

Scrabbabble

The quarterly magazine of Scrabble® South Africa

Issue 2

December 2023



From left, Ike Obidike, Stephen Peter, Steven Gruzd and Ola Gbadamosi during a tournament.

SCRABBLE® is a registered trademark. All intellectual property rights in and to the game are owned in the USA and Canada by Hasbro Inc., and throughout the rest of the world by J.W. Spear & Sons Limited of Maidenhead, Berkshire, England, a subsidiary of Mattel Inc.

Welcome to the second edition of *Scrabbabble!*

We've come to the end of another year jam-packed with Scrabble events. Both Gauteng and the Western Cape held tournaments on average once a month. But we need to continue to grow the game and spread the words to be a more viable and sustainable Scrabble community. We especially need young people to get hooked.

We have published the national Scrabble ratings as at the end of 2023 in this edition. Well done to those that have improved their ratings.

The Johannesburg Scrabble Club (JSC) which meets at the Beit Emanuel Progressive Synagogue in Parktown has had good attendance on Wednesdays and Saturdays, regularly hosting more than ten players. Well done to Dr Ike Obidike and Rajen Pillay for running the club so effectively. Newer players will have the opportunity to be coached at the club, so they are encouraged to attend.

We are also encouraged by the growth of social Scrabble in Durban, under the guidance of Keshi Naidoo of Love Letters. We believe those players are ready to taste tournament Scrabble, and have scheduled an event for 13 July 2024. We'd like to encourage Gauteng and Western Cape players to make a weekend of it and support this event.

2024 will also see Gaborone, Botswana

host the East, Central and Southern Africa (ECASA) tournament on 29-31 March. Scrabble will feature in the Africa Games in Accra, Ghana this year and the African Scrabble Championships with be held in Freetown, Sierra Leone on 23-27 October 2024.

After five years as the president of Scrabble South Africa, Andrew Goldberg stepped down in November. We thank Andrew for his enthusiasm, generosity, energy and professional leadership of the association. He will remain on the national committee in charge of the youth portfolio. The acting president is now Dr Ike Obidike. We wish him success and fulfilment, and pledge our full support.

Ike has spearheaded Scrabble SA's application for government funding from the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC).

Please join our [Scrabble South Africa Facebook Group](#) – I have been asking a Scrabble-related quiz questions daily!

Thanks for commenting on the first edition of *Scrabbabble** – your positive feedback is always encouraging. Please send ideas to steven.gruzd@saiia.org.za or WhatsApp +27845810777.

Steven Gruzd, *Scrabbabble* editor

*Any word marked with an asterisk is not playable.

My vision for Scrabble in South Africa

Ike Obidike

The highlight of South African Scrabble is Dr Trevor Hovelmeier winning the 2002 Africa Scrabble Championship in Nairobi. Following on this feat are Steven Gruzd's 6th (1995) and Larry Benjamin's 8th positions (1991) in the World Scrabble Championships, both in London. Lanre Oyekunle's 10th placing (Goa, 2019) is also hugely commendable. Aside from these achievements, which time is slowly eroding from our memories, we do not have much to brag about. Having been involved in competitive Scrabble for about 25 years in SA, I hope to lay the foundation that will launch SA on an upward trajectory towards becoming a force in global Scrabble, backed by accolades. The bricks I intend to lay towards erecting this edifice will be placed strategically and with patience and determination.

ESTABLISH SCRABBLE IN OTHER PROVINCES

Competitive Scrabble is played only in two of the nine provinces of South Africa – Gauteng and Western Cape. KwaZulu-Natal has just signalled their interest. I hope to have established competitive Scrabble in three other SA provinces by the end of 2024. This will attract more talents and with it, the emergence of elite players. We have contacts to establish clubs in Limpopo, Free State and KwaZulu-Natal. I plan to give them all the

necessary support and build them up for subsequent growth. We have scheduled a tournament for 13 July 2024 in Durban in this regard, to support the Love Letters Scrabble Club, a predominantly female, thriving, and innovative club in Durban. Through the Gauteng Association of Scrabble Players (GASP), we donated Scrabble sets to them earlier in the year in this regard. I plan to extend such a gesture to the other provinces in 2024 to encourage growth.

