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From the Editor

Congratulations are due to the four players who won their divisions at Nationals this past month: Nigel Richards, Richard Spence, Suhas Rao, and Randy Forrester. Interestingly, both Richard and Suhas played up a division, taking advantage of the NSC policy of allowing unlimited play-ups. Kudos as well to Jesse Day, who led Division 1 in games 27-29. Jesse finished 5th to raise his rating to 2005--joining the elite ten North Americans rated 2000+. He shares the excitement of an amazing tournament in “Fifteen Minutes of SCRABBLE® Fame.”

Also impressive was Jack Overby, a college student from Minnesota who came to Dallas with a 944 rating and the chutzpah to play in Division 1. Seeded last of 108 players, Jack won 16 of his 31 games, beating such players as Joel Wapnick, Marty Gabriel, Sam Rosin, Evans Clinchy, Bradley Whitmarsh, Geoff Thevenot, and Nathan Benedict (twice!) Jack finished Nationals 52nd in Division 1, with a new rating of 1540.

It seemed a Nationals where anything could happen--particularly for younger players. Seventeen-year-old Richard Spence, who won Division 4 last year, jumped up to Division 2 and won again. He also received a NASPA Achievement Award for the highest win percentage for the year, 82.7%--over all the players in North America!

Certainly one of the most astonishing victories was that of 12-year-old Suhas Rao, who won Division 3 with a 26-5 +3424 record, posting the tournament’s largest spread. Gibsonized after game 29, Suhas scored over 500 points in 11 of his games, tying a record set by the great international champion Ganesh Asirvatham.

I am enormously grateful to Ted Gest, who coordinated the Nationals coverage for The Last Word, and to the writers who contributed interviews and reports: Cecilia Le, Cheryl Melvin, Whitney Gould, Gerianne Abriano, Jesse Day, Stefan Fatsis, Dan Horowitz, and John Fultz. I think you’ll enjoy their stories! Stefan Fatsis’s piece on Nigel Richards, originally written for Word Freak, is amazing.

On another front, Nick Ball has submitted a fascinating look at NASPA-Collins in North America. This is the first year we’ve seen Collins divisions at more than a handful of tournaments. Although more of our top players are now trying Collins, Nick notes that entries at Collins tournaments are still light, and that greener players seem reluctant to switch lexicons.

Enter The Wordsmith, Chris Sinacola, a sub-1600 player who has decided to give Collins a try. Read his amusing “Mix me a Collins,” and you may want to have a go at Collins, too!

Next month our U.S. team will be in Warsaw, Poland, for the 12th World SCRABBLE Championship. Bradley Whitmarsh, announced as an alternate in our last issue, will be on the team, replacing Brian Cappelletto. Eleven of the fifteen team members participated in Collins tournaments discussed in Nick’s article. Here’s hoping this additional Collins practice helps win them many games!

Both NASPA and WGPO have announced their plans for next year’s big events. The 2012 NSC will be in Orlando, FL, August 11-15; the Word Cup in Bloomington, MN, the week before: August 3-8. It will be interesting to see what transpires. WGPO is also now offering Collins divisions at some upcoming tournaments, though these divisions will not be recognized for WESPA rating points.

Cornelia Guest
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Dear Cornelia Guest,

In the August 2011 issue of *The Last Word*, you stated that tournament attendance was down. You also offered ideas as to how to boost attendance as well as interest in SCRABBLE. It was suggested that interest in SCRABBLE has peaked. Although it's true that a book like Stefan Fatsis’s *Word Freak* can indeed spark interest in the game and recruit new players, and although it’s true that advertising can also increase participation, I am writing to inform you that I believe that interest in SCRABBLE is actually growing.

There is a large untapped market (if you will) out there of many thousands of people who love to play SCRABBLE who do not attend SCRABBLE clubs and play in SCRABBLE tournaments. These are the folks who attend the casual SCRABBLE clubs, groups that “meet up” occasionally. Some meet weekly.

I attend two such groups. One is the North Phoenix group, which has over 60 members. The other is the Peoria SCRABBLE players, which has around 20 members. I asked various people in these groups if they had ever attended one of the three organized SCRABBLE clubs in the area. Some of them replied that they attended once and never went back. I asked them why. Answers were, “Too intimidating.” “Cold atmosphere.” “Too stringent.” “Not fun.” “Grim.” “I didn’t feel welcome.” One man told me that he felt put off when a player made anagrams out of his name and tried to impress him with his superior word knowledge. Many people said they did not like to play with a clock and all of the pieces of paper they had to fill out, and they did not like to be reminded of every minor rule violation.

One might think that these casual players are poor players. Actually, many of them are very good, and most of them play quickly. I recently saw a man rattle off four bingos in one game. I saw a woman make a triple-triple. Some play SCRABBLE online. The main difference between these casual clubs and organized clubs is that casual players like to socialize and have fun while playing —meaning that they don’t fret over all of the rules. They abide by an open pairing system. There are no rigid time schedules. (Some even like to shout out “bingo” when they make one, and they are usually applauded.) Some like to play three or four to a board. I have never heard a casual player tell the other players to shush up because they were getting too loud. I have yet to hear two players quarrel over a rule dispute.

I believe that the main problem with organized clubs is that each session is run like a mini tournament. Some clubs even play for money, which makes it all that much more serious. Of course, many players like this method. But I venture to say that the majority of casual players don’t. Even so, I know that a few of these casual players want to play with a clock. Some want to play in tournaments. I’m teaching one excellent player the more stringent rules and how to track tiles. I
believe that many of them would fare well in an organized club—they simply have to be drawn into the fold, so to speak.

My advice to organized clubs is to lighten up a little—that's if they want to recruit these casual players. I also advise that directors and players in organized clubs check out their local SCRABBLE casual meetup groups by checking out the following website: www.scrabble.meetup.com. It is stated on this website that they have over 17,000 members worldwide. Talk to people there. Make friends. Get their feedback. Consider running a tournament strictly among these casual players to get them used to playing with a clock and tournament rules. I have a gut feeling that with 70 million “baby boomers” on the verge on the retirement, many of them are going to take up SCRABBLE as a hobby. Club and tournament attendance could indeed boom if temperate guidelines were instituted and followed.

What do you think?

Harry Decker
El Mirage, Arizona

Corny--

Thanx for another terrific issue! I want to thank you especially for your coverage of my Geezer Award presentation, and the reasons for its existence. And I'd love to see a match between Mack Meller and Suhas Rao.

One slightly negative note. The article noting the plays of QUIXOTRY and CAZIQUES seems to state that the latter is only good in Collins. I think you should’ve made it clear that it's good in the OWL, too, even if the article didn't say that.

Can't give you enough kudos for your work with this newsletter!

Stu Goldman
The Fingertips of Duncan Dorfman

By Meg Wolitzer

Reviewed by Cornelia Guest

Each spring approximately 200 middle-schoolers from across North America meet at the National School SCRAZZBLE® Championship—and for several years one of those players was the son of best-selling novelist Meg Wolitzer. In *The Fingertips of Duncan Dorfman*, Wolitzer, a tournament player herself, brings three very different twelve-year-olds to a fictional Youth Scrabble Tournament (YST) in Florida to vie with their partners for the top prize. In the process, the three become friends, solve several mysteries, and come to terms with their personal pressures and challenges.

Duncan Dorfman has moved to a new town in Pennsylvania, where he lives with his great-aunt and working single mother. At his new school, Duncan is ostracized, teased, and given the unkind nickname “Lunch Meat.” To gain acceptance, he shares that he has a magic power: He can “see” words and pictures with his fingertips. Suddenly he is the partner of choice for Carl Slater, an unpleasant bully who is hoping to win the upcoming Youth Scrabble Tournament.

April Blunt, from Oregon, is a dedicated SCRABBLE player who practices voraciously with her best friend, Lucy. The two make flashcards, study word lists, and challenge each other with anagrams. However, April’s sports-obsessed family has little respect for her skills. She hopes that by winning the YST she may finally impress them. April is also trying to find a boy she met while vacationing three years ago who liked her—and SCRABBLE—and she’s hoping he might be at the YST.

Nate Saviano, a New Yorker, is homeschooled by a father who lost the YST in the finals when he was a boy. Nate’s father is hoping to vindicate his loss those many years back through a win by Nate—who is good at SCRABBLE, but prefers skateboarding. As his father drills him with word lists for hours on end, Nate longs for a normal, SCRABBLE-free life.

When Duncan, April, and Nate meet at the Youth Scrabble Tournament, they face questions similar to those of many young competitors: Do I go easy on a weak team? How do I handle parental pressure to win? What will I do to win? In Duncan’s case, he finds himself in the difficult predicament of having a magic power that gives him an advantage—but an unfair one.

How the three Scrabblers resolve their problems is just part of the joy of this excellent book for young adults. Wolitzer includes SCRABBLE lists (the twos, SATINE-stem words, vowel dumps), anagrams, and mnemonics that illustrate the pleasures of the game. As the characters look for winning plays, the reader gets a lesson in SCRABBLE, too. In this brilliantly observed and humorous novel, Meg Wolitzer shows keen insight into the minds of both adolescents and SCRABBLE players, offering a story that will capture the imagination of all readers.

*The Fingertips of Duncan Dorfman* will be available September 20th at Amazon.com.

She has taught creative writing at the University of Iowa’s Writers' Workshop and Skidmore College and has written several Hollywood screenplays, most of which are unproduced. Two films have been based on her work: *This is My Life*, scripted and directed by Nora Ephron, and the 2006 TV movie *Surrender, Dorothy*, starring Diane Keaton and directed by Charles McDougall.

Meg and her sons, Charlie and Gabriel Panek, all enjoy SCRABBLE and have played in tournaments. Charlie competed at the 2007-2009 National School SCRABBLE Championships on the Dalton Team; the team won the 2008 Northeast School SCRABBLE Regionals and the 2009 Brooklyn (NY) School SCRABBLE Championship.

---

**TLW:** How familiar with the School SCRABBLE® world were you when you started writing *The Fingertips of Duncan Dorfman*?

**MW:** I had been to the School Nationals twice with my younger son, and I was really struck by what a lively and wonderful experience it was.

**TLW:** Your description of the kids going to Nationals covers a wide range, from kids in matching T-shirts there for fun to serious young players who have studied hard to win. Did you find similar kids at the Nationals your son attended? (The Evangelical Scrabblers from Butterman, Georgia, sound very similar to some teams I’ve seen at the NSSC!)

**MW:** I know there was a team at the tournament from an evangelical school, but I knew nothing more about them than that. I like making up characters wholecloth, and what struck me at the time was how the kids playing in the Nationals were from very different backgrounds, and how they all came together over this terrific game. I basically quietly observed the scene over the course of the weekend, hoping to get some of the details right about the matching T-shirts and so forth, but as for the characters themselves, they all came from me.

**TLW:** In Judith Thurman’s article in *The New Yorker*, she mentioned Charlie is a third-generation Scrabbler [Meg’s mother is the novelist Hilma Wolitzer]. Do you play as a family?

**MW:** We do sometimes play as a family. In fact this weekend we are going to my parents’ house, and I imagine that there will be an intense round or two. Some of the happiest memories in my
INTERVIEW WITH MEG WOLITZER

childhood are about playing SCRABBLE. My mother and I played often, even though back then we didn't know our 2's. But because she is a writer, and was always good at the NY Times crossword puzzle, words were very much in the air.

TLW: The device of Duncan's magic fingertips adds a very special element to the book, bringing into play ethical decisions kids must make when playing Scrabble. What gave you that idea? Have you ever suspected cheating at a School SCRABBLE tournament?

MW: I have never suspected cheating, no! In fact it would never have occurred to me. I think the kids there are very proud of their real abilities, and value honesty. But from a novelist's standpoint, cheating is pretty interesting. Kids' books are filled with ethical dilemmas. I even remember Charlotte's Web as having a complicated emotional thrust. The magical element in this book is, I hope, lightly done; I thought it would be fun to give my main character a fantastical skill that brings him accidentally into SCRABBLE. And then, of course, he falls in love with the game, because who wouldn't?

TLW: Some of the games in the book describe rather obscure words: GARDYLOO, ARTELS, ACYLS. Have you ever played any of those words?

MW: I believe I have played ACYLS. If I had played GARDYLOO, boy, I would remember that...

TLW: I loved that the book included anagram lists, a list of vowel dumps, Q-without-U words, the twos, mnemonics, the SATINE stem words, and puzzles (the anagram of ROAST MULES was my favorite!) Do you think your book may increase interest in School SCRABBLE among kids and educators?

MW: I really hope so. It's such a terrific world, and I'd love it if more kids knew about it, because I think they would like it too.

TWL: What I found particularly imaginative was that you managed to weave anagramming into the plot fabric. These kids use their anagramming skills to become super-sleuths. In a recent news story, it's been suggested that SCRABBLE players may be smarter than most people. Do you think SCRABBLE helps make kids smarter--or that smart kids just gravitate toward the game?

MW: This is a hard one to answer. The "use or or lose it" argument is quite convincing about our brains, our intelligences, our memories. I think you have to like words in order to like SCRABBLE--you have to find them strange and interesting. SCRABBLE exposes you to lots of odd new words, and I remember once my son Charlie wrote a short story for school in which he used the word SMAZE (a combination of smog and haze) and he was quite pleased to throw it in there. Yes, smart kids like the game, but I imagine that the game also gives them a lot in return.

TWL: When did you get the idea of writing a book about School SCRABBLE?

MW: It sort of percolated inside me for a while after I had spent the weekend at the Nationals in Providence, Rhode Island. I was delighted by how friendly it was--how great the kids seemed, and the parents too. It didn't have the tension of, say, a chess tournament, where parents huddle tensely with their kids after games, looking to see what went wrong.

TWL: The book gives a great sense of what it's like to play at Nationals--partners scribbling questions to each other, looking for a play through tiles on the board, facing a rack of UUUVVII, the
frustration of having a homeless bingo. Once you knew you were writing the book, was it difficult to both observe games for your research and be there as a coach and parent?

MW: I never really think to myself, "Oh, now I'm doing research." It sort of happens naturally, and only later do I realize, "Oh, that might be a nice detail to go into the book." As a fiction writer, I have a looser relationship to fact than a non-fiction writer would have when covering the same subject. When I've watched games during the writing the book, I've tried to let myself get involved in the experience of watching and taking in the moment, rather than thinking that it's research.

TWL: I liked the fact that the book was describing a fictional Youth Scrabble Championship, which had been held for years, rather than the actual NSSC. What prompted you to invent this world--complete with a word program called SYZYGY--and in what ways is it different from the NSSC?

MW: I imagined it as a kind of parallel universe to the real one. This way, I could take a lot more liberties (I hope) without people writing in to correct me. The liberties make it fiction, and allow me to go farther afield and explore any ideas that occur to me along the way.

TLW: Is there a movie version of The Fingertips of Duncan Dorfman in the works?

MW: Not yet.... Maybe after its official publication date.

TLW: Any thoughts about a cast?

MW: It would be fun to put in some real-life SCRABBLE players in cameos. Jimmy Kimmel, that means you! Kimmel could play Larry, the father of Nate Saviano. He's a guy who lost the SCRABBLE School Nationals 26 years earlier, and never got over it, so he's now living through his son, hoping Nate can avenge his loss.

TWL: Do you have another book coming out soon?

MW: I am signed up to write another middle-grade book, and two more so-called "adult" novels. My novel The Uncoupling came out in the spring.

TLW: What prompted you to write a young-adult novel after so many adult novels?

MW: Raising two sons meant there were a lot of kids' books in the house, and I always loved to read to my sons, so it was a natural fit.

TLW: Has your perspective on SCRABBLE® changed since writing The Fingertips of Duncan Dorfman?

MW: My love of the game has stayed as strong as ever, though I seem to be stuck at a certain level, skill-wise. If I wasn't writing so much, maybe I'd have time to study...

TLW: Thanks so much, Meg. Good luck with The Fingertips of Duncan Dorfman!

The Fingertips of Duncan Dorfman and Meg's other books are available at Amazon.com. To learn more about Meg Wolitzer, visit her website, www.megwolitzer.com.
NASPA-Collins SCRABBLE® in North America

By Nick Ball

On the rise

From just one or two tournaments per year through the 2000s, to 16 in 2010, and now 12 as of mid-June 2011 [the date this article was completed], Collins SCRABBLE® play in North America is taking off. While the scene is still small and many Collins tournaments remain single divisions of just a few players, there is a definite presence that has become established and is unlikely to recede.

A major factor in the rise in tournaments is the decision by NASPA to rate Collins games from 2010 onwards, under the NASPA SOWPODS rating system. While WESPA has rated North American Collins games for several years, the NASPA decision helped to encourage a small but critical mass of interest that made it worthwhile for directors to establish Collins divisions. For directors, the extra work involved is minimal. The main requirement is that the division contains at least four people, whether or not WESPA ratings will also be sought. The division should also use a challenge rule in line with WESPA tournaments (e.g. 5 or 10 points per word for unsuccessful challenge). [Ref. http://www.scrabbleplayers.org/w/Directing_SOWPODS_tournaments]

Many people have put in a lot of hard work to help establish the scene. In particular, NASPA co-president John Chew works tirelessly on a huge number of different things to do with the game, and this extends to Collins. For example, he maintains the NASPA SOWPODS rating system and assists tournament directors interested in rating Collins tournaments/divisions. Sam Kantimathi likewise never tires of promoting the game. He attends many Collins divisions and has provided much help and encouragement, such as ordering the Collins word list for players here, since it is not available in bookstores.

NASPA’s other co-president and founder, Chris Cree, established and organized the World Players Championship in Dallas, TX, in 2008 and 2010, and this event has been well attended by many top international players. Travis Chaney established the West Coast World Championship Wordlist Challenge (WCWCWC) in Ashland, OR, in 2009, and this remains one of the largest Collins events. And editor of The Last Word newsletter, Cornelia Guest, has published several articles on Collins.

Other Collins-related contributions from North Americans include:
• John O’Laughlin and Jason Katz-Brown incorporating Collins into Quackle
• Michael Thelen adding Collins to to Zyzzyva
• Chris Lipe’s 26-part posting to cgp and The Last Word [June] on the Collins three-letter words
• the work of the directors of all the Collins divisions so far
• the many committee members of NASPA and WESPA, and so on.

Apologies to any not mentioned who should have been! My own small contribution has been to edit the NASPA Wiki pages on Collins in North America [http://www.scrabbleplayers.org/w/SOWPODS]. These are designed for North American players familiar with the game using the OWL2 lexicon but who may be interesting in trying Collins, or just finding out more about it. In particular, there is a list of Collins tournaments [http://www.scrabbleplayers.org/w/CSW_Tournaments] and two “cheat sheets” [http://www.scrabbleplayers.org/wiki/images/7/7c/Collins_cheat_sheet.pdf; and http://www.scrabbleplayers.org/wiki/images/d/db/Collins_cheat_sheet_part_2.pdf], designed to introduce the most useful Collins words in the same way as the NSA’s “Important Words to Raise Your Score” sheet. [The Last Word also publishes a Collins-only “Cheat Sheet” in “SCRABBLE® Resources.”]
Since there have already been 12 tournaments this year, I won't attempt to provide a detailed review, but briefly summarize each one. The results are also given in the table below.

The 2011 rated Collins year began in February in Boston, MA, over the weekend of Feb 5–6. Kate and Tim Fukawa-Connelly were the organizers. Brian Bowman went 9–3, to beat out 1995 World Champion David Boys, Richard Buck, Bradley Whitmarsh, and Sam Kantimathi. Prasanth Seetharam (rated 1307) went 5–7 to gain 138 ratings points. Kate's blog postings on the event featured some of the fun Collins-only words played.

At the Phoenix, AZ event, February 19–21, Arizona player Nathan Benedict beat Mark Kenas and Marty Gabriel by four games to go 19–2. Nathan is one of the highest-rated Collins players, moving up to 2075 after this event.

In Charlotte, NC, also Feb 19–21, Matthew Bernardina, despite being the lowest seed at 1611, won 15–6–1, with one tie, to beat out Sam Kantimathi and Steve Polatnick. He gained 249 points in a field with an average rating 1787.

In Bethesda, MD, Mar 19–20, in a tournament organized by Ted Gest, longtime Collins expert and Quackle co-author John O'Laughlin won 11–3, beating Richard Buck and another longtime Collins player, Bob Linn. The 8th-placed Puneet Sharma is one player enjoying the increase in Collins tournaments. Like me, he experienced great difficulty “unlearning” words to play OWL2 since coming to America from the WESPA world.

Thanks to the bold initiative and work of Travis Chaney, the WCWCWC has become one of the largest Collins events in North America since its inception in spring 2009. This year it was held in the historic Ashland Spring Hotel in downtown Ashland, OR, from Mar 25 to 27. Dave Wiegand, the 2005 and 2009 National Champion, went 17–3 to beat Nathan Benedict and John Chew and go over 2000 in all three ratings systems (NASPA, NASPA/SOWPODS and WESPA). The road to victory included the word BEJEEZUS against myself, for 142 points.

The Boston Area Tournament (BAT), currently organized by Sherrie Saint John and John Chew, has been running each year since the early 1980s. Although the main event did not offer Collins, the April 10 “Late Bird” did — and uniquely among tournaments described here, it had two divisions. In Division 1, John O'Laughlin won again, beating Marty Gabriel and Jason Keller, and in Division 2, Chris Lipe beat Puneet Sharma and Prashanth Seetharam. One unlucky player in Division 2 went 0–6, which is unusual — most Collins players, even “newbies” just trying it out against a much stronger field, usually manage to win a game or two.

