

CIMB Junior Scrabble National Championship 2011

28-29 May 2011, Subang Jaya, Kuala Lumpur

Commentary by Cheong Yi Wei

This year's Junior Scrabble National Finals had a pleasant surprise awaiting all participants who qualified through their respective state circuits --- *we were reimbursed RM100 each, courtesy of CIMB!*

It was held in CADC, Complex 3C, Subang Jaya on the 28th and 29th of May 2011. 84 eager scrabblers flocked in with high spirits, chatting heartily and some had even started to pit their scrabble skills against each other. The atmosphere was one of warm camaraderie, but within us, we were all excited and raring to begin the 1st of 15 games.



The crossword battle thus began. Better seasoned players mercilessly trounced their opponents in the first 2 games, gaining superior spreads. Arvinran Rajendran and Choo Zi Wei garnered margins of over 600 and 500 respectively to lead the pack. Then in the 3rd game the excitement escalated. I was drawn to play William Kang, top seed in the tournament and a WSC(World Scrabble Championship) representative from our country. We were generally neck-to-neck until I played EFTSOON followed by DEBONAI(R), which he retaliated with QUILT scoring 73 points. I managed to maintain the lead with several solid moves, but towards the end my tile-tracking was wrong and it was a huge error because

William nearly, but not quite, had an opportunity to play a last-minute high-scoring bingo. It was a crucial and delightful win for me.

During the lunch break, Gabriel Martin appeared with a delicious chocolate ice-cream cake for our Tournament Director, Mr. K Sundraraj as all of us wished him happy birthday. Games then resumed once more. I was unbeaten by the end of the first day, but my opponents had not allowed me a smooth ride at all. Arvinran scored well in the first few moves, and it would have been a nail-biting match had he not attempted 3 phonies which cost him the game. Looi Yih Feng played a couple of non-gos as well to give me a rather easy win. Note: STAIRED means having stairs, not ascending a flight of stairs, so *STAIRING* sounds valid but is not acceptable. He realized that he missed INTARSI(A) in this game but luckily for him, it was one of the many bingos which allowed him to beat his opponent in the very next game! Jagan Narayanan and Vinnith Ramamurti put up tough resistance with stylish moves, the latter nearly getting the better of me if not for my final bingo MODISTE. I then proceeded to win my last match against Ignatius Wong and, fatigued but elated, retired to the heavenly embrace of my bed in our hotel.

Sunday 29th of May – The 84 of us arrived hoping to make the best out of the last 7 games, and the frontrunners no doubt eager to tarnish my winning streak. Choo Zi Wei did not manage to do so, but the last 6 games were KOTH with repeat and anything could happen during this period. Jagan had a rather huge lead over me midway through our game, but he allowed me to narrow the gap and finally edged him 410 to 388. Though I was now ahead of second-placed Vinnith by 2 games, I could not afford to let my guard down.

Much to my horror and to my contenders' delight, Vinnith pulled off 2 consecutive wins against me, gaining margins of +84 each. He made some impressive plays and certainly more bingos than I did as I struggled with tricky racks the entire time. The race for the title was opened once again.

My next game was also against Vinnith and I moaned silently at my tough luck as he played AUSTERE followed by BISTROS soon after. It was not until the last few turns that I finally got INFANTE and prevented what would have been a disastrous 3-game losing streak. My 14th game was to be a face-off against Jagan and it was a nerve-wrecking match full of high-scoring moves. I started the game by drawing 8 tiles instead of 7, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise because Jagan threw an A and left me with two more A's. I placed WAREZ, and SANTE(R)IA was the reply. My next rack was AGHIKO and I was considering whether I should try *HAIKI(N)G* or HOIKI(N)G both for a huge score of 60. I guessed that Jagan would be more likely to challenge HOIKING because HOIK sounded like an exclamation, but honestly I had no idea what HAIK was either. It turned out he knew HOIKING was a valid word and therefore assumed *HAIKING* was valid too. It was a major mistake which cost him the pivotal match, and onlookers were aghast at seeing the phony sprawled across the board unchallenged. He proceeded to garner great scores with

DO(M)INEES and ENSURES in reply to my REC(L)AIMS but again I emerged victorious with a slim margin.

Final game of the tournament and I was pitted against Vinnith for the 5th time. Though I was one game ahead of him, he had a higher spread and it was a winner-takes-all situation. He started off with a series of fantastic moves which never scored below 30 while I struggled with poor tiles again. In the middle of the game I had QOGES?? trailing by around 100 points, and somehow I knew that this was the move that would either make or break it. There was a tremendous urge to change the Q and bingo the next turn but this would give him ample time to pull away. I decided to play Qi with a blank for 31 points. Vinnith's jaw dropped at this and he let out a gasp. Surely he knew that I had the other blank and would raise his level of caution. Fortunately for me I found a GORGEOUS bingo to arrive neck-to-neck with him. Two plays later he opened a spot for me to place LOONIES(T) which dashed his chances of catching up. I was stunned and extremely relieved at the outcome even as I was heartily congratulated.