SET UP SCRABBLE CLUBS IN SCHOOLS

Grooming players from a young age is the best way to recruit players. Most of SA's best players, even the world's best players, started playing Scrabble when they were young. It is common knowledge that the zeal of youth drives the energy to excel while maturity and determination will sustain it in later years. With the help of Andrew Goldberg (Director of Youth Scrabble), I plan to establish Scrabble clubs in 10 schools each, in Gauteng and Western Cape.

Of the 10 schools, at least three should be in the disadvantaged areas. In Joburg, we would look at having clubs in townships like Soweto, Alexandra, Katilehong, Tembisa, Kagiso, etc. Cape Town will look towards Langa, Gugulethu, Khayelitsha, Mitchells Plain, etc. The other provinces should aim for

three schools and build on those as the game grows there. The designated Scrabble SA member will help each school set up the club, coach the designated teachers and the students, and allow the teachers to run the clubs. Through intermittent visits by the members, we will monitor their progress and lend support regularly. A competition of the schools in each province will be organised at least once a year. An Inter-provincial tournament will be conducted to select the pupils who will represent SA Din the World Youth Championships.

most, if not all the varsities in SA by June 2024. Debbie Dooley has been appointed the National Coordinator for this project. She will work together with the individual varsity coordinators and send quarterly reports to the Scrabble SA Executive Committee on the project's progress. The Fundraising Committee will source funds for this project ASAP. The aim is to have the clubs registered and ready when schools resume in February 2024. This will allow us to partake in the Orientation programmes for the new students!



Debbie Dooley coaching Scrabble at Saxonwold Primary School

VARSITY PROJECT

Building up the Scrabble players' numbers in South Africa is my major objective and there are layers of strategies that I have mapped out on how to achieve this. Establishing the game in schools – primary, secondary and universities – is just one of them. While primary and secondary schools give long-term results, varsities give a more immediate result. So, I have designed a strategy to establish a Scrabble club in

RUN SCRABBLE CAMPAIGNS AND PROMOTIONS IN SHOPPING MALLS

Canvassing for players in malls and shopping centres has been a fun way of attracting new people. We will increase its frequency and play in these spaces to attract attention and hopefully, players. However, we always need five people for a successful campaign – two canvassing, two playing and one writing down details of interested prospects and giving them further information.

Taking it further, I am preparing a collaboration with Exclusive Books that will start in January 2024 to allow our members to meet and play one Saturday in a month at their coffee shop, Vida e Caffè, usually attached to the bookshop. Each month, members will meet in different Vida e Caffes of Exclusive Books all over Johannesburg. The first meeting will take place in the Rosebank Mall in January 2024. In time, we hope to include other cities and provinces as interest builds. This strategy is aimed at targeting word lovers.

IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF THE ADVANCED PLAYERS

South Africa is not blessed with an adequate number of players to drive revolutionary improvement. The bulk of the players to lead this transformation – those in the penultimate strata of the Scrabble hierarchy, ranked between 1400–1600 are only 14, at the end of

2023. Only two players are ranked above 1900, two in the 1800s, one in the lower 1700s and just two in the 1600s. This is the sad picture of the Scrabble standard in SA which has denied the top players the competition they need to stimulate further improvement. Reality check: Nigeria has over 4,000 Scrabble players; SA has about 100. Nigeria has over 100 Scrabble clubs; SA has about 5. Using the WESPA ratings in direct comparison, 39 Nigerian players are above SA's topmost-ranked player.

To correct this anomaly, I plan to push the 1400-1600 group to step up and populate the +1600 stratum.