In Gatlinburg, TN, Apr 22–24, organized by Ryan Fischer: Kelly McKenzie went 12–8 to beat Brian Bowman (also 12–8) and Bob Linn.

In Portsmouth, NH, May 14–15, again run by Kate and Tim Fukawa-Connelly: John O'Laughlin won again with 9–3, beating world #9 David Eldar from Australia, and Chris Lipe. John thus raised his rating to 1981.

The Teeny Tiny Tucson series on May 21 was really tiny Collins-wise, with the bare minimum of four players. But it was strong on quality, with an average rating of 1833. Laurie Cohen beat Sam Kantimathi, Nathan Benedict and Jim Lamerand.

In Montreal, QC, May 28–29, David Boys beat John O'Laughlin and 2005 World Champion Adam
Logan, going 10–4 to their 8–5–1 and 7–6–1. Andrew Golding is another Collins regular and, despite being lower-rated at 1615, won a couple of games against opponents of average rating 1943.

The Arden Cup is a major tournament held over Memorial Day weekend, May 28–30, in Skokie, IL, north of Chicago. After hosting the WSC qualifier in 2009, this year it ran a Collins division in its own right for the first time. Sam Kantimathi saw off all comers to win 16–4 and gain 99 ratings points. Brian Cappelletto, the 2001 World Champion, also made a return to the international lexicon, placing second at 14–6, and expert Collins regular Mark Kenas was third.

The North American SCRABBLE Tour (NAST) final in Revere, MA, held a one-day Collins event on the Sunday after the main event on June 5, both directed by Sherrie Saint John. Bradley Whitmarsh won on 5–1, with Richard Buck, Carl Durdan and Mark Kenas all on 3–3.

Other venues have offered to hold Collins divisions if there was sufficient interest, but have so far fallen short. These include Philadelphia, PA; Kelowna, BC; Wilmington, DE; and Hancock, MA. Thus, the majority of offered Collins venues have attracted enough players, but some haven't.

At the time of writing (June 17, 2011), more than 30 further tournaments or divisions are scheduled (or offered) for the remainder of the year, including Austin, TX; Albany, NY; Bethesda, MD (again); Akron, OH; Victoria, BC; Old Greenwich, CT; the “Lunch Bird” at the Nationals in Dallas, TX in August; Utica, NY; Dover, DE; Seattle, WA; Stamford, CT; and several in Austin, Philadelphia and Toronto. [Note: Austin, Albany, Akron, Old Greenwich, and Utica have been held already.]

Toronto is promoting its International Open in September. With a minimum first prize of $3000, organizers expect to attract many top players.

Tournament notices are also beginning to appear for 2012. In particular, Sam Kantimathi is organizing a large event in Las Vegas in February. And we have been getting excited about Michael Tang's “Causeway” event in Vancouver, BC planned for May. [Editor: Shortly after this was written, Michael announced that his planned Causeway circuit — with big-money events held three months apart, at Melbourne, Vancouver, Manchester and Johor Bahru — would not go ahead. Watch out for more detailed information in these news pages.]

The future

Given the increasing number of tournaments, the next year will be a very interesting one for Collins play in North America. The prize money on offer for the Causeway event could have encouraged several top North American players to try the lexicon.

It is notable that a significant fraction of North America's top-rated players (at June 16, 6 of the top 10 and 11 of the top 25) are already regular Collins players. If a few dozen more were to switch, it is plausible that the Collins division at many tournaments would become the de facto Division 1 — as happened in Britain back in the late 1990s when SOWPODS (as it was then) became rated.

It remains to be seen how much Collins will percolate through the North American scene. In the author's (biased) opinion, the essential problem is that players are happy as they are, and have no desire to try to play two lexicons, even if they are interested in principle.

And who can blame them? It was similar in Britain in the 1990s: Most people were against switching, and the change was driven from the top.
Whether or not this will happen here is not clear. Many players are also likely intimidated by the high average ratings of the Collins divisions. As the results tables show, several lower-rated players are trying out the lexicon, but they remain in the minority. So far, there has been insufficient attendance at most Collins tournaments to make two divisions viable.

For the lexicon itself, the current messages coming from the dictionary committees are also, unfortunately, discouraging. The NASPA committee has announced that the OWL3 is currently scheduled for publication in 2013. Given that the world will be switching to CSW12 on Jan 1, 2012, such a publication would outdate the CSW12 list after just one year. That would leave an incomplete incorporation of the North American list for the first time since the international lexicon was first devised at the inaugural World Championships in 1991. It could also provide a significant disincentive to switching. Hopefully, this situation will be avoided.

Despite this uncertainty, these are exciting times for North American players interested in the international lexicon. For the first time, a viable scene exists — and although it remains to be seen how quickly it will grow, a core of regular Collins attendees frequents the tournaments and many more have tried out the game.

### Table of results

This table gives 2011 Collins tournament results up to June 17, 2011. For full details of the results, and more recent tournaments, see Cross-Tables [http://www.cross-tables.com], or the NASPA results pages [http://www.scrabbleplayers.org/w/Tournament_results]. On Cross-Tables, results for Collins tournaments or divisions are given in italics.

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[a] Low, high, and average ratings of the players at the tournament, to give an idea of the playing strength. All ratings shown are NASPA SOWPODS.
[b] Tournament organizer/contact/director, as listed on the NASPA tournament calendar, [http://www.scrabbleplayers.org/tourneys/listings.html](http://www.scrabbleplayers.org/tourneys/listings.html).

**Nick Ball** is the ultimate trans-Atlantic competitor. He started playing SCRABBLE at school in the UK and played his first rated tournament in 1995. He moved to North America in 2004 to take up a postdoctoral position in astronomy, and is currently living and working in Victoria, Canada. Nick represented England at the World SCRABBLE Championship in 2005 and the US in 2009. And he has achieved peak ratings of 198 in the UK, 1687 in North America TWL, 1895 in North America Collins and 1997 in WESPA.

June 2011
The Wordsmith

Mix me a Collins

By Chris Sinacola

The road to my first Collins SCRABBLE® game actually began five or six years ago during a game with Seth Lipkin at one of those Italian chain restaurants where, if you close your eyes for a moment and the cook happens to be on his or her game that day, you might be fooled into thinking you are in Rome.

We were chit-chatting and slapping down the tiles – he leading, as is often the case – when I found what I thought was a lovely bingo, and played ASKARIS#.

Seth wasted very little time in challenging it off the board. I was surprised, and said something like:

“Really? What’s wrong with an askari? It’s a hired gun in an African expedition! You know, Stanley and Livingstone? The search for Nile and all that?”

The lesson – one repeatedly applied in the course of the last five years – is always to check the dictionary, and be sure sure you’re checking the right dictionary. Sometimes, it isn’t what you don’t know that will hurt you, but what you know that just isn’t so.

I told this story frequently enough so that another SCRABBLE friend and frequent opponent, John Cheras, cleverly used it as a reason that I ought to try playing Collins SCRABBLE.

It would be too much to say John persuaded me. It’s a personal choice, he notes, meaning, I think, that no one ought to be held responsible for one’s taking on the Collins dictionary except those themselves who are brave or foolhardy enough to do so on their own initiative.

Of course, John did slyly note that my very favorite mineral, CHRYSOCOLLA# - and I trust you see why - is another example of a word that is acceptable in Collins, but not in OWL2 play.

That did it. Askaris can fight their own battles, but who if not me would speak for my beloved “hydrous silicate of copper, occurring massive, of a blue or greenish-blue color”?

And so, on a recent Tuesday evening at our modest but growing Worcester SCRABBLE club, John and I squared off in my first Collins game.

For those who don’t know, Collins is the name for what used to be – and in some quarters still is – called SOWPODS. It is based on the Collins English Dictionary, first published in 1979. I know the story is more complicated, but the quickest way to describe Collins is “Everything that’s good in OWL2, plus a whole lot more.”

It’s that “whole lot more” that has engendered such earnest, sometime heated, debates. There are those, including me for most of the last five years, who hold that the North American English we have grown up with is largely (if imperfectly) adequate for the purposes of SCRABBLE.
Others, like John, point out that before there were any standardized lexicons for SCRABBLE, the game was played with reference to whatever dictionary a family happened to own – an unabridged Funk & Wagnalls in his case. In this view, the advent of the OSPD and the OWL acted to limit the numbers of words that one could play. I see his point. I began playing the game at 9 or 10, and for years the quiet, post-dinner hours of our holiday gatherings were enhanced by SCRABBLE, even as the harmony among relatives was sometimes menaced by the absence of a standard lexicon, leading to interminable “discussions” on which words and plurals should be acceptable and which not.

This is not the place to settle the great lexicon debate, and I rather doubt a matter of such subjectivity can ever be settled.

For my own part, I have after considerable reflection decided that the absurdities and inconsistencies of the OWL2 are sufficient to undermine my previous exclusive loyalty to it. I admit, for example, that a lifelong New Englander like me in search of a SCRABBLE lexicon that is “true” to his native region would have no business playing ZAIRE or KWACHA, both coins of Africa that OWL2 allows, and should be rightly outraged at being prevented from playing the lovely MOONCUSSER*, a term for smugglers and pirates who cursed nights during which the full moon threatened to expose their nefarious deeds along the rocky New England coast.

That said, I have already noticed that the Collins lexicon is also far from what the ultimate lexicographer would consider to be complete. UNCINATE and RUNCINATE, to cite but one example, are acceptable in both OWL2 and Collins, UNCINATED# in Collins alone, and RUNCINATED* in neither – despite finding a place in the Oxford English Dictionary.

Of greater practical import, of course, is the fact that the Collins lexicon offers SCRABBLE players a good number of additional words to play, from 23 additional two-letter words to 277 threes, 8,880 sevens and so forth.

Knowing a few of these proved to be somewhat useful in my debut Collins game, in the course of which John played OO#, NY#, TE#, GI# and DI#. I was happy to recognize all as acceptable words and did not issue any challenges.

I was all excited to play TIC/CHA# for 19, and knew CHA# means tea. Unfortunately, John’s DI# was part of playing DOPE to a TWS for 44 points. Such stuff helped him prevail by 439-352.

Describing all this to several non-SCRABBLE friends drew a familiar response. They suggested that a lexicon that allows GI, ZO, CAA and so much more might just as well allow any combination of letters. That, I was told, seems to be the path down which Collins is leading us.

Well, not really. In fact, not even close.

While, as noted earlier, my purpose here is not to settle the debate as to which lexicon is “better” or to be preferred for tournament play, I can and will quantify how many additional words Collins puts at a SCRABBLE player’s disposal, and I’ll conclude with a few thoughts on the implications of such an expanded list.
The twos, as we’ve seen, add just 23 words to the 101 familiar to OWL2 players. A concerted effort of a few hours or days should suffice to master these, which are essential if one is to hook bingos in Collins play.

The threes add 277 words to OWL2, a 27.3 percent increase, to 1,292 words. There are many players who struggle to master the threes, and even intermediate and expert players occasionally slip up on them. Still, this is hardly the end of the world.

It is with the fours that we begin to see a serious study challenge. OWL2’s 4,030 words expand by a whopping 35.3 percent, to 5,454. That’s 1,424 more words to learn. As someone who has more-or-less mastered the fours, let me say I’m not exactly relishing the prospect of tackling more.

The fives offer a similar tale, only worse. OWL2’s 8,938 fives grow to 12,478, a nearly 40 percent increase!

But let us pause to consider my non-SCRABBLE-playing friend’s casual suggestion that any combination of letters might some day be acceptable.

Among two-letter words, the 101 acceptable in OWL2 play are just 14.9 percent of all combinations. HW, MN, UQ, WK and 571 others are not good now in OWL2 play, and I think fewer than the 23 permitted in Collins are likely ever to migrate into an OWL3 or later edition, although a few linguistic surprises cannot be ruled out as English develops.

Even adding the Collins-only twos brings us to a mere 18.3 percent of the 676 possible two-letter combinations.

For three-letter words, we have 26x26x26, or 17,576 possible combinations. OWL2 permits just 5.8 percent. And Collins only 7.4 percent.

For four letters and more the math becomes somewhat daunting, as one must consider that the existence of only two blanks in the game, and the fact that there is but one or two of certain tiles, means that one cannot simply take 26 to the nth power to determine how many possible combinations there are to consider.

There are, in short, somewhat fewer than 456,976 possible fours, probably many fewer than 11.8 million fives, 308 million sixes and so forth.

However, that bit of vigorish makes no difference at all to the point at hand. Even for the fours, OWL2 permits less than 1 percent of possible combinations, and Collins just over 1 percent.

Once we consider words of five letters, either lexicon accepts well under 1 percent of the letter strings one could make. And for longer words, the percentages became vanishingly small.

Having established, then, that language does not merely spit out random strings of letters for purposes of making SCRABBLE more difficult than it already is, let’s return to the main argument – how many new words, and particularly, how many new bingos do we have to think about if we plunge into the world of Collins?
Well, sixes are useful if you can pluralize them, of course, and Collins adds 6,369 to the OWL2 collection of 15,788, for a total of 22,157. This is a greater than 40 percent increase, the largest such increase for any length of word. With the sevens, Collins adds more words in absolute terms, 8,880, but that is “only” a 37 percent increase over OWL2.

Still, that’s a daunting prospect.

Having spent arguably (just ask my wife) far too many hours in the last five years studying seven-letter strings, and having systematically absorbed perhaps 8,000 such combinations, I was a bit shocked to see the finish line move from 24,029 words to 32,909. Of course, that does include ASKARIS#, so it’s really only 32,908, right?

Every dedicated SCRABBLE player eventually learn that sevens are nice, but eights are also key to success, so I feel compelled to add that OWL2’s 29,766 eights grow under the tender mercies of Collins to a list of 40,161 words.

Since the vast majority of the words played in SCRABBLE are from two to eight letters in length, the bottom line is this: OWL2 has 83,667 words of eight letters or fewer. Collins has 114,575 such words. That’s an overall increase of 30,908 words, or very close to 37 percent more.

For simplicity’s sake, if you knock out plurals and root words and such, you can say that tackling the Collins game is about equivalent to learning one-third more words than OWL2 demands. That’s probably the easiest way to explain it at the Sunday dinner table, anyhow.

What conclusions can we draw from all this?

It’s tempting to conclude that knowledge of Collins words will confer a significant edge to any player with strong memory and a powerful vocabulary. But then, any player wading into the deep end of that pool is already blessed with both. It is perhaps more accurate to suggest that players with what I might call “persuasive linguistic imaginations” are at an advantage when playing Collins, since a bit of educated guesswork may either result in your opponent accepting a word that is not in fact a word, or challenging one that you only thought might be good, and proves to be so – which, in Collins play, adds 5 points to one’s score.

A second point, at least from my point of view, is that those who enjoy reading widely are less apt to be disappointed with Collins than with OWL2. It is simply more likely that an unusual or “new” word will be acceptable. To cite a small example, George Orwell’s fine novel Burmese Days, which I read recently, is full of references to the DA#, a heavy Burmese knife. I am delighted that it is included in Collins, and imagine that it’s deadly in the hands of a skilled ASKARI#.

A third and perhaps obvious implication is the danger that Collins might sow confusion in the mind of experienced SCRABBLE players. I’m not sure it’s much of a danger.

The Word Freak generation that began playing tournament SCRABBLE after the publication of Stefan Fatsis’ fine book of that title in 2001, has enjoyed a few advantages. Unlike some older players, they have had relatively little to unlearn as dictionaries have been revised, and the arrival of
the OWL2 in March 2006 was nearly perfect timing for many, like myself, who began to take the
game seriously at about that time.

*Word Freak* SCRABBLE players have had roughly five years to learn the game, study anagrams,
and grow familiar with the common hooks and extensions. AEILNOR is by now so familiar as
AILERON/ALIENOR that discovering Collins adds a third word, ALERION#, -S, a heraldic term for
an eagle displayed without feet or beak, is not likely to confuse me. It’s just kind of interesting, and
surely useful.

It is, I hasten to add, a source of greater anxiety to see that AEINORT, which is a high-probability but
barren rack in OWL2, produces both NOTAIRE# and OTARINE# in Collins. Will I remember those?
If I do, will it make the game too easy, or simply more interesting, more open to history, other
cultures, and the richness of the world’s many other languages?

I cannot yet say. But in looking to see what company CHRYSOCOLLA# keeps among the 11-letter
Collins words, I did come across some delights. There’s ASSOCIATORY#, which I would have
thought good in OWL2, but then who studies 11-letter words? (Only Quackle, I think, which
moments ago played (OVI)PARITIES on me!) There’s WATCHSTRAPS#, which seems like it wants
to be two words, but it’s a close call and I can go with Collins’ verdict that it is one. And there is the
delightful PATAPHYSICS#, which is a parody word for a supposed French philosophical school for
the study of what lies beyond metaphysics.

My final thought, then, is that I’m surely never going to get to the end of the Collins dictionary. But
that is no reason not to tackle Collins at some level. After all, by the time I shall have achieved
anything like a practical mastery of even the OWL2, it would long since have become the OWL3 or
OWL4!

The point, in my eyes, is that SCRABBLE is a game about language and life and learning, a journey
meant to be enjoyed for the riches it offers. Winning and losing are the least of it. Whatever lexicon
you use, try to bear that in mind.

*Chris Sinacola is director of NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #600 in Worcester, Massachusetts. He
promises to TRIE# Collins play with any of his friends who are so inclined.*
Two significant things were identical about the 2010 and 2011 National SCRABBLE® Championships: They both were held at the same hotel in suburban Dallas, and they both were won by Nigel Richards of Malaysia.

This year’s event, which concluded August 10, was different in two important ways: There were 80 fewer players, meaning only 4 divisions instead of 5, and the championship race was much tighter. Five Division 1 players entered the final round with 21-9 records, meaning that the winner would prevail on spread points. Richards won by 346 points over Kenji Matsumoto of Hawaii.

Brian Bowman of Kentucky also had a 22-9 final record, with 504 fewer points than Richards. Two players, Jim Kramer of Minnesota and Jesse Day of California, trailed with 21-10 records. In the 2010 contest, Richards far outpaced his competitors, ending up with a 25-6 record. The two closest players both finished 21-10.

The event had the same format as in recent years: 28 games spread evenly over the first four days, and a three-game final day.
Richards sealed his tournament victory with a 576-339 win in the final round over Kramer, while Matsumoto was defeating Day, 405-321.

In Division 2, Richard Spence of Tucson prevailed with a 25-6 record; Matt Canik of Austin, TX, was second at 23-8. Spence and Canik split four games, with Canik winning by five points in Round 29 but Spence taking Round 30 over Canik, 448-343. In the third and fourth spots, both with 21-10 records, were Daniel Citron of Chicago and Alan Stern of California, who also served as the master of ceremonies at the beginning of each morning and afternoon’s play.

Division 3 winner Suhas Rao of North Carolina is only 12 years old. Rao compiled a 26-5 record with a high 3424-point spread. He clinched the win by beating Jason Randolph of San Antonio, TX, 390-279 in Round 29. Rao beat Randolph, who finished 23-8, in two of three encounters in Dallas. Trailing at 21-10 were Mike Lean of Washington, D.C. and Doug Lundquist of Chicago. Unfortunately, Rao’s victory was marred by allegations of irregularities that were unresolved at presstime by the tournament’s sponsor, the North American SCRABBLE® Players Association (NASPA).

In Division 4, Randy Forrester of Santa Fe, NM, finished first at 21.5-9.5 over Joyce Stock of Rocky River, Ohio, 21-10. Elizabeth Davis of Dayton was third at 20-11. Forrester won only in the last round by beating Stock, 397 to 335. Stock told tournament reporter Sherrie Saint John, “We played four times. He won two and I won two. He just won the one that counted!”

Two smaller tournaments were held in conjunction with the national event. An 8-person early bird to allow play by tournament staff was won by Daniel Stock with a 4-0 record. Player Dan Horowitz of Delaware organized a “lunch bird” in which one rated game was played during the lunch hour each day. The three divisional winners were Steve Glass, 5-0, Bruce Shuman, 4-1, and Bryan Pepper, 4-1.

Full standings for all divisions can be seen at http://scrabbleplayers.org and http://cross-tables.com

Also at the tournament, the annual Rose Award, donated in memory of the late Rose Kreiswirth, was given to Katya Lezin of Charlotte, NC. Winning lifetime achievement awards for playing 5,000 tournament games were Siri Tillekeratne of Calgary, Alberta; Sam Kantimathi of Sacramento, CA, and Jan Cardia of Wilmington, DE. Annette Tedesco, who runs popular tournaments in Albany, Lake George, and Hancock, MA, was named NASPA’s Michael Wise Person of the Year.

Mary Rhoades of Dallas, who directed the two consecutive Dallas events, said she would step down and yield to a new director for next year’s National Championship, which will be held in Orlando, Florida, starting August 10.

Next summer, the Word Game Players Organization (WGPO) will hold its major annual event, the Word Cup, the week before, in Minneapolis.

The smaller crowd for this year’s Nationals, down from 407 to 327 players, was probably due to several factors, including poor economic conditions generally and the fact that some players did not want to visit notoriously hot Dallas for two summers in a row.
NASPA’s competition with WGPO had relatively little formal discussion in Dallas. During the annual town meeting, this year held on August 8, player Judith Ford of Florida gave an impassioned talk deploring the split between the two organizations and urging mediation, arbitration of “whatever needs to be done” to reunite the groups. “I implore Chris and John [NASPA leaders Cree and Chew] to do everything they can to heal this rift,” she said.

Ford was the only speaker to address the situation in any detail, and there was no formal response from the NASPA leadership. At the same meeting, NASPA membership chair Mad Palazzo of Canada said the organization had more than 2,300 active members.

