



# NASPA Bulletin

The monthly news bulletin of the North American SCRABBLE® Players Association

## November 2009: Vol. I, No. 3

### The Bulletin Returns

by John Chew

Yes, we did say this would be a monthly publication; and yes, we've just missed several issues because of an overwhelming list of things that had to take priority. I'm happy to announce that we're resuming publication now, and plan on publishing an issue in the first week of each month. As before, NASPA members will get an exclusive one-week preview of each issue.

So what were some of these more important things? We spent June getting ready to take over official responsibility for competitive SCRABBLE play in Canada and the United States from the NSA, in particular oversight of players and directors, administration of the rules and lexicon, operation of the rating system, management of the tournament calendar and certification of clubs, directors and tournaments, along with preparing the volunteer staff, procedures and enterprise software required for all of the above.

We spent July putting together our first National SCRABBLE Championship in Dayton, OH for five hundred players. My favorite moment from that event was when volunteers from the NSA office took over

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### Where Should We Play?

by Chris Cree

I have just returned from three days and three nights in San Francisco. The weather was picture perfect. The California Open tournament was exceedingly well organized by Bennett Jacobstein (Santa Clara, CA), John Aitken (Vancouver, BC), Ruth Hamilton (Lake Oswego, OR), et al. There was something for everyone. As with all opens, there were plenty of upsets and great performances by up and comers.

This may be the only year that a California Open will be played in San Francisco. The reason? The cost of playing space and room rates.

The event was held at the Sheraton Fisherman's Wharf. Predicated upon seasonal rates and supply and demand, rack room rates can run up to just under \$300 per night and the playing room rental as high as \$4,500 per day.

Recessions can have their advantages. Bennett was able to negotiate \$129 room nights and a very reasonable rate for the



Division 1 Leader Bryan Pepper and new Champion Dave Wiegand. Photo: Sherrie Saint John

playing room to allow this year's venue to be on the Pacific Ocean in one of the world's premier destinations versus last year's locale in the middle of the state, which people certainly enjoyed, but....

I hope that Bennett and company can try to negotiate a venue for 2010 as quickly as possible with the Dow Jones Price Index still hovering below 10,000.

Recessions come and recessions go as do boom times. The cycle seems to be every 5-7 years. This is the fifth recession I have seen in my business. Though this one feels the worst, they have all had their short term impact.

For those who organize tournaments, this past year, and even right now, is the time to negotiate as many long term deals as one can. Jeff Widergren negotiated a five-year deal with the Grand Sierra Resort. He is getting today's supply and demand numbers locked in for a future that almost will assuredly be higher demand and lower supply. Sherrie Saint John continues to amaze me with the deals she gets at the Westford Regency for the Boston Area Tournament. This was the primary reason that I signed a two-year contract with the Intercontinental Hotel in Dallas for the National SCRABBLE Championships in 2010 and 2011.

I had told them from the onset that I did not want to host the event in Dallas as

I did not want to portray any "home cookin'" going on. Plus, I would just as soon travel the country anyway. It is fun to see what is out there. To be sure, we all

*WHAT SHOULD WE continued on p. 2*

### The Nationals

by Championship Committee staff

Congratulations to the winners of the 2009 NSC: Dave Wiegand (Portland, OR), the overall champion who received the \$10,000 top prize in Division 1; Thomas Reinke (Middleton, WI) in Division 2; Dave Leonard (Kenmore, NY) in Division 3; Max Karten (Barrington, RI) in Division 4 and Doug Szymkowiak (North Ridgeville, OH) in Division 5.

If you missed it, Sherrie Saint John's live coverage of the event remains archived on the NSA website, whose web hosting was generously shared for this occasion.

The Championship moves to Dallas, TX for 2010 and 2011, and further details about NSC 2010 are available on the NASPA website. There are no plans yet for 2012 and beyond, except that we would like to have in place by then a point system for rating and eventually choosing potential venues, based on criteria such as cost of operation, cost to players, potential for publicity, ease of access and proximity to past Nationals.

## What Should We Eat?

from *WHERE SHOULD WE PLAY*, p. 1

spend most of our days in a hotel ballroom shuffling tiles, but cuisines around the country are different and interesting.

