

## **MSA National Scrabble Competition 2010**

*By Martin Teo*

The MSA Nationals ended with a big reunion of old hands and youngsters celebrating a new National Champion.

Malaysia's first national Champion, Muhammad Ali Ismail showed commendable sportsmanship despite a year hiatus from competitive Scrabble. Day 1 ended with Ali topping the charts, dropping only one game to Pui Cheng Wui.

However, Day 2 proved to be more exciting as the upper hand switched to Pui, after beating Ali 2 games in a row to take the lead. Pui was drawn to play Aaron and at this point, there was no clear winner as the leaders were all neck to neck.

Aaron showed Pui the exit from top 3 as he swept 2 points from Pui in the last two games to seal his victory with 13 wins and a whopping +1275 spread.

Overnight leader, Ali won his last game to end the day with a superb 2<sup>nd</sup> placing followed by Alex Tan as second runner-up. Pui who was gunning for a National Champion title and Tengku Asri completed the top 5.

In the Intermediate section, Kang Eng Lee, Tan Jien Lee and Ker Ken Wa finished in the top 3.

All winners received cash prizes and the National Champion was awarded the President Challenge Trophy sponsored by Dr Adele Tan, MSA President. A very big thank you is forwarded to Mr Sundraraj and family for an amazing job in organizing and coordinating the competition.

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### **Game by Game Highlights**

*By Aaron Chong*

#### **Game 1: Cedric Stewart Lewis**

**W 449 – 318**

I had ANOTHER, S(L)ITTER and RHUMBAE(D) against no bingos from Cedric.

#### **Game 2: Alex Tan**

**W 491 – 362**

Alex took the lead at first with ANBURIES but I overtook with RE(L)AYERS and A(M)PHORAE.

#### **Game 3: Chim Wai Main**

**L 407 – 411**

Chim had an early bingo A(T)ABRIN, challenged of my phony BELAW\*, and scored 71 points for QUALE to take a convincing lead of 100+ points! I already

knew I was a goner at this point, but I fought back with DINEROS, outplayed with CARLINE and got a nice bonus of 30+ points from his rack, but it was not enough to win from behind. Sad.

#### **Game 4: Martin Teo**

**W 505 – 361**

Martin drew first blood with DARTLES and in the next few moves I subsequently retaliated with ATROPIAS. He played a phony with AKAS\*. I challenged it off and played REVISED. In the next turn, he played TA(P)ERE(R) - he was keeping two blanks all along! I played RECOUPED in the very next turn to seal the win.

#### **Game 5: Pui Cheng Wui**

**W 420 – 414**

I took the lead with MAZIER for 81 points and ANURETIC, but Pui's late moves of (SA)LVETE (double blanks again!), CRIB for 30 and DEVILS for 33 compared to my measly finishing moves greatly lowered his losing margin.

#### **Game 6: Yeap Gim Sai**

**W 391 – 332**

I challenged off her phony SWEARED\* and she was sort of surprised that it wasn't valid. (Note: Should be DRAWWEES, RESAWED. Past tense of swear is swore.)

Later I had a simple bingo of ANTIREED while Auntie Yeap had UNIT(E)RS.

#### **Game 7: Mohd Ali**

**L 392 – 449**

He gave me a shocker when he played ANTISEX, hooking the S behind my QAT at his first move. I tried to catch up with INDE(V)OUT and MURLINS but he had W(A)RISON and YONIC for 50 points. He had consistent scores and balanced racks throughout the game that made this game a sure goner for me.

#### **Game 8: Tan Jin Chor**

**W 436 – 343**

I had SOLIV(E)S, WARDMOTE and DAIN(T)IES against no bingos from Jin Chor.

#### **Game 9: Yeo Kien Hung**

**L 442 – 447**

Yeo opened with THEEK and I countered with WRANGLE. Yeo subsequently played PERENTIE and MAULVI(S) with the S behind PERENTIE. I challenged both PERENTIE and PERENTIES, giving an extra 10 points that increased his lead to 100+ points. Again, I thought I was a goner, but I caught up with POINDED and DRAFTIER and eventually snatched away his lead! It was neck-on-neck after that, but my third mistake of playing the U while the Q was still in the pool as we approached endgame regrettably gave Yeo the win with a razor-thin margin.

**Game 10: William Kang****W 567 – 433**

I opened the game strongly with ZUPAS, but I was exasperated when William played COAUTHOR for 102 points! However, I turned the tables and netted a huge victory with COULDEST, SUBPARTS, UNDERTAX, JERK for 66 points and UNDERTAXED for 49 points against his QAIDS for 70 points.

**Game 11: Alex Tan****W 374 – 305**

Alex started off with (M)ADRIGAL. There were no bingos after that, but I won by outscoring most of Alex's subsequent moves and keeping him from capturing those precious S's.

**Game 12: Yeo Kien Hung****L 374 – 473**

He played TRAINED, I countered with SOREDIA and he retaliated with NINEBARK! As we approached endgame, I snatched the lead with SORBITIC but Yeo managed to fend me off with EROTISES. I had a final rack of PUCIE?? and the only way to win is to play an 8-letter bingo with D as its fourth letter. I tried playing PE(N)DULI(C) but Yeo successfully challenged it off. Once again, it was another exciting game for us, but it was nonetheless a heartbreaking loss for me.

**Game 13: Yeo Kien Hung****W 515 – 334**

Finally there was fortune against Yeo as I walloped him with OZEKI, FLINTED, F(O)RPINED, TEAGLES, CYAN(O)SES and TOQUE against TRISECTS.

I had to play either Tengku Asri or Cheah Siu Hean as they were against each other for fourth place. To my delight, Tengku won. I had to win the next game or else my chances of winning the nationals would be out of reach.

**Game 14: Tengku Asri****W 433 – 320**

I caught him with DACOID(S)\* and subsequently led comfortably with CRANKIER for 104 points. He had RELIN(E)S to his credit, but my consistent high scoring guaranteed victory to me.

It was a crucial win as it propelled my chances to win the nationals. In the next game, I would be playing Pui, holding pole position at this time. I anticipated that we would be playing against each other in the last three games.

**Game 15: Pui Cheng Wui****W 462 – 360**

Pui led with ORIENTAL at the beginning of the game. I caught up with NEE(D)IER and overtook him with CRAV(A)TS and INGATES. It was déjà vu

when he played AKAS\* against me. I challenged it off and used the high scoring spot to play OPSIN for 55 points, as a tribute to Jocelyn Lor who wasn't able to attend the nationals.

By now I was ahead of Pui by about 60 points in spread. However, we both had the same number of wins. This meant that the title of national champion was still up for grabs.

### **Game 16: Pui Cheng Wui**

**W 425 – 370**

Again, Pui had the early lead with his opening move of ENTOMB(S). I soon caught up with TROUPES and increased my lead with INEDI(T)A. The board was still open at this point, but fortunately Pui drew the Q that hampered his chances of sneaking away with a win.

I was now one winning point ahead of Pui. There was however a chance of me losing the title to Pui as he had to beat me by 168 points in our final game.

### **Game 17: Pui Cheng Wui**

**W 591 – 367**

I opened with HEARING, Pui countered with UNMATTED, and I countered back with ROUTEMEN, REST(Y)LE and QUICHE for 60 points. The tiles had spoken and I won my first nationals in nine years of my Scrabble career.