As for future national tournaments, Cree vowed that three events would be held in each of six national regions during the next 18 years. He said that potential host cities had been identified, but he indicated that specific plans had not been made after next year’s Orlando event.

Among other items mentioned at the town meeting or a club/tournament directors’ meeting the previous evening:

• John Williams of the National Scrabble Association said that about 2,500 schools nationwide are sponsoring School Scrabble programs.

• Jim Pate of Alabama, chair of NASPA’s dictionary committee, said that a new edition of the Official Word List should be issued by 2014. The last edition was published in 2006.

• Mary Rhoades said that NASPA’s annual $30 fee for sanctioning local clubs had been eliminated.

• Cree, discussing NASPA finances generally, said that about $170,000 in net revenues had been amassed towards the organization’s goal of having a $250,000 “nest egg” in its first five years. (It now is about two years old.)

Minutes of the town meeting appear later in the Nationals coverage.

Editors Note: Profiles of Annette Tedesco, Person of the Year, and the winners of the NASPA Achievement Awards will appear in the October issue of The Last Word.
Nigel Richards: Division 1 Champion

By Cecilia Le

It was one of the most suspenseful National Championships ever, with five players in contention entering the final round. But in the end, the champion was the player most expected to win from the start: Nigel Richards, who reaffirmed his dominance in the SCRABBLE world with his third Nationals title.

But if he’s SCRABBLE’s best player today, Nigel is also its most indifferent. As he set off to eat his bag lunch while waiting for the prize ceremony, he said, “I feel the same way I did in the first round.” Then why does he come? “I enjoy the SCRABBLE.”

Nigel cut it closer than last time – a year ago in Dallas, he clinched the title before the last day of games began. This time, Joel Sherman won the first 14 games, finishing day two three games ahead of Nigel. By round 31, Jim Kramer, Kenji Matsumoto, Jesse Day, and Brian Bowman were in close pursuit, each trailing Nigel by mere hundreds of spread points and all mathematically alive. Nigel defeated Jim, a former champion himself, finishing 22-9, +1532. The 44-year-old New Zealander will play next in the Toronto International Open in September, then vie for a second World Championship title in Warsaw in October.

If he lacks the competitive fire, Nigel certainly demonstrates love for the elegance and creativity of the game. In one game against Scott Appel, Nigel, having challenged off Scott’s phony bingo, knew Scott’s rack of CNNORU?. With no place for Scott to play a seven-letter word, Nigel made a stunning one-tile play of IT to allow Scott a low-scoring bingo lane guaranteed to set up Nigel’s own rack of AANQT? along the triple lane. If Scott chose to play UNICORN, 11 different draws for Nigel would give him a 100-point bingo back. If Scott chose NOCTURN, Nigel held the tiles for a 72-point comeback of QANAT. Scott played UNICORN, Nigel drew an L and slapped down ALIQUANT.

In the annotated game 14 against Joel Sherman, Nigel forwent the highly conventional pre-endgame play of QI for 35, instead blocking Joel’s highest-scoring play of JUMP and, as it turned out, sticking himself with the Q.

“I couldn’t see any way to win [by playing QI],” Nigel said. “I was hoping a miracle would come out of the bag.” As it turns out, a Quackle simulation puts QI’s winning chances at 27 percent, with Nigel’s unorthodox play one of the next best at 17 percent. But Nigel wouldn’t have analyzed it – he prefers to leave each game behind, moving on to the next.

Nigel quickly admits that he’s willing to make a counterintuitive play for fun, even if it may not be best. “I sometimes open nine-timers just to see what my opponent will do, how much they’ll squirm,” he said cheerily.

Asked about any favorite plays of the tournament, Nigel offered that he had played HORTATORARY. Although he reports studying only one hour a day, Nigel has learned all the words up through 15 letters, although he studies 2-8, “the important ones,” more. Before the tournament, he reviewed his word lists in alphabetical order. Looking as though it were obvious, he said, “I don’t want to miss one.”

Cecilia Le is a researcher and writer at Jobs for the Future in Boston, where she promotes policies that enable more students underrepresented in higher education to earn a degree.
Richard Spence: Division 2 Champion
By Cheryl Melvin

Richard Spence, a 17-year-old high school senior from Tucson, AZ, wins first place in Division 2, is $3000 richer, and has a nice plaque to commemorate the occasion.

This was Richard’s second consecutive Nationals win: Last year he placed first in Division 4. This year he skipped Division 3 and played up as seed #30 in Division 2. He took control of the field in round 12 and maintained first place throughout the rest of the tourney, with a final record of 26-5, +2207. He was Gibsonized after round 30 and took a bye in the final round. As a result of his outstanding performance, his rating increased by 204 points to 1719, a new peak. He looks forward to playing Division 1 next year in Orlando.

Richard’s favorite play at Nationals was a 212-point 3x3play, SPA(E)TZLE, in round 13 against Matt Canik. This earned Richard a special prize for the high Z-word as well. His all-time most memorable play was when he was holding AINORTT and extended EXPO on the board for an 11-letter play. Can you find it? (Answer at end of article.)

Except for Nationals, Richard does not compete outside of the Tucson area due to his student commitments. However, that did not keep him this past year from having the highest win percentage of any player in North America: 82.7%. Richard placed first at every tournament he played in during the time between the 2010 Nationals and the 2011 Nationals. He accepted a certificate recognizing his impressive win percentage at this year’s awards ceremony.

Richard is a student at Sonoran Science Academy in Tucson. He has strong math skills and has competed in National Math Counts four times. He is especially proud of being one of only ten students in the country to be selected to compete in Who Wants to be a Mathematician in New Orleans, where he did well. He hopes to study engineering in college. In addition to SCRABBLE, Richard also enjoys ping pong and league bowling.

Richard credits his mother, Phyllis Spence, with teaching him the game of SCRABBLE at age 8, but now he wins about 90% of their games. Last year she traveled with Richard to Nationals and played in the same division. This year it was a father/son road trip to Dallas, while mom stayed home with Richard’s 14-year-old brother. Unlike mom, dad does not play competitively. Richard has once again made his parents very proud.

Answer: (EXPO)RTATION

Cheryl Melvin is the winner of the most games (499) played in the 2010/2011 SCRABBLE year.
Suhas Rao: Division 3 Champion

By Cornelia Guest

Perhaps the most astonishing story at Nationals was that of Suhas Rao, a 12-year-old rising 8th grader from Apex, North Carolina. Entering Division 3 with an 1109 rating, Suhas posted the tournament’s best record--26-5 +3424--to demolish the 71-player field. On the way to his first tournament victory, Suhas scored a remarkable eleven 500+ games, tying the record of the great international champion Ganesh Asirvatham. Suhas’s game average was 474, eclipsing Chris Cree’s 2007 record for highest average in a multi-game TWL tournament (471). Suhas was Gibsonized after game 29, and was given two byes for games 30 and 31. He emerged with a rating of 1636, making him one of the youngest players to reach the traditional “expert” mark of 1600.

Suhas began playing SCRABBLE as a 3rd grader. Sandra Wagner, who ran the SCRABBLE club at his elementary school, played a big role in introducing him to the world of School SCRABBLE. Suhas also learned a lot from David Klionsky, who hosts many tournaments in Durham for both School SCRABBLE and regular SCRABBLE players.

Suhas has been fortunate to be part of an outstanding middle-school SCRABBLE club started at the request of Adair Salgado, whose son Erik teamed with Andy Hoang to win the 2009 National School SCRABBLE Championship. Both Erik and Andy are good friends with Suhas and an inspiration to him. (Andy’s brother Kenny was Suhas’s partner at this year’s National School SCRABBLE Championship; they finished 8th, with a 5-2 +578 record.) Andy encouraged Suhas to enter this year’s Nationals, and Erik helped him manage his schoolwork after the tournament. Katya Lezin, another player with North Carolina School SCRABBLE ties, helped Suhas both before and during the tournament, handling his proxy check-in and offering words of support. Suhas’s father used three vacation days to be there with him at the tournament.

Suhas’s favorite game at the tournament was game 28 against Doug Lundquist., which he won 563-448. “The game had a wide-open board with lots of opportunities for playing high-scoring words.” The game’s combined score was 1011--the highest at the tournament for Division 3.

His favorite word at the tournament was CONIFERS. “From the moment I drew the tiles CFINORS I saw the word and was hoping there would be an open E so I could play it. As soon as my opponent played the word ELF I was thrilled.”

His highest scoring word at the tournament was the triple-triple REPAYING for 140 points.

Along with his games at school and at tournaments, Suhas enjoys playing SCRABBLE at home with his mom and his younger brother. His study tools include Zyzzyva and the Internet SCRABBLE Club (ISC).

Suhas loves playing SCRABBLE and hopes he can continue playing it for a long, long time....
Randy Forrester has been a happily settled resident of Santa Fe, New Mexico, for the last 20 years. As a child, Randy lived a nomadic lifestyle as his dad was in the military, so he is happy to have firmly planted roots in a city that he loves. My interview of Randy revealed a man with myriad interests and an overall zest for living. He was nothing short of inspirational, and he made me want to get out of my seat and start dancing--more on that later!

Randy’s earliest memories of playing SCRABBLE® were with his mom at the kitchen table. Randy then played with friends, but it wasn’t long before his skill at the game scared them off. The club and tournament scene beckoned to Randy about 26 years ago in Cincinnati, and he’s been a competitive SCRABBLE player ever since. While playing in only 2 to 3 tournaments annually, he is a regular at the Santa Fe SCRABBLE Club #542. Randy went 21.5-9.5 +746 at Nationals and said being the Division 4 winner was “a real honor.”

Randy works as the Grant Administrator for the New Mexico Historical Records Advisory Board. He also is co-chairman of the Santa Fe County Ethics Board and secretary/treasurer of the New Mexico Dance Coalition. Dance is major passion of Randy’s. A self-proclaimed “jock,” for many years, Randy developed severe hip problems in 1992 and was told to give up skiing and tennis. Determined to keep physically active, Randy turned to dancing.

Randy describes himself as “a better dancer than Scrabbler.” He has been studying dance for nearly 20 years: ballet, tango, swing, salsa, and more. In 2005 and 2007 he was the National Dance Champion in the Swing category at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in New Mexico. Randy also co-hosts a weekly public radio show, Gotta Dance!, which features guests from the world of dance and is chock full of “any music you can dance to” including hip hop, opera, rock and roll, country western, and more.

Cooking is another passion of Randy’s. He has won ribbons for his chocolate cake with chocolate dipped strawberries and for his cold celery and potato soup, and he took first place in the Red Chile category at the Santa Fe Chile Cook-Off. Randy also writes restaurant reviews, and he has published over 100 food-related articles in New Mexico Magazine and other publications.

It was a pleasure getting to know Randy Forrester. He is a shining example of the wonderfully diverse group of people that make up our SCRABBLE community. Congratulations on a stellar performance, Randy!
Jesse Day, a 23-year-old graduate student at UC-Berkeley in California, led Division 1 at Nationals in games 27-29. Starting the final day as the leader, Jesse lost his last two games to eventual NSC winner Nigel Richards (308-630) and runner-up Kenji Matsumoto (320-405) to finish 5th with a 21-10 +924 record. Jesse’s new rating--2005--is his all-time peak, and places him 9th of all North American players.

Eighteen days later, I have finally lost track of how long it has been since the last day of Nationals until checking a calendar. I spent the first week after Nationals in mild shock. I was leading the national championship yesterday with two games to go. That was yesterday morning. That was two mornings ago. That was three mornings ago. That was…a while ago.

I can’t say that I expected to do that well at Nationals. I suspect that most of you feel the same way (Eric Tran at least had the candor to tell me “Dude, I had no idea you were this good!”). I’d been having a pretty good year until then. I won a few tournaments and got my rating up to new heights after a disastrous Nationals in 2010. At the same time, I also did such things as winning the wooden spoon at our annual Bay Area shindig (given to the worst performer) and missed the Worlds team by a grand total of 2 rating points. I did nothing particularly extraordinary to prepare for Nationals, either. After a year and a half stretch in which I lived in China and played almost no SCRABBLE whatsoever, I’ve spent the last year indentured to my Zyzzyva cardbox, but not to an unreasonable extent. I had ambitious targets for how many words I would have studied by Nationals, which, inevitably, I fell well short of.

Once the games started, however, something seemed to click. I felt focused. Alert. Calm. Loose. I went 4-3 to start Day 1, but already I could tell I was in some kind of a good zone. Somehow, that feeling sustained itself at every step of the tournament, even up until the final day. I hardly felt nervous. It was almost surreal. I don’t think it really sunk in that I was in first place until well after the tournament was over. I was trying to focus as much as possible during the games and not worrying too much besides that. I guess it worked out pretty well as a strategy.

I’m still wondering how much of my success was due to luck. Certainly there were many better players who had unfortunate tournaments. For me, the real pleasure was that from start to finish I was involved in excellent, challenging games against great opponents. Some of them made stunning plays. On Day 1, Jerry Lerman took a game for me that I was convinced I had sewn up by playing GOUTIER through UT as a double-double in the endgame. Jim Kramer found OLDWIVES through an E to almost pull off a comeback win. In the final round against Kenji, he burned the blank for 40 points in the pre-endgame, taking out my only realistic chance of victory (though I’m sure he
thinks it was just an ordinary play). It was an honor to be playing games that mattered right up until the end, and to be able to win some of them, too. I suspect that I’ll be thinking about my wins at table 1 against Joel Sherman and Brian Bowman for the rest of my SCRABBLE career. It was one of the most exciting experiences of my life.

Simultaneously, I can guarantee that if you, dear reader, are holding on to the upper rungs of the Nationals echelon until the very last rounds, the experience will almost certainly be one of the biggest anticlimaxes of your entire life. For all that Nationals is the premiere event on the North American SCRABBLE calendar, it is also in many ways suspiciously similar to a regular tournament. When the curtains close and the show is over, the magic wears off pretty quickly. In a matter of hours you will be sitting on your plane heading home and your life will suddenly be completely ordinary once again. In truth, the prize ceremony itself mirrored this transition. The players were strewn in low-density clumps across the now oversized playing room. There was almost a sense of ennui as Nigel Richards picked up his inevitable first-prize check. Half of the prizewinners in Division 1 were not there to receive their money. SCRABBLE players for the most part are undramatic people, and I can’t say that I’m necessarily an exception (notwithstanding a few bouts of pen-throwing that some of you may have witnessed this year). In a completely self-serving way, I was hoping that we would surpass ourselves and that the award ceremony would turn into some glitzy, well-polished PR event as opposed to the drudge it usually turns out to be – but Nationals never really changes, and it looked pretty much as it did in the years I finished in 97th or 359th place, except that I was $500 richer.

Indeed, the real pleasure was not the aftermath but the experience itself. For some of the folks at the top it was clearly nerve-racking. I’m pretty sure Kenji didn’t eat dinner the night before the final day. Instead of being nervous, however, I was more stunned at the number of well-wishers I had from different parts of life. I had been posting updates on Facebook about how I was doing, and all of a sudden it turned out that I had friends cheering me on from all different walks of life and watching my games. My buddy Robert from college. Mom. Dad, calling from India on a business trip. Kate the annotator, who had me autograph one of her tile racks. Joel Sherman. Stefan Fatsis. All of my SCRABBLE buddies. Chris Cree at the award ceremony. Scott Pianowski in one of his baseball columns. Chris Patrick Morgan and Club 95 in San Francisco. Kate Fukawa-Connelly and Cecilia Le. When I went back to my department (I’m a graduate student in atmospheric science at UC-Berkeley) one of my colleagues said that he had been waking up at 7 am to watch my games online. I’m still overwhelmed. Thank you all.

One particular pleasure was getting to call a former champion, James Leong, who also happens to be one of my best friends in the world. James has more or less been my SCRABBLE mentor over the years, even though he would deny it. Until this year, my happiest moment in SCRABBLE by far was when he won the 2008 Dayton Players Championship as a complete unknown. I remember playing my games as fast as possible so I could watch the end of his, even though he played so fast that he was always the first one done anyway. Barely a month earlier at summer Reno I had called him in the middle of the night to launch into a tirade about how terrible I was at everything from SCRABBLE to life. Instead, this time I got to inform him that the annotators miss him and wish he would come back to Nationals. Even though I didn’t end up winning, I’m proud that I was able to walk in his footsteps as an underdog.

I have no regrets about not winning. I had gone through the entire tournament without ever getting beat too badly. Losing by 322 to fall out of first place was unfortunate, but to complain about bad
luck would be ignoring the 29 rounds prior where things went overwhelmingly right. In the final round, Kenji overcame his nerves and played a great game in the to clinch second. Brian Bowman came third in spite of primarily being a Collins specialist. It was an honor to be in contention with you all. I hope it happens again.

Finally, I play SCRABBLE first and foremost because of the people. There are too many of you to name here, but you are all important people in my life. Thank you for supporting me. I hope that I can return to the top tables in years to come. Until then, I’ll be doing my best to root for you guys the way you did for me.

Follow the links to see Jesse’s game 15 against Joel Sherman and game 29 against Brian Bowman.
Nigel Richards--now a three-time North American champion--remains one of the most fascinating figures in Scrabble.

The story of his emergence in Scrabble is one that few people know, and one that was in the original draft of Word Freak. But my editor wanted to keep the book under 400 pages (though with the publication of the 10th anniversary edition of the book, I’ve blown past that number), so my profile of Nigel wound up on the cutting-room floor.

I offer the lost pages here. The setting is the 1999 World Scrabble Championship in Melbourne, Australia. I hope you enjoy.

After three rounds, eleven players are undefeated. After four rounds, the number is down to six. It falls to three after five rounds. And after six rounds, just one player is without a loss: Nigel Richards of New Zealand.

In the tight, little world of Scrabble, Nigel Richards stories are legendary. Nigel read the 1,953-page *Chambers Dictionary* five times and memorized all the words. Nigel bicycled fourteen hours overnight to a weekend tournament, won it, then biked home and straight to work on Monday morning. With a rack of CDHLNR?, Nigel played CHLORDYNE# through three disconnected tiles (the two O’s and the E). Nigel played SAPROZOIC through ZO#. Nigel played GOOSEFISH$. Nigel averaged 584 points per games in a tournament. Nigel’s word knowledge was so deep, his point-scoring ability so profound, his manner so unflappable, that a competitor once made a T-shirt reading: I BEAT NIGEL RICHARDS.

“It’s like playing a computer,” Jeff Grant, a twelve-time New Zealand champion, says when I ask about Nigel. “I’ve never seen anything like it. The word knowledge. The ability to pluck them out of nowhere.”

Grant is shaking his head in awe and bewilderment, as if he has just seen a painting of the Virgin Mary dripping tears of blood.

“I’d place him as the top player I’ve ever played. And I’ve played all the top players.”

If Scrabble was searching for a Bobby Fischer, Nigel Richards might qualify. Like Fischer, Nigel’s knowledge of the game, in this case word knowledge, is so complete as to put competitors at a usually insurmountable disadvantage. And like Fischer—though of course without the hatred, reclusiveness, and perversity that characterized Fischer’s life—Nigel the person is an enigma, Scrabble’s mystery man, arriving seemingly from nowhere, revealing little, asking nothing in return. Nigel has a rock climber’s thin and sinewy body, with sandy brown hair combed straight forward in bangs and a long bushy beard that make him look like an Amish elder. He wears oversized aviator glasses, jeans and T-shirts, and mid-calf brown boots, and always carries a stuffed rucksack. During the tournament, he rents a bicycle and takes a forty-minute ride every morning before the start of play—and play starts at eight o’clock. I never see him join a friendly game or otherwise socialize with fellow players.
More compelling than his mountain-man appearance is his demeanor. Nigel is the first Scrabble player I’ve met who truly doesn’t seem bothered by the outcome of a game, who is interested only in the process, the intellectual challenge posed by the seven letters on a rack. He wears a blank expression that seldom changes. He rarely reacts to what people say to (or about) him, yet his silence isn’t rude or hostile, either. He betrays no emotion when he plays. Arms parallel to the edge of the board, left hand folded over right, Nigel stares unblinkingly at the tiles before making his play: still life with Scrabble player.

“When I see you I can never tell whether you won or lost,” Bob Felt says to Nigel between rounds.

“That’s because I don’t care,” Nigel replies.

Nigel is thirty-two years old and lives in Christchurch, where he works as a technician for the water company. He fixes pumps. He didn’t go to university; though he won a scholarship, he did poorly on entrance exams. His mother is a secretary. He is estranged from his father, who runs a shop — Nigel says he doesn’t know what kind. He bicycles eleven kilometers to and from work, and on weekends takes long, solo rides in the countryside. He doesn’t own a television, doesn’t listen to the radio, doesn’t read much.

Friends?

“I’m not close to anyone,” Nigel says.

Nigel has been playing competitive Scrabble for just four years, having learned the game from his mother. He won the New Zealand national championships on his first try, in 1997, and has been racking up impressive performances in big tournaments throughout Asia. Nigel has won an astonishing 85 percent of his tournament games in New Zealand.

When he captured a tournament in Sydney, the director handed him the first-prize check and asked, “Would you like to say a few words?”

Said Nigel: “I don’t know any.”

Oh, but he does. Nigel might know more words than anyone who has ever played the game. He has compiled lists from the computer program LeXpert and read the OSW and a book called Redwoods that combines the British and American lists. He has indeed been through Chambers, though not five times. “I can look at things and remember,” he says. Nigel scans the pages of the dictionary looking at all the words listed in boldface. He doesn’t use tenses, plurals, or definitions to help him learn.