For one thing, I really like bread. Good tasting bread is a function of the city's water. New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco – great water, great bread. A group of around 50 SCRABBLE players had dinner at Cioppino's on Friday night and I must have had two loaves myself to dip into their signature dish. Mmmmm. [CIOPPINO\*CIOPPINOS n a spicy fish stew]

Then there's Chinese food. Toronto, New York, Chicago, Reno, Los Angeles, Las Vegas and, of course, San Francisco, all have great Chinese food. But, no matter your personal preferences, there is great food everywhere.

The day we reached an agreement for 2010, the Dow Jones had hit 6500 and the Intercontinental came forward with an offer that I just couldn't refuse. Then, they duplicated it for a two year deal. I told the young man who is the hotel representative, "What are you doing? The Dow won't stay at 6500. If it goes too much lower, the world will come to an end, but all historical data says that it just has to go up and you are doing deals for a time when the Dow will likely be back at least over 12,000, if not back to the 14,000 it was before the recession hit." He said, "I'm just doing what my boss told me to do." I told him that his boss was making a mistake and unless the order was coming from even higher up or they just needed to show some activity, that I just do not understand. He then said that not too many of his customers have tried to talk him out of lower rates!

## Summer Vacation

from *THE BULLETIN RETURNS*, p. 1

registration so that the NASPA crew could meet over dinner. Not only did it demonstrate perfectly the partnership of the two organizations, but the look of confusion on the late registrants' faces was priceless.

August went to recovering from the NSC, following up with discipline issues that arose there, and shaking out the bugs in the systems that we had put together quickly in June, seeing who and what were working or not.

September and October have seen steady improvements to the NASPA website and services to our players, directors and committee members, more work by our less well-known committees such as the Canadian and WESPA Liaison Committees, along with a sense now that the

day-to-day running of the tournament circuit was on a good footing. So here we are back to writing about what we're doing instead of just doing it, looking forward to the future and what we can do beyond just keeping things running to make a bigger, better tournament world for us all.

## PayPal Warning

by John Chew

Some players may have noticed that we went through several different payment systems for the online registration system for NSC 2009. We had to do this because of a series of problems with the popular PayPal payment processing service.

PayPal have told us that their lawyers believe that recent changes to U.S. federal law require them to verify that the funds that they handle are not related to gambling activities that are prohibited in the state jurisdictions in which they take place. We were denied access to substantial funds in our PayPal accounts for several weeks because of an alleged violation of PayPal's terms of service, and were given a choice between discontinuing all further SCRABBLE-related transactions or providing authoritative legal opinions from all American states and Canadian provinces stating that it is legal to hold a SCRABBLE tournament.

We chose the former option and recommend that our directors also discontinue use of PayPal if they do not wish to risk having all of their tournament funds frozen at an inopportune moment.

## New on the Website

by Web Committee members

Have you visited our website lately? We are the authoritative source for information about upcoming tournaments, results of past events, and contact information for our players, clubs and tournaments. If you spot an error or omission, please send us email. We'll fix it right away and the NSA and cross-tables websites will pick it up on their next automatic update.

If there's anything you'd like to know about NASPA or competitive SCRABBLE play in North America, check out NASPA-Wiki, our online encyclopedia that is continually being revised by our committee members.

Some services are password-protected, like preview access to the Bulletin, the new printable membership card, and specialized services for directors and staff. You can access them all through the Member Services link.

And finally, you can now pay for your new NASPA membership online securely by Visa or MasterCard!

## Canadian Elections

by John Robertson

A scheduled election to replace two outgoing members of the Canadian Committee (CC) proved to be unnecessary this year. As of the October 17 deadline for nominations, three candidates had expressed interest in running for the two vacant CC seats: Tony Leah, Randall Thomas, and Shelley Ubeika.

On October 20, however, Shelley withdrew from the general election that would have begun on November 1, so Tony and Randall won their seats by acclamation. Their terms will begin on January 1, 2010 and run to December 31, 2012. Tony is already a CC member and was actually running to retain his seat. Outgoing member John Aitken decided not to run and will be replaced by Randall.

The six-member CC is designed so that two members' terms expire each year. The terms of John Robertson and Jeff Parsons will expire at the end of 2010. The terms of David Boys and Siri Tillekeratne will expire at the end of 2011. Elections will be held in each of these years if more than two candidates run for the vacant seats.

*World SCRABBLE Champion Nigel Richards (MYS) found the best play against Jeff Fiszbein (South Lyon, MI) at Board 1 at the 2009 NSC, using the tiles EGHIRTU. Can you find it on this Quackle board?*



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