

MSA CNY Scrabble Challenge 2011

Feb 26 -27, Kompleks Inn 3K, Subang Jaya.

Reported by William Kang

This year's MSA CNY Scrabble Challenge was held in Kompleks Inn 3K in Subang Jaya, where a total of 54 participants turned up for the event to kick-off another season of Scrabbling. There were two divisions in this tournament: Masters and Intermediate.

22 participants joined the Masters category, with many familiar faces in the Scrabble scene vying for top spot in the first MSA tournament of the year. Meanwhile, 32 players of all ages were to play 12 games for the Intermediate title.

Precious rating points for WSC qualification were particularly at stake for the Masters in this tournament.

There was much drama in the Masters category on Day 1, with leaders alternating from William Kang, to Khoo Beng Way, to Pui Cheng Wui and back to Khoo after 8 games, who had 6 wins and a draw. One game in particular, between Chim Wai Main and Cheah Siu Hean, had witnessed a well-played nine-timer - HOARIEST - by Chim for 158 points, but still went down to his opponent from Singapore. Chim was, to his credit, gracious of his unfortunate loss.

On the other end of the tournament venue, Ker Ken Wa, father of WYSC champion Ker Jen Ho, had steamrolled all opposition during the day to garner 7 wins from 7 games.

Day 2 saw Khoo Beng Way slipping off pole position as a seasoned Pui regained top spot. He was undeterred by his loss to William Kang in the 11th game by a mere 10 points, shown by his subsequent return victory over his younger opponent, 458-380. During that time, Ker Ken Wa had already won the tournament with 2 games left to play, having a three-win advantage over his nearest rival. Thus, Ker was Gibsonised.

By the start of the 15th game in Masters, William had replaced Beng Way on 2nd place, setting up a final showdown against Pui for the title. Whichever player was the victor will have won the tournament.

As luck would have it, William emerged triumphant with a scoreline of 414-396 over Pui due to the latter's midgame mistake of overlooking a bingo line to place his bingo GOATIER, which would possibly have substantially reduced the chances of the former catching up and winning the game.

So the Masters division was won by William Kang with 11 wins and +508 margin. In the runner-up position was Pui Cheng Wui with 10 wins and +827 spread, followed by national #1 Aaron Chong who also had 10 wins but with +468 spread. Darren Khoo Beng Way and Cheah Siu Hean were fourth and fifth respectively.

Ker Ken Wa was unbeaten in the Intermediate category en route to achieving 12 wins and +734 spread. Behind him was Andrew Chung with 9 wins, and Thong Yi Kun, Matthew Mathan Raj and James Chin all with 8 wins, separated by spread. Muhd Amirul Azrie, Mohd Syazwan Aidid, Kang Eng Lee, Megan Yeoh and Ahmad Mursyidi Tzaka round out the top ten.

A player worthy of mention is 9-year-old Keeran Bathmanaban, the youngest player in the tournament who, despite having a winless streak throughout the two days, had the courage to participate in an Intermediate category sprinkled with able and experienced players.

(Alas, yours truly does not have the usual list of interesting words because he had characteristically not bothered to record them!)

Kudos to TD Alex Tan Ken Seng, K. Sundraraj and family, and every participant for making this tournament yet another success.