

SCRABBLE ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

General Body Meeting

28th May 2023



INTRODUCTION



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Welcome

..... a few rules.

- 1) All questions will be taken at the end.
- 2) Priority will be given to those questions that were sent in before the meeting.
- 3) Questions that arise during the meeting will be addressed after that, time permitting.
- 4) To ask a question, please type it into the chat box. If you are referring to a particular slide, please put down the slide title/ number.
- 5) Mikes will be muted, please only unmute if you are asked to speak.

Enjoy!

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING



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To share with the community what the SAI Committee has done over the last year



To increase participation of members in the functioning of SAI

THE SAI MISSION AND VISION



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Mission:

To guide, govern and grow competitive Scrabble in India in a transparent, considerate and inclusive manner and ensure continuous improvements in process and players.

Vision:

To gain recognition for competitive Scrabble as a sport, achieve a sizeable following in every state of India, and influence the growth and governance of competitive Scrabble across the world.

ABOUT SAI



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- The apex body overseeing Scrabble as a tournament sport in India.
- Formally registered in 2004.
- A member of the World English-language Scrabble Players Association (WESPA).
- Tournament Scrabble is still a small community in India with under 300 players, and we need to grow this at least 10 times to apply for Government recognition as a sport.

THE SAI MANAGING COMMITTEE (2022 – 2024)

- **Udayan Grover (Pune) – President:**

Rumour has it that Udayan studies words while combing out his dreadlocks... just kidding. But he is a serial scrabblor and a compulsive anagrammer: he has even programmed his sub-conscious to anagram during conversations. A tournament veteran, he is committed to the cause of enhancing various facets of competitive Scrabble in India.

- **Vimisha Patel (Vadodara) – Vice-President:**

A dentist by day and a dedicated scrabblor by night. She started the Vadodara Club and promotes the game through local-level school workshops and tournaments. She has been on the committee since 2021, a few years after she actively started playing Scrabble.

- **Rustom Deboo (Mumbai) – Secretary:**

An epitome of condensed potential energy, Rustom revolves his Scrabble-verse around Endgame, the quarterly SAI magazine, which he edits with unbridled zest. Aside from playing around with words, he works as a Company Secretary, and is a lifelong cricket buff and train-travel enthusiast.

- **Ela Ghose (NCR-Delhi) – Jt. Secretary:**

A market researcher by profession and an endurance cyclist and wellness coach by interest, I have often been told that I should come with sub-titles! I started playing competitive Scrabble in Sri Lanka in the 90s and joined the SAI committee last year.

- **Harry Bhatia (Mumbai) – Treasurer:**

The word multi-tasking was coined for Harry. Neeta, his wife, says in exasperation that he sometimes is on two calls at the same time while playing online Scrabble. His family, Neeta, Rehet and Samrath, are all excellent Scrabble players and he is the self-confessed rookie in his pod. He has been the Treasurer since 2018 and has streamlined the financial operations of the Association.

- **Archana Aggarwal (Delhi) – Member:**

On the committee since 2022, she actively works towards making Scrabble popular amongst the youth, and has along with Wordaholic and the Scrabble Association of Delhi (SaDel), successfully conducted the first international tournament for youth in Delhi - the Asia Youth Scrabble Championship in 2022. She is currently working with schools to establish Scrabble clubs in Delhi and conducts training programs and study groups.

- **Rajiv Antao (Goa) – Member:**

Soft-spoken, logical and peaceful, he is the repository for all Scrabble committee information, having worked with the SAI committee for many years in different positions. He helped organise the first Goa tournament way back in 1988. His love for words is evinced in his rating (he plays mid A Div.), which he earns without even studying!

THE SUB-COMMITTEES



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- **Membership** - Vimisha, Rustom
- **Finance and Banking** - Harry, Rajiv, Rustom
- **Schools and Training** - Archana, Vimisha, Harry
- **Content, Communication and Marketing** - Ela, Rustom, Vimisha, Udayan
- **Policy/Tournaments** - Udayan, Rajiv, Rustom, Ela
- **External Coordination** - Rajiv, Udayan, Harry
- **Ethics** - Udayan, Ela, Rajiv

MEMBERSHIP



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- Current membership base stands at ~ 250, including life and annual members.
- About 30% of the current membership have joined SAI within the last two and a half years.
- We intend to double our membership base in the next two years.
- Free annual membership offered to each of the 32 finalists of the Collins Schools Championship 2022.
- Vital for any Scrabble enthusiast to become a member.

