrabble I ended up playing. I knew my word knowledge was rusty compared with some of the elite players in the field, so I consciously tried to play far more defensively than I normally would. The idea was to reduce volatility, keep boards tighter, and hopefully create positions where strategic decision-making and endgame play could help level the playing field a little.

That style produced some very uncharacteristic games. I beat Nigel 387-321, Puttapong Moonsarn 363-353 and Komol 386-360, for example, and crossed 500 only once throughout the tournament. Normally I enjoy more open, aggressive, high-scoring games; but a lot of these games turned into something closer to games of chess – closed boards, difficult positional decisions and complicated endgames.



Receiving the prize for tenth place – a memorable finish in the toughest tournament I've played

I've actually grown to enjoy that side of the game quite a bit recently. So, beyond any individual word, one of my biggest takeaways from Causeway was discovering that I might have another gear stylistically. It has definitely given me something to think about in terms of the kind of player I want to be going forward.

As far as overall tournament experiences go, where would Causeway 2026 rank for you, and why?

Easily at the top. The result obviously helps, but even irrespective of where I'd finished, I think this would have been my favourite tournament experience. Michael Tang really knows how to make a Scrabble tournament feel like a spectacle. The quality of the venue, the strength of the field, the fact that three games were being livestreamed every round – there was a sense throughout that this was a genuinely major event.

But just as importantly, it was everything that happened away from the boards. One of the great things about international Scrabble is getting to spend time with people you've known through the game for years, as well as meeting players from around the world whom you might previously have only encountered online.

The river cruise after the tournament was a perfect example of that. I was there with several players from the Indian contingent as well as some new friends we'd made over the course of the tournament. After four days of extremely intense competition, being able to switch off, have fun together and actually enjoy Bangkok was a great way to end the tournament.

So yes, comfortably number one for me... and I'm already excited for Causeway 2028!

Blistering boards of the Scrabble summer

Below is a selection of 14 remarkable boards of games featuring Indian players from tournaments between April and June 2026, along with the list of bingos played in each game:

#1 Madhav Gopal Kamath v Euclid Hui, Round 2, Causeway

Down by 135 with six tiles left in the bag, Euclid plonked down DIA(L)OgIC for 149, before Madhav held on to win a humdinger.

Bingos: DEERLET, NAUSEANT, TUNIEST, RENTABLE, LEMURES, DIALOGIC

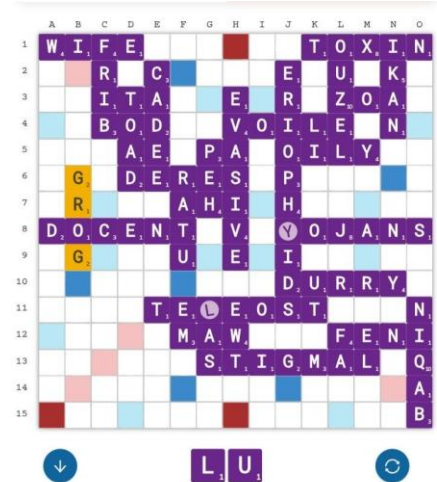


Madhav 534-531 Euclid

#2 Akshay Bhandarkar v Nigel Richards, Round 3, Causeway

This game was notable for a typically stunning nine-letter play by Nigel – ER(IO)PhyID. Akshay fought back as endgame approached, but Nigel did enough to prevail by ten points.

Bingos: EVASIVE, ERIOPHYID, TELEOST, STIGMAL



Nigel 434-424 Akshay

#3 Akshay Bhandarkar v Joshua Castellano, Round 6, Causeway



Joshua 544-512 Akshay

Joshua's four bingos ensured he had control for the best part, but it was his late J play for 54 that eventually sealed the game for him.

Bingos: COINAGE, FERRELS, ROMANTIC, PROVINCE, ABIOSSES, TREADLE

#4 David Eldar v Madhav Gopal Kamath, Round 15, Causeway

The first of two 1000-pointers between David and Madhav. Riding on four bingos and ahead by 81, David made BEWE(T), extending his lead to 114. He reckoned without (B)ROdKINS, which Madhav played for 104+5 to edge an incredible win.

Bingos: RATTLING, MENTALLY, BEGUILE, RENOVATE, GLACIERS, TENTORIA, BRODKINS



Madhav 513-506 David

#5 David Eldar v Madhav Gopal Kamath, Round 26, Causeway

Madhav's impressive TUMO(R)OUS helped him edge ahead with six tiles left in the bag, but David's ORIGANE ensured that he ended up on the right side of this one.

Bingos: DEVIANT, LAIRISE, SPARSER, MONADAL, TUMOROUS, ORIGANE

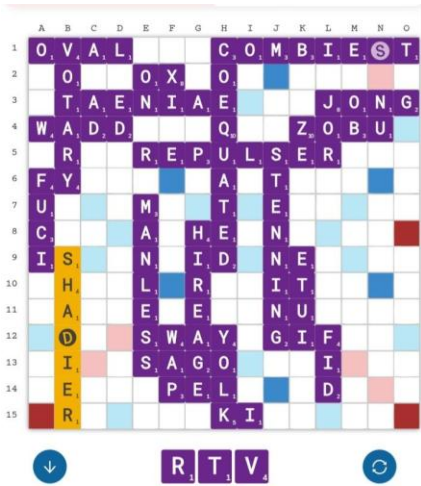


David 525-501 Madhav

#6 Akshay Bhandarkar v Khoo Beng Way, Round 29, Causeway

With a mind-boggling 1115, this was the second highest aggregate at Causeway, behind the 1174 between Trevor Halsall (whose 734 was the second highest score in the Premier Division, behind Ryan Wee's 755) and Jason Carney in Round 24. An early run of four successive bingos across both sides set the tone, before Khoo inched ahead with the critical non-bingo spot of CO(EQUATE)D for 66. Following another bingo trade, it all came down to the Malaysian's out-play of SHADIER.

Bingos: REPULSER, TAENIAE, STENNING, HIREAGE, MANLESS, COMBIEST, SHADIER



Khoo 604-511 Akshay

#7 Akshay Bhandarkar v Thacha Koowirat, Round 10, Chennai



Thacha 715-394 Akshay

Thacha opened the game with six bingos from as many turns, including the nine-timer ECTOD(E)RM for 185, en route to a score of 715, the highest in a tournament game in India this year so far. For good measure, he later added QANAT for 101.

Bingos: RONNIES, STARVING, BANDSTER, EOSINES, ECTODERM, UNGLOVED, GELCOAT

#8 Ishika Shivalingaiah v Manju Sood, Round 20, Chennai



Ishika 604-437 Manju

With a combined eight bingos, including the impressive find of M(O)BISODE from Ishika, this game produced the second highest aggregate at the Chennai Open.

Bingos: OUTSTATE, HALIMOTS, MOBISODE, ALUNITE, CARDING, REVOLTS, DAIRYING, TANGIER

#9 Samarth Manchali v Suyash Manchali, Round 16, Chennai

In this game between brothers, Suyash opened with cOWSKIN before Samarth sped ahead with four bingos. Suyash clawed back with two more bingos to eventually secure victory by 40 points in a tight endgame.

Bingos: COWSKIN, FURTIVE, TEENAGES, INCLINED, TRIPOLI, REGEARED, SOBRIETY

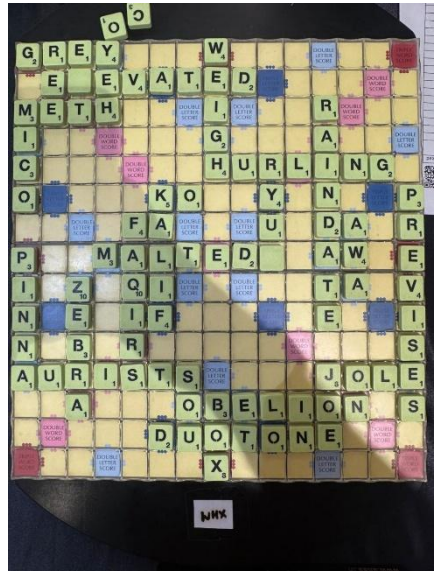


Suyash 538-498 Samarth

#10 Aditya Iyengar v Akshay Bhandarkar, Round 19, Mumbai

This game featured the highest aggregate (1086) as well as the highest individual score (647) at the Gateway Cup. Akshay's six bingos, including four on the trot, carried him to an imposing win.

Bingos: MALTEDS, HURLING, RAINDATE, AURISTS, ELEVATED, OBELION, PREVISES, DUOTONE



Akshay 647-439 Aditya

#11 Akshay Bhandarkar v Ishika Shivalingaiah, Round 12, Mumbai



Akshay 527-497 Ishika

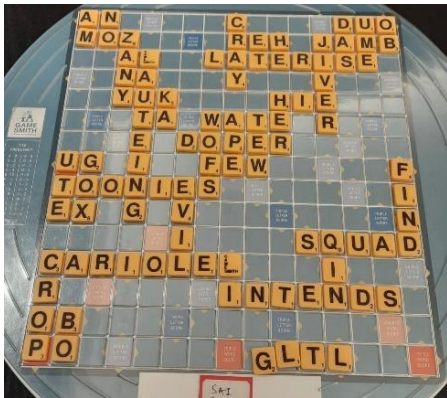
Seven bingos resulted in a gripping 1000-pointer, with Ishika's 497 being the highest losing score in Division A.

Bingos: GEODUCK, OILSEED,
TRIPIER, LOANERS, ORIENTAL,
RETOTAL, WRISTED

#12 Pallavi Praveen v Ritu Chadha, Round 21, Mumbai

Thrilling high-scorers were not limited to Division A in Mumbai. This Division B game fell two short of 1000, with a two-point margin. Pallavi's four bingos ensured that she hung on despite Ritu's late surge.

Bingos: TOONIES, SAUTEING,
CARIOLES, INTENDS, LATERISE

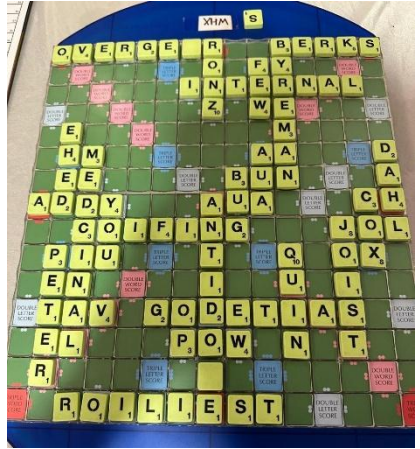


Pallavi 500-498 Ritu

#13 Akshay Bhandarkar v Sunny Bhatia, Round 8, Goa

Akshay's six bingos led to tourney highs for the individual score – 685, also his best in a WESPA-rated game – as well as the aggregate.

