

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Having shaken off the cobwebs of Christmas celebrations, it's time to get back to some serious (or perhaps not-so-serious) Scrabble at the club.

Over the holidays, we had the pleasure of seeing a change in furniture from desks suitable for very young students (a bit squishy on our longer legs at times) to desks suitable for older Primary students, resulting in more comfortable surroundings.

Thanks to all for your continuing commitment to the Club. Have a great year of entertaining word gymnastics.

Chris

BLAST FROM THE PAST

While idly delving into the history of our Club, I stumbled upon the year 1999, when Baulkham Hills Club made history on the ASPA (Australian Scrabble) website. Who would have thought it was one of only three events to feature in the major Scrabble milestones of that year?

1999	First day's play at the Sydney International Masters filmed by Channel Ten and featured during Sydney's televised evening news.
	<i>Baulkham Hills Club the first Australian Club to have its own website.</i>
	Mattel commissions a dress made from Scrabble® tiles which was worn by Penne Dennison of 'Hey, Hey, It's Saturday' at the Australian Fashion Awards in Sydney (May 1999)



PANTOMIME REVIEW:

ALI BABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES



Our Scrabble club member Glenn played the role of Advisor to the Sultan in this musical presented by the Picton Theatre Group at the Picton Bowling Club, Picton.

The setting was both colourful and fun. The actors were dressed in great costumes and played to a full house. A large cast of both young people and adults performed with talent, vigour and verve.

Glenn's talent was evident in his portrayal of his character in a role that suited him perfectly. His costume was striking and, in concert with his couture beard, looked wonderful. The audience was kept amused with the many corny jokes that were seamlessly inserted into the plot. The children were encouraged to join in with the cast, which kept their interest.

David and Margaret both say "Five stars".

Review written by Diana Hilly

STRATEGY AND TACTICS by Robin

My strategy, or objective, in competitive Scrabble is to outscore my opponent by maximising my score and minimising their score.

My tactics, or the means for achieving my objective are as follows:

I use both open board and closed board tactics, sometimes favouring one, sometimes the other.

If I have won the start I prefer a vertical play, same as Nigel Richards. This is more likely to give me the flexibility of having an open or a closed board. When you play your first word, most times your opponent will play parallel or alongside your word. If you play horizontally you run the risk of ending up with a staircase going from the bottom left to the top right of the board. It can often be impossible to escape from such a staircase. If I play vertically it is easier to open up the top left quadrant of the board and thus avoid a staircase. In any case I will, most times, try to make an early opening of the top left quadrant of the board. This pretty much ensures an open board. I can still close down the board later if I want.

When going first a short play or a change of letters is often best. If a big score is available by playing a bingo or by playing a longer word with the high-scoring tiles then I will do that. The advantage of a short play is it gives your opponent fewer tiles to overlap thus reducing their score and it gives your opponent fewer floaters for making eight letter words.

For each move I aim to get a good score, inhibit my opponent, and keep a balanced leave. If I can't achieve enough of these aims I change tiles. I prefer to have in my leave about equal numbers of vowels and consonants. Generally I play off multiple tiles, though SS and EE can be worth keeping, if this helps my rack balance. When the board has bingo lines available I want to have one and two point tiles in my leave and perhaps one of the letters C,H,M and P. My least favoured letters are Q,U,V,W and the letters in FIGJOB.

I keep a close watch on all the premium squares. I avoid putting a vowel next to a premium square. It is too easy for a player to get 50 or 60 points for plays such as a ZA/ZA,

ZO/ZO, JA/JA/ or JO/JO. If my opponent is unwise enough to put a vowel next to a premium square I will do my best to use the spot myself.

I devote my thinking time to looking at possible words on my rack and to looking for places to play them, including places with multiple overlaps, which will increase my score.

My method for finding bingos is to choose a starting letter, next I choose an ending and then slot in the middle letters. Example: for the rack ACINOST I see A-C-TIONS or C-A-TIONS.

When faced with two places for a bingo I choose the higher scoring and the more defensive. If both choices allow high scoring replies then I choose the one that gives two places, such as a bingo that opens two triple word squares. Then I will be able to use one of the places on my next turn.

I decide whether scoring, defence, leave or a combination of these, is most important at this particular time.

It is necessary, I think, to track the Q even if I track nothing else. If I get stuck with it, it may lose me the game.

Once I have a good lead, about a hundred points, I like to switch from open board tactics to closed board tactics. I aim to take out all good scoring places for my opponent, block bingo lines, and spots for the high scoring tiles.

When the bag is nearly empty I count the tiles remaining. In general I try to leave one tile in the bag. If the opponent does this first and leaves one tile in the bag then I generally try to play a longer word so I only have one, two or three tiles left making it easier for me to go out. It is nearly always right to leave one tile in the bag. There are two good reasons for this. Firstly, leaving one tile in the bag means I will get another move if my opponent bingos. And secondly if I leave one in the bag I will be able to plan an out-in-two. The first move should block the best possible move of my opponent and preferably score well. The second move should be playable in two separate places, so my opponent can't stop me from going out.

