



NASPA Bulletin

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

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A Year in the Making

by Chris Cree

Last week, John Williams, the Executive Director of the NSA and NASPA member AA000002, sent me an email that said, "It was one year ago today that we met with Hasbro to find out that they were no longer interested in supporting the tournament & club scene. Time flies, doesn't it?" I replied: "In retrospect, it was a blink of an eye but living it was painstakingly slow."

Nineteen days from today, there was no longer going to be tournament SCRABBLE. Instead, as of today, there are 29 sanctioned SCRABBLE tournaments on the tournament calendar for January, 2010 starting with the end of the year/New Year event in Albany, NY organized and directed by Annette Tedesco (Stillwater, NY), John Robertson (Cambridge, ON) and Allen Pengelly (Ridgeway, ON).

In February, we had determined that approximately 2,000 members of the NSA played a total of approximately 70,000 tournament games per year in 2007 and 2008. NASPA became the only organization in North America licensed to use the name SCRABBLE and sanction tournament games of SCRABBLE on July 1, 2009. We hoped to have 1,800 members by July 1, 2010, one full year's cycle of being in business. Today, NASPA has 2,467 members. Mad Palazzo (Richmond Hill, ON), Chair of the Membership Committee, has entered just about each and every one of those names, with contact information, into the system.

I think back to how we used to play. Tournaments were two day, one open division affairs. The first day, we played three games. The top 16 played in a 4-game finals the next day while the rest were not invited back. Each game was a clocked one hour. We had sand timers purportedly filled with three minutes of sand to make each move. Many games ended incomplete. No one had ever heard of rack management, but to compete at a high level, one certainly had to have sand timer and clock management skills.

Somewhere along the way events became two-day affairs. Still one open division, but one could travel to play in a tournament without fear of not qualifying for the second day. Eventually, analog chess clocks replaced sand timers. One had to keep a

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WSC finalists Pakorn Nemitrmansuk and Nigel Richards relaxing at the end. Photo: John Chew

WSC 2009

by John Chew

If you asked him, Pakorn Nemitrmansuk (Thailand) would tell you there wasn't any more glory for him to strive for. He had won his country's highest titles, and was the only player ever to play in the World SCRABBLE Championship (WSC) finals twice without winning. At this year's WSC, held on November 26–29 in Johor Bahru, Malaysia, he was just one of the six-man Thai team.

His first opponent was Hervé Bohbot (France), who had begun WSC 2005 against the only other two-time WSC runner-up, 1999 Champion Joel Wapnick (Montreal, QC). Pakorn won 555–410. Then he won a few more, lost a few more, and closed the first of three days 4–4, 50th out of a field of 108. All eyes were on Wellington Jighere (Nigeria), the only undefeated player of the day, who had taken on such early favorites as 2006 Youth Champion David Eldar (Australia) and 2003 Champion Panupol Sujjayakorn (Thailand) and defeated them without shifting his trademark hat.

Day Two was a different story. Jighere fell to 1995 Champion David Boys (Dorval, QC), and doffed his hat. Pakorn won his first five games, then beat Jighere

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Greenport Greetings

by Jane Ratsey Williams

As we close out 2009, the team at the NSA has a lot of great reflecting to do. We have successfully completed the transfer of club and tournament play to NASPA and honestly feel that the two associations could not have worked better together. It was an unimaginably awesome task, and we are thrilled to see NASPA's membership at over 2,400 as we write this. That's a lot of players and a lot of SCRABBLE games in less than six months! Truthfully, I think their passion for the game and their organizational talents and dedication are what pulled this off. No one knows better than we do how hard it is to make a difficult task look easy. I think, as NASPA's half-year mark approaches, we all need to take time to congratulate them on their success. Your support will only make NASPA flourish. In the New Year, NASPA and the NSA will keep working together to grow the tournament scene, while NASPA will send newcomers our way.

The NSA team loved being a small part of the first NASPA Nationals. John Williams and Katie Schulz were hired by Hasbro to handle the PR, but in case you didn't notice, the rest of the Greenport crew was also on site for most of the event,

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Olden SCRABBLE Days

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keen eye on the flag and there were official director calls to determine how many parts of a minute one might have gone over. I remember magnifying glasses and stop watches being employed to figure that out.

The National Championship, mainly through the exhaustive campaigning efforts of Mike Baron (Albuquerque, NM), went from being a top 32 player event to an open National Championship in 1985.