I ask him if he has a photographic memory. “I think there are about twenty-eight thousand definitions of a photographic memory. I can recall images very easily, but I can’t put the image in a context. I can remember a picture, but I can’t remember where I’ve seen it. I just have to view the word. As long as I’ve seen the word, I can bring it back. But if I’ve only heard it or spoken it, I can’t do it at all.”

Nigel doesn’t know how or why he can do what he does. School was easy, because of his memory, but he was bored. Studying the words is boring, too. “The cycling helps. I can go through the lists in my mind.” Nigel just conjures a mental snapshot of a list, or the specific page of a dictionary. That’s why he can recall a word like CHLORODYNE, which isn’t on any Scrabble list because it is longer than nine letters and isn’t in Merriam-Webster’s Tenth, the American word source. It’s only in Chambers. “It may well be that no other Scrabble player knows that word,” Bob Felt says.
If Nigel has a weakness, it’s that his wide-open, high-scoring style often leaves him vulnerable to counterattack by opponents who also have prodigious word knowledge. And Nigel is regarded as having a less-than-proficient endgame, which is variously attributed to his lack of interest in strategic play or his reluctance to study board positions. Indeed, Nigel doesn’t record his racks, doesn’t review games, rarely kibitzes about particular plays. The other top experts, particularly the Americans, talk disdainfully about this gap in Nigel’s ability, how it makes him an incomplete player. Naturally, Nigel doesn’t care.

“One it’s over, I think that’s it for that particular situation,” he says. “Because the next situation is going to be different. I don’t see the point in analyzing it to death.” When other players want to review one of his games, Nigel lets them—without him. “I just keep away. I’ve had some people come over and say, ‘You could have done that.’ I say, ‘Well, you can sit here and play with it. I’m going to go do my own thing.’”

Nigel has adopted a style and he sticks to it. “I try to score points,” he says. “The goal is to score more points than your opponent.” After defeating Nigel, G.I. Joel lectures him for playing WE for 29 points, leaving IIIIU on his rack. “You should have passed seven and gone for the blanks,” Joel says. Nigel replies: “Twenty-nine points is a lot of points.”

Nigel is amused by the legend that has grown up around him—even by the simple fact that other players have opinions about his style, his perceived weaknesses, and his word knowledge. “People say, ‘He knows all the words.’ It would be nice if I did. But I’m quite happy to have people think that.”

Nigel won’t say whether he likes the competition. Only that it lets him play against the best players and, anyway, is a new experience, and he does like new experiences.

“Competition was new to me. But it doesn’t bother me. It’s more of a challenge here, which is really what I’m after. I just enjoy trying to work out the possibilities and see what I can do, see what I can come up with. I can enjoy it if I win. I can enjoy it if I lose.”

“Are you ever disappointed?” I ask.

“No.”

“Honestly?”

“Why is there a reason to be disappointed?” Nigel replies. “I’m just here for a bit of fun. Everything else is a bonus.”

Stefan Fatsis is the author of the New York Times bestseller Word Freak: Heartbreak, Triumph, Genius, and Obsession in the World of Competitive Scrabble Players, which was published in a 10th anniversary edition in the summer of 2011. His latest book, A Few Seconds of Panic: A Sportswriter Plays in the NFL, is out in paperback. You can reach him at sfatsis@gmail.com.
NSC Lunch Bird Recap

By Dan Horowitz

At the 2011 National SCRABBLE® Championship, I had the privilege of directing NASPA’s first-ever “Lunch Bird” tournament. The idea came from feedback from the 2010 NSC, which showed that while some players were happy with the seven-game, two-hour-lunch daily schedule needed to accommodate NASPA committee meetings, many players wanted to play more games and have a shorter lunch break. Accordingly, we decided to offer a five-game fully rated round-robin tournament, with one game taking place during the lunch break of each of the five days of the NSC.

As with any first-time event, I wasn’t quite sure what kind of turnout to expect. As the event got closer, I began to realize that while many players would like to see the NSC schedule expanded to at least eight games per day, most were reluctant to forgo the opportunity to spend the lunch break socializing with their fellow players in order to play an extra game that wouldn’t count in the NSC standings. In spite of that obstacle, we managed to end up with three competitive divisions.

Although the final standings don’t show it, the quest for first place in Division A went down to the wire, with Steve Glass winning the division with a 5-0 +377 record. Winter finished second, with a 3-2 +369 record, over Michael Early (3-2 -65). Winter also won the prize for high loss for his 414-415 loss to Carolyn Easter--a one-point loss that cost him a shot at the top prize. NOTE: Because a high-rated player dropped out of the Lunch Bird after it had started, I slotted 914-rated Kevin Rosenthal into Division A, where he competed against players with ratings between 1475 and 1819. Although he ultimately finished with a record of 0-5 -521, Kevin had a very respectable 358-379 loss in round 4 to top seed Steve Glass.

Bruce Shuman clinched Division B, Gibsonized after the fourth round. Second place went to Judy Newhouse, with a record of 3-2 +40. Bruce dropped his final game to Noah Lieberman, winning with a record of 4-1 +145.

Division C was a tight race, as there were no undefeated players. Bryan Pepper finished in first place with a 4-1 record and a spread of +319. Aided by a one-point victory over me (yes, we did a recount), Hannah Lieberman finished second with a 4-1 +72 record.

Two additional prizes were awarded to players in Division B: Noah won a Zyzzyva T-shirt (generously donated by Michael Thelen) for his high-scoring “Z” play of ENERGIZER, for 111 points against Bruce, and Katya Lezin (Hannah and Noah Lieberman’s mother) won $5 for the highest win in the tournament, with a 503-293 victory over Jason Randolph in round 4. This high win ensured that all three members of Lieberman/Lezin clan won a prize at the Lunch Bird.

Unfortunately, there was no prize for high overall play, but if there had been, the likely winner would have been Bruce, with his round 2 play of TRIAXIAL against Katya for 119 points.

NSC Tag-Team SCRABBLE® Tournament

By Brian Galebach

Thanks to the 32 players (plus one late-tournament sub) who took part in this year’s Tag-Team SCRABBLE Tournament on Tuesday night at Nationals. This was our best participation yet, with one of every ten Nationals players taking part in the Tag-Team Tournament. Fantastic!

Thanks also to those who helped out with getting us set up, and then cleaned up in the main playing hall, especially Dan Stock and John Chew. Thanks to Ryan Fischer and Michael Donegan for helping us get everyone registered so quickly. And thanks to Sherrie Saint John for popping in to get pictures of all our winners at the end of the tournament, and to Mary Rhoades for having promoted the tournament several times during announcements.

Here are the results in each of the four 4-team divisions:

DIVISION 1:
Orry Swift & Samantha Nelson: 2-1 +138, $50
Brad Whitmarsh & Judy Cole: 2-1 +60, $30
Ryan Fischer & Brian Galebach: 1-2 -42
Dan Stock & Michael Bassett: 1-2 -156

DIVISION 2:
Stephen Sneed & Daniel Citron: 3-0 +344, $50
Matt Dewaelsche & Jason Randolph: 1-2 -85, $30
David Weiss & Art Finkel: 1-2 -94
Jeremy Hall & Fred Schneider: 1-2 -165

DIVISION 3:
Bradley Robbins & Phil Robbins: 2-1 +125, $50
Jeremy Jeffers & Kate Graham: 2-1 +98, $30
Bob Gillis & David Merideth: 2-1 -16
Mariah Smith & Michael Donegan: 0-3 -207

DIVISION 4:
Judy Newhouse & Hannah Lieberman: 3-0 +155, $50
John Dowaliby & Morris Greenberg: 2-1 +29, $30
Cynthia Hughes & Jacob Cohen: 1-2 +142
Robin Lewis & Jack Titzman: 0-3 -326

We didn't get very many pictures of games in progress, but we have quite a few pictures of winners. They are available among the Round 29 photos at http://www.scrabble-assoc.com/tourneys/2011/nsc/build/photo/29/index.html.
NSC Town Hall Minutes

By John Fultz

Below are the minutes that I took from the NSC Town Hall meeting held in Dallas on August 8, 2011.

Panel:

Jim Pate (Dictionary)
Jan (Dixon) Cardia (Rules)
Dallas Johnson (Tournament)
John Chew (co-president), referred to as JC in the notes
Mary Rhoades (Club and Director)
Siri Tillekeratne (Canadian)
Tony Leah (International)
Chris Cree (co-president), referred to as CC in the notes
Mad Palazzo (Membership)

John Robertson, emcee

Guests
Peter Sokolowski, Merriam-Webster
John Williams, NSA

Meeting convened at 8:34pm

[Panel members introduced]

John Williams: Most of the executives involved with School SCRABBLE® have turned over. As far as we know, it'll be business as usual. We don't have a site yet for 2012. Won't be in Orlando, Philadelphia. Could be in Chicago. 2500 schools are on the roster in addition to hundreds of library programs, after-school programs, park and recreations, etc. We want to recruit youth, then feed them into NASPA. We ended up with 150 million impressions between radio, websites, etc. Any questions about the school program?

J.C. Green: Aren't there casual clubs?

John Williams: Yes, over 700 casual clubs. We're also looking to expand to seniors as a group.

Q: What actually goes on at the 2500 schools?

John Williams: It's a loose group. You're as good as your operative in any single area. In some it's an after-school program, some in the classroom, some have clubs, some have tourneys. We have 100 teams of two kids playing in the championship.

Stefan Fatsis: I started a club in my daughter's school 4 or 5 years ago. I now do 1 day a week at her school, 1 day at the middle school, and I've got 60 kids playing. We arranged to do training sessions for teachers and coordinators. How many clubs will form out of that, it's hard to know. That's where players like you can get involved. You need a teacher and somebody who knows how to play SCRABBLE involved. We held a national tournament in Washington. 80 kids came from as far away as California at a DC public school. It takes effort, time and interest, and that's the challenge. Sam Rosin and Joey Krafchick are products of the School SCRABBLE. It's small steps, but it does bear fruit.
John Williams: Part of what we’re looking for is a kid-safe website where kids can play SCRABBLE. It’s been promised by Hasbro and Electronic Arts, but it hasn’t happened yet. We’re going to push it with the new Hasbro regime, and we believe it’s imperative.

Peter Sokolowski introduced
Peter Sokolowski: If you have a question, please feel free to come see me. I’m an editor at MW and participate in writing the dictionary.

John Robertson: The rules of Q&A. We’ll give each person a total of three minutes to ask questions or make comments. I’ll keep track of the time. Three minutes total, not each time you get to the front of the queue.

Siri Tillekeratne: Finalized the qualifying rules for CNSC. Conducted an election in which John Robertson and Randall Thomas were reelected to three-year terms. Finalized rules for qualifying for Canadian team at next WSC. Hosted CanAm in Calgary.

Tony Leah: Co-chair with Sam Kantimathi who was going to give the report, but he’s not here because of car troubles. The committee is concerned with promoting the use of the international dictionary for players who want to do that, and coordinating with WESPA. US members of the committee did a great job of putting together a qualification system for US players for WSC. Sam and I were elected to the WESPA committee at the last worlds, so we’ve had an opportunity to give input to that body. One area where we’ve had significant impact is in the rewriting of the rules WESPA uses for the national championship and other tourneys. We’ve been able to influence those rules in a positive direction, and I think they’re much closer to the national rules than they were before. We’ve been working with the Canada Committee to work with other SCRABBLE associations around the world. For example, any NASPA member who wants to take part in a tournament in the UK will get a discount on the entry fee which their members get; in return, ABSP players will be recognized as members here. We want to expand that cooperation to other organizations. We’ve played a role in expanding the number of tourneys held in North America using the Collins dictionary.

Mad Palazzo: Committee consists of Tony Leah and John Robertson, and we’re soliciting volunteers. We have 127 unrated players. 639 people that are expiring Dec. 31. We’ve had discussion about expanding membership. We think it’d be great to follow up with people and call them to see what they like or don’t like to try to make it less intimidating for people. If you refer a new player to NASPA, you’ll get one extra month on your membership. If somebody only joins for six months, and then subsequently renews for six months, then the referrer gets the extra month. If you join for the first time, it’s $30. Renewing a month before expiring is $25. Renewing for up to five years is down to $20. For people who only want to play in one tournament, it’s $19 for a one-week membership. If anybody has suggestions, please let me know. We’re also looking to get directors who have a lot of tournament some kind of bonus or...we’re not quite sure yet. For example, if a directory has five or six tournaments a year, they might get some bonus. We’re still developing this. John is working on email reminders two months before expiration date.

Q: In many organizations, membership is required to play at a club. Has any thought been given to, for example, saying you can play in a club twice, and then you have to join? Perhaps we could get them to join NASPA right at the beginning.

Mad Palazzo: We could bring that up with the committee. Somebody else brought to my attention a possible senior discount. We’re open to ideas.

Mary Rhoades: John Robertson has taken on administering the director test. We’ve taken on 12 new directors this year. One thing I announced at the Director meeting last night that last fall, our committee voted to end the club sanctioning fee as of the end of this year. One reason for instituting the fee was to stay current on active clubs, and we’ll now be contacting directors to confirm the club status. We welcome new directors, but
several current directors grandfathered from the NSA have taken the test as a refresher. All passed. Also, Hasbro has donated SCRABBLE Flash games for tournament prizes. We have no guarantee that it will continue forever, so we've been giving them to directors of multi-day tournaments first, one per director, until all have had a chance to give them at a tournament. The only thing that Hasbro asks in exchange for this is to take a picture of the person who wins the SCRABBLE Flash so that they can have it, and John sometimes puts these in the NASPA Bulletin.

Dallas Johnson: The tournament committee has sanctioned several hundred tournaments, dealt with incident reports and accommodation requests. Responded to director questions, initiated work on an automated sanctioning tool, enhancing online information, filling committee vacancies, got some rules changes due to incident reports. We have a couple of messages we wanted to give to players. We'd like players to be really proactive about calling the director. If an incident occurs, please let the director know right away. We've had a number of after-the-fact reports where the best handling would have been when the incident occurred.

Jan Cardia: Update to rules in June were well received, but we got lots of suggestions for more changes. We're going to try for updates roughly 12-15 months. My email will remain jandixon@aol.com. I'd like to know about two players who left the committee. Thanks to Geoff Thevenot and especially to Steve Oliger, whose assistance was invaluable. We have two new committee members, Mark Milan and Diane Firstman.

Jim Pate: We're on the cusp of getting ready to do another edition of the OWL. We're beginning to review source dictionaries to update the long list. We're going to review all of the source dictionaries, including the original Funk and Wagnalls source dictionary. I have a list of examples from the A section of that dictionary, and you can see what is not legal now but could be in the next few years. Very logical constructions, like adding LY. Many of you probably know the source dictionaries we use to compile the OWL...a couple of those are not being published any longer. We're checking out adding a couple of dictionaries. These will be approved at a later time, and we'll talk with Merriam-Webster about this to get the expert advice from their lexicographers. The members of our committee include James Cherry, Bob Gillis, Peter Huszagh, Bob Lipton. We're adding new members, including Tim Bottorff, and two or three who are just about to join. We're a small group, and there's a lot of work to do. I'm soliciting additional people who'd like to work on the committee, but it's not work for everyone. There's a lot of grunt work, and double- and triple-checking. We're testing people, and that way people know whether or not they're up to this. All I would ask anybody to do is to contribute on a regular basis and do what you can...I know that people have lives and are busy. My email address is jipate@lycos.com. We may end up publishing in a different format...perhaps a combined OWL/LWL. The next edition of Merriam Webster is in 2013, so we hope to get OWL3 sometime in 2014.

CC: Ratings and Recognition committees. Recognitions committee will see the results of what they've done at the NSC awards. The official year for recognitions is from Nationals to Nationals. Four years ago, we came up with a ratings curve which we think more matches reality. Most importantly, we think that for the most part, the days of people sitting at home because of the ratings curve are at an end. I'm now no longer afraid to play at a tournament where the max is a 1500 players. And today's 1500-rated player would have been a national champion in 1975. The ratings committee has considered moving onto phase 2, but that's for them to say. Finance committee -- most of the costs have been startup costs because we're getting a lot of volunteer work. I want to get a capital base of $250,000, which I think is going to take four or five years. Right now, we have $170,000 in the bank. One issue which has come up is putting together a NASPA policy for charity events. We very much want people on the Finance Committee. Send ideas to info@scrabbleplayers.org. I didn't want to set up a policy until we've achieved a capital base, but we have enough now that if a charity event wants a few hundred dollars, we need to have a policy to make that decision. Hasbro is an investor in Winning Moves, and they made a very nice donation which we're very appreciative of. There's been turnover in the Hasbro executive, and I'm heading up to Massachusetts to see people at Hasbro, Winning Moves, Merriam Webster. I'm talking to people at Fox Sports about the future of SCRABBLE on broadcast media.
JC: Chris and I compose the Executive Committee, which means that we communicate constantly about what's going on with NASPA, what the working committees are doing, and we're always pretty busy. On the Executive Committee, we're responsible for maintaining business relationship with other organizations. I've been working with HelmsBriscoe, which is a site selection company. If, for example, you're having trouble finding a site for a tournament, you could talk to them and they would help free of charge. For example, in Toronto, we had a hotel that was giving us a lot of trouble, we got HelmsBriscoe to talk to them, and they settled down and gave us a better deal than ever before. If you'd like their assistance, ask Chris or myself and we'll put you in touch with them. I've sent 4000-4500 messages since the last NSC on NASPA, and have received ten times as many (including mailing lists). On member communication, I was really excited by Google+. I started a Google+ circle for NASPA. If you're interested, I'd love to talk to you about it. I'm on two committees which are largely inactive, the History and Pairings committees. The pairings committee exists to explore different ideas for pairing systems. I'd like to talk to people about this, but not so many people are interested. There was a new edition of the Directors Manual. Chris and I co-chair the Advisory Board, which we inherited from the NSA. It's taken us a while to figure out what the best advisory function is. It's continuing to evolve, but we've had a good group of members, and we're working with a partially different crew this year. We've met seven times by person or conference call and other correspondences. Five had to do with disciplinary issues, one was a Canadian committee issue, and one was how to rate computer players. The most important ones were the following. We have a new Code of Conduct approved by the AB. The main feature, aside from language cleanup, is that the Clubs and Directors and Tournaments committees are now empowered to enforce certain disciplinary issues, and to clean up the appeal process. The AB has long been loosely geographically representative, but never rigidly so. We promised last year to have elections for the AB by this year. We had elections in two districts...Siri in the Western district, and Jan Cardia in the Eastern district. We also debated the size of the AB, and decided that 12 was the right size. We also decided to award an annual Person of the Year. I'd like to congratulate this year's Person of the Year, Annette Tedesco. I'm also a major part of the Bulletin committee which has been much more active this year. I talked my sister-in-law to do the graphic design and typesetting and to help keep the entire process on schedule. We've managed to stick to a monthly issue, we've had a popular contest, we've had controversies about the rules of those contests. We're averaging 350-400 monthly downloads, and I'm sure that many are club directors who are printing them out for distribution. We do downloads because we can track people who are actively downloading it and sending emails runs afoul of various anti-spam laws. We're giving tech support where necessary to get it downloaded. Much of what I do involves the Web Committee. We maintain the NASPA Wiki. In order to edit pages, you must be a committee member or a club director...directors can create their own pages in the club director section. We maintain Member Services, which allows members to do various things, and directors and committee members to do more. The Web Committee (me) also designs the web pages for large special events. We oversaw the online elections. We keep an eye on Google+ and Facebook presence. We're working on rewriting the calendar of upcoming tournaments to streamline the tourney-sanctioning process and distinguish the types of directors involved in a particular event (for example, a director who submits data, one who takes cash, and one who runs the event). We're working with Seth Lipkin to make sure that like-named players are supported. We're working with Tournament and Ratings Committees to require that all data include the scores. Since the last Nationals, all but three tourneys have score data. There is some suggestion that the Ratings Committee would like to investigate score-based ratings, like the Norwegian system uses. There is no imminent change, but it's useful to collect the data to see whether it might lead to a better system. Championship Committee, which puts together events like this. Chris looks at the people who come to Nationals in three different groups. There are some who want to play as many games as possible for as little money as possible and don't care where. Some people like tourist destinations because they like to travel. The last group can only go places in August if they can bring their families with them. We are happy to announce that next year's championship will take place at Orlando at the Royal Pacific Resort, August 10-14.
Brian Galebach: When the new dictionary comes out, will it result in a new book available in bookstores (OSPD5)?

Jim Pate: I don't know, but I anticipate that there will continue to be an OSPD and an OWL. How those will be marketed remains to be seen. Chris will address some of these issues on the trip he's taking right after this tournament. The process of finding the answers to some of these questions has just begun.

Judy Ford: Many of my friends aren't going to Dallas, they're going to Reno. I believe that Dallas should be where we can all see one another. I don't find the firing of directors like Larry Rand acceptable, and I think it's a shame that it's happened. I'd like to ask John and Chris to do everything they can to heal this rift. We should all be in the same organization, and we should all be here for Nationals.

JC: We haven't booked anything for the year after next, but a west coast Nationals is high on our priorities.

Becky Dyer: It sounds like the dictionary committee is a whole lot of work, and there's a book called Collins that doesn't require any work.

JC: We're currently coexisting with Collins, but we've had a lot more rated games without Collins.

Paul Avrin: I'd like to see a national schedule that starts at 10, with a slightly shorter lunch break.

JC: We did a player-satisfaction survey at the end of the last Nationals. One question which came up often was the reason for the schedule. Here, we start early and play a 4/3 split so that people can go to lunch without a lunch rush, and finish early before the dinner rush. The situation is different in Orlando, and we'll investigate that. There wasn't much support for a 10am start time, but please feel free to comment about the schedule on this year's comment cards.

