



# NASPA Bulletin

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

## May 2009: Vol. I, No. 2

### Portland Town Hall

by Chris Cree

At the Town Hall meeting in Portland, Oregon at the superbly organized and run Oregon Tile on May 1-3, I was doing what I have been doing at the other Town Hall meetings the past couple of months: answering questions. Although phrased a little differently, they have been pretty much the same ones from city to city. The players have the same concerns throughout the organization. Most of these questions and their answers are on our website, [www.scrabbleplayers.org](http://www.scrabbleplayers.org), under the FAQ section.

I did hear one I had not heard before. It really gave me pause. The first part of the answer was pretty simple as I answered from my heart. The second part of the question, I answered just in part as I really could not get my arms around all of it. Upon reflection on my flight home, I came up with my answer.

The question was: What has been your biggest challenge thus far and what do you see as the biggest challenge going forward?

Wow.

The biggest challenge thus far has been finding the time to devote to this project to do a competent job while at the same time being an available and devoted husband and father while still trying to earn a living.

The biggest challenge ahead is a threefold answer covering the short, intermediate and long terms.

The biggest short term challenge is just to have as much ready and in place as we can think of for the switch-over on July 1 while simultaneously preparing for the National Scrabble Championship in Dayton, Ohio this August 1-5. There seems to be a never ending list of structural decisions to be made on a daily basis.

The biggest intermediate term challenge for me is to learn how to properly run a player organization. I have never done this before. Yes, I managed and administered employees and a company for many years, but this is a completely different type of entity. I figure it will take 18-24 months for John Chew and me to have a good feel for it and then just try to constantly improve the decision making process, which must consist of making decisions with the good of the game in mind. Not all members will have the same definition of

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Playing at the club in Huntsville, AL: Eric Patty and Billy Joe Cooley. Photo: Amy Simms

### NASPA in Huntsville, AL

by Amy Simms

I am pleased to announce that Huntsville, Alabama's first NASPA meeting was a great success. We had 16 members in attendance, including Dr. Reese Danley Kilgo, who directed a Huntsville NSA club in 1977. She brought the original records to show the group. Martin and Mary Ellen Weisskopf, who were also original members of that club, attended. They hadn't seen Reese since then, so it definitely was a good reunion. Three Birmingham club players including Jim Pate, Director, attended and were wonderful help at showing the beginners the ropes of tournament SCRABBLE. Our youngest player was my nephew Eric Patty, 12. We had an orientation presentation followed by three games. Everyone had a blast, and we are looking forward to many more successful meetings. Special thanks to Jim Pate and Alvin Haney, Nashville Director, for encouraging me to start this club.

### Clubs Sign Up for NASPA

by Mary Rhoades

The adventure of the startup of NASPA heavily impacted the Club/Director Committee consisting of Alan Stern, John Robertson and Mary Rhoades, Chairman.

In an effort to get the most recent contact and meeting information from all clubs in the United States and Canada, we embarked upon a project that would email a "State of NASPA" explanation of why NASPA was begun, followed immediately by a questionnaire to be returned with current information as well as suggestions for NASPA. Part of the way into the project, Sherrie Saint John offered to help and jumped in to get us to the end of the project.

As of May 24, we have sanctioned 91 clubs, which are listed on the Clubs page of the NASPA website. In order for a club to be sanctioned, the club director's membership must be current and an annual club sanctioning fee of \$30 must be paid. This initial club sanctioning fee, like the initial personal membership fee, will not expire until the end of 2010.

In truth, the project hasn't ended yet. There are club directors on the NSA club list who don't have emails and haven't been reached yet. If you attend one of those clubs, you can help us with this by contacting me at [mrhoadestx@gmail.com](mailto:mrhoadestx@gmail.com) and allowing me to send you the information, which you can share with your director. Then return the information to me. It may be that some of these directors have email addresses but don't want them listed

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## Club Registration

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on the club list, which is fine, but I would appreciate having the email addresses in case we ever need to contact all directors with important information such as rule changes, etc.

Thank you so much, John, Alan, Sherrie and the multitude of directors who helped us get to this point!