Bingos: ANTIDOTE, COIFING,
BYREMAN, INTERNAL, GODETIAS,
OVERGEAR, MEDCINAL, ROILIIEST



Akshay 685-397 Sunny

#14 Sujana Somasekar v Sunny Bhatia, Round 1, Tirthan

The inaugural Tirthan tourney saw this heavy scorer in the first round, with Sunny starting off resoundingly with ZAPTIEH for 112 + 5.

Bingos: ZAPTIEH, CRANIATE,
TOUSLED, HEROINE, FONTLET,
INFARES, SIEVING



Sunny 571-459 Sujana

The Causeway Challenge: A view from screens far, far away

by Ela Ghose

This 2026 Causeway Challenge in Bangkok was the first time that three top tables in an international tournament were simultaneously live-streamed. The team of expert players and seasoned broadcasters, which included Matt Canik, Chloe Fatsis, Jesse Matthews, Robin Pollock Daniel, Josh Sokol, and our very own Nitya (Nits) Chagti, provided outstanding commentary. While the tournament was conceptualised and organised by Michael Tang, the online coverage was masterminded by Josh Greenway – two people to whom we are all very grateful!

Many of us in the Scrabble community who were not playing the Causeway Challenge were glued to our screens (and there were three simultaneous live streams, so we needed multiple screens) watching the best Scrabble minds at play. The picture of Dr. Varisht Hingorani watching all three games at a time, each on a different gadget, epitomised the most immersive way of watching the action.

If I had to describe in a word the emotion of watching Grandmasters play, I would say ‘INTIMIDATING’. Playing with both speed and accuracy in terms of constant puzzle-solving (anagramming), attention to detail (tracking), calculation/math (assessing alternatives) and strategy

(choosing the best play) – and to make it look effortless – seemed like an extraordinary feat.



Varisht Hingorani catching all the Causeway action available

The games also highlighted that even with exceptional skills, luck still matters. Take the example of the GOAT (Nigel Richards), who played at the lower tables for the first three days before finally finishing sixth.

Of the many Scrabblers who watched the live stream(s), eight (other than me) offered to share their experiences: Varisht Hingorani (NGM*), Carolann Pais (NM*), Hriday Samtani (NM), Shubha Shivashankar (NE*), Sumeet Sachdev

(NE) and other avid Scrabblers such as Shalini Sahdev, Rekha Sanzgiri, and Akshay Hiremath.

*(*NGM, NM, and NE refer to the SAI titles of National Grandmaster, National Master, and National Expert respectively)*

While everyone enjoyed the top-notch commentary coupled with the thrill of watching words magically spread across boards, the common element was the delight in watching the 15-year-old Madhav Gopal Kamath (the youngest WESPA Grandmaster). Every viewer was invested in Madhav's matches, swelling with pride when he did well and cursing when he didn't. Madhav, on the other hand, dealt with the pressure coolly and with a maturity that belied his years. All of us could take a tile out of this youngster's bag!

Varisht Hingorani (NGM):

Sitting with the three screens open and flitting from board to board was exciting, but difficult to follow any one game fully. Huge kudos to the commentators who sat in the same place for about ten hours each day – super tiring. In fact, maybe in the next edition, there could be a bigger pool of commentators that could be rotated, so that all commentators could get a few hours' break.

Of course, Madhav's matches were the ones followed with the greatest attention and zest, as this is where the 'heart and soul' reside! All the other matches were watched rather dispassionately.

The most interesting elements were the speed of the anagramming (finds were superfast!), the ability to judge the steps taken, and the assumptions made while playing. Assumptions that the competitor won't know the word can be disastrous – as happened with David Eldar. He was 114 points ahead when he opened a triple lane with a B, only to have Madhav carefully place BRODKINS and win by seven points!

Key takeaways that served to emphasise lessons already known:

- 1) Strategy (especially at this level) is perhaps the more critical element of a win, rather than word knowledge.
- 2) Slowing down to look again: After finding the first word, sometimes the words found later are the better ones. It is worth spending the extra time for a second look!
- 3) The element of luck works everywhere: Nigel (and even Hubert Wee) should have done much better, but then luck is notoriously fickle!
- 4) Consistently making the right choices.
- 5) Calculating the score of every option: This is meant for the super-fast calculators (like Madhav).
- 6) Defensive vs offensive play: Players with super word knowledge and good math skills can afford to play defensively, as they can work out potential moves on a closed board. Other players can benefit from offensive play – opening the board and taking more chances.

7) Everyone makes mistakes; but the one who comes out on top is likely to have made consistently better plays and fewer mistakes.

Carolann Pais (NM):

The Causeway Challenge 2026 must have been such a thrilling experience for all the participants! I couldn't help but reminisce nostalgically about my experience in Johor Bahru (Malaysia) in 2011. Everything was organised so meticulously, singlehandedly by Michael Tang. Having lag draws was a splendid idea that hastened the start of each game, enabling one to cover ten games easily throughout the day.

I was watching Madhav play and saw him making some very bold moves. Not the kind that I would make – I'm not a risk taker; I'm a rather conservative player, and at this age, it's not easy to change your style of play!



The commentators' desk at the 2026 Causeway Challenge, held at Miracle Grand Convention Hotel in Bangkok

Hriday Samtani (NM):

Madhav gives the games a HastyBot feel. Having seen him evolve from a child prodigy to a global ambassador

for India makes me super proud. Go MGK!

His composure during live streaming was remarkable. There may have been instances where he felt the pressure of being unsure of a bingo, but he didn't let it show, and overall, he was great!

Shubha Shivashankar (NE):

I was lucky to be at Pankaj Bolaki's house for a couple of games, and discovered the joy of playing a game and watching another, all while having steaming samosas and coffee! We happily commented on the moves, the players, and shouted out when we spotted our Indian Scrabblers roaming about after finishing their games (of course, all the while my mind was consciously trying to find Suyash among them!)

I chose to watch only the games of Indian players, and when they were not playing, I tuned into two commentators: Matt Canik and Josh Sokol.

The first three days went by with me watching only the second half of the day's games, as I had committed myself to a Scrabble summer camp in the morning. Fortunately, I got the last day to myself! I lay right in front of the TV with pillows, surrounded by stuff to eat, water, a power bank, and mobile. It defined my perfect day!

A thought that crossed my mind was that I must have reached a fairly good level in Scrabble, as I could comprehend their moves and the

various aspects of the game that was being played in front of us.

The most exciting part was when the commentators would go mute and let us hear the conversation between the players! My ears would be the sharpest then! But the moment that pushed me to the edge of the seat was when Dave Wiegand's setup of COD to place an E (which he had on his rack) in the front in the triple lane was taken away by his opponent, who made RIVALS along with SCOD*, which went unchallenged. Note to self: Do not kick yourself when making such mistakes in the future!

Sumeet Sachdev (NE):

I diligently followed the Causeway games. It was awesome. The commentary was great, the games were of great quality. I, along with all of us, was rooting for Madhav, and watched pretty much all his games!

I think the fantastic commentary is what I loved the most, especially the way they would effortlessly give the options the players have, along with the pros and cons of all options.

On a related note, watching the online games we had during Covid, with insightful commentary from Irfan Siddiqui, Varisht Hingorani and other masters, really helped me in improving my game – by listening to expert commentary, one can have an understanding about various aspects of the game.

Shalini Sahdev:

The live telecast was an absolute Scrabble masterclass! Watching the players think through their moves was fascinating, and the commentators were outstanding! They constantly spotted words, suggested alternatives, and kept us engaged and thinking throughout. Full credit to the commentary teams for making the experience both educational and exciting.

At one stage, we were playing our own game while following three live matches on three different devices, two muted and one with commentary. It was Scrabble heaven!

Those who went to play surely had their share of fun, but thanks to the superb coverage, the rest of us had a memorable time too. It was the next best thing to being there.

Besides learning new words, I also learnt the following:

- 1) If you don't know for sure, you don't play.
- 2) If you take your time, you will find a new word.
- 3) You must play every move to get the highest score AND the best leave possible.

Rekha Sanzgiri:

I am not a tech-savvy person, and the thought of doing anything with online operations scares me. But with some help from my Causeway-watching friends, I could watch the action at

the different tables and also navigate to the standings page.

It was thrilling to watch the games. The commentators were humorous and informative. I studied how the players worked out the words on their racks, how they gave ample time for their moves, and the calmness with which they played.

The top-table players' expressions were worth noticing. Every player was cordial after the game was over – smiling, shaking hands, and discussing their moves. The last part at the end of each game, where the commentators switched on the players' overhead microphones, was great – it was interesting to hear the players analysing their game to see if there could have been better moves.



A crowd gathers after David Eldar (left) beat David Wiegand in Round 35, confirming the Causeway title in favour of the Australian Grandmaster

It was heartbreaking to see the draws in Madhav's last few games. His tiles didn't allow for him to do much. I was feeling so disappointed, sitting so far away and watching; I can only imagine how difficult it must have been for him. My heart went out to him.

I definitely see Madhav topping the charts at another such tournament soon, perhaps at the next Causeway Challenge in Kuala Lumpur.

While I was particularly thrilled to watch Madhav's games and wish him all the very best for his future Scrabble journey, I was happy to see several Indians in the top ten, particularly A Krishnan (who won Division 1), and Ritu Chadha (who came fourth in Division 4).

Akshay Hiremath:

The coverage of the Causeway games and the commentary were done very professionally. One almost felt like one is playing the games oneself! Who says Scrabble is not a 'spectator sport'? With this kind of coverage, it certainly is! The calibre of the players is, of course, at a stratospheric level!

Being a teacher of chess, I find a striking similarity between the two games, as both games require strategy, in-depth knowledge, and thorough preparation. The difference, of course, is the surprise element in Scrabble, because one doesn't know what tiles one is going to get next.