Charlene White: Nationals hasn't been North since Providence. Many of my friends consider it too hot to come to the Nationals.

JC: As soon as we have an economically viable proposal, we can do something in the north.

CC: We've divided the country into six regions...between that and the three demographics, I think we have a lot of choices in the coming years. We have dinner tomorrow night with Resorts Consortium, and we'll tell him what we're looking for.

Charlene White: I'd also like to see ratings for NASPA and WGPO on cross-tables.

JC: I heard the tournament committee say something about a SCRABBLE league.

John Robertson: Some Canadian directors got together to discuss the idea of forming a league among various clubs. In southern Ontario, we have several clubs in close proximity. We're hoping to get something started there this autumn. We think it has the potential to catch on across North America. It's a good way of fostering interest in your club and interclub goodwill.

Ruchi Gupta: The facilities are great, and all of the players benefit. I couldn't afford to stay at the hotel, and I pay a commuter fee, but local players get no commuter fee. Instead of a commuter fee, let's have a "facility use" fee and make it uniform for everyone.
JC: Extending a fee to local players in the Orlando area might not be popular, but we'll consider it. We get this ballroom for free, but we get it if approximately 160 people stay in the hotel. From a purely economic point of view, the charging of a commuter fee has led to just about the right number of people. We will probably barely break even and not have to pay for this room. But we have a facility fee as an incentive to get people to stay in the hotel.

CC: Jan Cardia has been a big proponent of what you've said, Ruchi. But, for example, at Dayton, they got to play for free, but they also provided us with $800 worth of tablecloths. I think that Robin Gates has earned her keep, and we rely on the local community of volunteers to help us put on the event.

Ruchi Gupta: I do appreciate the work they do, and I don't know the math, but it seems inequitable.

CC: That's one of the many traditions that we've inherited from the NSA, and I've always thought it was no big deal. In Dayton, Lois Greene made it so simple, and club members contributed tablecloths which was a big expense. Everything you see costs something. John says we have 20 local players at the tournament, and he feels we've gotten a $1000 worth of value. If there are 20 players I want to do stuff for us and I also say "give us $50," they're not going to do anything for us.

JC: For those people for whom cost of entry is a barrier, we do need volunteers, and we're willing to discuss. One question that's come up is why no Nationals in Canada, and the answer is no time soon. We're happy to hear proposals, but the cost has to be no greater than this one, and it shouldn't be more expensive for Americans than this one.

CC: Thanks to committee heads here, and thanks for coming to the Town Hall. This is Mary Rhoades' last championship, and we appreciate her so much. [applause]

Meeting adjourned, 10:18pm.
Norwalk in August

Although entries were light at the August 13 Norwalk tournaments, play was strong. The main 8-game event had two divisions, plus there were two 4-game Youth Tournaments. Four new players and six Youth Players attended the tournaments. In the main event, the winners of both divisions were Gibsonized going into the final round.

Division A went to Peter Barkman, who posted an 8-0 +600 record, boosting his rating to 1659. Second went to the bottom seed, Andrew Beaton, a college student heading off later this month for his second year at Duke. Andrew's record was 5-3 +74. There was an unusual situation going into the final round: All of the players but Peter had negative spreads! Sue Gable took the tournament prize for High Play with TRAVELER for 140 points.

Division B went to Brandon Randall, with an 8-0 +1081 record. Second was Betsy Wood (6-2 +307), who beat 3rd place Andrew Malaby in the final game by 20 points. High Game (506) went to Neal Beaton, narrowly beating Linda Wancell's 504. Linda won the prize for Best Summer Word for RELAXES.

The Morning Youth Tournament was dominated by the youngest player in the 6-person division: rising 4th grader Jared Tilliss, who was undefeated with a 4-0 +512 record. Jared also had the High Game (487) and won the prize for Best Summer Word (HEATED). Jared's brother, Seth, came in 2nd with a 3-1 187 record. Seth had the High Play: BADGERS, 92.

The Afternoon Youth Tournament lost a player, leaving only three to compete. The odd player played the odd player in the adult Division B (a player in that division had left as well). Although each player got a bye, there was a prize for the best result by a Youth Player in these games. Seth Tilliss won the afternoon event, 3-1 +386, with Amy Rowland 2nd (3-1 -26). Amy also won the prize for best showing in the Youth v. Adult round and Best Summer Word: WAVE. Seth had the High Game: 448.

A sportsmanship prize--a copy of Tony Rasch’s excellent study guide, Brow-Raisers II--went to Judy Umlas, who did not have a win in her official tournament games (though she had a bye). In her bye round against Jared Tilliss she won with a 477 score, so we hope she'll be back!

The next Norwalk Tournament will be on Sunday, September 11.
Utica NY SCRABBLE® Tournament

By Matt O’Connor

In a building outside of a church near Utica, a SCRABBLE tournament was held on August 20-21. Directed by Chris Lipe and Don Drumm, it had 16 participants. There were two divisions for TWL: one for players above 1500 (with unlimited playups), and one for people below 1500 who did not want to play up. In actuality, no one elected to play up. Each TWL division had six participants. There was also a Collins division, which garnered four participants.

The tournament started off with a double round robin for TWL, and a quadruple round robin for Collins. An interesting fact was that every division had someone Gibsonized for first place before the final round, even though two of them could have still been second (under NASPA rules, if someone is 1 game and more than 500 spread points ahead of someone, they are Gibsonized. Heather Drumm and Evans Clinchy were both affected by this).

Division 1 went to Kate Fukawa-Connelly, who caught up to Cecelia Le. Cecelia was 7-0, but Kate eventually got two games ahead to be Gibsonized. Second place was Cecelia, who got a good start, but faltered to Kate. Third place went to Terry Kang Rau, who beat Joel Horn out in the final round for the last money slot.

Division 2 went to Heather Drumm. Before the final two rounds, I had to beat her by a combined total of 400 points. I managed to win the first game by 8, which Gibsonized her. I then played Judy Horn for second place, and I won, with Judy finishing third.

The Collins division went to Evans Clinchy, playing in his first Collins Tournament. Second was John O’Laughlin, one of the 15 players going to Poland in October to represent the US at the World SCRABBLE Championship.

Complete results area at cross-tables.com.

A good time was had by all in Utica!

Matt O’Connor, a rising 8th grader from DeWitt, NY, has had a strong last year in SCRABBLE. He won his division at the Lake George and Old Greenwich tournaments, and he was third with his partner, Seth Tilliss, in the 2011 National School SCRABBLE Championship. His rating after Utica is 1323.
Sixteen Scrabblers gathered at the home of David and Nancy Gibson in Spartanburg, SC on Saturday, August 20th, to play an 10-game “Border Battle.” Mark Schmidt directed the unrated tournament, and David Gibson’s sister Joan Randolph served as word judge. For the first eight rounds, each player for each state played each participant for the other state once; then the 1/2, 3/4, 5/6, and 7/8 seeds squared off in two final games, for a total of 80 games. After 79 games were played, the score was 40-39 in favor of SC, with Nancy Gibson the team’s top scorer. A game between Chad Harris (Clemson, SC) and Brett Haughney (Asheville, NC) was still out--delayed for a recount. Chad and Brett tied at 448, thus securing SC’s one-game victory, 40.5 - 39.5!

Partial individual standings were as follows:

SC:
Nancy Gibson 8-2
David Gibson 7-3
Mark Schmidt 5-5
Victor Li 5-5
Chad Harris
Denise Mahnken
Alan Riechman
Linda Bianca

NC:
Ryan Fischer 8-2
Brett Haughney 7.5-2.5
Matthew Bernardino 7-3
Aaron Finkel 5-5
Jacob Cohen
Susan Blanchard
Suhas Rao
Ricki Zameck

David Gibson remarked:

“So neat that my wife led the pack for SC. She was our fourth seed and was quite hesitant about playing, not wanting to do poorly and let the team down (she hadn’t played in a tournament in over 6 years).
“I think everyone had a great time. Most of the players arrived early for some good breakfast treats. We started playing just after 9 am, played 5 games, then had a lunch break---a full meal served here. A few players and visitors played a little billiards on either side of the lunch. After lunch we had another 5 games, then a short awards ceremony. Each player was given a certificate of participation in this first annual event, and each member of the winning team got a small cash prize. Places 1-4 on each team won prizes, as well as the winners of High Game, High Loss, and High Play both before and after lunch.

“After each round, my sister Joan Randolph (the word judge, secretary, cook, etc.) posted the results. It was neck and neck in the morning rounds. In fact, at the lunch break, it was dead even at 20-20. After lunch, the NC Team edged ahead, and by the end of Round 8 NC had forged a 4-game lead, with two rounds to go.

“I told our SC Team members we needed to go 6-2 in Round 9 to get even. Then I as our top seed proceeded to lose my game that round, as did Chad Harris, our number 2 seed. But lo and behold, all the other six games went the SC way, to bring the match back to even headed into the final round.

“I had to play Ryan Fischer (the NC #1) again. Ryan had clobbered me in Round 8 by over 100 points. This time I was lucky to get a good early lead and hold on. Playing next to me, Nancy "bingoed" out with BEAUTIES to take her game. Two other SC players won their final game also. But three of them lost, making it 4-3 in favor of SC with one game still out. Turns out the reason that game took longer was because it was being carefully recounted. After several more tantalizing minutes, we all learned that Chad Harris (Clemson, SC) and Brett Haughney (Asheville, NC) had played to a 448-448 tie. This was just enough to give the edge to SC, 40.5-39.5.

“We were blessed with players driving in from over four hours away in many cases. Nancy and I live in Spartanburg, SC, in the NW corner of the state. On the SC team, we had, besides Nancy and myself, Chad Harris from Clemson, Mark Schmidt from Hilton Head, Victor Li from Columbia, Alan Riechman from Aiken, Linda Bianca from Myrtle Beach, and Denise Mahnken from Hilton Head.

“The NC seeds in order were Ryan Fischer from Charlotte, Brett Haughney from Asheville, Matthew Bernardina from Raleigh, Suhas Rao from Raleigh, Aaron Finkel from Asheville, Susan Blanchard from Charlotte, Jacob Cohen from Asheville, and Ricki Zameck from Chapel Hill.

“Several players brought fruit, baked goodies, etc. as snacks. In addition to having breakfast and lunch together, some players hung around afterwards for dinner and an extra fun SCRABBLE game, before leaving.

“Each December for the past several years, Siri Tillekeratne has flown here from Calgary for a week of intense SCRABBLE lessons and study. One day during that week, we hold a 10-game invitational tournament. This year will be the Siri IV. Several of the same players who were here for the Border Battle will be back for the Siri IV Invitational on December 14.

“The good SCRABBLE matches plus the camaraderie and friendships really make it a great experience. Plus Nancy's great lunches!”
Tournament Results

AUGUST 1-31

NSC EARLY BIRD (RESTRICTED) 8/5
1. Daniel Stock

1. Nigel Richards
2. Richard Spence
3. Suhas Rao
4. Randy Forrester

NSC DALLAS TX 8/6-10
1. Steve Glass
2. Bruce Shuman
3. Bryan Pepper

NSC LUNCH BIRD
DALLAS TX 8/6-10
1. Peter Barkman
2. Brandon Randall

NORWALK CT YOUTH A.M. 8/13
1. Jared Tilliss

NORWALK CT YOUTH P.M. 8/13
1. Seth Tilliss

BERKELEY CA 8/14
1. Nick Meyer
2. Mary Aline Stevens
3. Alan Whitman
4. Peter Smith

GUELPH ON CAN 8/14
1. Max Panitch
2. Sophia Ozorio
3. Shauna Petrie

BAYSIDE NY 8/20
1. Jeremy Hall
2. Woody Chen
3. Gerianne Abriano

DALLAS TX 8/20
1. Chris Cree
2. Pat Sanchez
3. Nancy Bratcher

EDMONTON AB CAN 8/20
1. Jarett Myskiw
2. Ed Guilbault

INDEPENDENCE OH 8/20
1. Jason Idalski
2. Flossie Swint
3. Cecilia Huber

MN-WI BORDER BATTLE (WGPO; RESTRICTED) 8/20-21
1. Charles Reinke
2. Mike Johnson

NC-SC BORDER BATTLE (UNRATED; RESTRICTED) 8/20
1. South Carolina (Nancy Gibson top player)

PINELLAS PARK FL 8/20
1. Bob Blyler

UTICA NY 8/20-21
1. Kate Fukawa-Connelly
2. Heather Drumm

UTICA NY (COLLINS) 8/20-21
1. Evans Clinchy

INDEPENDENCE OH 8/21
1. Dorcas Alexander
2. Gerry Smith
3. Dean Scouloukas
4. Brandon Zitzman

MOUNTAIN VIEW CA (WGPO) 8/21
1. Jeff Widergren

AUSTIN TX 8/27
1. Geoff Thevenot
2. Judy Newhouse

DURHAM NC 8/27
1. Matthew Bernardina
2. Noah Lieberman
3. David Klionsky
4. Amy Slaughter

FT. LAUDERDALE FL 8/27
1. Ron Tiebert
2. George Rogers
3. Marilena Souza

LINDEN MI 8/27
1. Jeff Fiszbein
2. Cheryl Melvin
3. Kathleen Washburn

STRATFORD ON CAN 8/27
1. Arie Sinke
2. Steve Ozorio
3. Sophia Ozorio
4. Allan Brown

VANCOUVER BC CAN 8/27-28
1. James Leong

LINDEN MI 8/28
1. Chuck Armstrong
New Faces

Since our last issue, 14 new faces have competed at NASPA, NSA, and WGPO tournaments. This month our featured “New Face” is Amy Slaughter, who won Division 4 at the Durham NC tournament on 8/27 (8-0 +384) to earn a 900 initial rating.

Amy Slaughter

Amy Slaughter, a 38-year-old Registered Nurse from Cary, NC, loves cooking, reading, playing piano, and spending time with her fiance, John Price, his kids, and the family cat, Corky. Although she has played SCRABBLE® since she was a teenager, she’d never attended a club or tournament until this March, when John, who had started going to a club in January, encouraged her to join him. “I always thought of myself as a pretty good player,” Amy said, “until I started playing in a club.”

The club they attend, the Triangle SCRABBLE® Club (Durham NASPA Club #623), is one of the nation’s most challenging. “I’m lucky that I get to play against some of the top rated players in North Carolina--folks like Matt Bernardina, Liz Gottlin, Flora Taylor. I find their anagramming skills and board knowledge really inspiring. Of course, the downside to playing against people who are so highly skilled is obvious: I don’t think I won a single game at club until I had been going for about two months. Humbling, for sure. Humiliating, even.” However, the encouragement she got from better players kept her determined to work on improving her game.

While Amy plays “a bit” on the Internet SCRABBLE Club (ISC) and uses the Hasbro app for the iPhone on a daily basis, she prefers club play for learning and retaining new words. She considers herself “pretty lazy” at studying. However, as she prepared for the Durham tournament she started studying harder. “I had already learned all the two-letter words earlier this year, and I’d been working on the threes and some of the top-10 bingo stems throughout the spring. I knew I needed to get some more threes under my belt before the tournament, and I tried to work on a couple of letters each day.” Because John was entering the tournament, too, they studied together.

“It’s great being in a relationship with a SCRABBLE player. We used Zyzzyva to quiz ourselves, and we also did a lot of out-loud review of the threes and bingo stems during our evening walks around the neighborhood. There’s something about saying the words out loud that helps me remember them.”

Because Amy had played with a clock at club, she was surprised how nervous she was at the beginning of the tournament. “I felt more comfortable after I made it through my first game with a win. That was the goal I set for myself--to win one game out of eight. The tournament was held in a place where I play once a week, so it helped that I was familiar
with the playing environment beforehand. My opponents were all really friendly and enthusiastic, and I enjoyed meeting so many new players.”

Amy surpassed her goal by far, winning all eight of her games. Some were close, though. “I had a couple of games where I got behind, including the round 8 game against Midori Salgado. When I’m down, I struggle to maintain any kind of mental toughness and it often costs me games. I am happy that I was able to stay calm and focused on making the best plays I could find.” Among the bingos she played during the tournament, four were challenged by her opponents: TENNIES, FRAULEIN, BLOUSED, and ANTIRED.

The best moment of the tournament for Amy was when the tournament director announced that she had won her division. “I felt really validated and supported by all the other people there that day, especially my fellow club members who were all playing in higher divisions. Also, the tournament director announced that John and I are engaged, and referred to us as an ‘up and coming SCRABBLE power couple.’ I am embarrassed to admit how cool that was for me, but there you go. It was awesome. I am a dork.”

Amy suggests that new tournament players get used to playing with a clock before entering a tournament. “Don’t worry so much about the holes in your vocabulary, and don’t try to learn lots of new words the week of the tournament.” She also recommends getting plenty of sleep the night before.

Amy plans to attend more tournaments, and she is looking forward to playing in a local tournament in January for the benefit of the Pediatric Blood and Marrow Transplantation Program at the Duke Comprehensive Cancer Center (click here for tournament details).

And beyond that?

“John and I talk about how cool it would be to go to Nationals one day!”

Welcome to Amy Slaughter and the following other new faces:

NATIONAL SCRABBLE CHAMPIONSHIP, DALLAS TX 8/6-10: Chalomrit Sayavesa

NORWALK CT  8/13: Hugh Tanchuck, Judy Umlas

NORWALK CT YOUTH A.M. 8/13: Harrison Tanchuck, Nicholas Wein

GUELPH ON CAN 8/14: Hal Bond

BAYSIDE NY 8/20: Evan Rourke

MOUNTAIN VIEW CA 8/21: Jignesh Shah

DURHAM NC 8/27: Marybeth Epperly, Diana Levy, Adair Salgado

VANCOUVER BC CAN 8/27-28: Kim Proulx

LINDEN MI 8/28: Fay Holmquist
A 3-D Grid for Practicing 5s

By David Lewis

[Editor’s note: This puzzle was intended for our last issue but was inadvertently left out. Apologies!]

I’ve enjoyed doing Jeff Kastner’s “Word Star” puzzles in The Last Word. I was reminded of another puzzle arrangement that has occasionally appeared in the New York Times, done by the Puzzlemaster himself, Will Shortz.

The letters appear in two layers, each 3x3, and also connected front-to-back. Each of the nodes in this grid contains a letter from the phrase “DO GREAT AT NATIONALS.” The O in the back is also connected to the A, I, N, and L in the back and to the E in the front layer.

Find as many five-letter words as you can by following the connections between the balls. You may use a letter a second or third time if you come back to it. For example, the word SLATS can be made by starting from the S and ending at the S in the rear layer. However, you can’t make STALL, because you can’t stay on the same spot twice in a row.

There are 20 possible 5s. The source for answers is The Official Tournament and Club Word List, 2nd Edition (OWL2).

ANSWERS on next page.

David Lewis is an active club player in Connecticut. He can be reached at david_b_lewis@yahoo.com.
### 3-D Grid for Practicing 5's

#### Answers

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By Connie Creed

There will be a wealth of “Word Freaks” on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania this academic year. It has been declared the “Year of Games,” and Penn in conjunction with Philly Plays SCRABBLE® will host the monthly Philadelphia SCRABBLE® tournaments on campus this upcoming season, encouraging student participation through its newly revitalized SCRABBLE Club.

The university will sponsor NASPA membership for all student participants and has provided Houston Hall, a sunlit, mahogany appointed, spacious gem, for our playing room. Word Freak author and Penn alumnus, Stefan Fatsis, will be on hand for the kickoff event on September 18th. He will be playing in the tournament and signing copies of the newly released 10th anniversary edition of his New York Times bestselling book about the subculture of competitive SCRABBLE. The new edition includes a 30-page afterword on the last decade in SCRABBLE -- changes in the words, the politics and the personalities in the game. Stefan became an instant SCRABBLE celeb with his original publication, and he has been the inspiration and impetus for many players to pursue their passion for the game. For those of you who did not attend the Nationals this year, Stefan and his 10th anniversary edition, hot off the press, did a brief, but very well received book reading and offered up some extremely entertaining and poignant anecdotal reminiscences. The Word Freak anniversary edition will be on sale at the September tournament.

I am very excited about this ambitious joint venture. The endeavor is aimed at promoting tournament SCRABBLE® on campus, and our goal is to attract ten new college players each month. Our community needs new blood and more young people if we want to keep tourney play alive and thriving. As you know, Hasbro only supports School SCRABBLE® up to the 8th grade. If this program is successful in Philly, it can be a blueprint for similar programs around the country, possibly spurring Hasbro into reconsidering its current position. I hope I can count on the local community, and possibly more far-reaching than the local community, of NASPA players for their support. Involving this undergraduate demographic is a win/win situation for competitive SCRABBLE®.

The 2011-2012 academic year will culminate in a Best of Philly, “City Six,” intercollegiate championship. Participants will include student teams from the following local Philadelphia universities: Penn, Temple, Drexel, LaSalle, St. Joseph’s and Villanova.

I look forward to seeing many new and old faces across the boards in the upcoming months and hope the “Year of Games” will be a huge success for the University of Pennsylvania and competitive SCRABBLE®.

For more information about Penn's Year of Games, visit www.yearofgames.org.
**Scrab-doku**

*By Jeff Kastner*

In a standard Sudoku, your object is to fill in every square of the grid so that all nine rows across, all nine columns down, and all nine 3-by-3 boxes contain the numbers 1 through 9, with no repeats.