A league of the top 12 players is planned for Gauteng and Western Cape from January 2024. The Joburg League has already registered the players to kickstart this project. They will play 33 games, playing three games fortnightly. Season 1 will run for 20 weeks, and Season 2 will start after an eight-week break. This



Ike with Nigeria's Enoch Nwali, current African Champion in Las Vegas, July 2023

league is fashioned according to the London Scrabble League, but some features have been adjusted to fit our situation in South Africa. The provincial and national associations will fund this league with prizes if needed. This competition will hone the Scrabble skills of the participant players and prepare them for international competitions. A second division of the league could be set up in Season 2 if there is interest from the players below the top 12.

INTRODUCE ACTIVE COACHING IN CLUBS

The grooming of new players in the Scrabble clubs to become good tournament players is critical to retaining them. Clubs will be encouraged to groom the new players through coaching and material support to become professional players. Subsidising or waiving club fees for eager but financially constrained players will also be encouraged.

SOURCING FUNDING

Funding is critical to expanding the game in SA and there are two ways to tackle this elephant in the room – government and corporate funding. To access government funding, we have applied for membership in SASCOC (South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee) and are awaiting the outcome. This step became unavoidable when Scrabble became enlisted as a demonstration sport in the upcoming All-Africa Games in Accra, Ghana starting in March 2024. SA has been allotted eight players for the event – four males and four females. We need government funding to attend this festival but need to be duly registered first.

We also plan to seek funding from other government entities like Lotto, National Arts Council, etc. Notably, Lotto donated R40 000 to us in 2004 for school Scrabble. We are optimistic that they will repeat that gesture, and bountifully too, this time around.



Cape Town players waiting for results

Corporate funding is also on our radar. Sometimes, their support could be through offering us air tickets to competitions (SAA, FlySafair, etc.). They could even offer discounts on local flights, especially for Johannesburg players flying to Cape Town for the Masters and SA Nationals and Cape Town players coming to Johannesburg for the Collins Cup in 2024. Flight tickets will greatly improve the attendance of the visiting players and the competitions' standards. Goods companies like Samsung, Apple, PnP, etc. can also gift us prizes for our competitions. Hotels are most invaluable in housing our visiting players in these cities. Even allowing us to use company halls and boardrooms for competitions and printing our tracking sheets will go a long way. There is a lot that the corporates can contribute to assist us.

When my tenure ends, I want to leave Scrabble SA with enough active players to sustain itself, have top competitive players to fly the country's flag in international tournaments, and a huge amount of money to run the organisation and our numerous projects. I want to lead SA Scrabble to a glorious new era where we walk with confidence and pride! As a vital piece of the Pan-African Scrabble Association's (PANASA) jigsaw, South Africa holds the key to unlocking the full potential of Scrabble on the continent. However, despite its significance, South African Scrabble has struggled to make its mark within the African Scrabble community. This insight as I see it explores the reasons behind South

Africa's limited involvement within the African Scrabble community, the importance of prioritising local development, and the need for South Africa to embrace Scrabble as a competitive sport. PANASA applauds the positive strides made by the current Scrabble South Africa executive committee and encourages them to seize the opportunities presented by Mattel's presence in South Africa to propel Scrabble to new heights.

Dr Ike Obidike is the Acting President of Scrabble SA

Are you on Facebook?

Then please join our Scrabble South Africa Facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/109968329077753>

We post pictures, results, announcements of upcoming tournaments, as well as a daily word quiz to sharpen your wits!

We aim to have 1,000 members by the end of 2024.

You can also play against others on the ScrabbleGO app.

BOSCRA can't wait to host ECASA – Gaborone 2024



Kem Bonno

The Botswana Scrabble Association (BOSCRA) will on 29-31 March 2024 host the East, Central and Southern Africa (ECASA) Scrabble extravaganza in a bid to shine a light on Scrabble as a competitive sport of choice, in Botswana, Africa and the whole world. Preparations are already under way as the media and other sport practitioners in Botswana are already showing interest in taking part in this historical event.