The incredible thing, though, is that true champions – like some of the players we saw at the Causeway Challenge – find a way to draw on their amazing knowledge base and make great words irrespective of the tiles they've picked up! With such high-level coverage and commentary being made possible, both games can be highly engaging for audiences who otherwise would struggle to understand what is going on.

Scrabble musings

From basketball courts to Scrabble boards

by Rajalakshmi Ponnuswamy

I was a sportswoman through and through in my school days. I even represented my school at the national level in basketball. That love for sports never left me – I still watch every game I can get my hands on. My quiet hobby back then was solving crosswords. The thrill of finding the right word always excited me. And now, with my granddaughters playing tennis, I'm inspired all over again by the discipline, focus, and joy that is attained by playing sports.

But I never imagined Scrabble would become my new arena. I was introduced to competitive Scrabble by Dr. Girija, my neighbour. When she first mentioned about the Mu Sigma tournament, I grinned! The only Scrabble I knew was playing casually with my daughter when she was in middle school. My first experience at Mu Sigma changed everything. That's where I met my mentor, Radhika Mahalingiah. We clicked instantly. She taught me the game properly, explained the strategies, and encouraged me to participate in tournaments. Without her guidance, I wouldn't have reached where I am today. Kudos to her!

Today, Scrabble is a real passion. There's so much still to learn, but I've fallen in love with it. Every game is so different. An hour passes in what

feels like minutes because your mind is so completely absorbed. It's challenging, it's fun, and it keeps you sharp. To enhance my skill, I play this game for two hours every day with my fellow playmates in the society. Each session teaches me something new.

Recently I played in the Causeway Challenge in Thailand – an experience I'll never forget. Four days flew by. I met and played with people from different countries, and even got to meet legends like Nigel Richards, David Eldar and many more. The games, the hall buzzing with players, the food, the friendships – I'll treasure it all. It was wonderfully organised by Michael Tang.



Winning the raffle in my division for a ticket to the 2028 Causeway Challenge in Malaysia was a delightful surprise

None of this would have been possible without my family, who supports and cheers me in every step of the way. From basketball courts to crossword grids to Scrabble boards – life has a funny way of keeping the game going and engaged!

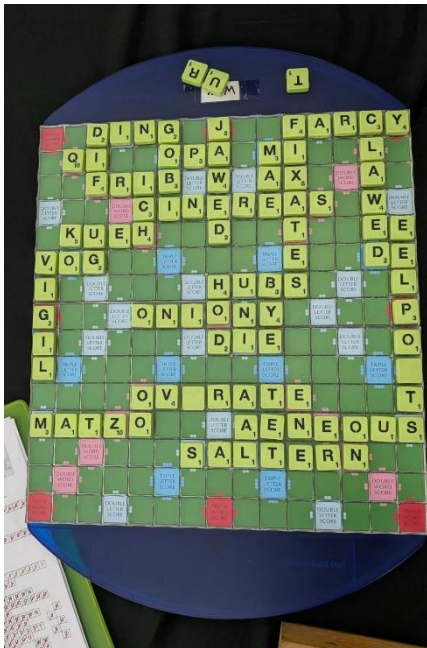
The ifs and buts of Scrabble

by Sumeet Sachdev

I am totally against taking the ‘ifs and buts’ route in matters of competitive Scrabble, but every now and then, I am compelled to do so.

In the final game of the WCG Mumbai one-dayer in April, I was in complete control of the before the brilliant Samrath Singh Bhatia went all guns blazing.

I was ahead 301-230 when Samrath played the splendid EELPOuT (79 + 5), followed by AENEIOUS (76). I put down SALTern soon after, and was still marginally ahead: 396-390.



A final-round 534-417 loss to Samrath Singh Bhatia at the WCG one-dayer – a different vowel would have changed the outcome!

And that's when the four-timer OVeRATE came down for 98 points, putting me behind again: 396-488.

The bag was now empty. My rack was DGINRTU, and Samrath had AMOTZ.

So, *if* I had drawn either the A or the O instead of the U, DARTING or DORTING would have played to the right of VIGIL for 79 points. I would have got 32 on countback and would have won by 19 points (507-488) despite his three consecutive bingos... *but* that didn't happen.

This reminded me of the final game at the IIT Bombay Open in 2022, against Udayan Grover, where I had to win by 84 to win the tourney. I did manage to turn the tables in that game despite trailing by over 170 at one point. The 158-point nine-timer NOTiC(E)RS got me back in the game. The last tile in the bag that Udayan drew was the blank, and he duly ‘golden bingoed’. I still won the game, but just by 20, and had to settle for second place. I went into the ‘ifs and buts’ route there as well!

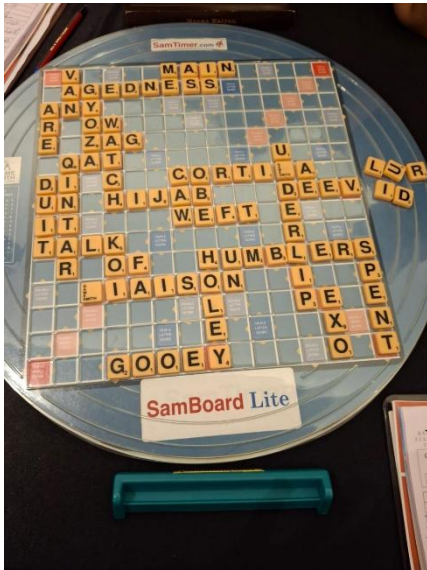
So close, yet so far! I guess winning a tournament is still at bay for me, but having said that, I was extremely happy with the way I played at the WCG one-dayer despite being away from the game for so long.

And, congratulations to Samrath for a very well-deserved win. I applauded EELPOUT when my challenge failed, and I feel he should have pouted in his picture with the winning board, dedicating his win to EELPOUT!

Smiles and tiles in Mumbai

by Meena Kalyan

One of my most enjoyable games this year was at the Gateway Cup (Division B) in Mumbai against Ishika Poddar, in Round 14. Given Ishika's calibre, I knew this was going to be a tough encounter. It was my privilege to play this game against a youth player with international exposure. After wishing each other luck, we began the game. She unveiled with HIJAB for 42.



I tried to catch up with WEFT, but she replied with the bingo CORTINA for 84.

I then saw UNDERLIP through her N, scoring 77. She hit back with GYOZA for 54.

This opened AGEDNESS for me through her G, for 74. I drew

BEHMRSU thereafter, and tried HUMBLERS through L. It was good – a cool 85 points.

I cashed in with QINTAR for 69, helping me close out the game 487-410.

It was an exhilarating win for me. But this story is not just about my win. It serves to remind us that a victory is not for ever, and a defeat is not the end.

Ishika went on to have an admirable fourth-place finish, while I finished 14th. Congratulations, Ishika!

A sweet spot prize

by Girija Nadagoudar

The Chennai Open was my first ever three-day tournament, where I was thrilled to win a spot prize – the 'Mind Sport Award' for making the word PIONEER for 91 points.



In memoriam



‘Will be remembered for his dedication to the club’

by Lennie D’Souza

Christopher Imison was a gentleman, a friend, and a true Scrabble soul. He will be remembered for his kindness and dedication to the Bangalore Scrabble club.

He was at our place for hours each week, always learning a new word and always ready to explain it to us. Beat him and you would hear, “Careful walking through that door – your head’s too swollen!” Even from Brighton in his last years, he stayed with us in the KSSA group chat, cheering us and joining discussions with the same keen interest and wit.

We miss you, Chris. The board won’t be the same without you.

‘Gracious in victory and defeat’

by Dipankar Chatterjee

My journey in tournament Scrabble began across the board from Chris at the 2014 iGATE Open in Bangalore, in Division C. I still remember that thrilling first game; competitive, memorable, and played in the finest spirit of the game.

Chris was a true gentleman, gracious in victory and defeat, and someone who made every encounter a pleasure. Over the years, we shared many more games, conversations, and laughs. For me, he will always remain a part of my Scrabble journey. It is hard to imagine the Scrabble community without him. I will miss seeing him across the board. Thank you for the memories!

‘A fine gentleman’

by Hemanth Achaya

I first met Chris at the 2014 iGATE tournament. I was a newb, and he played TEAZLES against me. After I lost the challenge, and asked in utter consternation if it was English, he replied, in his sardonic and nonchalant style, “No, it is Scrabble!”

Such a fine gentleman... will miss you, Chris!

‘Taught me a lot’

by Suchindra Potnis

Chris taught me a lot when I started playing Scrabble. I always enjoyed talking to him. Till date, I use the tile rack he gifted me when I started playing.

Tackling a few words

by Rustom Deboo

Here are 20 select sevens and eights found within 'FOOTBALL WORLD CUP' to assist you towards your goal at your next tournament:

BATFOWL – to catch birds by temporarily blinding them

BLAWORT – the blue corn-flower

BLOWDART – a dart fired from a blowpipe or blowgun

BOLLARD – a thick post on a ship or wharf



Blawort

BOURLAW – a local law

CLOTBUR – a name of the burdock, a plant

CLUBFOOT – a congenital deformity of the foot

CLUBROOT – a disease of cabbage and related plants

COBLOAF – a misshapen loaf

CORDOBA – currency of Nicaragua



Cordoba

COWFLAP – dropping of cow dung

COWFLOP – same as cowflap

FLATBROD – the thin wafer-like bread of Scandinavia



Flatbrod

FOLDBOAT – a type of collapsible canoe

FOULARD – a lightweight twill or plain-woven fabric of silk

FURBALL – a ball of fur, especially one coughed up by a cat

LAWCOURT – a court of law

TOURACO – a large brightly crested bird of Africa



Touraco

UROPODAL – pertaining to a uropod

WOOLFAT – a yellow, viscous animal oil extracted from wool

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



Know a few potential bingos from stems of select names of countries and players in action at the 2026 football World Cup:

FRANCE?? (12)

CANTREFS, CARNIFEX,
CONFERVA, CRANEFLY,

FALCONER, FANCIERS,
FRANCISE, FRANCIZE,
FURNACED, FURNACES,
PENCRAFT, REFACING

HAITI?? (12)

ADHIBIT, CHIANTI, HIMATIA,
HUITAIN, IJTIHAD, INHABIT,
LITHIAS, SAMITHI, TAHINIS,
TAWHIRI, THIAMIN, THIAZIN

PANAMA?? (6)

APIMANIA, CAMPAGNA,
CAMPANAS, EMPANADA,
PANORAMA, PRANAYAM

YAMAL?? (14)

ABYSMAL, AMIABLY, AMYGDAL,
AMYLASE, AMYTALS, ANOMALY,
BALSAMY, MALARKY, MAYORAL,
MYALGIA, PALMARY, PALMYRA,
YAMALKA, YAMULKA

RODRI?? (16)

AIRDROP, BROIDER, CORRIDA,
DORKIER, DORRING, DORTIER,
DRONIER, GRODIER, MIRADOR,
ORDINAR, REMORID, RIPCORN,
ROWDIER, STRIDOR, WORDIER,
WORRIED

GORDON?? (15)

BROODING, DOGGONER,
DRAGOONS, DRONGOES,
DROOKING, DROOLING,
DROOPING, FORDOING,
GADROONS, GODROONS,
HORNDogs, ONDOGRAM,
ORGANOID, RIGADOON,
RODEOING

WESPA rules explained, anecdotal style

by Ritu Chadha

In this series, Ritu Chadha aims at enlightening players and enthusiasts about some of the lesser-known rules from the WESPA Game Rules through hypothetical game scenarios dashed with humour.