Vinnith's sterling performance earned him the 1st runners-up placing; William recovered well to clinch 3rd place. Jagan slipped from the top 3 positions to settle at 4th position while a very determined Ignatius took 5th place. The complete results can be seen below:

Results after game 15
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Rank	Player	Wins	Byes	Mar
1	Cheong Yi Wei	13		1428
2	Vinnith Ramamurti	11		1421
3	William Kang Wei Lia11			1289
4	Jagan Narayanan	11		1102
5	Ignatius Wong Chen	11		472
6	Arvinran Rajendran	10		1581
7	Looi Yih Feng	10		915
8	Lim Mao Fong	10		525
9	Chang Ching Yet	10		496
10	Arunan Sethu	10		355
11	Shiidheshwar Ravich	10		315
12	Prema Maniam	10		209
13	Azirfan Azhar	9.5		-194
14	Choo Zi Wei	9		1155
15	Cheong Yi Hua	9		852
16	Johnston Tan Ee Jun	9		510
17	Muhamad Amirul Azrie	9		434
18	Jeihiin Subramaniam	9		393
19	Lim Yu Chia	9		386
20	Pang Xynna	9		295
21	Melvin Ong RahmatOng	9		213
22	Wan Mohd Azril	9		203
23	Nikhil Theva Raj	9		142
24	Wilson Kang WeiChern	9		80
25	Ahmad Zahid AbdRazak	9		-49
26	Elvan Yeoh Yan Shin	8.5		-243
27	Kong Sian Jhieh	8.5		-252

28	Ong Zhuhan	8	548
29	K Sharshindra Prathe	8	534
30	Harendraraj Mohanraj	8	453
31	Ang Qi Xuan	8	345
32	Muhd Adham Abdullah	8	264
33	S. Krishnapriya	8	164
34	Syasya Aqilah ABakar	8	121
35	Jonson Lim Jia Sheng	8	111
36	Megan Yeoh Li Yuen	8	108
37	Priyanka Sethu	8	-85
38	Brian Tay CheongYang	8	-113
39	Manfred John	8	-186
40	Nicolas Choo	8	-230
41	Kenneth Wu Min Jin	7.5	92
42	Nik Mohd Syamil	7.5	54
43	Muhd Noorafiq Izani	7.5	-63
44	Shaysagiri Muthiah	7.5	-232
45	Mohd Hilman AbdRahma	7.5	-236
46	Amin Rasyadan AbdRzk	7	-367
47	Benjamin Choo JiaZhg	7	319
48	Colin Low Zhi Yeong	7	256
49	Arun Maniam	7	129
50	Amirul Safwan Nasaru	7	21
51	Yu Teik Chien	7	19
52	Veylamuthen Murugan	7	-83
53	Kuhan Bathmanaban	7	-97
54	Ahmad Mursyidi Tzaka	7	-186
55	Aiman Dzulhelmy Shaz	7	-247
56	Adam Desa AzlanZahid	7	-330
57	Eunice Tang Chun Yi	7	-336
58	Kaveen Ramakrishnan	7	-562
59	Danial Azim Lokman	7	-596
60	Alvin Teh Swee Jie	6.5	-67
61	Mohd Hisyam Takiudin	6.5	-351
62	Abigail Achiamma	6	16
63	Kuhan Anandan	6	-136
64	Lee Wei Zhe	6	-147
65	Nur Syamimi Bahru	6	-209
66	Cheah Ken Ween	6	-290
67	Sri Ram Vengada	6	-463
68	Muhd Ashraff A Idrus	6	-488
69	Sharman Ramesh	6	-520
70	Justin Looi Su Min	6	-563
71	Moi Zjen Kuok	5.5	291
72	Suah Jin Shaun	5.5	-1029
73	Anisha Anne Victor	5	-191
74	Nik Amir Hasyim N M	5	-330
75	Kalai Arasu Devaraja	5	-563
76	Nadiah Najihah K.A	5	-742
77	Alvin Lean Jun Kou	5	-745
78	Manirethnam Ganesan	5	-898
79	Mahesh Chabra S.K.C	5	-669
80	Haveenesh Retnasinga	4	-524
81	Fairuz Adilah MDaman	4	-782
82	Muhammad Iqmal Amin	4	-925
83	Fong Yau Woon	3.5	-1459
84	Kaanita Nair Armanat	0.5	-1838
HIGH GAME: Arvinran Rajendran			719

After such an exhausting weekend which kept my head swimming due to the pressure, my appetite finally returned and I could enjoy a relaxing dinnertime with my fellow scrabblers. Once again, MSA has done a splendid job in organizing this tournament, kudos especially to Mr. K. Sundraraj, Mdm. Chitra and Gabriel Martin. We would like to extend our thanks to CIMB as they have so kindly sponsored the event. Last but not least to all participants, your very presence and enthusiasm has made this championship a success, and we hope to see all of you again in the years to come! ^^



From left:

Jagan, William (2nd runner-up), Martin, Mr. Raj (Tournament Director), Mr. Yap (CIMB), Yi Wei (champion), Ignatius, Arvinran, Lim Mao Fong, Vinnith (1st runner-up), Chang Ching Yet, Arunan, Looi Yih Feng, and the representative for Complex 3C.