My favourite wordlist is of the two and three letter words that won't take an S. Knowing these I can set traps. I glance at this list before every tournament.

THE BEST-LAID PLANS O' MICE AND MEN

Last month, Glenn and Marion visited another Scrabble club after I was contacted by the Parramatta Council as part of Seniors' Week. In the end, despite my best intentions to help promote our club and our game, the "event" was just a regular meeting of a few casual players.

Glenn and Marion were kind enough to help out but in the end, the time in traffic to and from Newington was about the same as the whole activity.

Thank you to Glenn and Marion, but if we get contacted next year, my response will be (politely) different.

POCKET TRAVELS

Over the last couple of months, my wife Kris and I have treated ourselves to two very short holidays. Nevertheless, our trips to Canberra and Uluru were most enjoyable. The best comment to sum up how much we enjoyed these trips was made by Kris. "It's nice to get away so we can get to spend a whole day together!"

In any case, our trip to Canberra was to see two concerts, one being John Waters' tribute to John Lennon (brilliant!) while the next evening we were treated to Anh Do the comedian. He's about the only entertainer I know who can make you laugh and cry in the one sentence. Truly inspiring.

There were a couple of surprises in store as well. It just happened to be the weekend of the Canberra Multi-cultural Festival. On both evenings, we walked out of the theatre and into a vibrant (and delicious!) display of cultures from all over the world. It was huge, and a couple of hours disappeared before we knew it.



Another treat was The Glass Factory. A colleague of mine at work recommended it, probably because her son has exhibited there. When we went, we had a pleasant half-hour looking at some amazing glasswork but just when we thought that was it, we stumbled onto a (free!) tour of the entire complex.

The guide told us all about the history of the original building and then took us into the deepest recesses of the complex which took us into the world of glass-blowing in a way that revealed the difficulty of that art. We even saw a glass-blower in action, teaching a visitor how to make a brilliantly coloured glass. Two hours later, we emerged truly impressed.

Two days in Canberra but not a moment of inactivity.

Two weeks later, it was Uluru.



Yes, we took pictures of the rock, but who doesn't? So for a change, I have included a picture of the museum in Yalara where we stayed. This young man was amazing. Going by the very indigenous name of Leon, his knowledge of the outback was unparalleled: a virtual encyclopedia who could answer any question you asked him. He was also extremely articulate and personable and a real credit to the museum.

Apart from taking lots of pics of the Rock at sunrise and sunset, a visit to the remarkable Field of Light was almost hypnotic. Originally designed as an artwork, it comprises tens of thousands of fibre optic lights that slowly change colour. It was meant to be dismantled after a year, but now looks like lasting at least a decade as a tourist attraction. It stretches over eight acres. Breathtaking!

Want to travel? See Australia first!

Chris

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PICTON

It seems as if Picton plays a large part in this edition. In fact, as an aside, that is where I first met a 16 year-old girl fifty years ago when I came down from Brisbane on a Scout camp (my father was Head of the Polish Boy Scouts of Australia) and the girl came to the camp with her own father, who was providing all the food supplies for 200 scouts. Today, that girl and I are married!

Anyhow, back to the main article. George Khamis was an ex-member of our Club, and is now Vice-President of Scrabble NSW and NSW Clubs Liaison Officer as well as being extremely active in creating Scrabble clubs in the Southern Highlands. George has provided a list of his favourite "ii" words below and even a good wish at the end!

AALII (s)
FILII
GENII
MEDII
MODII
RADII
TORII
CONGII
KAWAII (s)
BACCHII
DENARII
DOCHMII
NAUPLII
RISORII
SENARII
SPLENII
DUPONDII
PERRADII
RETIARII
SARTORII
SEXTARII
STAPEDII
TRAPEZII
LEYLANDII
OCTONARII
SESTERTII
ACCESSORII
INTERRADII
SEPTENARII
ANTIBACCHII
GASTROCNEMII

Happy Scrabbling & May The Tile Gods & Tile Fairies Smile Upon Your Racks

Not content with just one contribution, George also sent this interesting list.

How many times can you make a Seven Into a NINE?

Well I was playing against the computer and a word was played that caught my eye – "**LEONINE**" so I decided to look up the word. It's a adjective meaning "**like a lion**"

This got me thinking - How many more NINE based words can I make into Bingos?

Here they are:

CA NINE (S)
CO NINE (S)
VE NINE (S)

ADE NINE (S)
ALA NINE (S)
ASI NINE *

CYA NINE (S)
GUA NINE (S)
HYE NINE (S)
LEO NINE *
PEN NINE (S)
STA NINE (S)

QUIN NINE (S)

*There only two that don't take a (S) as an end hook (ASI NINE and LEO NINE)

May The Tile Gods Smile Upon Your Rack

George Khamis