Botswana players cannot contain the excitement of taking part in such a big regional tournament on their home ground. It will be a fantastic war of words over the board and players cannot wait to be counted among the greats who are coming from other African countries to grace the event. Players are expected from Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and hopefully Lesotho.

Since its inception in 2019, BOSCRA has hosted several local tournaments. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic

crushed our dreams and hopes for finding sponsors and players as everyone got affected. Most of our support has been from outside the country, mainly the moral support from South Africa where Scrabble has been played for a long time.

We also have the backing of the Pan-African Scrabble Association (PANASA). PANASA president Adekoyejo Adegbesan has taken keen interest in growing African Scrabble associations. He does not want anyone left behind and that motivates BOSCRA to do better.

We would really love to see Scrabble as a sport grow in leaps and bounds in Botswana, because it really has the potential to remove children from the streets as it can be played by as many people as possible at a time. Children can also benefit in their academic endeavours from playing Scrabble, as it is a brain stimulating game and as a word game it also enriches vocabulary. Adults too stand to benefit from playing this

game, exercising their brains. Our tagline at BOSCREA is "Families that Scrabble together, stay together".

ECASA 2024 in Gaborone is the place to be. We will have the main event which we hope to have over 80 seasoned players from the African Continent including our very own Dr Jared Omolo, who recently took part in the PANASA President's Cup in Lagos Nigeria and finished in the top 30. It was not an easy feat battling with other African giants especially the

Nigerians. BOSCREA is very proud of him, and we are looking forward to fielding more local players. Alongside the main event there will be a youth division where we hope to witness our youngest players battling it out with other youth from the region. We are looking at unveiling cash prizes worth \$4,200 for the tournament before December 2023.

Kem Bonno is the chairperson of the Botswana Scrabble Association (BOSCREA)

Would you know all the words that end in -WOOD? (7-9 letters)

BARWOOD BAYWOOD BOGWOOD BOWWOOD BOXWOOD BUDWOOD
CAMWOOD DAGWOOD DOGWOOD DYEWOOD ELMWOOD FATWOOD
FIRWOOD GUMWOOD INKWOOD LOGWOOD NUTWOOD OAKWOOD
PLYWOOD REDWOOD SAPWOOD

AGALWOOD AGARWOOD BACKWOOD BARNWOOD BASSWOOD
BEARWOOD BEEFWOOD BENTWOOD BLUEWOOD COLTWOOD
CORDWOOD CORKWOOD CRABWOOD DEADWOOD FIREWOOD
GILTWOOD HARDWOOD HAREWOOD IRONWOOD KINGWOOD
LACEWOOD LATEWOOD MILKWOOD OVENWOOD PEARWOOD
PINWOOD PORKWOOD PULPWOOD ROSEWOOD SASSWOOD
SOFTWOOD SOURWOOD TEAKWOOD WILDWOOD WORMWOOD

ALOESWOOD ARROWWOOD BALSAMWOOD BEECHWOOD BIRCHWOOD
BLACKWOOD BLOODWOOD BRIARWOOD BRIERWOOD BRUSHWOOD
CANOEWOOD CEADWOOD COACHWOOD COCUSWOOD COPSEWOOD
DEVILWOOD DRIFTWOOD EAGLEWOOD EARLYWOOD FRUITWOOD
GREENWOOD HAZELWOOD HEARTWOOD IVORYWOOD LANCEWOOD
LARCHWOOD LEMONWOOD LIGHTWOOD MATCHWOOD MOOSEWOOD
OLIVEWOOD PRICKWOOD ROUNDWOOD SAPANWOOD SASSYWOOD
SATINWOOD SNAKEWOOD STINKWOOD STOVEWOOD SWEETWOOD
TIGERWOOD TORCHWOOD TOUCHWOOD TULIPWOOD UNDERWOOD
WHITEWOOD ZANTEWOOD ZEBRAWOOD