BENEFITS OF BEING A SAI MEMBER



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- Community of like-minded enthusiasts – finding your tribe.
- Attain a SAI rating by competing in SAI-rated events nationally.
- Gain opportunity to represent India in WESPA-rated and other global events.
- Be aware of Scrabble tournaments across India to plan your Scrabble travel.
- Gain access to learning resources including study material and strategy, curated by experts.
- SAI supports players in international events by covering the entry fees of its youth reps and top performers in international events such as WESPAC and the virtual WESPA Youth Cup.
- Help in getting official recognition as a mind sport by wider outreach through representation created by an expanding SAI member base.

FINANCE AND BANKING:



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- SAI HDFC Bank Account signatories updated - Rustom and Harry are the new joint signatories.
- QR Code activated for SAI Bank Account - payments can be made scanning the code from the website.
- Internet Banking activated.
- Accounts are under Audit for the year ended March 2023.
- Unaudited Figures 22-23:
 - Revenue - 137,536
 - Breakup- Rating fee - 59,975, Membership fee - 57,600 and FDR interest - 19,961
 - 15 new life members paid 3000 each for membership fee
 - FD made for 5 lacs in the year. Total FD of SAI - 9 lacs
 - Current account balance as of today - 285,668.74

SCHOOLS AND TRAINING



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- We support members in approaching schools and corporations to introduce Scrabble.
- SAI associated with Collins to run the Collins Schools tournament.
- Conducted the first international youth tournament in Nov. 2022 – 60 players across 8 countries.
- The Buddy Plan
 - Any new member joining SAI would be assigned an experienced player, called “The Buddy” who will:
 - Guide the new member about all virtual playing platforms, study materials and software or apps
 - Guide them about offline tournaments, rules and conduct as required
 - Introduce them to their local clubs and members
 - The Buddy is not a mentor, but a friend to help them familiarise with our community at large.

CONTENT/COMMUNICATION/MARKETING



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ENDGAME – The Quarterly Magazine:

- Endgame, the SAI quarterly magazine, was introduced in March 2021.
- Introduced to enhance the community aspect of Indian Scrabble and allow members to voice their thoughts.
- It has seen nine editions so far, and has grown to become the official periodical of all things Scrabble in India.
- Endgame would be a key component in Indian Scrabble's collective push towards recognition.

Other content:

- Facebook and Twitter pages updated regularly.
- Mainstream media outreach: Indian performances at the virtual WESPA Youth Cup made it to primetime TV and a few leading print publications.



- Updated regularly with tournament information, ratings, and news.
- Has a full archive of tournaments dating back to 2008.
- SAI Announcement section under “About SAI” for various announcements on important notices, ratings criteria, selection criteria etc.
- Galleries – pictures of tournaments and others.
- All previous editions of the Endgame magazine.
- A news section for when Scrabble has been in the public news.
- All members are invited to send content for the website (News/Galleries/posts or other content) – send it to Rustom/Rajiv at info@indianscrabble.com.

TOURNAMENTS



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- Calendar

2023	Name	Place	Dates	No. of days	Divisions	Confirmed
January	KSSA Open MuSigma	Bangalore	26 -29	4	4	Yes
February						
March	Kaizen All India Open	Pune	17-19 March	3	2	Yes
	Women's Day	Lonavla	6	1	1	Yes
	Delhi IIT	Delhi	11- 12	2	TBC	Yes
April	Delhi 1-day	Gurgaon, NCR	2	1	1	Yes
	Goa Open	Goa	21-23	3	TBD	Yes
May	National Scrabble Champion	Mumbai	19 - 21	3	2	Yes
June	Goa 2-Day	Goa	17-18	2	1	Yes
July	Pune Club Championship	Pune	7 - 9	3	1	Yes
August	Independence Day	Bangalore	12- 13	2	1	
	Vadodara	Vadodara	4 - 6	3	TBD	Yes
September	GAIL cup	Delhi	1 - 3	3	3	Yes
			29, 30			
	IIT Mumbai Open	Mumbai	Sep, 1 Oct	3	2	Yes
October	WSL	Lonavla	27 - 29	3	league	Yes
November						
December	Deccan Cup	Hyderabad	15- 17	3	TBD	

TOURNAMENTS ... MAKING THINGS EASIER



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- Tied up with Treebo for discounts on accommodation options for each tournament.
- Mitigated the number of instances of unfair play by setting up an Ethics sub-committee.
- Increased the understanding of the rules by disseminating / discussing the rules.
- Got feedback on every tournament – shared with organisers for continual improvement.