Same rules apply to this Scrab-doku, but I’ve added a few twists to help you solve it. First of all, I use letters to replace the numbers. These letters are part of a “Keyword,” which I’ve scrambled below. I’ve also provided a clue to help you find the correct anagram. Once you’ve unscrambled the Keyword, one of the rows or columns will contain all of its 9 letters in the proper order.

This week’s “Scrambled” Keyword: HAZIER MUT

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**Scrab-doku Puzzle for: Sept 2011**

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“Scrambled” Keyword: HAZIER MUT

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**Clue:**

TV’s Granny Clampett brewed moonshine by the “cee-ment pond” of her Beverly Hillbilly mansion, claiming it was “medicine” to remedy this ailment….

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**Solution** on the page after next.
**Word-Finder Challenge:**

Here’s an additional test of your anagramming ability. **Your object is to find as many words as possible that contain the letter “Z”, using only the 9 letters of this month’s (Scrambled) Keyword: HAZIER MUT.**

Words can be of any length, from 2 to 9 letters, and must be OWL2 acceptable. Each letter of the Keyword may be used only once within any word you find. So, for instance, ZA and ZIT are acceptable, but not ZITI or ZZZ.

**Par Scores for this month’s Word-Finder Challenge:**

10 Words (Novice); 15 Words (Intermediate); 19 Words (Advanced)

Once you’ve compiled your list, check out my SOLUTION on the next page.

See you next month with another Scrab-doku puzzle and Word-Finder Challenge! …Jeff Kastner

Jeff Kastner, originally from New York City, has been living in Phoenix, AZ since 1985. Jeff is one of a handful of players who has ever been ranked in the USA-top-50 in both SCRABBLE® and chess. He is the 2009-2010 Phoenix SCRABBLE® Club champion as well as the 2008 and 2009 Scottsdale SCRABBLE® Club champ.
Scrab-doku Solution for: Sept 2011

Unscrambled Keyword: RHEUMATIZ

Word-Finder List

Keyword (Unscrambled): RHEUMATIZ (23 “Z” Words Total)

AZIMUTH  AZURE  AZURITE  HAZE  HAZER  HAZIER
HERTZ  IZAR  MAIZE  MAZE  MAZER  MAZIER
MIRZA  RAZE  RHEUMATIZ  RITZ  TZAR  ZAIRE
ZAIRE  ZETA  ZIRAM  ZIT  ZITHER
Friday July 8

On Friday morning, our weather was cool and clear. We arrived at the ship terminal, checked our luggage, registered, and were onboard Royal Carribean’s “Rhapsody of the Seas” by noon. Just in time for the lunch buffet.

We had a group meeting before dinner, and everyone was introduced to one another. We had two families within the group. Leesa and Rob Berahovich had their three boys, along with Leesa’s father, Morris Friedell. David Whitley was joined by five members of his family from Texas. Two of my Dickinson College classmates, Sully Harwell and Maureen Hayes, took their first cruise with us. It was an anomaly that the non-SCRABBLE players outnumbered the players on this voyage.

Our three tables, in the Edelweiss Restaurant, were right by the windows. This evening comedian Don Barnhart, who has his own show in Las Vegas, entertained us in the Broadway Melody Lounge. In 2010 Barnhart won the Bob Hope Comedy Award for entertaining the troops overseas.

Saturday, July 9

For our first full day at sea, the skies were sunny; the air was cool and fresh; and the water was like a still pond. The Captain commented in his noon address that this was one of the calmest days he had ever seen in the Alaska Inland Passage.
We played six games of SCRABBLE® in a private Conference Center room. The Berahovich family, Leesa and Rob, led the way in their respective divisions. The second place contenders were Aldo Cardia and Marion Brien.

For everyone who was not playing SCRABBLE, there were an abundant number of activities for cruisers of all ages. A sampling of events included fitness classes; trivia contests; aquadynamics in the pool; seminars; sports tournaments; a port and shopping show; Wii games; horse racing at sea; a blackjack tournament; bingo; a movie, “Just Go With It;” a family scavenger hunt; and a variety of musical entertainment throughout the ship. Royal Caribbean has one of the best programs for children, providing activities for different age levels all day long.

Following our first formal dinner, the quintet “Tribute” presented a salute to the Motown sensations, the Temptations. In the Viking Crown Lounge, a 70s disco inferno party was hosted by DJ George until the wee hours. We set our clocks back an hour before going to bed.

Sunday, July 10

The morning weather was spectacular as we cruised into the Gastineau Channel for our 11AM arrival into Juneau, the capital of Alaska. Juneau was established in 1906, and is only accessible by sea and air. Today, we would have 18 hours of daylight to enjoy the city and surrounding area.

This part of Alaska has been inhabited for thousands of years by the native cultures of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people. In the 1880s, gold was discovered in Gold Creek, Quartz Gulch, and Silver Bow Basin, and fortune hunters arrived from all over the world. Magnificent fjords lie along the coast and the Mendenhall Glacier is one of the top tourist attractions.

A variety of activities are available to visitors in Juneau. In the city, local points of interest include the Last Chance Mining Museum; the St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church; the Alaska State Capitol; the Juneau-Douglas City Museum; and the Alaska...
State Museum. Another major attraction is the Mt. Robert's Tram, with exhilarating views of the surrounding area, a theatre, a restaurant, a nature center, and hiking trails. Beyond Juneau, visitors may reach the Macaulay Salmon Hatchery; Douglas Island and the Treadmill Mine; and Glacier Bay National Park and Gustavus, the entry point to the park.

Special explorations were available through the ship’s excursion desk for walking tours, trolleys, bike trips, floatplanes, helicopters, fly fishing, kayaking, river rafting, whale watching, mine tours, gold panning, hiking, salmon bakes, sport fishing, dog sledding, and halibut fishing. Something for everyone!

At 8PM, the Rhapsody of the Seas set sail for Skagway. After dinner, the Royal Caribbean Singers and Dancers presented “Piano Man,” a tribute to Billy Joel, Elton John, Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles and Barry Manilow. A variety of dancing and music were offered at seven different venues on the ship until midnight or later.

Monday, July 11 (7-11-11)

A lucky day and the weather was perfect for our visit to the historic mining town of Skagway. Daytime high temperatures were in the low 70s.

In 1900, Skagway was the first incorporated town in Alaska. Two years earlier, the Klondike Gold Rush began in what had been a tranquil Tlingit village. A hundred thousand prospectors set up camp for the trek up the mountain to the White Pass Summit and the gold fields in Dawson City, Canada. The Northwest Canadian mounties stopped the prospectors at the border and required them to have enough provisions for one year to keep them from dying of famine. This required up to 30 round trips for each prospector to bring their provisions up to the summit, a 16-mile hike in each direction.
The number-one tourist attraction in Alaska is the White Pass and Yukon Railroad, a narrow gauge train that travels along one of the two historic routes that the prospectors used. Some train excursions provided the opportunity to hike at the terminus on the Canadian side of the border. Another option is to take a small bus on the Klondike Highway that parallels the rail trip. The bus makes stops at the historic Skagway Cemetery and visits the ghost town, Dyea, about nine miles away. During the gold rush, Dyea was the beginning of the Chilkoot Trail, but the town went bust when an avalanche killed some of the “stampeders.”

There are about a hundred buildings and old wooden sidewalks in the historical section of Skagway, which is literally a one-street town: Broadway. Some of us watched a free 20-minute movie depicting the Klondike Gold Rush era in the Visitor Center at Broadway and 2nd Avenue. Next door there was a mining museum, which is part of the National Park Service.

The ship offered a wide variety of other excursions including: horseback riding, hiking and rafting, a salmon bake, a four-wheel-drive jeep adventure, helicopter flightseeing, dog sledding, bicycle tours, rock climbing and rappelling, nature hikes, hands-on glassblowing, gold panning, a zip line, and a brewery trip.

The Royal Caribbean Singers and Dancers presented a “Pure Country” show featuring country music selections from Patsy Cline to Tim McGraw and everything in between. The comedian, Don Barnhart, made an encore appearance with a late night comedy and hypnosis show.

**Tuesday, July 12**

It was another beautiful day for our morning cruise through the Tracy Arm Fjord. The Rhapsody of the Seas was the first ship allowed to enter the fjord at 5AM. It took the Captain about two hours to navigate the narrow, winding fjord, until we reached the Sawyer glacier. The ship was only about two hundred yards from the glacier and we were able to easily hear the thunder and view the huge chunks of ice that were calving. White, blue, and black floes of ice surrounded the ship near the base of the glacier. Everyone onboard had a good view of the glacier when the ship made a 180-degree turn in the water and began to leave the fjord at about 8AM.
While traversing the fjord, we saw numerous seals, otters, and birds. The scarred, sheer mountains rose thousands of feet on both sides of the ship, and waterfalls flowed from large snow packs near the peaks of the mountains. It was a breathtakingly awesome experience in near perfect weather conditions.

At 1PM, we resumed the SCRABBLE tournament and played three more games. Our leaders after nine rounds were David Whitley and Rob Berahovich. Tonight was our second formal night of the cruise, followed by a show by comedian and musician Glenn Smith, who was voted “best of Las Vegas,” and “The Not So Newlywed Game,” one of the popular evening activities.

**Wednesday, July 13**

Our final day at sea was spent cruising in the Pacific Ocean. The weather was cloudy and foggy all day, but it didn’t matter in the tournament game room. Jan Cardia was on fire and won all six games to win the NASPA event. Leesa finished second. In the WGPO tournament, Rob went wire to wire, winning all six of his games to take top honors. Marion Brien earned the runner-up spot.

Following dinner, the Royal Caribbean Singers and Dancers performed “Ballroom Fever.” The production featured International Dance Champions, Hana and Milan.

**Thursday, July 14**

Our day began with overcast skies and calm seas for our final port of call, Victoria, BC, the “City of Gardens.” Victoria enjoys a temperate climate year round. Victoria is a very British town with Edwardian architecture and numerous old churches and homes. The ivy-covered Fairmont Empress Hotel, which is one of the oldest hotels in Canada, attracts visitors for its renowned high tea. Canada’s “fittest city” offers a multitude of outdoor activities. In addition to Butchart Gardens and the Empress Hotel, the ship’s excursions offered whale watching, a trip to Craigdarroch Castle, a zip-line adventure, a trolley tour, and a walking tour of Victoria.

Two of our friends, Audrey Pelfrey and Marc Levesque,
live in Victoria and offered to take us to Butchart Gardens. The family-owned Butchart Gardens are the most visited site in Victoria, with about one million visitors a year. There are 55 acres of display gardens in this National Historic Site of Canada, and an additional 75 acres of the original estate. In 1904, Jennie Butchart began to develop the gardens from a barren limestone quarry. A few years later, the Butcharts acquired an adjacent cattle farm. Now the perfectly manicured grounds include the Sunken Garden, the Rose Garden, the Japanese Garden, and the Italian Garden. A variety of sculptures and fountains add to the beauty of the grounds. There are approximately 65-70 full-time gardeners who attend to the planting, pruning, and maintenance of the grounds. Hidden from sight are 22 greenhouses.

Butchart Gardens also features an indoor carousel, a seed and gift store, and two restaurants. During the summer, boat tours and Saturday night fireworks are offered. A separate attraction, the indoor Butterfly Gardens, are two miles away and house 35 species of imported tropical butterflies. (For more information, visit www.butchartgardens.com)

The final evening show was “Until We Meet Again,” a farewell performance. The headliner attraction was the comedy of “Chucky” and David Morgan.

Friday, July 15

We disembarked from the Rhapsody of the Seas around 8AM. This was our fifth cruise to Alaska’s inside passage, and there is no doubt that our weather was the best we have ever experienced.

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Know the Rules

By Jan Cardia, NASPA Rules Committee Chair

Jan Cardia, a longtime expert player and chair of the NASPA Rules Committee, writes this monthly column on rules for The Last Word. We are thrilled to have Jan sharing her rules expertise with our readers, and we encourage you to email any questions you may have about tournament and club rules to CorneliaSGuest@gmail.com. (Photo credit: Jill Jarrell)

Question:

I am wondering whether in a tile exchange it is legal to place some of the exchanged tiles back into the bag before drawing replacement tiles. For example: I place 5 tiles face down on the table with 2 separated from the other 3, announce that I am exchanging 5 tiles, put 2 tiles into the bag, draw 5 replacement tiles, and place the remaining 3 face-down tiles into the bag. According to rule IV.E.2.b.3, there is "no penalty" for doing this. My confusion arises because this rule appears under the heading "Improper Tile Exchanges." I am asking not only whether this procedure is technically legal, but also if it is considered sportsmanlike behaviour to do intentionally.

I asked this question to two directors, who answered that they thought such a tile exchange procedure was legal, but considered my question purely hypothetical since, they believed, it was never strategically intelligent to put exchanged tiles back into the bag to possibly be drawn again.

Thank you for considering my question.

Answer:

A "proper" exchange is made by placing the tiles to be exchanged face down and then drawing replacement tiles from the bag. If someone inadvertently puts old tiles back first, the player is not penalized. As other directors have told you, since there can be no perceived advantage to a player to put the exchanged tiles back in first, the player would not be penalized. HOWEVER, I would rule that once one tile has gone into the bag first, ALL tiles must go back into the bag first. Rule IV.E.2.b.3 states "putting the old tiles," and I would rule that it must be done in its entirety. There cannot be loose tiles in separate places that would allow for the possibility of intermingling.

Jan Cardia has been playing competitive SCRABBLE® for 32 years and in tournaments for 29 years. She has been a member of the Rules Committee since its inception. She divides her time between New York City with her husband, Aldo, and Delaware, where her children and grandchildren all reside.
One Up! Cup for September
By Timothy Cataldo

Calling all Smart Alecks! Every month we'll post a One Up! ‘game situation’ so you word heads out there can show everyone how brilliant and quick you are.

Here's all you need to know to play: Take one or more letters from the center and add them to an existing word to make a new word.

Since there won't be a 'right' answer, we'll be looking for originality, wit and wow! The winner will receive a One Up! and have his or her name put in the drawing for the Grand Prize at the end of the year, which will be a $250 gift certificate to Uppityshirts.com. Send your best guess to One Up! Cup.

Here are some of the very clever responses so far:

STROPPY + AEGHR = TYPOGRAPHERS -- Jeffrey L. Schwartz, New York, NY

DOLOR + AGE = DROOLAGE -- Shari, Pittsburgh, PA

August's winner is Mark Nandor, who sent us several excellent plays, and some food for thought:

For my answer, I was thinking about being cute ("his translation of the CUNEIFORM inscription is currently UNCONFIRMED by the archaeological community"), or going for the largest point difference ("from SIMMER to MONETARISMS"), or the most obscure ("YIKES, exclaimed the fungus, I can't make this wood rotten because it has been KYANISED!"). Instead...

I decided to go for profound. Not worth many points, and extremely easy to find. However, I remembered my Proust! His taste of madeleine cake dipped in tea inspired (or at least provided the impetus for) much of the rest of his classic, In Search of Lost Time. So that particular SIMMER inspired a brilliant set of MEMOIRS.

By the way, an idea for One Up! Cup, if you haven't tried it before: volume! For instance, over the course of some of my sleepless nights I found over 130 possible moves in the August game. Just a thought... (Incidentally, probably my next favorite after SIMMER to MEMOIRS I found just last night: the old Yiddish mother watched her TZIMMES SIMMER (reusing the uppity as a Z, of course).

Thanks Mark, and everyone else who entered. BTW, we've updated the website to make it easier to submit an entry, and to share One Up! on Facebook. Spread the word, spread the word.
SCRABBLE® and Scrabblers in the News
Edited by Judy Cole

See something about SCRABBLE or a SCRABBLE player in the news? Let us know! Send your stories to Judy Cole (judithcole@msn.com).

Dateline: Dallas
The Dallas (TX) National SCRABBLE® Championship garnered its share of press coverage, including:

• National SCRABBLE® Association (08/10/2011) – This press release reported that Nigel Richards is only the second person after Joe Edley to win the National Championship three times. Nearly 350 players ranging in age from 12 to 81 came from 40 states and 4 countries came to Dallas to compete in the championship.

• The two-way (08/10/11) – NPR’s news blog noted that the king, Nigel Richards, retained his crown and cited some of the unusual words played - ALEVIN, JAUP, TZIGANE, and QAT.

• About.com (08/10/2011) – Nigel Richards averaged 434 points per game and had the following high-scoring plays in the final game: SCHmEAR (95), LOAMIER (78) and TAXIES (68).

AUGUST MILESTONES

JESSE DAY reached 2000 for the first time at the Dallas (TX) National SCRABBLE® Championship.

SCOTT JACKSON reached 1900 for the first time at the Dallas (TX) National SCRABBLE® Championship.

DORCAS ALEXANDER reached 1700 for the first time at the Independence (OH) tournament.

RICHARD SPENCE reached 1700 for the first time at the Dallas (TX) National SCRABBLE® Championship.

JIM BURLANT reached 1700 for the first time at the Austin (TX) tournament.

KEVIN LEEDS reached 1700 for the first time at the Austin (TX) tournament.

MATT CANIK reached 1700 for the first time at the Edmonton (AB) tournament.

JARETT MYSKIW reached 1600 for the first time at the Norwalk (CT) tournament.

PETER BARKMAN reached 1600 for the first time at the Dallas (TX) National SCRABBLE® Championship.

SUHAS RAO reached 1600 for the first time at the Dallas (TX) National SCRABBLE® Championship.

DANIEL CITRON reached 1600 for the first time at the Dallas (TX) National SCRABBLE® Championship.

ROLAND FILIO reached 1600 for the first time at the Dallas (TX) National SCRABBLE® Championship.

JACOB BERGMANN reached 1600 for the first time at the Dallas (TX) National SCRABBLE® Championship.

JOE SOUTH reached 1600 for the first time at the Akron (OH) tournament.

TRAVIS CARLSON reached 1500 for the first time at the Dallas (TX) National SCRABBLE® Championship.

JACK OVERBY reached 1500 for the first time at the Dallas (TX) National SCRABBLE® Championship.

STEVEN KARP reached 1500 for the first time at the Dallas (TX) National SCRABBLE® Championship.
Destination: Dallas

Local press put the spotlight on players heading to or from the National SCRABBLE® Championship held in Dallas (TX) from August 6 through 10, 2011.

- Aiea (HI) resident Kenji Matsumoto, who was competing in his eighth championship since 2000, placed 2nd in Division A. Honolulu Star-Advertiser (08/11/2011) http://www.staradvertiser.com/news/breaking/127533918.html

- Roseville (MN) resident Jim Kramer, who placed 4th in Division A, is the 2006 National Champion and a proofreader by trade. Jim, who was in 2nd place going into the final game, commented that it was the most exciting finish for a national with four players in contention. Roseville Patch (08/05/2011) http://roseville.patch.com/articles/roseville-man-a-word-warrior; Roseville Patch (08/16/2011) http://roseville.patch.com/articles/roseville-man-goes-down-to-wire-in-scrabble-championship

- Yale alumnus Jesse Day, who was in 1st place going into the last day of competition and ended in 5th place in Division A, relished the opportunity to play high-level games against some of the best players in the world. Yale Daily News (08/13/2011) http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2011/aug/13/day-09-finishes-fifth-national-scrabble-championsh/

- Cape Elizabeth (ME) resident Joey Mallick, who placed 9th in Division A, plays tournament SCRABBLE® for the same reasons that most players do: “I love the competition, the camaraderie, the community.” His father jokingly advises the unwary competitor: “If he ever asks you to play for money, say no. Don’t do it.” The Cape Courier (08/17/2011) http://capecourier.com/archive/20110817.pdf

- Port Jefferson (NY) resident Joe Edley, who placed 18th in Division A, cited the camaraderie from experts down to novices at the National SCRABBLE® championship. When asked for his best play, Joe recalled the time that played JIUJITSU through an S for 248 points.


- Moraga (CA) native Conrad Bassett-Bouchard, who placed 18th in Division A, likes to play the drums, Ultimate Disc golf, and SCRABBLE®. Lamorinda Patch (08/03/2011) http://lamorinda.patch.com/articles/azoic-moraga-scrabble-champ-heads-to-texas-for-national-tournament

- Toronto (ON) resident Robin Pollock Daniel, who placed 36th in Division A, commented, “You don’t have an idea of the intricacy and beauty of the game until you start playing it at a competitive level.” Toronto Sun (08/07/2011) http://www.torontosun.com/2011/08/07/word-power
SC R A B B L E  I N  T H E  N E W S

• University of Arizona graduate **Nathan Benedict**, who placed 66th in Division A, loves the X but is less enamored of the Q even though his highest scoring play – MESQUITE for 221 points – featured a Q. *Arizona Daily Star* (08/06/2011) [http://azstarnet.com/news/local/article_fe05bad7-82af-5e04-a16c-223dc73e46a8.html](http://azstarnet.com/news/local/article_fe05bad7-82af-5e04-a16c-223dc73e46a8.html)


To Rome with Lipe

The *Utica Observer-Dispatch* (07/30/2011) interviewed Rome (NY) SCRABBLE® player **Chris Lipe** after he qualified for the US team going to the World SCRABBLE® championship in Poland this fall.

Chris first played in a tournament in New Hartford (NY) six years ago and after an uninspired beginning, quickly rose to expert status through hard work and determination. Chicago (IL) player **Jeremy Cahnman**, who joined the tournament circuit at the same time, terms Chris “one of my favorite people to play against.”