## Future Challenges

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"the good of the game." We will have to formulate our own definition and stick with it. Consistency in the decision making process is a very high priority.

As time has gone by since the meeting at Hasbro last December, John and I have both noted that we tend to think alike on many issues. Thus, we need the thoughts and opinions of the Steering Committee and Advisory Board to constantly either affirm what we are thinking or give us other points of view on critical decisions. Neither of us could possibly make all of the decisions on our own and neither of us have the desire to morph into a complacent Executive Committee.

The biggest long term challenge is to build this organization into something special. Although Hasbro's direct funding is gone, I am looking at this as a huge opportunity for indirect funding. Hasbro will continue to fund the NSA, which will endeavor to build and grow the School Scrabble program. Well, there are potential members by the thousands as they transition from School Scrabble into the club and tournament scene. Thus, Hasbro would be indirectly funding our long term membership campaign. This will involve a great deal of continuous work and cooperation with the NSA going forward. This will also require a level of commitment that I do not think we were aware of just a few months ago.

I love a challenge. I look forward to these.

## Join Before You Play

by John Chew

The NSA and now NASPA have always allowed first-time (i.e., unrated) players at fully rated sanctioned tournaments (but not so-called Local Club Tournaments) an exemption from the usual requirement that they be paid members of the Association. As a tournament director, I have publicly opposed requiring everyone to pay membership fees, and have argued that the last thing that the SCRABBLE scene needs is another obstacle to recruiting new players.

As your copresident however, I've had to change my position. Chris Cree and I feel strongly that once we get NASPA on its feet, our main job is going to be increasing the size of the regular tournament playing community. While it might seem like charging new players a membership fee on top of their tournament entry fee is a strange way to go about growing our population, it's the way most similar organizations work and with reason. As things stand, a newcomer can be discouraged by their first tournament, walk away from tournament SCRABBLE and never know what they really left behind. Instead, we want them to give us their contact information, so that we can send them this Bulletin, let them know about what else is going on in the SCRABBLE world that might interest them and give us another chance at recruiting them.

As a tournament director, I'm grudgingly willing to go along with this idea, but still think that \$30 is going to deter some of my potential players. So what we're going to do is offer a special rate only for unrated newcomers: \$15 for six months' membership. They are, of course, welcome to pay \$30 for a year instead, and if they do so before the end of this year, their \$30 pays their membership until the end of 2010, just like anyone else.

Finally, there's the question of when this takes effect. Newcomers may pay \$15 for six months' membership effective immediately, but are not yet required to do so. Since Club Committee chair Mary Rhoades and I are both running tournaments in September, newcomers will be required to pay for memberships effective September 1st, 2009, and Mary and I will have a chance to see first-hand what effect this has on attendance, if any.

## Game Recording Rules

by Advisory Board members

Game recording or annotation for webcasting has been a part of SCRABBLE tournaments since the 1998 Canadian NSC, and is an important publicity tool for many large events. It is however intrusive to the players involved, and the question of whether or not a player is obliged to comply with scheduled annotation came before the NASPA Advisory Board (AB) at its inaugural meeting last month.

After opening remarks from outgoing chair and NSA Executive Director John D. Williams, Jr., who has graciously agreed to stay on as a regular board member, incoming cochairs Chris Cree and John Chew asked the AB which takes precedence: a player's or a tournament director's right to state the terms under

which games will be played, at least as far as annotation is concerned.

The board ruled unanimously in favor of directors, provided that they provide clear notice in the event flyer that games will be annotated. Players who then refuse to play will forfeit their games with a spread penalty to be determined by the Rules Committee.

## Club Fee Discount

by Membership Committee members

NASPA directors now receive complimentary club registration when they pay for individual memberships for ten or more players at the same time.

Payment must be made using only one instrument (one check, one credit card payment or one wad of cash), as we are making this offer partly to reduce our payment processing workload. If you pay for ten players through December 2010, you get club registration for the same period. If you pay for ten more players for the same time, you do not get an extra year.

*Joseph Bowman (Toronto, ON) reported an interesting play against him by John Dungey (Mitchell, ON) at a tournament in Cambridge, ON. Dungey made an 88-point play with ??INSTT. Can you find it on this Quackle board?*



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