EXTERNAL COORDINATION



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- India is a Class II member of WESPA which entails a minimum quota of 3 for WESPAC events – our current quota stands at 7 for WESPAC 2023. All WESPA-related info can be accessed at wespa.org.
- India's top players have been invited in team events such as the Causeway Championship, and are expected to send a contingent at the Alchemist Cup 2024 in Malaysia, pending confirmation.
- India's youth especially have been exceptional in proving their mettle at the WESPA Youth Cup (formerly WYSC) and at the Asia Cup Youth Scrabble Championship hosted by India last year.
- Harry and Udayan are SAI representatives on the newly formed Asian Scrabble Federation that covers 7 Asian countries.
- India enjoys representation on WESPA's Executive Committee – this allows us to build a strong international network.

THE ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE



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- Formed after the first formal complaint was raised to SAI Committee in May 2022, to ensure fair play across all tournaments and raise the level to a serious, competitive sport.
- There have been 7 reported incidents that have been investigated over the last year.
- We have published notes on fair play and on things to look out for when playing, based on incidents that have occurred.
- Tournament directors have been briefed so that they are vigilant about specific players.
- There has been leniency in the first year with warnings and non-ban penalties – this will change going forward.
- To raise an issue to the ethics committee, you could either contact your TD during a tournament or reach out to Udayan, Rajiv or Ela.

NEW INITIATIVES



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- The Buddy plan
- Train the trainer
- Creating a TD pool
- Title system
- Associate memberships and tie-ups: Formalising relations with city clubs, state associations, educational institutes, and other eco-system partners
- Starting a SAI shop for memorabilia

SUGGESTIONS/QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS



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- How about advertisements about upcoming tournaments in newspapers and Scrabble Go mobile app to spread awareness to more Indian people?
- Figure out a marketing strategy to convert current Indian players on Scrabble Go into SAI members and local club members – the (potential) number in my estimate could be as high as 50K.
- What is the value of being a SAI member?
- Where will the funding for the points under Suggestions come from? Current reserves plus new sponsors? If we have success at WYSC, that will make sponsors more likely to reach for their wallets, else it boils down to personal contacts and personal goodwill being used for SAI.
- Do tourneys have to mandatorily be held in metros/major cities?
- Strong action against unfair practices of various kinds – precedent has to be set.

SUGGESTIONS/QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS



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- Please pick up the baton from KSSA who set up and sponsored high potential youth player coaching last year; with WYSC in Dec. this year, the youth training should continue and should be SAI's remit; who, what, how of coaching can be decided by a sub-committee, but please act quickly; we could potentially have two top 5s from India.
- Consider structuring and running a set of Scrabble training courses for different skill levels; charge for them but offer scholarships based on some criteria.
- Please consider funding clubs like Goa/Mum/Pun to improve standards of their tournaments. Put in a check so that clubs don't take advantage of a free grant but make the grant a percentage of what club generates through its efforts of course with a cap on absolute amount. Consider waiving the SAI rating fee for underfunded clubs as it is quite high and no point funding them and taking it back.
- Provide a service to clubs for tournament operations - a) printed material like scorebooks - have a template and either produce for the clubs at a cost or give them artworks for local printing. All the nuances can be handled once and for all without clubs having to reinvent the wheel each time; b) TSH operations - provide a centralised resource for config file development and training of local tech-savvy members in TSH operations. This skill needs to be there in every city club.

SUGGESTIONS/QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS



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- There are tournaments twice a year in Pune and Mumbai. Why not one in Chennai and Kolkata?
- To have some 1/2 day tourneys too in the calendar, as being away from home gets difficult.
- Strong proponent of 25-26 games per tourney. Could the Nationals be made a 4-day event of 34-36 games?
- We need to think out of the box to make tourneys more attractive and a greater sense of value for money and time spent. I feel any destination which is scenically beautiful, calmer and relatively easily approachable too should be considered; it would have an added incentive rather than blindly going with the mundane metros and large cities which are crowded, polluted, concrete, obviously keeping the sponsors interests in mind wherever applicable.



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THANK YOU!