In describing his strategy, Chris listed the factors considered before playing a word – the primary concern being the number of points a move will score. Other factors include what tiles he’d like to keep, what tiles he’d like to play, and what areas on the board he’d like to open up. But, all things being equal, Chris will make a longer play and see what new tiles he’ll pull from the bag. [http://www.uticaod.com/m/top/x643156830/Local-Scrabble-star-has-top-class-skill?img=2](http://www.uticaod.com/m/top/x643156830/Local-Scrabble-star-has-top-class-skill?img=2)

See and Play

A new study by **Ian Hargreaves** and colleagues from the University of Calgary in Canada concludes that competitive SCRABBLE® players are visual word recognition experts with a degree of skill that pushes the end point of what was previously deemed possible.

Competitive SCRABBLE® players surpassed non-players significantly in the following skills:

• Coming up with words beginning with a specific letter
• Anagramming accurately
• Judging whether a word was real
• Recognizing words with a vertical orientation
• Picking up abstract words

SCRABBLE® Fundraisers

SCRABBLE® tournaments and events as fundraisers are in the news:

• **The ARC of Monmouth (NJ)** - SCRABBLE® by the Sea raised more than $6,000 in Asbury Park (NJ) on August 20, 2011 to support the ARC’s mission of helping people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

  **Brett Colby**, a development associate at the ARC, recruited SCRABBLE® expert **Jason Keller** to direct the 3-game unrated tournament and to offer two workshops as warmups to the main event.

  Press coverage leading up to the event included:


• **Literacy Advance of Houston (TX)** - SCRABBLE® and the City was held on July 21, 2011, at the Saint Arnold Brewing Company. The Spellbound and Lexicologists teams from Centerpoint Energy won the championship title and the coveted traveling trophy, Mr. T.

  Houston sports broadcaster **Milo Hamilton** provided play-by-play coverage and awarded 500 extra points to the first team to spell out his catchphrase “Holy Toledo!”

  Prizes were awarded for best team name - Scrabble Dabble Doo – to the team from Really Deally, Inc., and for best team costume to the Houston Public Library team, who played as the Scurvy Scrabblers in pirate regalia. [http://www.yourhoustonnews.com/greater_houston/entertainment/article_ca6fa2a8-c2a3-11e0-b31a-001cc4c03286.html](http://www.yourhoustonnews.com/greater_houston/entertainment/article_ca6fa2a8-c2a3-11e0-b31a-001cc4c03286.html)

• **The Connection Homeless Shelter** – The winning words at the annual SCRABBLE® Scramble on August 13, 2011, were WHEYISH and HYDRATES for 107 points. Along a route in Centennial Park in North Platte (NB), 27 cyclists made six stops to collect SCRABBLE® letters and to then

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**Tiger Woods of the Gulf**

On June 25, 2011, Mohammad Sulaiman of Dubai (UAE) defended his title of Gulf SCRABBLE® Champion and thereby earned a slot at the World SCRABBLE® championship in Poland this fall. More than 40 players from throughout the region competed in the 21st Gulf Scrabble Championship (GSC).

Sulaiman was once described by Causeway Challenge organizer Michael Tang as "the Tiger Woods of SCRABBLE®" for his reclusive nature and mastery of the game. *The National* (08/05/2011) [http://www.thenational.ae/lifestyle/well-being/uae-scrabble-champion-places-big-value-on-small-words?pageCount=2](http://www.thenational.ae/lifestyle/well-being/uae-scrabble-champion-places-big-value-on-small-words?pageCount=2)

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**Luckbox**

To test the extent to which luck affects the outcome of a SCRABBLE® game, Andrew C Thomas, a professor in Statistics at Carnegie Mellon University, used Quackle to have two equally matched “players” play the same sequence of tiles in a series of games.

In the study, 100 simulated matches are played for each sequence: the average score difference between Player 1 and Player 2 is then a measure of how "lucky" that sequence is for Player 1. Thomas repeated this process for 10,000 different random sequences.

Thomas made the following conclusions:

- The blank is worth about 30 points.
- Each S is worth about 10 points to the player who draws it.
- The Q is a burden to whichever player receives it and equivalent to a 5-point penalty.
- The J is neutral pointwise.
- The X and the Z are each worth about 3 to 5 extra points to the player who receives them.
- Going first is worth about 14 points.


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**Missing Tiles**

Seattle (WA) artist Jennifer Phillips creates jewelry by covering one side of a SCRABBLE® tile with a miniature oil painting.

Unfortunately, Jennifer lost her latest collection when a thief smashed a window in her Jeep and took a box that contained the jewelry. KOMO 4 TV (08/13/2011) [http://www.komonews.com/news/local/127667518.html](http://www.komonews.com/news/local/127667518.html)
As a result of the TV report, workers at MIH (Make It Happen Studios), which helps young artists realize their dreams, helped Jennifer when they found a box containing the stolen jewelry at a bus stop.

Jennifer will now be able to showcase the jewelry as planned at an upcoming show in Portland (OR). KOMO 4 TV (08/22/2011)  http://www.komonews.com/news/local/128227458.html

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**Throwing in the Towel**

Bedford (TX) player **Mary Rhoades** traveled to Houston to a tournament where the hotel provided only one set of towels to each room. After repeated requests for a second set of towels for her roommate, Mary swiped a set of towels from the housekeeping cart.

Her plight was featured in a recent investigation by Frommer’s on hotel towels: “That's ridiculous! Housekeeping secrets of your hotel towels.” http://www.wfmj.com/story/14859617/thats-ridiculous-housekeeping-secrets-of-your-hotel-towels

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**What's Your Sign?**

The Queens (NY) street sign commemorating Jackson Heights as the birthplace of SCRABBLE® is still missing, but the story of how it got there is now known.


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**SCRABBLE® Olympics**

The Redford (MI) Community Center was the site of the SCRABBLE® event in the Wayne County Senior Olympics open to players between the ages of 50 and 90.

**Michael Valente** of Redford Township, who had been in training with other players, won a gold medal in Division A, thereby surpassing last year's second place showing. The SCRABBLE® event attracted 13 Olympians in 4 divisions. *Observer & Eccentric* (08/21/2011) http://www.hometownlife.com/article/20110821/NEWS16/108210476
SCRABBLE® Celebrities
Celebrities share our love of the game.

*During a guest appearance on *Lopez Tonight* (08/02/2011), Tom Felton – Draco to fans of Harry Potter – revealed that he and co-star Daniel Radcliffe engaged in a heated game of SCRABBLE® at the wrap party for the movie series.

There was no word on whether QUIDDITCH# was played. [http://www.digitalspy.com/celebrity/news/a333123/harry-potters-tom-felton-daniel-radcliffe-got-heated-over-scrabble.html](http://www.digitalspy.com/celebrity/news/a333123/harry-potters-tom-felton-daniel-radcliffe-got-heated-over-scrabble.html).

You can view the interview at [http://ohnotheydidnt.livejournal.com/61620992.html](http://ohnotheydidnt.livejournal.com/61620992.html).

• NPR listener Cecilia Le reports that in an August 27, 2011, interview, Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick said that he planned to play SCRABBLE® with his wife during Hurricane Irene.

• W.P. Kinsella, whose novel *Shoeless Joe* was the basis of the movie *Field of Dreams*, is a founding member of the Hope (BC) SCRABBLE® Club, which meets Wednesday evenings at the Grace Baptist Church. *Agassiz Harrison Observer* (08/12/2011) [http://www.bclocalnews.com/fraser_valley/ahobserver/news/127621988.html](http://www.bclocalnews.com/fraser_valley/ahobserver/news/127621988.html).

• On the *Daily Show* (08/18/2011), actress Anne Hathaway confesses that she is a SCRABBLE® fiend to fellow fiend Jon Stewart. Anne advises Jon to know those high-scoring 2-letter words like XI and QI. Jon admits that his quest for the triple word play often causes him to overlook a better scoring play.

• Among the presents that country singer Chely Wright and activist Lauren Blitzer received at their August 20, 2011, wedding was a SCRABBLE® rug made by Lauren’s aunt Debbie. The Boot (08/20/2011) http://www.theboot.com/2011/08/20/chely-wright-wedding/

• Stephen Malkmus, front man for the band Pavement, always has plenty of SCRABBLE® games going on his iPhone and likes to dominate the competition. “Most people are pretty mediocre on there, so it’s good for my ego to play a lot.” Vulture (08/22/2011) http://nymag.com/daily/entertainment/2011/08/stephen_malkmus.html

• President Barack Obama takes his SCRABBLE® seriously even when on vacation on Martha’s Vineyard (MA). Harvard Law professor Charles Ogletree comments, “As you walk into a room and you see him, you see how relaxed, how unguarded, how open and funny, and yet how serious when it comes to playing SCRABBLE®.” Among his victims are senior adviser Valerie Jarrett. Washington Post (08/27/2011) http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/scrabble-anyone-drawn-to-familiar-comforts-obama-finds-refuge-with-close-friends-on-vacation/2011/08/27/gIQA4hOthJ_story.html

• Actor Alec Baldwin tweeted that he had assembled a survival kit for Hurricane Irene: “water, batteries, a SCRABBLE® dictionary, peanut M&Ms, a copy of Decision Points, and a Thigh Master.” Aces Showbiz (08/27/2011) http://www.aceshowbiz.com/news/view/00043238.html

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Hands Off

As seen on the BBC (08/04/2011), St. Johnsbury (VT) SCRABBLE® player Kevin Colosa attended and performed at the Hands Off festival celebrating the theremin in Scarborough (UK). http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-14396967
Cool Down


Meanwhile, residents of Clarksville (TN) beat the heat at the Dunbar Cave State Park. The friends of Dunbar Cave hosted Cooling by the Cave, an event to recreate how people survived the summer heat before air conditioning. *The Leaf Chronicle* (07/31/2011) [http://www.theleafchronicle.com/article/20110731/NEWS01/107310342/Few-places-cooler-than-a-cave?odyssey=tab|mostpopular|text|FRONTPAGE](http://www.theleafchronicle.com/article/20110731/NEWS01/107310342/Few-places-cooler-than-a-cave?odyssey=tab|mostpopular|text|FRONTPAGE)

Listen to Laurie


*Judy Cole is co-director of the Lexington (MA) NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #108 and solves crossword puzzles when not playing SCRABBLE®.*
LINDA'S LIBRARY

Linda’s Library
By Linda Wancel

As an avid reader and book lover, I have found that many other Scrabblers also share my passion for books and for reading. So I am happy to have this opportunity to share some of my favorite books with you. These reviews, for the most part, were written for Amazon.com, where I have been writing reviews under a pseudonym for over ten years. I hope that the book lovers among you may find your interest piqued by some of these books.

Fiction:

The Ruins
By Scott Smith

Ever since this author blazed across the literary consciousness during the mid 1990s with A Simple Plan, his blockbuster tale of greed and suspense, fans have been waiting and clamoring for another book by this author. While I was surprised by the author's foray into an unexpected genre, that of horror fiction, having now read the book I can fully understand why the master of the macabre himself, Stephen King, has proclaimed it to be "the best horror novel of the new century." I would not disagree. It is simply a masterpiece.

Two young American couples, Jeff, Amy, Eric, and Stacy travel to Mexico to spend three weeks in August frolicking on the beaches of the Yucatan peninsula before Jeff and Amy embark on their medical school careers. There they become friendly with a young English-speaking German tourist, Mathias, and three fun-loving Greeks. All in their early twenties, they hang out and party together.

Mathias then reveals that he had been on vacation with his younger brother, Heinrich, and the two had quarreled. Heinrich had apparently met a young woman with whom he had become smitten, and when she left him to go work on an archeological dig in Coba, he had followed in hot pursuit. Heinrich left Mathias a note detailing why he was abandoning him and a somewhat sketchy map of where he was headed.

When Mathias decides to go after his brother, he persuades the Americans and one of the Greeks to accompany him. Believing this to be just a day excursion, these six intrepid travelers pack lightly and set out on their adventure. Despite a warning from a well-meaning native not to proceed, they continue on their way, traipsing through jungle. When they arrive at a remote Mayan village, they know that they are close to their objective. Soon after reaching their destination, however, it becomes clear that they wish that they had never set eyes nor foot upon the place. What unfolds is simply horrific.

This is a horror novel that is relentless in its pacing, building the tension and suspense slowly, while creating an atmosphere of sheer and utter dread. What makes the story so stunning is the author's
description of the events as they unfold within the novel, and the perceptions and reactions of those who are living the nightmare. This is a finely wrought work of horror fiction, beautifully nuanced and well-written, that will ensnare the discerning reader. I simply could not put it down!

**The Ruins is available at Amazon.com.**

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**Nonfiction:**

**The Lost King of France: How DNA Solved the Mystery of the Murdered Son of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette**

*By Deborah Cadbury*

This well-written and compelling work of nonfiction recounts the political events that led up to the French Revolution and the tragedy that befell the royal family, Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, and their two living children, Louis-Charles and Marie-Therese. It gives insight into just how the royal family was treated after the revolutionists were in charge.

The book details the terms of their imprisonment in Temple Tower. It is almost hard to believe the cruelty with which they were met. The heartbreak of the King and Queen is palpable as they realized what fate had in store for them. Moreover, their fear for the fate of their children must have been an incalculable agony, piercing the heart and soul of the King and Queen.

While the indignities imposed upon the King and Queen were insufferable, once the royal couple met their fate at the guillotine, what was done to the now eight-year-old King Louis XVII was downright cruel and inhuman. Barbaric beyond belief, his treatment was nothing short of shocking. While his thirteen-year-old sister was also cruelly treated, her experience paled in comparison to that of her once happy and cherubic little brother.

When Louis XVII was declared dead two years later, the fact that there was no marked grave sparked rumors that he had escaped and was still among the living. Over the years, many came forward claiming to be the lost King of France. It was not until the twenty-first century that the mystery was laid to rest, thanks to DNA testing and a heart purported to be that of Louis XVII.

This is a fascinating, well-researched book that will keep the reader turning the pages.

**The Lost King of France is available at Amazon.com.**

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_Linda Wancel loves reading, writing, watching films, traveling, and Scrabbling. She is the mother of 28-year-old twins and has recently retired after having been a criminal prosecutor for nearly 25 years._
Word Trivia Quiz

By Siri Tillekeratne

The following unique meanings are of new words added to the OSPD 4 in 2006. What are those words?

1. Pertaining to the native people of Ireland
2. A sauteed mixture of diced vegetables
3. A sweet Japanese cooking wine
4. A Japanese mustard
5. A cocktail with no alcohol
6. Provided with bumps of hard snow
7. A hairstyle marked by a stiff ridge of long hair from front to back
8. A substance secreted by white blood cells
9. A one-legged support for a camera
10. A glass panel in an automobile roof

ANSWERS ON THE NEXT PAGE

Siri Tillekeratne is a director of the Calgary NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #374 and a former Director of the Year.
ANSWERS

1. Pertaining to the native people of Ireland  MILESIAN
2. A sauteed mixture of diced vegetables  MIREPOIX
3. A sweet Japanese cooking wine  MIRIN/S
4. A Japanese mustard  MIZUNA/S
5. A cocktail with no alcohol  MOCKTAIL/S
6. Provided with bumps of hard snow  MOGULED
7. A hairstyle marked by a stiff ridge of long hair from front to back  MOHAWK/S
8. A substance secreted by white blood cells  MONOKINE/S
9. A one-legged support for a camera  MONOPOD/S
10. A glass panel in an automobile roof  MOONROOF/S
**Club News**

*Larry Sherman, Editor*

If you'd like your club to be considered for an article or if a newsworthy event has taken place at your club in the last month, please submit material to CorneliaSGuest@gmail.com.

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**Nick Ball’s 787 game at the Victoria Club**

Nick Ball scored a 787-point game against Jeeto Crone on August 2 at the Victoria (BC) NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #492. The final score was 787-325.

Nick played five bingos (including two 3x3 plays): CRAN(K)ILY (203), PETR(O)SAL (140), FAINTER (95), AGEEnDUM (84), and STERILE (72). In addition he played VEX for 54 points. There were no phonies.

Nick also benefited from his opponent’s two exchanges and two challenges.


**Victoria (BC) NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #492** meets on Tuesday nights from 6:00-9:00 p.m. at James Bay New Horizons Community Center, 234 Menzies St., Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Contact: Marc Levesque, 250-381-0569, marc.levesque@telus.net. Club Website: www.victoriascrabbleclub.org.

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**Dorcas Alexander shines**

Dorcas Alexander, who plays frequently at NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #352 in Pittsburgh, PA, won the top division in the one-day tourney at Independence, OH on August 21st. She gained 90 rating points for a new peak rating of 1720, and is now the second highest rated player in Pennsylvania.

**Pittsburgh (PA) NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #352** meets on Wednesday nights at 7:00 p.m. (except on holidays) in Squirrel Hill. Call for details. Contacts: Stan Angrist, 412-422-7878, sangrist@verizon.net; Terry Schroeder, msch@nauticom.net. Club Website: www.pghscrabble.com

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**Norma Marshall scores top word at Lexington Club**

The Lexington (MA) NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #108 just closed their season for the year, with Norma Marshall entering the record books for the season’s highest word: QUICKEST, 266 points.

**Lexington (MA) NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #108** meets on Thursday nights at 7:00 p.m. in the basement of the First Parish Unitarian Church, 7 Harrington Rd., Lexington, MA. Contact: Judy Horn, 781-942-7471, scrabbleclub108@aol.com. Club Website: www.wolfberg.net/scrabble/lexington. Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/groups/119298679388/
Craig Rowland’s 714 game at Mississauga Club

Craig Rowland joined the 700 Club on July 21 at the Mississauga (ON) NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #422 with a 714-399 game against Steve Ozorio. There were seven bingos played in the game, and no phonies.

After 17 plays Rowland had AEHILST on his rack. He writes: “I wanted to play HELIAST for 83 at D4; then Steve opened up a triple-triple when he laid down QUEY for 32. I saw HYALITES for 185 and rocketed to 527. My post-bingo pick was CEKMOPT. With four Es and a blank unseen, I fished off the M for UM for 16, then drew the blank. Steve set down CRESTAL for 76 and I played my fifth bingo with POCKeTED for 113. My score was now 656 with five tiles left in the bag. I drew AFINS, while Steve was left with BEEEFWX. My final two moves were SIFT for 30 (686), then AN for 12 (698) + Steve’s BEW = 714. My previous high score was 691, also in a phony-free Mississauga Club game. This sets a new Mississauga Club as well as a personal record. Thanks, Steve, for this cumulative 1113-point game.”


Mississauga (ON) NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #422 meets on Thursday nights at 7:30 p.m. at Erin Mills Church Centre, 3535 South Common Court, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. Contact: Craig Rowland, 905-272-6843, scrabblecraig@yahoo.com. Club Website: www.mississaugascrabble.com.

Tim Bottorff’s 704 game at Casselberry Club

On June 20th Tim Bottorff scored a 704-pt game at the Casselberry (FL) NASPA SCRABBLE Club #438, featuring DOUGHIER (203).

“I won 704-293. My plays included four bingos -- DOUGHIER (203), COEDITOR (74), BRATTIER (83), and PILEATE (73) -- plus BUQSHA (63) and several 30-point plays. My opponent had RIOTING (79) and NEEDIEST (68).

“On his final turn my opponent played FREONS*. I was pretty sure it was not valid (in our list), but I did not want to jeopardize getting a 700 game, so I accepted it and played out. My opponent also lost a challenge and played a phony, so I benefited greatly from his mistakes. So it feels a little tainted, but at least I didn't play any phonies.”

Casselberry/Orlando (FL) NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #438 meets on Monday nights at 7:00 p.m. at the Wirz Park Recreation Building, 806 Mark David Blvd., Casselberry, FL 32707, near Orlando. Contacts: Art Moore, 407-733-2095, lazyart@earthlink.net; Brian Miller, 407-580-1099, brian@buhmony.com. Club Website: www.orlandoscrabble.com.
If you play SCRABBLE on a regular basis you will understand this observation. We players take turns being in the spotlight; some of us more than others. But on any given day, in any given game/s, any one of us may shine so much brighter than the rest in our midst.

Take it from me, when it happens it is delicious. When it happens it can be unexpected. When it happens to me I become very talkative and giddy.

On the other hand, utterly dismal defeat can occur too. When all I can draw are vowels and more vowels, it seems that my opponent gets every high-point tile and the blanks as well. Sometimes I feel like grabbing the tile bag and board and heaving them across the room. (I actually saw one player melt down and do that at a tournament.) To date I have refrained from giving in to that urge.

Last evening there were an odd number of players at Club #350. Some of the time I will sit out when the games begin and hope that a straggler will appear and I will have a partner. Lynn Gunn arrived a little late, due to the traffic from work, and hurriedly set up her board so we could play game #1. Lynn quickly found HERDER and dropped it onto the board. Those of you who know me well understand that I can’t spell worth a darn, so you recognize that I was the dolt who then played AMONIA. Lynn didn’t mind and chose not to challenge because she was sitting there poised with THORN, and I provided a great spot for her play.

This is the point when I got excited. When Lynn played THORN I was sitting with EENOPTX. The word EXPONENT, through the N in THORN jumped out at me. Not that many points for a bingo, but a bingo just the same

A couple of turns later I extended EXPONENT with an IAL to EXPONENTIAL, feeling very proud of myself. The L sat directly above a TWS. I was certain in my mind that no letter could be added to the end of EXPONENTIAL.

Lynn jumped on it like greased lightning. She played LURKS with the S on the TWS under EXPONENTIAL.

I YELLED “CHALLENGE!”
Without a care in the world, I strolled up to the computer and typed in EXPONENTIALS, confident that it was a phoney. But Word Judge indicated “YES, the play is ACCEPTABLE.” My jaw dropped. Lynn earned 93 points and I did all the hard work. But that’s how the game of SCRABBLE goes sometimes.

I hate to lose, but this time I was so excited about Lynn’s great play that instead of moaning “poor me,” I felt the celebration in her spirit.