One year in: Assessing our inaugural year and shaping the path forward

Adekoyejo Adegbesan

A year ago in Lusaka, Zambia, Chrispine Kennedy Okeyo and I were elected to join the Presidents of the respective Scrabble Associations and Federations to run the affairs of Scrabble on the continent. This was a daunting task given we were just coming out of a pandemic and taking over an association that has had no traction on all fronts. In the last year, we have recorded modest achievements, some of which are:

- **Purchasing Scrabble training materials for the development of the game at youth and grassroots levels.** Kenya, Cameroon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Uganda are some of the countries that have benefited from these training aids.
- **Building a functional website for the association.** The website <https://www.panafricanscrabble.com>, our quarterly newsletter PANASA CHRONICLE and our social media platforms are now the primary source of information from the Pan African Scrabble Association.
- **Purchasing 100 lightweight compact boards and 50 blocks for use by the association.**
- **AYSC & Trophy Tour:** The first ever Africa Youth Scrabble Championship was birthed after 28 years in Lagos in August 2023. The two divisions were won by the Nigerians David Ojih and Prestige Archibong. There were 89 players from Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, and Uganda. We also embarked on a successful trophy tour across Africa prior to raise awareness for the championship. We expect South African youth to play in the next event – it was disappointing to see no one from the country competing.
- **The President's Cup Championship,** a biennial event, was added to our calendar. This August 2023 event saw over 130 players from across Africa attend.
- **Our ongoing expansive engagement with the media** to put Scrabble out there across the continent is one of the feats of our administration.
- **Scrabble will now feature at the next All African Games** to be held in Ghana in March 2024.
- **Currently onboarding** Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, and the English speaking parts of three North African countries.
- **Financial donation to ECASA 2023** host, Kenya.
- Through our collaboration with the Association and Federation

Presidents and Asia, we achieved the **highest number of seats on the World Scrabble body, WESPA**, the World English-Speaking Scrabble Players' Association. Africa's seats in WESPA moved from two to four, with Ghana and Kenya gaining a seat at the table alongside Nigeria and Liberia.

- **Ongoing review of the PANASA Constitution.** A draft constitution is expected at the end of April 2024. This draft will be shared with the country associations and a vote of adoption carried out at the next General Meeting in Sierra Leone during the ASC. It is my hope that the committee will give us a constitution reflective of modern realities.
- **We have developed a unified Africa Scrabble calendar for 2024.**

The new PANASA Executive has achieved all of what it promised players across the continent through my election manifesto and our plan is to use the remaining year to consolidate and steady the institutions we have built. It has always been the plan to show that things can be done differently, and with the assistance of all of you, we have been able to tick all these boxes. Through my travels across Africa, I have met with young Scrabble players, and it gives me great joy to know that our future is secure. We are working on a plan to secure a financial future for PANASA, this will guarantee success for whoever becomes President after ASC 2024. We

continue to seek your financial support towards our programmes.

We hope to fully activate Scrabble Clinics and Workshops which will see top players move around their region with the aim of helping to train players from neighbouring nations where Scrabble is less developed. A pilot of the programme was explored with former World Champion Jighere Wellington travelling to Ghana and Kenya in what was a successful pilot which happened side-by-side with the Africa Youth Scrabble Trophy Tour.

I urge all Scrabble players on the continent to continue to prioritise our own events, to see themselves as part of the rejuvenation happening across the continent. Scrabble is now thriving in most of the PANASA affiliated nations, there is not a better time to be a Scrabble player, playing the game on the continent.

Thank you.

Adekoyejo Adegbesan is President of the Pan African Scrabble Association



Brett's best advice

Brett Smitheram

A lot of topics have been covered regarding the subject of playing better Scrabble. Word learning techniques, rack leave values, equity, board control ... the list goes on. Much of this is, of course, very valuable to understand if you want to improve your game. You can't escape from the necessity of knowing the words, spotting them, and then picking the right one to play in a specific situation. When I was asked to write this article however, I decided that I'd cover off something a little different – but which has 100% led to the consistent success I've enjoyed over my Scrabble playing career.