Story #3: Compelled to return

Player A and Player B are at the fag end of their game. Player A is leading. Player A plays 3 tiles. He picks 2 tiles from the bag, but misses picking the third tile that is hidden in a corner of the bag.

Player B has BEFGINR on his rack. He feels the bag to see that there is one tile. He knows there is still a chance of getting the S or the blank, so he simply hooks his B to an existing OX to get 12 points in the hope of making a golden bingo. He pulls the last tile and smiles gleefully.

Player A, who has only 6 tiles on his rack, realises that the tile should have been pulled by him, and says so. Player B objects, as he wants to play his golden bingo and clinch the game.

They call Siddharth Nithyanand, the TD, who knows the rule book like the back of his hand. He declares that since Player A realised that the tile should have been taken by him instead of Player B before Player A could play his turn, Player B will now have to return a tile. Player B can choose any tile from his rack and give

it to Player A, as per **WESPA Rule 3.9.9**.

Player B had just pulled an S, and had FINGERS on his rack. Angry that he won't be able to make his bingo, he wants to show a finger each to both Player A and the TD but refrains, and hands the F to Player A. Player A goes on to win the game.



However, had Player A made his move before he had noticed that the last tile has been taken by Player B by mistake, the game would have continued normally and no corrective action would have been allowed.

No play can be taken back, as a general rule.

Story #4: A flash moment

Player A is playing opposite Udayan Grover. He knows **THUNK** is good, so he takes a chance and bingos with **MET(H)UNKS*** through a floating H on D15, going for the triple-triple. He announces his score as **203**. In his excitement of having made the word of his lifetime; he takes the bag,

starts drawing tiles, and quickly places one on his rack, as he thinks that once a newly drawn tile is put on his rack, the word cannot be challenged.

Udayan knows all the thinking words such as OVERTHINK, MISTHINK, UNTHINK and especially METHINKS, since that's his job, but since he has not yet finished his quota of thinking, he is sure METHUNKS* is not good. He duly announces “**Challenge**”, confident that the play is going to go off the board.

Player A cheekily tells him that he has already put a tile on his rack, so the word can no longer be challenged. The TD is called. He checks if Player A has written the score and also written the cumulative score before drawing new tiles. He has not. Therefore, this is alleged to be **flash drawing, as per WESPA Rule 3.10.2**. The word can still be challenged. If the word comes off, all the tiles picked must be shown to the opponent, and only then be put back in the bag.



If Player A had not played all 7 tiles and mixed the new tiles with the tiles on his rack, rules of **overdraw** would have applied had the challenge held.

Moreover, as per the aforesaid WESPA rule regarding flash drawing, even pre-writing of the score and pre-totalling it before playing your turn are considered as flash drawing, and is not allowed or ethical. Scores must be written and totalled after playing your turn.

Endgame Extra: Winning Division C at the June Junket one-day tourney in Brisbane

by Mehjabeen Peeradina

It was a pleasure to top the charts in Division C at June Junket, a one-day tournament organised by Scrabble Queensland at Queen Alexandra Home in Coorparoo, Brisbane on 28th June. I won seven of my eight games, finishing ahead of 11 competitors – it felt great to win a tourney overseas!



Accepting the winner's prize from Paul Richards

Tournament round-up

Causeway Challenge, Bangkok

by Rustom Deboo

Returning after a gap of nearly ten years, the Causeway Challenge proved to be a Scrabble spectacle of the highest order. Held at the Miracle Grand Convention Hotel in Bangkok from 29th May to 1st June 2026, the much-awaited tournament attracted 440 players across five divisions – a sea of Scrabblers converging to display their passion for the sport.

Spearheaded by Michael Tang, the organising team provided players and viewers alike with a memorable Scrabble experience throughout the four days, highlighted by an intensely competitive field producing top-drawer action, world-class streaming of as many as 108 games (the top three tables in each of the 36 rounds) with expert commentary, and annotation of more than 300 games; making for a great showcase of Scrabble’s global appeal.



The Causeway Challenge drew 440 players from 30 countries

With most of the Scrabble world’s leading names in attendance, it was as tough as it got. Moreover, with only the top ten in each division finishing among the prizes, every move in every game mattered, leaving little room for error and making Causeway 2026 arguably the most demanding Scrabble tournament held so far.



A Krishnan, winner of Division 1

India’s Causeway contingent featured 50 players – the second largest, next only to that of host nation Thailand. With the players equally divided into the five divisions based on their WESPA ratings, there were 12 Indian players in the Premier Division, seven in Division 1, 14 in Division 2, ten in Division 3, and seven in Division 4.

India's best finisher across divisions was A Krishnan, as he won the Division 1 title (prize money of USD 5000) with 25 wins in a fight to the finish. Seeded 36th, he kept going at it until the final round, where he beat top seed Olaribigbe Hakeem to record one of the most notable international Scrabble results by an Indian player. Division 1 also featured Sunny Bhatia in the top five, as he finished in fifth place with 23 wins after being in the race for the title until the very end.



Madhav Gopal Kamath finished eighth in the Premier Division

Among the slew of international Grandmasters in the Premier Division were all three GMs from India – Akshay Bhandarkar, reigning world youth champion and the world's youngest GM Madhav Gopal Kamath, and Sherwin Rodrigues. Heading into the tourney, Akshay was one of four players in the fray with a WESPA rating of 2100 or more, seeded only behind the legendary Nigel Richards of New Zealand, David

Eldar of Australia, and Hubert Wee of Singapore. It was David who came up trumps, clinching the coveted title in the penultimate round.



Aditya Iyengar finished tenth in the Premier Division

Madhav stole the show for the best part of the first three days, wowing viewers with his breathtaking brand of play. Ahead of the final day's six games, he led the standings with 21 wins from 30 games, and despite a late drop in results, secured an excellent eighth-place finish with 22 wins.

Equally impressive was India's other Premier Division top-ten finisher Aditya Iyengar, who also won 22 games en route to a commendable tenth-place finish – a good 34 places above his seeding. Rajeew Menon and Ritu Chadha rounded off India's list of prize winners, finishing sixth in Division 2 and fourth in Division 4 respectively.

How Indian players finished at Causeway 2026			
Div.	Player	Place	Seed
A	Madhav Kamath	8	10
	Aditya Iyengar	10	44
	Akshay Bhandarkar	21	4
	Udayan Grover	22	39
	Suyash Manchali	39	34
	Sherwin Rodrigues	42	22
	Samrath Singh Bhatia	61	88
	Charles Carneiro	65	85
	Sujana Somasekar	66	86
	Sanjoy Gupta	70	80
B	Ishika Shivalingaiah	71	62
	Siddharth Nithyanand	86	66
	A Krishnan	1	36
	Sunny Bhatia	5	44
	Rahil Parkar	21	18
	Mohan Chunkath	38	33
	Nidhi Singhvi	66	50
C	Rustom Deboo	75	80
	Manju Sood	76	79
	Rajeev Menon	6	15
	Gajanan Patil	11	58
	Shaik Ahmed	12	74
	Vimisha Patel	13	49
	Sudhir Kamath	14	8
	Danish Shahna	45	44
	Rajiv Antao	47	53
	Vignesh S	48	35
	Neeta Bhatia	49	37
	Komal RG	57	87
	Mangala Bhandarkar	58	39
	Abid Hussain	60	26
	Kala Ganesh	76	34
	Swagat Nukala	84	60
D	Sushanto B	21	12
	Rehet Singh Bhatia	26	53
	Monica Agarwala	29	83
	Jyoti Budhia	33	27
	Harvinderjit Bhatia	44	67
	Asha Kamath	57	52
	Saraswathi R	60	86
	Archana Aggarwal	69	54
	Abhijit Shilotri	76	33
E	Pradyot Anand	78	61
	Ritu Chadha	4	20
	Hyder Quraishi	38	48
	Gaurav Bhargava	42	15
	Mehjabeen Peeradina	55	69
	Rajalakshmi P	61	81
	Suguna Dandi	65	73
	Caryl Gonsalvez	68	49



Sunny Bhatia finished fifth in Division 1

The results highlighted the growing strength and depth of competitive Scrabble in India, with India's players competing successfully in one of the strongest international fields ever assembled.



Rajeev Menon finished sixth in Division 2

The Indian players wore special Team India t-shirts on the first day, with the names of all Indian players on the

back; thanks to Vimisha Patel for the initiative, Nidhi Singhvi for the design, and Sunny for the production.