When ratings were first instituted, Alan Frank (Boston, MA), hand calculated them. In about 4–6 weeks after an event, one would get their new rating in a SASE. The same ratings formula was used until a little over a year ago. It punished people for playing, but through the efforts of Jim Hughes (Austin, TX) and his Ratings & Recognition Committee, a new formula was devised using many years' data.

John Chew has worked tirelessly to come up with the system that allows immediate updating of ratings once an event's results are turned in. In addition to his daily work as copresident, he makes himself available each and every weekend with technical assistance for directors.

February 2010 will mark 30 years for me to be playing in SCRABBLE tournaments. Time has, indeed, flown.

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volunteering for jobs we used to hire others to do. After running this event for years, it was just too hard for us to not support it in any way we could. We needed to see those old friends and faces one more time, share some memories and help create some new ones. For those we missed or who didn't attend, you know how to find us, always.

The first issue of SCRABBLE News in 2010 will reflect our brand new design and format. There is something for everyone and we hope you'll take time to read it and see what you think. It's fresh with good material for the serious player and appeal for the newer one. The 12-page newsletter will remain for the first quarter of 2010 at \$20 for 8 issues. We're also redesigning our website for a January launch.

WordGear will continue to sell the OWL2, Mike Baron's Wordbook and Bob's Bible, and constantly update our line of merchandise with new designs.

Our new Casual Club and Players roster has exceeded 500, and we offer a fun perk each month for anyone on the list. At year end, we'll be moving all NSA clubs to this new list; to opt out please email Katie Schulz <ks@scrabble-assoc.com>. Think about signing yourself up as well as a

player. It's FREE. It spreads the word. Best wishes from us all for a terrific New Year!

Setting Records

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and faced Boys. Boys remarked that if he won the game, it would be his 13th consecutive win, tying a WSC record set in 1997 by Matt Graham (New York, NY). Pakorn won, then finished the day by beating Dave Wiegand (Portland, OR).

Now he set his sights on beating Graham's record. To tie it, all he had to do was beat defending Champion Nigel Richards (N.Z.), Eldar, Komol Panyasophonlert (the #3 Thai) and Panupol. For a mere mortal to beat any of these four players would be something to brag about; for a world-class player to beat all of them would still be remarkable. And he did.

Pakorn then beat Andrew Fisher (Australia) to break the record with a 14th win, relaxed and lost consecutive games to Naween Fernando (Australia) and Wiegand, but scored a needed win against Komol to make it back to the finals to face Richards in a best-of-five.

As with all the Board 1 games, the finals were webcast live at wscgames.com to an online audience of several thousand. They were also transmitted via closed-circuit camera to a theatre, and presented by Allan Simmons (U.K.). The first game was a 425–419 nailbiter for Pakorn. The second was a 670–303 blowout, also for Pakorn. With six tiles left in the bag and a 204-point lead, Pakorn first replied to Richards' triple-triple setup by placing DINE (21), watched Richards begin to record the play, then said "Not enough points," and laid down the rest of his rack for PALUDINE# (167). Richards took it in good humor; we all roared with laughter.

After a lunch break, the tables turned and Richards won the third game 443–394. It looked like Richards might take the fourth game as well and force a fifth, when he led 419–365 with eight tiles in the bag and Pakorn down to less than a minute on his clock. Pakorn found an amazing play though, shown in the board diagram at right, to win the game 499–480. Never has a player deserved the championship more.

New Director's Manual

by *Ted Gest*

A newly revised version of the official manual for club and tournament directors (DM) has been posted on the NASPA website. Current and would-be directors are encouraged to review the manual. It is a wealth of information containing detailed descriptions of pairing methods, available software and other important items.

The DM was reorganized in 2007–08 by a committee of directors to make information easier to find, to assist directors with decision making and to separate club and tournament sections. The writers also added tables for clarity and checklists for directors. The most recent update includes changes for the NSA-to-NASPA transition.

Because the manual is not updated very often, directors should consult the NASPA website for such information as updated rules, tournament software and lists of players under suspension. Questions or comments on the manual should be addressed to the committee chair, Rebecca Slivka (Seattle, WA), slivkar@comcast.net.

Recent Wiki News

by *Web Committee members*

We welcome Dallas Johnson (Stow, OH), who joins Andy Saunders (Guelph, ON) as Tournament Committee cochair.

We need items for "Club News."

Tournament scheduling conflict rules have been restated more clearly.

If you forget your password, you now have to enter both your NASPA ID and your email address to reset your password.

Pakorn Nemitrkansuk is down 419–365, and has AABCNOT vs. Nigel Richards at the end: see SETTING RECORDS.



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