You can enjoy fun and learning experiences too. Support your local scrabble clubs. When in southern California plan to play with NASPA SCRABBLE Club #350 and/or at The 1st Sunday SCRABBLE® Tournament.
Word Star

By Jeff Kastner

Play Word Star, a word game with similarities to Boggle, created and presented each month by Phoenix, AZ expert Jeff Kastner.

The puzzle grid is in the shape of a hexagram...also known as the “Star of David.”

Your object is to find and list as many words as possible, using only the 7 letters contained in the Word Star puzzle. All words must be OWL2 or Long List acceptable.

There are 3 basic rules to finding words within a Word Star puzzle:

1. Words must be at least 3 or more letters long (with no limit on how long the word can be).

2. Words are formed by using letters that adjoin each other. For example, the words OXEN and TOP are acceptable, but not PENT, because the “P” and the “E” are not neighboring letters.

3. Letters within a word may repeat as many times as possible, as long as such letters are repeated twice (or thrice) in a row, or as long as Rule 2 is followed. So, for example, NEON and POOR are acceptable. But EXTORT would not be acceptable because the “X” and the “T” are not adjoining.

* Note that the Center Star, located in the white middle portion of the puzzle, is the most important letter. It is the only letter that adjoins each of the 6 others in the puzzle. In addition, there are bonus points awarded for using the Center Star as often as possible. The Center Star in this month’s puzzle is the letter “O.”
Multiple forms of the same word are acceptable (for example, RATE, RATED, RATER, Raters, and RATES would all be fine, if they were in the puzzle). No points are awarded (and no penalty points are assessed) for any entries on your word list that are not in the OWL2 or the Long List, or that do not adhere to the above rules.

Points are scored as follows:

- 2 Points for each WORD found.
- 5 Bonus Points for each BINGO (7 or more letters) found.
- 1 Point for each LETTER of every word found.
- 1 Bonus Point for each CENTER STAR of every word found.

Example of Points Scored:

Let's say a Word Star puzzle has an “S” as the Center Star letter, and your list consists of the following words:

ATTIRE
ATTIRES
SAT
SATE
SATIRE
SATIRES
TIRE
TIRES

Your score would be:

- 16 Points for the 8 WORDS found.
- 10 Bonus Points for the 2 BINGOS (ATTIRES and SATIRES) found.
- 42 Points for each of the 42 LETTERS used in the 8 words.
- 7 Bonus Points for each CENTER STAR used (the letter “S” is used 7 times).

TOTAL SCORE in this imaginary example = 75 Points.

Par Scores for this month’s Word Star:

215 points (Novice); 325 points (Intermediate); 400 points (Advanced)

Once you’ve compiled your list, check out my SOLUTION on the next page.

See you next month with another Word Star puzzle! …Jeff Kastner

Jeff Kastner, originally from New York City, has been living in Phoenix, AZ since 1985. Jeff is one of a handful of players who has ever been ranked in the USA-top-50 in both SCRABBLE® and chess. He is the 2009-2010 Phoenix SCRABBLE® Club champion as well as the 2008 and 2009 Scottsdale SCRABBLE® Club champ.
### SOLUTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EON</th>
<th>ONO</th>
<th>POOP</th>
<th>ROE</th>
<th>TOR</th>
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**PAR SCORES:** 215 points (Novice); 325 points (Intermediate); 400 points (Advanced)

**BEST SCORE:**
- 2 Points for each WORD found:
  - 68 Words = 136 points.
- 5 Bonus Points for each BINGO found:
  - 5 Bingos = 25 points.
- 1 Point for each LETTER of every word found:
  - 288 Letters = 288 points.
- 1 Bonus Point for each CENTER STAR of every word found:
  - 97 O’s = 97 points.

**TOTAL = 546 Points**
Diane’s DEFALTS

By Diane Firstman

Diane Firstman published her first book of DEFALTS, Generous to a DEFALT: Vol. 1-3, in 2006. Since then, she has published a second volume of her humorous alternative definitions to common (and not-so-common) words--DEFALTS Vol. 4--and selected DEFALTS have appeared in SCRABBLE® News and on the online SCRABBLE® discussion groups crossword-games-pro (cgp) and OSPD. The Last Word is pleased to offer the following selection of DEFALTS.

BEANLIKE: a cheap knock-off of an item from L.L. Bean

BELLBIRD: the bird responsible for bringing other bird's bags upstairs in birdhouse hotels

BENEDICK: 1) something beneficial to the work of a private eye; 2) to present an old-time New York hot dog to someone

BENTWOOD: an abused golf club

BESTROWS: 1) annual landscaping competitions, with prizes for skills like neatest hedge trimming; 2) the parts of a spreadsheet in which formulas have the most utility

BIGSTICK: a weapon to carry when speaking softly

BILLBUGS: "past due" collection notices

BILLFISH: using currency as bait (not to be confused with "sand dollars")

BIOSCOPE: trying to deal with a problematic PC Basic Input/Output System

BIOSCOPY: trying to deal with a problematic PC Basic Input/Output System by mimicking the exact settings of a similar computer

Diane Firstman is a lifelong New Yorker and has been playing SCRABBLE® competitively since 1994. When not thinking up DEFALTS, she attends crossword puzzle tourneys and writes on the New York Yankees for www.bronxbanterblog.com. She is adept at math, can reach items on top shelves in supermarkets, and does a dead-on impression of a sea lion. The collected “DEFALTS” are available at http://stores.lulu.com/dianagram.
From Brian Galebach:

I made a nice play in my round 23 game at Nationals versus David Whitley.

Me: 309, David 425
My rack: EFIRRS?
David's rack: DILNOPT

ANSWER on the following page.
I played out with (NIT)RiFiERS for 89. Although I still lost the game by 7 points, the closeness of the result probably helped me to win the "tough luck" prize for Division 1, which I achieved by losing 6 games by a combined total of 50 points.

Historic Moments: SCRABBLE® Throughout the Years

An Important Factor of a Bingo Challenge

By Stu Goldman

Having an idea of what your opponent will do can help win a game. This is evident in endgames when you should know, through tracking, what your opponent’s rack is. The same is true if you have successfully challenged a bingo. An excellent example of this comes from Confessions of a Compulsive Tile Pusher, when I had challenged ENERgIA, played by an expert known for occasional spelling gaffs.

"I tried to figure out what (he) would play next with AEEINR?. Spotting a V on the board in a position for starting a word, I felt certain that he would try VENERIAl. Knowing there is no I in VENEREAL, I left the V alone . . .

"After a moment of study he played his tiles exactly as I imagined he would. As he put them down, slowly and emphatically, I had the greatest feeling of power I have ever had while playing my favorite game."

Although that happened over 25 years ago, I have yet to experience again knowing that my opponent would play another phony after I challenged one off the board.

Stu Goldman lives in California and has been playing tournament SCRABBLE® for 37 years
Baltimore Newcomers Tournament Planned

Linda Oliva has come up with an interesting way to introduce newcomers to tournament SCRABBLE®. Alongside her sanctioned University of Baltimore tournament on September 10, she is offering a Scrabble Challenge for newcomers. This free newcomer event starts at 1:15 and will include a workshop and a three-game competition. She hopes to recruit new players for a club at the university and to see some newcomers at future tournaments.

Scrabble® Challenge

Got Game?

It’s your words against your opponents’

Saturday, September 10, 2011

at the University of Maryland Baltimore County

Come play America’s favorite word game. Learn new words and strategies to improve your skills.

TIME: Registration starts at 1 p.m. An informal strategy workshop will be held from 1:15 – 2 pm. A three game competition will start at 2 pm. This free event will end around 5 pm.

LOCATION: Sports Zone – The Commons – mezzanine level

FORMAT: Scrabble® games will be played one-on-one. Players with most wins and highest scores will earn certificates. Door prizes and word lists will be distributed.

Please RSVP by September 9th by e-mail. Boards and equipment will be provided.

Contact: Linda Oliva oliva@umbc.edu phone: 410 455-2382

The North American Scrabble Players Association has sanctioned a tournament for its members on this date starting at 10:15 am. If you are interested in participating in the rated tournament, please contact Linda Oliva.
DEATHS

STANLEY EDWARD WILLIAMS

On Sunday, August 14, we unexpectedly lost one of the good guys: Stan Williams, 69, a well-liked tournament player and regular attendee at club #333 (Downingtown, PA). His daughter Donna Gotshall writes: "He was visiting me in Hickory, NC, when he had extremely harsh abdominal pain and was admitted to the hospital. Unfortunately, exploratory surgery found a great deal and it became a much more intense surgery. My dad never regained consciousness and died just a few hours later."

Stan is survived by Donna and her sister, Lisa Schmoyer of Allentown, PA.

According to cross-tables.com, Stan began tourney competition in 2002, achieved a peak rating of 1532, and earned over $3,000 in prize money. His close friend, Sue Gable, wrote to c-g-p: "He was an old-fashioned guy who had done well in life through his own efforts and hard work and he enjoyed his retirement. His days were very disciplined and always included a several-mile walk, a lot of reading and a martini as soon as the clock hit 5. He liked things tidy and his inbox never had any leftover emails in it. He read them, dealt with them and deleted them. I was always in awe of his ability to keep his life so clean."

"One of the things I loved most about him was his volunteer work at Blankenburg Middle School, an inner-city school in Philly. I know he will be very missed there. He was a father figure to many of the kids. He ran a SCRABBLE club there after school and one of his proudest accomplishments was getting a team to the School Nationals in 2009. They did not win a lot of games but they had a great time and were amazed at the kids that they met there. They went back to Blankenburg as local heros and it actually became a cool thing to be one of Mr. Stan's Scrabblers. He affectionately called them his 'little bestids'. Stan, you will be greatly missed by all of us that knew you."

Stan, a retired CPA, was athletic, an avid reader, and a Phillies baseball phanatic. Katie Devanney wrote to c-g-p: "Stan was a fantastic SCRABBLE player, role model, and friend." And from Chris Lipe: "He remains one of the kindest people I've met in the six plus years I've been playing. To say he will be missed doesn't really capture the profound loss our community has suffered."

His daughters write that they greatly appreciate the email stories and condolences from Stan's SCRABBLE friends. "It’s wonderful to know how he’s touched the hearts and minds of so many.” Contributions in Stan’s memory may be made to the after-school program ASAP (www.phillyasap.org/Donate.aspx), Blankenburg Elementary school (c/o Sandra O'Keefe, 4600 West Girard Ave., Philadelphia 19131-4697), and/or the Chester County Library (www.ccls.org).

The memorial flyer prepared by Stan’s daughters is on the following page.
Stanley Edward Williams  
August 29, 1941 – August 14, 2011

Mr Stan as he was known at Blankenburg Elementary school - Consistent supporter in so many ways… helped start the Scrabble program, helped in many classrooms and with after-school programs, assisted with the basketball and track teams, chaperoned field trips. Had a positive impact on so many kids!

Read all of the time… Always had a book or two or more nearby – Good thing for the Kindle. Was all about continuous and self education.

Scrabble enthusiast – an understatement… always studied his 1000s of word cards, practiced daily online and on paper… continued to study Scrabble strategy… was a regular in a few Scrabble clubs and on the Scrabble tournament circuit.

The QUALITY of life was of the utmost importance.

Athletic – from marathoner to tri-athlete… walked 4+ miles/day to the end… Participated in all kinds of sports… Avid Phillies fan.

Never wanted to be a burden on anyone. Always generous and supportive in his own way.

Donna, Lisa and our families greatly appreciate everyone’s condolences and support.
Memorials can be made to the following organizations…

THANK YOU ! ! !
CHESTER COLLINS

Alan Stern wrote to c-g-p: "On Sunday, August 28, Chester Collins passed away at the VA Hospital in West Los Angeles of various ailments including cancer. Chester was a big part of SCRABBLE® in L.A. for many years. Before that he lived in New York. He is probably best known for his affinity for the color green. He was a pleasant person to play, not really caring if he won or lost. Chester rarely exchanged tiles."

According to cross-tables.com, Chester competed in at least 38 tournaments from 1978 to 2001, achieving a peak rating of 1852. He refused to play vulgarities and ethnic slurs in his games. However, in 1994 he banded with other Scrabblers in signing a petition to Hasbro against banning offensive words. In an interview with the Los Angeles Times, Chester said he wouldn’t play “the famous F-word,” but “would defend anybody’s right to play it.”

Following are excerpts of other memories shared with c-g-p:

From Stu Goldman:

"I knew Chester well when we both lived in the New York area. I disagree--he did care if he won or lost, but he had to do it his way. In one game I noticed he had not used his X for a 2-letter word for maximum points and mentioned it to him. 'I prefer making elegant plays,' he scoffed."

From Ann Sanfedele:

"Stu is right, he would rather play something classy than win...but he certainly cared about winning...he kept tidy and careful pencil-written tally of the games he and I played over a year or so's time and I think with some others as well....

"Chester was key to my getting a photo of Christine Sigel published in the Daily News when she won the NYC Championship and their photographer had...left without having photographed Christine at all. When she won I snapped off some frames and Chester drove me to the Daily News office where they developed the film. Ugh -- terrible shots, unflattering -- so then we dashed off to my house where I retrieved a better photo from the week before and dashed back to the News with the good one.... Since it was the first time a woman had won the NYC Championship we wanted to make sure we got her photo in the paper."

From Gary Moss:

"One of the first SCRABBLE players who I took on regularly [in Southern California] was Chester Collins. We played at Alan Stern’s club on Wednesday evenings at the JCC in the Fairfax district and then again on Saturdays at the Felecia Mayhood Senior Center. Chester played as fast or sometimes faster than I played. We would be finished with our game while others still had half their tiles remaining in their bag. I remember that Chester had great word power. He rarely played a phoney. I don’t think he studied systematically, using stems or mnemonics. He had his own system and was a frequent winner. Chester was one of the players who liked to play with the board upside down; I don’t remember him ever turning the board to look at it straight on. He always showed up..."
wearing a green shirt and green trousers. I remember that I once sold him a set of green Protiles. I never asked him about his affinity for the color green."

From Scott Pianowski:

"I lived in California for about a year and a half, and I played Chester Collins many times at clubs and local gatherings. He was always friendly, affable, a joy to be around, and in good spirits win or lose. He was a skilled player and he competed to win, sure, but the variance of the game never got to him. He's not the only person I'd ever say these things about, but it's a very small list.

"He was known for playing his games quickly, though on one occasion he used up almost all of his time against me. 'The day I go over is the day I stop playing,' Chester said, a gleam in his eye. In his world, it was easy being green.

"I was silly enough to think he'd never run out of time, but I guess we all do someday. I'm lucky our paths intersected for a while. A very kind, unique man. Thanks for the games and the company, Chester. Rest in peace. "
SCRABBLE® Resources

There are many study tools to help SCRABBLE® players hone their skills, including a number of programs that can be downloaded for free. This section will offer suggestions and links for both players and directors.

Play SCRABBLE® On Line

POGO SCRABBLE®
The official SCRABBLE® online game. Created under agreement with Hasbro in 2008.

SCRABBLE® ON FACEBOOK
Select the SCRABBLE® application on the Facebook home page to play the official SCRABBLE® game. Various groups hold tournaments at this site, including a group called “Mad Scrabblers”.

INTERNET SCRABBLE® CLUB
A Romanian-based site and application for interactive games. A favorite site for many of the top players.

Anagramming/Practice Tools

JUMBLETIME
A free web site for practicing anagramming skills.

MAC USERS: After you do a Jumbletime quiz on a Mac, the scroll bar to view the results is missing. To make it appear, go to the lower right corner and grab the striped triangle and shrink the window all the way to the top left corner. When you pull it back, the scroll bar to the right of the answers to the quiz appears. (Make sure you do this before you check your score against other players.)

AEROLITH
A free application for practicing anagramming skills and learning words.

Has SCRABBLE® tournament aides.

NASPA CLUB LISTINGS
Lists clubs throughout North America with their meeting times and locations.

NSA CLUB LISTINGS
Lists casual clubs throughout North America with their meeting times and locations.

WGPO CLUB LISTINGS
Lists clubs throughout North America with their meeting times and locations.

Anagramming/Practice Tools

QUACKLE
A free application for playing, simulating, and analyzing games.

ZYZZYVA
A free application for practicing anagramming skills and learning words. Also has Word Judge capabilities.

SCRABBLE® DICTIONARY
Type a word to check for acceptability. OSPD4 words.

LEXIFIND SCRABBLE® HELPER AND WORD GAME WIZARD WORDFINDER FOR GOOGLE CHROME
A full-board SCRABBLE® word-finder program that shows you every word that can possibly be made on an entire SCRABBLE® board, and continuously updates its results as you type letters onto the board or into the rack. Full version available at http://bit.ly/ecwHPt

FRANKLIN SCRABBLE® PLAYERS DICTIONARY
An electronic handheld dictionary and anagrammer, with many helpful options and games. Includes the latest word lists, and can be adjusted from OSPD4 to OWL2 lists with a code.

Play Live SCRABBLE® CROSS-TABLES
Lists all upcoming tournaments, as well as results of past tournaments.
CLICK HERE TO HELP END WORD HUNGER AS YOU LEARN WORDS
A free vocabulary testing site. For every correct word, grains of rice are donated through the United Nations World Food Program. Feed hungry people as you expand your vocabulary!

Online SCRABBLE® Discussion Groups

CGP (crossword-games-pro@yahoogroups.com)
This group, for NASPA tournament players and directors only, has the largest membership of any online tournament SCRABBLE® discussion group. Most important events and changes in the SCRABBLE® world are discussed on cgp. Admission is by approval only. Details can be found at http://sasj.com/cgp/join.html.

OSPD (ospd-scrabble@yahoogroups.com)
This group, dedicated to players using The Official SCRABBLE® Players’ Dictionary, offers light-hearted humor, daily word lists, and more. Admission is to all SCRABBLE® lovers. Details can be found in the NASPA.

Tournament SCRABBLE® Newsletter #1.

WGPO Listserv (WGPO@yahoogroups.com)
This group, open to all members of the tournament community, is a forum for issues of interest to SCRABBLE® players. No approval of any kind is needed to join, and readers need not be members of the Word Game Player’s Organization (WGPO).

SCRABBLE® Blogs

THE BADQOPH DIRECTORY
This is a database of blogs by known SCRABBLE® bloggers, primarily tournament players. As of March 29th there were 196 blogs in the directory.

Cheat Sheets

MIKE BARON’S CHEAT SHEET
A great cheat sheet with 2s, 3s, vowel dumps, short high-point-tile words, and good bingo stems. Includes useful front and back hook letters to make 3s from 2s. Adapted from Mike Barron’s SCRABBLE® Wordbook and the Official SCRABBLE® Players Dictionary, 4th Edition.

COLLINS-ONLY CHEAT SHEET
A cheat sheet of short Collins words NOT found in the OWL2. 2s, 3s, short high-point-tile words, and Q-without-U words.

COLLINS WORD LISTS

Tournament Management Software DIRECTOR!
Marc Levesque’s software for managing tournaments. Also
has a Yahoo user group you can join as a support option.

TOURNEYMAN
Jeff Widergren’s software for managing tournaments.

TSH
John Chew’s software for managing tournaments.

Books

BOB’S BIBLE
A terrific book to build word power for tournaments.

BOB’S BIBLE, SCHOOL EDITION
For School SCRABBLE® and home play.

BROW-RAISERS II
A brilliantly organized study guide geared towards the success of beginning and intermediate players.

HOW TO PLAY SCRABBLE® LIKE A CHAMPION
A new guide to winning SCRABBLE® from World SCRABBLE® Champion Joel Wapnick. Fantastic insights into expert playing techniques. (See review in the October issue of The Last Word.)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE WORD BUILDER
Bob Jackman’s guide to building a strong Collins vocabulary, organized by word length, familiarity, and part of speech.

EVERYTHING SCRABBLE®, THIRD EDITION
The ultimate guide to winning at SCRABBLE® by 3-time National Champion Joe Edley and John D. Williams, Jr. Completely updated to include all new words. (See review in the January issue of The Last word.)

THE OFFICIAL SCRABBLE® PLAYERS DICTIONARY, FOURTH EDITION
The official word source for School SCRABBLE® and casual play.

THE OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT AND CLUB WORD LIST, 2ND EDITION
The official word source for NASPA tournament and club play.

SCRABBLE® TOURNAMENT & CLUB WORD LIST (COLLINS)
The official word list for international tournament play. (Available at SamTimer.com.)

SCRABBLE® WORDBOOK
A great word book for SCRABBLE® players by Mike Baron. OSPD4 words. (POO Lists available with words excluded from the OWL2.)
Our new calendar format addresses two concerns: 1) Readers wanted as complete a list as possible of tournament dates, not just two months worth of dates; 2) Readers wanted to know easily whether a tournament was sanctioned by NASPA, WGPO, or the NSA (or was unrated).

However, because new tournaments are constantly being added to the schedule, it is difficult to be all-inclusive. Please be sure to refer to the Websites of the organization sanctioning the tournament for a complete list. Click NASPA, WGPO, or NSA for the most up-to-date calendars. Links to NASPA and some NSA tournaments are also posted at cross-tables.com.

Thanks to Henry Leong, who permitted The Last Word to adapt his calendar from the WGPO Website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Tournament/Location</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>SEPTEMBER</td>
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<td>9/2-5</td>
<td>NASPA</td>
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<td>ATLANTA GA</td>
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<td>BURLINGTON MA - TWL &amp; COLLINS</td>
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<td>TAMPA BAY (PINELLAS PARK) FL</td>
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<td>GRITS II, CHARLESON SC (RESTRICTED)</td>
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Archives

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