Ritu Chadha finished fourth in Division 4



David Eldar receives the champion's prize from Michael Tang

Top 20 – Premier Division

	Player and country	Wins	Spread
1	David Eldar, AUS	24 (+2)	1647
2	Joshua Castellano, USA	24	1168
3	Harshan L, ENG	23	1608
4	Panupol S, THA	23	1271
5	David Wiegand, USA	23	1127
6	Nigel Richards, NZL	23	751
7	Thacha Koowirat, THA	22.5	516
8	Madhav Kamath, IND	22	768
9	Jason Keller, USA	22	591
10	Aditya Iyengar, IND	22	222
11	Samson Okosagah, NGA	21.5	762
12	Ben Schoenbrun, USA	20 (+1)	1047

13	Komol P, THA	21	1015
14	Napat V, THA	21	756
15	Nuti Suri, THA	21	455
16	Nattapat Nak-in, THA	21	151
17	Michael Gongolo, KEN	20.5	832
18	Alexander Gozali, IDN	20.5	331
19	Brian Po, HKG	20.5	276
20	Austin Shin, ENG	19	1015

High game: Ryan Wee, SGP 755
Bye treatment explained in brackets



Special Team India t-shirts were worn by the Indian contingent on the first day

The complete standings and results from the Causeway Challenge can be found here:

<https://www.causeway-challenge.com/index26.php>

The 108 streamed games can be viewed on the LetsPlayScrabble YouTube channel here:

<https://www.youtube.com/@letsplayscrabbledotcom/playlists>

The annotated games can be found on Woogles here:

<https://woogles.io/broadcasts/causeway-2026>

Top 20 – Division 1

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	A Krishnan, IND	25	691
2	Olaribigbe H, NGA	24	1455
3	Weera S, THA	24	1173
4	Tan Zi Kang, MYS	24	940
5	Sunny Bhatia, IND	23	1623
6	Wolfram Poh, SGP	23	813
7	Jayaska B, LKA	22.5	487
8	Tim Weiss, USA	22	1001
9	Sinatarn P, THA	22	723
10	Amit Chakrabarti, USA	22	271
11	Leon Tan Zheng, SGP	22	225
12	Benjamin Tacheney, USA	21	870
13	Moses Peter, NGA	21	810
14	Tay Yi An, SGP	21	692
15	Nsikan Iyanam, NGA	21	546
16	Ryan Sutton, AUS	21	307
17	Jared Robinson, ENG	21	203
18	Carson Ip, HKG	21	-527
19	Theodoro Martus, PHL	20	954
20	Wittayawut W, THA	20	766

High game: Daniel Srichawla, THA 804

Top 15 – Division 2

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Zachary Dang, USA	25	1443
2	Imeth De Silva, LKA	23.5	612
3	Ronald Credo, PHL	23	1377
4	Win Inthara, THA	23	1182
5	Louis Candia, PHL	22 (+1)	1001

6	Rajeev Menon, IND	23	865
7	Fred Magu, KEN	21 (+1)	858
8	Tony Hunt, AUS	22	668
9	Kavindu M, LKA	22	334
10	Charles Uzamere, NGA	22	296
11	Gajanan Patil, IND	21.5	769
12	Shaik Ahmed, IND	21	1568
13	Vimisha Patel, IND	21	876
14	Sudhir Kamath, IND	21	736
15	Liao Yi, SGP	21	613

High game: Pannatat T, THA 680

Bye treatment explained in brackets



Indian players in their Team India t-shirts



Indian players in their Causeway t-shirts

Top 10 – Division 3

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Mbonu Olachi, NGA	27	2141
2	Hassan Arshad, PAK	25.5	1267
3	Norawit S, THA	25	1245
4	M Furqon, IDN	24	947
5	Cedric Lewis, MYS	23	1501
6	Jyoti Chandna, AUS	23	1174
7	Passfine C, NGA	22	1217
8	Dart Eslao, PHL	21 (+1)	1035
9	Alvin Imanuel, IDN	22	531

10 Rebecca Soble, TUR 22 401

High game: Hassan Arshad, PAK 662
Bye treatment explained in brackets

Top 10 – Division 4

Player	Wins	Spread
1 Pattarapol J, THA	28.5 (+1)	3028
2 Muhammad E, PAK	24.5	1568
3 Paerrin Udtaisuk, THA	23	1268
4 Ritu Chadha, IND	23	1164
5 Caroline S, AUS	22 (+1)	635
6 Mags Treanor, SUI	22	726
7 Faris Muhammad, IDN	22	303
8 Cheryl Melvin, USA	21 (+1)	258
9 Vimol Vitooraporn, THA	20.5 (+1)	1008
10 Sharmaine Farini, CAN	21	1091

High game: Kulachat K, THA 655
Bye treatment explained in brackets

Gateway Cup, Mumbai

Mumbai's premier national Scrabble tournament, newly christened as the Gateway Cup, was held at the Willingdon Catholic Gymkhana (WCG) from 8th to 10th May.



Akshay Bhandarkar with the Gateway Cup trophy, flanked by hockey Olympians Mervyn Fernandis and Joaquim Carvalho

Organised by the Mumbai Scrabble Club (MSC), the tourney attracted 75 players across three divisions.

Former world champion Akshay Bhandarkar produced another remarkable performance to secure the gruelling 24-round Premier Division title with as many as four rounds to spare.

The International Grandmaster won 18 out of 20 games with a spread of 2012 to win his third successive tournament in three months and extend his lead as the frontrunner in the 2026 All-India National Championship race.

In second and third place respectively were Akshay's fellow International GMs Sherwin Rodrigues and reigning world youth champion Madhav Gopal Kamath. The Open Division was won by Abid Hussain, with Swagat Nukala and 16-year-old Ahana Goyal finishing second and third respectively. The Beginner Division, aimed at encouraging upcoming Scrabble talents, was won by WCG's own Valentine De Souza.



Abid Hussain, winner of the Open Division

Besides trophies and cash prizes for the top finishers, various rating category prizes and spot prizes were awarded as well. The prize ceremony was graced by Arjuna Awardees and Indian hockey Olympians Joaquim Carvalho and Mervyn Fernandis. Thanks to WCG for being the venue partner, and ICICI Prudential and Aditya Birla Group for their valuable support.

Final standings – Premier Division

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Akshay Bhandarkar	18 (+4)	2012
2	Sherwin Rodrigues	15	1370
3	Madhav Kamath	15	842
4	Varisht Hingorani	15	813
5	Aditya Iyengar	14	882
6	Sujana Somasekar	13 (+1)	250
7	Siddharth Nithyanand	14	38
8	Hriday Samtani	13.5	811
9	Kala Ganesh	13	332
10	Samrath Bhatia	13	248
11	Ishika Shivalingaiah	13	182
12	Nidhi Singhvi	13	-108
13	Rustom Deboo	11 (+1)	93
14	Mohan Chunkath	12	-78
15	Neeta Bhatia	11 (+1)	-140
16	Anvay Shah	12	-480
17	Sumeet Sachdev	12	-737
18	Mangala Bhandarkar	9.5 (+2)	-511
19	Alan De Mello	10 (+1)	-189
20	Pankaj Bolaki	10 (+1)	-515
21	Sanjay Bijlani	10 (+1)	-644
22	Venkataraman Sridev	9 (+1)	-336
23	Rajiv Antao	8 (+2)	-725
24	Priya Karkhanis	8 (+2)	-776
25	Rehet Bhatia	8 (+2)	-876
26	Bhushan Pradhan	9	-215
27	Joe Rodrigues	3 (+5)	-1543

High game: Akshay Bhandarkar 647

Bye treatment explained in brackets

Final standings – Open Division

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Abid Hussain	17.5	852
2	Swagat Nukala	16.5	748

3	Ahana Goyal	16	1052
4	Ishika Poddar	15	782
5	R Nalini	15	530
6	Dipankar Chatterjee	14.5	254
7	Suhaas Khandelwal	14	729
8	Vimarsh Pandita	14	517
9	Pallavi Praveen	14	338
10	Aditya Choudhary	14	-367
11	Abhijit Shilotri	13.5	542
12	Nikheel Ruparel	13	409
13	Harvinderjit Bhatia	13	200
14	Meena Kalyan	13	-100
15	Aria Kapadia	12.5	282
16	Rekha Sanzgiri	12	317
17	Madhulekha B	12	267
18	Mayank Khandelwal	12	9
19	Mehjabeen P	12	-185
20	Ramchander K	12	-188
21	Raksha Tanna	10 (+2)	-422
22	Utkarsh Lal	11 (+1)	-518
23	Ritu Chadha	11	781
24	Bhushan Sarmalkar	11	102
25	V Ramachandran	11	75
26	Lucy Thomas	11	43
27	Srushti Gandhi	11	-253
28	Dhaval Rathod	10.5	-124
29	Mehul Munwani	10.5	-894
30	Arnab Choudhury	9 (+1)	-499
31	Archana Lalwani	10	-795
32	Viji Ramachandran	9.5	-98
33	Rajalakshmi P	9	-143
34	Harim Talreja	8 (+1)	-1058
35	Rama B	3 (+3)	-1113
36	Sylvia Coelho	0	-2072

High game: Ahana Goyal 592

Bye treatment explained in brackets



Podium finishers from the Premier and Open divisions

Chennai Open

The 2026 Chennai Open, which marked the return of competitive Scrabble in Chennai after more than a decade, was held from 26th to 28th June at the E-Hotel, Royapettah. Organised jointly by the Madras Scrabble Foundation (MSF) and the Karnataka State Scrabble Association (KSSA), the tournament featured 56 players of varying ages from across India and overseas in the Open Division, who were divided into two categories A and B on the basis of their ratings. Besides, there were separate one-day tournaments for school, college and beginner players, featuring another 75 players.



Madhav Gopal Kamath receives the winner's trophy from SAI President Siddharth Nithyanand

Reigning world youth champion Madhav Gopal Kamath, aged 15, added to his trophy cabinet by securing the 23-round Open Division title, with the battle going into the final round. The Delhi-based Grandmaster won 17 out of 23 games, edging out Aditya Iyengar of Mumbai and fellow Grandmaster Thacha Koowirat of Thailand into second and third position respectively.



The top three finishers

Narrowly missing out on the podium was India's highest-ranked player Akshay Bhandarkar, who finished fourth. Samarth Manchali from Bangalore, aged just 12, gave an indication of his ability by finishing fifth, while Chennai's Ranganathan Chakravarthy, coach to many upcoming juniors from Chennai, made a strong comeback to competitive Scrabble by finishing sixth. In Category B, Chennai's Jyoti Budhia stood first.



