

CIMB Junior Scrabble Circuit (Perak) 2011

30 April 2011, Ipoh International School, Perak

By Arvinran Rajendran

All it took was a 5 minute phone call to secure the venue for the CIMB Perak Junior Circuit, showing the strength of support shown by the International School Ipoh and Mr Louis Rozario Doss in advocating the English language. Scrabble finally found its way back to Perak after a three year absence, with 40 aspiring secondary school students participating in this junior circuit. Some of the schools that took part were Anderson School Ipoh, Tarcisian School Ipoh, Convent Sitiawan, SM Tenby and Penang's very own Jit Sin School. Pre-tournament favourite to clinch the crown was Arvinran, while promising Choo Zi Wei looked hopeful to wrestle the title away. This tournament, like many other Scrabble competitions, had its own twist to the tale.

Game Numero Uno saw Arvinran mercilessly pulverizing Ng Chien Xen 661 to 189, playing a couple of phonies that were unchallenged. Choo Zi Wei and his schoolmate Zhuhan Ong eased through their respective games and it became clear that it would be a three-horse race for the title. It was in game 3 when Arvin was finally drawn against Zi Wei. The former started off well, playing RETINAE for 73 points and had a sizeable lead. The latter however caught up midgame, due to unforgiving racks and a few bad plays by the former. As the game was into its final move, Arvin tile-tracked and discovered that his opponent had EDFGIR? on his rack, while he had EGLORTT. The only way he could have blocked Zi Wei's bingo was to play a 5 letter word ending with Y to block the last remaining bingo spot on the board. He played a phony TORTY which was challenged off, leaving Zi Wei to clinch the game with FRIDGES for 73 points. The tournament director Martin pointed out to Arvin that he overlooked the simple word GLORY that would have done the job, and a frustrated Arvin bolted out of the room in distress.

Zi Wei looked set to win the title when he defeated Ong Zhu Han the next game, and was up against unheralded Perakian Syasya Aqilah. A dejected Arvinran was behind the two in Table 2 against Ong Zhu Han, he was more interested in the outcome of the match at Table 1. He dully triumphed over the Penangite and hoped in anticipation that Syasya would pull off a surprise. Much to his delight, she drew both blank, had all the 5 power tiles and defeated Zi Wei by a comfortable margin. Phew!

Arvin could not believe his fairytale luck and the rejuvenated lad rather ungratefully defeated Syasya by 263 points to face newcomer Fairuz Adila in the final round. Adila could not believe her luck when she randomly spotted ANYTIME to score an opening 76 points. However, Arvin could not afford another setback especially in the final round, as Zi Wei lurked dangerously behind in Table 2. He mustered several 30 pointers before ending the game with a 68 pointer ETOURDI to clinch the title with 6 wins and a +1380 spread. Choo Zi Wei ended 2nd, also on 6 points, but with lower margin +1044. Syasya Aqila and Penangites Ong Zhuhan and Elvan Yeoh rounded up the Top 5. Five out of seven Andersonians made it to the National Finals as they managed to place themselves in the Top 15. The top 15 participants gained the tickets and the rights to battle it out against the best from Malaysia at the CIMB Junior Nationals which will be held at 3C Complex (MPSJ), Subang Jaya.

Deepest gratitude and special thanks to the MSA, Martin Teo, Mr Louis Rozario Doss and administrators of the Ipoh International School for making this event a success, and I hope that this junior circuit would kick start a Scrabble scene in Perak ☺