Srihari S, winner of the Schools Division, receives his trophy from Ranganathan C

The top finishers of the Schools Division, which was the regional qualifier for the All-India School Championship, were Srihari S from Sri Sankara Senior Secondary School (winner, senior division), KP Malai Vijesh from KSN Senior Secondary School (runner-up, senior division),

and Srihari Prashanth from Sri Sankara Senior Secondary School (winner, junior division); ensuring their qualification for the finals. The College Division was won by Abhyuday from IIT Madras, while the Beginner Division was won by Sivaraman K from Bangalore.



Budding Scrabblers in action in the Schools Division

Thanks to the efforts of J Meghanatha Reddy from the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu (SDAT) and Mohan Chunkath, IAS; a former national champion and Chennai's most accomplished Scrabble player, the tourney received a sponsorship of INR 5,00,000 from the SDAT – a notable landmark for the progress of Indian Scrabble. This support made the event a grand success. Besides trophies and cash prizes for the top finishers, with the top prize being INR 1,00,000, various category prizes and prizes for exceptional words were awarded.

Final standings

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Madhav Kamath	17	1817
2	Aditya Iyengar	16	1284
3	Thacha Koowirat	16	834
4	Akshay Bhandarkar	16	463

5	Samarth Manchali	15	554
6	Ranganathan C	15	483
7	Ishika Shivalingaiah	14	1103
8	J Jayaseelan	14	684
9	Suthiraphan Assarat	14	595
10	Suyash Manchali	14	471
11	Sudhir Kamath	14	314
12	Rajeev Menon	13	1596
13	A Krishnan	13	1210
14	Sanjoy Gupta	13	707
15	Nakul Prabhu	13	702
16	Vignesh S	13	463
17	Shubha S	13	293
18	Rustom Deboo	13	-15
19	Sujana Somasekar	13	-137
20	Jyoti Budhia	11 (+1)	903
21	Sunny Bhatia	12	823
22	Manju Sood	12	447
23	Rajiv Antao	12	311
24	Lennie D'Souza	12	268
25	Pankaj Bolaki	12	17
26	Nirupama Sivaraman	12	-16
27	Triambak Eashwar	12	-206
28	Neeta Bhatia	12	-250
29	Ela Ghose	11	469
30	Rajveer Rawlin	11	458
31	Abhijit Shilotri	10 (+1)	372
32	Kala Ganesh	10 (+1)	167
33	Harvinderjit Bhatia	11	165
34	Shaik Ahmed	11	-143
35	Suchindra Potnis	11	-216
36	Vimarsh Pandita	11	-404
37	R Nalini	11	-520
38	Gaurav Bhargava	11	-595
39	Krieshna Parmar	10	100
40	Valentine De Souza	10	-375
41	Hyder Quraishi	10	-387
42	Lucy Thomas	10	-494
43	Arvind Lath	10	-591
44	Rekha Balaji	10	-682
45	Rajalakshmi P	10	-1616
46	Raman Viswanathan	9	-10
47	Suguna Dandi	9	-577
48	Tata Ganesh	9	-1008
49	Tashvi N	8 (+1)	-1942
50	Ramchander K	8	-315
51	Sherin Thomas	8	-435
52	Jayakishore Satla	7 (+1)	-1208
53	Girija Nadagoudar	8	-2460
54	Rama B	6 (+1)	-381
55	Meenakshi N	6 (+1)	-1118
56	Annaphurni B	4 (+1)	-1972

High game: Thacha Koowairat 715
Bye treatment explained in brackets

Association of Goa and held at the Oak Resort.

Goa All-India Open

The 20th edition of the Goa All-India Open from 17th to 19th April saw Akshay Bhandarkar secure top honours with a round to spare, as he finished with 19 wins from 24 rounds to make it back-to-back titles following his win in Pune in March.



Akshay Bhandarkar with the board from his title-winning game at the Goa Open

Young guns Madhav Gopal Kamath and Suyash Manchali followed on the podium, with 17 and 15 wins respectively. Sujana Somasekar and Sanjoy Gupta, also with 15 wins each, rounded off the top five.

Besides the prizes for the top ten finishers, there were various rating band prizes and spot prizes on offer. A total of 42 players were in action during the three-day tournament, which was organised by the Scrabble



The podium at the 20th Goa Open



A board themed around the 20th Goa Open, created by Rustom Deboo

Final standings

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Akshay Bhandarkar	19	2391
2	Madhav Kamath	17	1065
3	Suyash Manchali	15	1274

4	Sujana Somasekar	15	1148
5	Sanjoy Gupta	15	666
6	Pramit Kamath	15	413
7	Aditya Iyengar	15	378
8	Manju Sood	14	705
9	Rustom Deboo	14	606
10	Shubha S	14	480
11	Siddharth Nithyanand	14	185
12	Neeta Bhatia	14	59
13	Samarth Manchali	13	422
14	Jacky Fernandes	13	314
15	Ishika Shivalingaiah	13	290
16	Kala Ganesh	13	-83
17	Rajeev Menon	12.5	334
18	Sumeet Sachdev	12.5	-308
19	Harvinderjit Bhatia	12	163
20	Sunny Bhatia	12	80
21	Nirupama Sivaraman	12	41
22	Komal RG	12	39
23	Asha Kamath	12	-597
24	Vignesh S	12	-672
25	Ela Ghose	11.5	-551
26	Sudhir Kamath	11	574
27	Selwyn Lobo	11	522
28	Radhika M	11	-344
29	Abhijit Shilotri	11	-544
30	Pallavi Praveen	10.5	201
31	Bhushan Pradhan	10.5	61
32	Ritu Chadha	10.5	-315
33	Swagat Nukala	10.5	-839
34	Gajanan Patil	10	-388
35	Joseph Tharun	9 (+1)	-943
36	Joe Rodrigues	9.5	-263
37	Tabish Sayed	9	-736
38	Ronilla Kataria	9	-859
39	Caroline Coelho	8	-1040
40	Bhushan Sarmalkar	8	-1693
41	Matt Daniels	7	-1149
42	Erol Jorge	6	-1087

High game: Akshay Bhandarkar 685

Bye treatment explained in brackets

Tirthan Scrabbcation

The inaugural edition of the Tirthan Scrabbcation, a unique WESPA-rated tournament organised by Archana Aggarwal, was highlighted by a comprehensive win by Siddharth

Nithyanand, who cruised to a tally of 18 wins in 20 rounds to be Gibsonised with three rounds to spare.



Siddharth Nithyanand with the board from his title-clinching game



Siddharth flanked by fellow podium finishers Sujana Somasekar and Mohan Chunkath

Played from 30th April to 3rd May, the tournament featured 14 players and

was played amid splendid locales in the Tirthan Valley, Himachal Pradesh. From customised score books to games by the riverside to local hospitality, it made for an experience to cherish for the participants.



Scrabble by the riverside



*Players cross the river to reach the venue –
Scrabble with a hint of adventure!*

Joining Siddharth on the podium were Sujana Somasekar and Mohan Chunkath, each of whom finished with 15 wins. Rounding off the top five were Sunny Bhatia and Nidhi Singhvi, with 14 wins each.



Games in progress in a cosy setting



*Participants enjoy a traditional
Himachali lunch after the tournament*

Final standings

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Siddharth Nithyanand	18	1590
2	Sujana Somasekar	15	1771
3	Mohan Chunkath	15	1442
4	Sunny Bhatia	14	1426
5	Nidhi Singhvi	14	157
6	Vimisha Patel	12	461
7	Sudhir Kamath	12	202
8	Komal RG	12	128
9	Abhijit Shilotri	11	-869
10	Archana Aggarwal	10	-535
11	Ritu Chadha	9	-907
12	Arvind Lath	8	-486
13	Gaurav Bhargava	8	-1347
14	Sheeba Simon	0	-3033

High game: Sujana Somasekar 653

Rated one-day tournaments

KSSA Scrabble Day, Bangalore (12th April, eight rounds)



*Sujana Somasekar (centre), winner of the
KSSA Scrabble Day one-dayer*

Final standings

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Sujana Somasekar	6	498
2	Suyash Manchali	6	260
3	Ishika Shivalingaiah	5	384

4	Suchindra Potnis	5	233
5	Siddharth Nithyanand	5	137
6	Shubha S	5	-51
7	Sanjoy Gupta	4	91
8	Vignesh S	4	-153
9	Samarth Manchali	3	346
10	Pankaj Bolaki	3	-139
10	Saraswathi R	3	-139
12	R Nalini	3	-359
13	Krieshna Parmar	2	-444
14	Abdul Waheed	2	-664

High game: Samarth Manchali 645

WCG Open, Mumbai (12th April, eight rounds)

Final standings

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Samrath Bhatia	7	856
2	Varisht Hingorani	6	804
3	Hriday Samtani	6	446
4	Sumeet Sachdev	6	254
5	Sanjay Bijlani	6	182
6	Gajanan Patil	5	521
7	Rustom Deboo	5	281
8	Bhushan Pradhan	5	163
9	Mimi Hingorani	5	152
10	Rehet Bhatia	5	88
11	Ishika Poddar	4	527
12	Anvay Shah	4	182
13	Gaurika Chaudhari	3 (+1)	48
14	Sonal Merchant	4	10
15	V Ramachandran	4	-108
16	Valentine De Souza	4	-264
17	Archana Lalwani	3 (+1)	-390
18	Bhushan Sarmalkar	3 (+1)	-522
19	Harvinderjit Bhatia	2 (+1)	166
20	Mehul Munwani	2 (+1)	-103
21	Aria Kapadia	3	-114
22	Viji Ramachandran	3	-272
23	Utkarsh Lal	3	-328
24	Mehjabeen P	3	-360
25	Raksha Tanna	1 (+1)	-327
26	Manish Jhaveri	1 (+1)	-597
27	Priti Sachdev	1 (+1)	-895

High game: Varisht Hingorani 639

Bye treatment explained in brackets



**Samrath Singh Bhatia, winner of the
WCG Mumbai one-dayer**

April Anagram, Delhi (26th April,
eight rounds)

Final standings

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Sunny Bhatia	7 (+1)	1016
2	Sudhir Kamath	4 (+1)	358
3	Komal RG	5	9
4	Archana Aggarwal	5	105
5	Ahana Goyal	4	153
6	Ela Ghose	3 (+1)	155
7	Akshay Hiremath	1 (+2)	-526
8	Gaurav Bhargava	1 (+2)	-598
9	Shalini Sahdev	1 (+1)	63
10	Karthik Ganesan	0	-525

High game: Sunny Bhatia 560
Bye treatment explained in brackets

May Mayhem, Delhi (17th May,
eight rounds)

Final standings

	Player	Wins	Spread
1	Sudhir Kamath	5 (+1)	534
2	Sunny Bhatia	4 (+1)	-25
3	Komal RG	5	-101
4	Madhav Kamath	4	393
5	Ahana Goyal	4	211
6	Shalini Sahdev	4	123
7	Archana Aggarwal	2 (+1)	-19
8	Ela Ghose	3	-103

9 Akshay Hiremath 1 (+1) -813

High game: Ahana Goyal 563
Bye treatment explained in brackets

**Top 15 in the 2026 All-India National
Championship table as on 30th June**

Rank	Player	Points
1	Akshay Bhandarkar	400
2	Madhav Gopal Kamath	270
3	Suyash Manchali	240
4	Aditya Iyengar	210
5	Sherwin Rodrigues	160
6	Udayan Grover	110
7	Sujana Somasekar	85
8	Samrath Singh Bhatia	55
9	Varisht Hingorani	50
9	Samarth Manchali	50
9	Ishika Shivalingaiah	50
12	Sanjoy Gupta	45
13	Ranganathan Chakravarthy	40
14	Pramit Kamath	30
15	Siddharth Nithyanand	20
15	Nakul Prabhu	20

**Top 20 WESPA-rated scores in India in 2026
(as on 30th June)**

Score	Player	Tourney
715	Thacha Koowirat	Chennai Open
708	Michael Tang	KSSA Open (A)
685	Akshay Bhandarkar	Goa Open
675	Azad Jowahir	KSSA Open (C)
674	Aditya Iyengar	KSSA Open (A)
670	Akshay Bhandarkar	KSSA Open (A)
669	Aditya Iyengar	Chennai Open
656	Suyash Manchali	Goa Open
655	Udayan Grover	Kaizen, Pune
653	Sujana Somasekar	Tirthan
647	Ishika Shivalingaiah	Goa Open
647	Akshay Bhandarkar	Gateway Cup
642	Suyash Manchali	Kaizen, Pune
641	Akshay Bhandarkar	Kaizen, Pune
641	Rajeev Menon	Chennai Open
636	Mangala Bhandarkar	KSSA Open (A)
634	Sujana Somasekar	Tirthan
627	Sunny Bhatia	Chennai Open
624	Kala Ganesh	Chennai Open
621	Madhav Kamath	Gateway Cup

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:



Thailand

The Causeway Challenge, held in Bangkok from 29th May to 1st June, was one of the grandest Scrabble events seen, as 440 players competed across five divisions in a 36-round extravaganza. This was the first Causeway tournament since 2016, marking a much-awaited return.



Australia's David Eldar, seeded second behind New Zealand's Nigel Richards, won the Premier Division with a round to spare, with Joshua Castellano (USA) and Harshan

Lamabadusuriya (England) joining him on the podium.

Panupol Sujjayakorn (Thailand) and David Wiegand (USA) rounded off the top five, while Nigel finished in sixth place. India's A Krishnan emerged as the winner of Division 1.



The top three in the Causeway Premier Division – champion David Eldar flanked by Joshua Castellano (left) and Harshan Lamabadusuriya

United States

The inaugural WESPA Word Wars series, a premier best-of-15 series launched by WESPA, was held between world champion Adam Logan of Canada and Nigel Richards – the two finalists of the 2025 WESPAC in Ghana – from 30th June to 1st July in Albany. The series went into the 14th game, after which Adam won 8-6 (+296). The game-wise results were as follows:

- 1) Adam 588-475, 2) Adam 437-409,
- 3) Adam 510-468, 4) Nigel 435-422,
- 5) Adam 510-364, 6) Nigel 509-463,

7) Nigel 529-422, 8) Nigel 488-364, 9) Adam 438-402, 10) Adam 485-439, 11) Adam 531-413, 12) Nigel 473-459, 13) Nigel 401-389, 14) Adam 477-394

The streamed Word Wars games can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwWNqkl7CEI>

England



Piotr Andronowski with the MGI Classics trophy

The 2026 MGI International Scrabble Classics took place in Milton Keynes from 1st to 4th May over 32 rounds, with Poland's Piotr Andronowski (24 wins, +1907) winning the title ahead of England's Lewis Mackay (24, +1722) and the United States' Samson Okosagah (23, +1444).

Australia

World champion Adam Logan clinched the 2026 Australian National Championship, held in Canberra from 2nd to 4th April. He

finished with 19 wins from 24 games, with defending champion David Eldar coming second with 17 wins and Ronnie Bennett third with 16.



Adam Logan, winner of the Australian National Championship. Three months later, the world champion won the inaugural WESPA Word Wars as well

Endgame Extra: An 800-plus score at the Causeway Challenge

Round 17 in Division 1 of the Causeway Challenge saw Thailand's Daniel Srichawla hit an astounding 804 against Indonesia's Fadlan Satria. He made two nine-timers (PORRIDGE and SHRIEKER), with the final scores reading 804-252.



Puzzles and quizzes

Mixed anagrams – Plant sevens

by Rustom Deboo

Below are ten anagrams, each of which has two seven-letter Scrabble words that are names of plants, which you might have come across during your word study or games. For instance, A TENTH SUIT PILE would yield the words PETUNIA and THISTLE. Can you unscramble them all?

You can send in your answers to indianscrabble@gmail.com by 31st August 2026. One entry getting all ten answers right (i.e. both words in each question) will win a cash prize of Rs. 500 in a lucky draw.

Congrats to Priyakshi Bhattacharyya for winning the lucky draw prize for the quiz featured in the March 2026 edition (answers are on page 54). The following also got all answers right: Akshay Bhandarkar, Gajanan Patil, Meena Kalyan, Pallavi Praveen, and Raman Viswanathan.

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1) AIM POUND ACTION | 6) NAMING USED SONG |
| 2) PRIVATE LAB NOTE | 7) PRIOR CABIN IDEA |
| 3) ABORT ENGINE FAD | 8) BOATER OWNS CAPE |
| 4) FARMING OUT SLOW | 9) SEAT TUBE ORIGIN |
| 5) POOR MARGINS AIL | 10) WIPED TAN REMOTE |



Homer's anagrams

by Nirupama Sivaraman

Unscramble ANAGRAMS of characters from The Odyssey. The rest of each clue points to the answer's meaning.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) LAERTES narrates | 6) NESTOR was one of those singers like Pavarotti |
| 2) At a lower level than ATHENA | 7) Make fun of TIRESIAS |
| 3) POSEIDON may be corrupted | 8) Dress as a character like CALYPSO |
| 4) HERMES sews the edge of his frock again | 9) MELANTHO may have made a good innkeeper |
| 5) ARTEMIS was quite the know-it-all | 10) Show respect to ELATUS |



Guess the eight-letter word

by Rustom Deboo

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

Here is an example of a question: 8315 is an animal; 62735 is a vehicle; 6478 is a colour. In the above example, the answer would be ORIENTAL, with LION, TRAIN, and TEAL being the respective shorter words to be derived from the hints.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) 8723 is an animal
75684 is a country
1735 is a unit | 3) 3715 is an animal
81276 is a dwelling
5416 is a title |
| 2) 8451 is a country
86724 is a vehicle
6473 is an element | 4) 7634 is a vehicle
56387 is a food item
1724 is a trait |

Mythical creature anagrams

by Nirupama Sivaraman

Unscramble the words to get the names of mythical creatures (that are also valid Scrabble words).

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1) CREMATION | 9) CURE ANT |
| 2) ELK PIE | 10) RACE HIM |
| 3) GLORY AGE | 11) HIP OXEN |
| 4) FEWER OWL | 12) SILK BIAS |
| 5) HARDY | 13) HAS BEEN |
| 6) RIFFING | 14) IS LEEK |
| 7) USES GAP | 15) I GOT FOB |
| 8) RUIN ATOM | |
-

Can you RUN through them all?

by Rustom Deboo

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

- | Sevens | Eights |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1. OV?? (6) | 7. BHI?? (4) |
| 2. CR?? (8) | 8. FLU?? (7) |
| 3. AZ?? (5) | 9. ETW?? (6) |
| 4. HL?? (4) | 10. GLN?? (4) |
| 5. DM?? (7) | 11. IOR?? (4) |
| 6. IU?? (5) | 12. OTY?? (6) |



SAI round-up

The new SAI Managing Committee was elected by the SAI members on 7th May 2026 for a two-year period. Outgoing President Harvinderjit Bhatia served as the Election Officer. Following is the constitution of the Managing Committee 2026-28:

Siddharth Nithyanand – President
Neeta Bhatia – Vice President
Rustom Deboo – Secretary
Ritu Chadha – Treasurer
Vimisha Patel – Joint Secretary
Rajiv Antao – Executive Member
Sujana Somasekar – Executive Member

- **Five-point strategic plan for the next phase**

Formulated by newly elected SAI President Siddharth Nithyanand, SAI's Strategic Plan for the next two years would revolve around the following five pillars:

- 1) Build the youth pipeline
- 2) Strengthen the SAI-club ecosystem
- 3) Grow to 5000 registered players
- 4) Secure funding and sponsorships
- 5) Win the WESPAC bid by 2030

- **All-India School Championship kicks off**

The qualification process for the 2026 All-India School Scrabble Championship, to be held later this year, commenced with its first regional qualifier in Chennai along with the Chennai Open on 26th June. Following regional rounds are set to be played in Vadodara, Bangalore, Kottayam, Pune, Delhi, Mumbai, Goa, Kolkata, and Hyderabad.

- **SAI Fundraiser**



To back the budding youth Scrabble players through the regional school tournaments, SAI has announced the SAI Fundraiser 2026, for covering expenses such as

travel and accommodation, meals and event operations, trophies and certificates, and championship logistics. Those wishing to contribute could do so through the QR code below – any amount helps!



SAI thanks all those who have contributed towards the same, and hopes for much more support going forward.

- **Indian squad for WYSC 2026 finalised**

The 2026 edition of the World Youth Scrabble Championship (WYSC) will be held in Nairobi, Kenya from 7th to 9th August.

The 11-member contingent to represent India at the premier global youth tourney comprises defending champion Madhav Gopal Kamath, Suyash Manchali, Samarth Manchali, Ishika Poddar, Vihaan Singhvi, Ahana Goyal, Anika Dalwani, Suhaas Khandelwal, Khanak

Singhvi, Aria Kapadia, and Shreyas Khandelwal.

- **SAI Virtual GBM**

A virtual General Body Meeting (GBM) of SAI was conducted by the newly elected Managing Committee on 21st June. Members were enlightened about the highlights and initiatives of the past two years, and the road ahead. In addition, the GBM was a means to reach out and connect with the members, and obtain their feedback and suggestions on various aspects.

The meeting's presentation can be viewed here:

<https://acro-bat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:ap:02b8b57b-4f78-4098-92e1-c023d379dc96>

- **Update on migration to new rating system**

With a view to align with WESPA's RJR rating system, introduced in 2025, SAI intends to fully replace its existing rating system with a new system (currently provisional) following the Kolkata Open in late August.

New members

The following members were

welcomed into SAI in the last three months:

1. **Manish Jhaveri** (Mumbai) works in advertising as a copywriter, so words have been his passion as well as his bread and butter – quite literally in his case, as he has been writing the Amul topicals for over 30 years for da Cunha Communications. He used to play Scrabble as a kid, and joining SAI is an attempt to rekindle his interest.
2. **Priti Sachdev** (Mumbai)
3. **Rajalakshmi Ponnuswamy** (Bangalore) has always been excited by the thrill of finding the right word. She was introduced to competitive Scrabble by her neighbour Girija, after which she was mentored by Radhika Mahalingaiah, who encouraged her to start playing in tournaments. She recently played at the Causeway Challenge in Bangkok – an experience she will never forget.
4. **Rama Balasubramanya** (Bangalore) is a retired marketing manager from a PSU and is continuing

as a consultant. She was introduced to Scrabble by her friend Girija in 2023. She is enjoying the challenge, which boosts her memory, though she finds some words confusing!

5. **Girija Nadagoudar** (Bangalore) is 75 years old and practised homeopathy, specialised to treat children. She was introduced to Scrabble through a friend 42 years ago, and started indulging in it as a passion with friends and family. She also played casually in Australia, but never played in a tournament until Shubha Shivashankar introduced her to the 2024 Mu Sigma tournament, where she competed in the beginners' division. She keeps practising at the KSSA sessions, and recently played her first three-day tourney in Chennai.
6. **Sharon Sieiro** (Goa)
7. **Mehul Munwani** (Mumbai)
8. **Valentine De Souza** (Mumbai)
9. **Anupam Kathuria** (Pune)

Solutions to puzzles and quizzes

Homer's anagrams

- 1) RELATES, 2) ANEATH,
- 3) POISONED, 4) REHEMS,
- 5) SMARTIE, 6) TENORS,
- 7) SATIRISE, 8) COSPLAY,
- 9) HOTELMAN, 10) SALUTE

Guess the eight-letter word

- 1) PONYTAIL, 2) UNDERLAP,
- 3) ANGSTROM, 4) GIFTWARE

Mythical creature anagrams

- 1) MANTICORE, 2) KELPIE,
- 3) GARGOYLE, 4) WEREWOLF,
- 5) HYDRA, 6) GRIFFIN,
- 7) PEGASUS, 8) MINOTAUR,
- 9) CENTAUR, 10) CHIMERA,
- 11) PHOENIX, 12) BASILISK,
- 13) BANSHEE, 14) SELKIE,
- 15) BIGFOOT

Can you RUN through them all?

- 1) NERVOUS, OVERRUN,
RUNOVER, UNCOVER,
UNROVEN, UNVISOR
- 2) CHURNER, CURNIER,
CURRANS, CURRANT, CURRENT,
CURRING, RANCOUR, REINCUR
- 3) AZUREAN, AZURINE,
UNCRAZY, UNRAZED, ZONULAR
- 4) HORNFUL, HURLING,
LUNCHER, LUTHERN
- 5) DRUMLIN, DURAMEN,
MANURED, MAUNDER,

MOURNED, UNARMED,
UNRIMED

6) RUINOUS, UNIQUER,
URANIUM, URINOUS, USURING

7) BRUSHING, BUNCHIER,
CHERUBIN, UNBRIGHT

8) FRENULUM, FURUNCLE,
MOURNFUL, TRUNKFUL,
UNARTFUL, UNFURLED,
UNRUFFLE

9) UNDERTOW, UNDERWIT,
UNWATERS, UNWATERY,
UNWRITES, UPTOWNER

10) KNURLING, NURDLING,
NURSLING, RUNKLING

11) MURRIONS, QUARRION,
RUMORING, URINATOR

12) NOCTUARY, NUGATORY,
PUNITORY, ROTUNDLY,
TOURNEYS, UNWORTHY

Mixed anagrams – March 2026 edition

- 1) ECHIDNA – OPOSSUM
- 2) BANTENG – TARSIER
- 3) MARKHOR – POLECAT
- 4) NARWHAL – RACCOON
- 5) CARIBOU – MANATEE
- 6) DUNNART – SIAMANG
- 7) TAMARIN – WARTHOG
- 8) MUNTJAC – NAGAPIE
- 9) CARACAL – GEMSBOK
- 10) LINSANG – MEERKAT

Ratings

Below are the official SAI ratings (top 80) as on 30th June 2026. Please visit indianscrabble.com for the full rankings.

	Name	Club	Rating	Games
1	Akshay Bhandarkar	OSI	1833	793
2	Madhav Gopal Kamath	DEL	1768	1268
	Irfan Siddiqui	OS	1726	552
3	Varisht Hingorani	MUM	1647	1539
4	Ranganathan C	CHN	1641	958
5	Sherwin Rodrigues	MUM	1621	2144
6	Udayan Grover	PUN	1608	2862
7	Aditya Iyengar	MUM	1608	1128
8	Suyash Manchali	BLR	1569	624
9	Charles Carneiro	OSI	1554	919
10	Siddharth Nithyanand	BLR	1542	912
11	Goutham Jayaraman	BLR	1511	682
12	Sujana Somasekar	BLR	1491	1329
13	Ishika Shivalingaiah	BLR	1488	1145
14	Nakul Prabhu	MUM	1484	1655
15	Samrath Singh Bhatia	MUM	1471	1297
16	Rahil Parkar	OSI	1463	813
17	Hriday Samtani	MUM	1445	846
18	Sanjoy Gupta	BLR	1436	1899
19	A Krishnan	CHN	1429	688
	Michael Tang	OS	1427	493
20	Douglas Lobo	GOA	1426	1544
21	Mohan Chunkath	CHN	1423	1413
22	Carolann Pais	MUM	1391	1632
23	Nidhi Singhvi	PUN	1380	1399
24	Samarth Manchali	BLR	1369	424
	Raghuram J	OS	1366	74
25	Shaila Amalean	OSI	1362	429
26	Rustom Deboo	MUM	1357	1025
	Sumeet Sachdev	OS	1343	961
27	Rajveer Rawlin	BLR	1338	669
28	Pramit Kamath	GOA	1336	659
29	Sunny Bhatia	DEL	1325	2195
30	Shubha S	BLR	1322	667
31	Sudhir Kamath	DEL	1317	1738
32	Pankaj Bolaki	BLR	1309	876
33	Manju Sood	BLR	1287	1031
34	Amit Sood	PUN	1283	809
35	Triambak Eashwar	CHN	1281	297
36	Rajeev Menon	HYD	1276	1342
37	Anvay Shah	MUM	1263	300
38	Ekansh Arora	DEL	1245	288
39	Neeta Bhatia	MUM	1230	973
40	Mangala Bhandarkar	PUN	1221	2273
41	Kala Ganesh	MUM	1221	2054
42	Danish Shahna	BLR	1220	1171
43	Jacky Fernandes	GOA	1216	1337

	Name	Club	Rating	Games
44	Vignesh S	BLR	1204	1097
45	Suchindra Potnis	BLR	1202	896
46	Sanjay Bijlani	MUM	1190	848
47	Rohaina Tanveer	OSI	1185	662
48	Rajiv Antao	GOA	1182	1517
49	Selwyn Lobo	GOA	1181	788
50	Gajanan Patil	BLR	1178	458
51	Abid Hussain	BLR	1177	795
52	Alan De Mello	MUM	1170	235
53	Prithwiraj Mukherjee	BLR	1165	409
54	Vimisha Patel	GUJ	1148	1118
55	Arindam Basu	KOL	1139	655
56	Komal RG	DEL	1138	697
57	Nirupama Sivaraman	BLR	1134	179
58	Swagat Nukala	HYD	1123	814
59	Sushanto B	BLR	1119	906
60	Bhushan Pradhan	MUM	1115	2650
61	Shaik Ahmed	BLR	1113	2221
62	Venkataraman Sridev	KER	1113	232
63	R Nalini	BLR	1107	1236
64	Abel George Mathew	BLR	1105	81
	Kessen Budhoo	OS	1104	66
65	Ela Ghose	DEL	1093	611
66	Priya Karkhanis	PUN	1088	643
67	Ahana Goyal	DEL	1083	402
68	Jyoti Budhia	CHN	1072	273
69	Rehet Singh Bhatia	MUM	1065	1196
70	Meena Bakhru	PUN	1054	477
71	Shreyas Gupta	DEL	1054	110
72	Harsh Sood	BLR	1052	273
73	Dipankar Chatterjee	BLR	1042	910
74	Sonal Merchant	MUM	1031	345
75	V Ramachandran	MUM	1030	1657
76	Radhika Mahalingaiah	BLR	1018	1147
77	Virendra Braganza	PUN	1015	630
78	Ishika Poddar	MUM	1013	220
79	Rajnikant Singh	KOL	1002	388
80	Asha Kamath	KER	994	1263
81	Pradyot Anand	OSI	994	103

BLR – Bangalore (KSSA)

CHN – Chennai

DEL – Delhi

GOA – Goa

GUJ – Gujarat (Vadodara)

HYD – Hyderabad

KER – Kerala

KOL – Kolkata

MUM – Mumbai

PUN – Pune

OSI – Indian national residing overseas

OS – Overseas foreign player (no rank)



ENDGAME

Let us know your feedback

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

About SAI

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

How to become a SAI member?

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

Contact us

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

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

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

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