Let me take you back to the year 2000 (and typing that makes me feel old!) I'd been playing tournament Scrabble for three years by then. I'd won a couple of small tournaments, but on the big stage I'd always crashed and burned. At my first World Championship in Melbourne the previous year, I was in the running for the finals going into the final day...and ended up in 44th place. This capped a run of tournaments I'd entered and failed in. It was the same story time and time again – I'd look at the field, look at my rating, work out how many games I needed to win to maintain or raise my rating... and then it wouldn't happen.

As I stepped into the playing room to take part in the 2000 UK National Championships I'd made my mind up – this was

my last tournament. No point knowing the words, wasting all that effort, and just blowing it. I could do other things with my life. More worthwhile things. It was a weight off my shoulders to not be going in with so much expectation and pressure and ...something odd happened. I won. I didn't just win, I walked it. I saw the words, made the right decisions, won the games one at a time. It wasn't until it was announced that I'd qualified for the best of three final that it even registered that I'd made it through. And then I won that final 2-0.

I'd inadvertently learned one of the most important lessons of my Scrabble playing career, and it had nothing to do with word lists or board control. It was that I needed to be master of my own mind and that pressure and distraction were killing my game.

How many times have you said, while looking back at a game you've just lost "but I *knew* that word, how did I miss it??!" or "I can't believe I did that. What possessed me?" I'm pretty certain that before making that fatal mistake you were tunnel-visioning, getting yourself more and more stressed that you were missing something ...You can't lose to *them*...You'll miss out on qualifying if you don't get this win ...You'll drop out of the cash ...This game is being annotated

and the audience will think you're stupid!...

You've switched to fight or flight mode. Your brain isn't focused on the task at hand – it's doing everything it can to get you *out* of this situation as soon as possible, not to find the winning move.

It's this which I've largely eliminated from my game. I now very rarely feel in or out of "the zone" and my performance, at one point decidedly streaky, became consistent.

My approach is simple: I view each move in total isolation. It's an individual puzzle, removed from context and import. All I have to do is find the solution, just as if I was filling words into a cryptic crossword as I travel into work. No pressure. It's something I do for fun. Maybe I don't always find the most brilliant play but I, equally, almost never miss a win that is within my ability. Over enough games and enough time, it makes a huge difference.

I often receive messages from friends excited about scoring 600 in a game, then the rest of the tournament falls apart and they're left crestfallen. While I cheer them on, I repeat, over and over again, focus on consistency and the wins will sort themselves out. Don't expect the 600s to come every game, and don't start thinking about the finish line prematurely. One step at a time. If you do this, I guarantee your results will improve.

To end this article, I'll switch back to the more standard Scrabble subject matter of fun words! One of the things I've always

loved, and yet sometimes totally overlooked while under pressure, are those unexpected hooks that can take people by surprise. Etched into my memory is the time I confidently played ARTICLE one to the right of a triple word...having mistracked the Ps and losing to a final move bonus from my opponent. Admittedly, this was just dumb rather than being an amazing lexical feat. But did you know SPARTICLE? Some of my other favourites

P-ARTWORK
S-UNCHOKE
B-ACRONYM
BERGAMAS-K
B-UNHEAD
C-UPBEARER

Brett Smitheram is Chief of Staff for a tech company based in London. After winning what he terms as his "First World Championship" in 2016, he said in an interview that he was going to celebrate by taking a long break from Scrabble. That break is still pending ...

Here are all the words that end in -MOUSE

SMOUSE

ZAMOUSE

DORMOUSE TITMOUSE

ONCOMOUSE REARMOUSE REREMOUSE
WOODMOUSE

CREEPMOUSE FIELDMOUSE SHREWMOUSE

PAMPELMOUSE (S) POMPELMOUSE (S)

FLITTERMOUSE

You are not playing enough setups!

Jay Page

Most players simply do not play enough deliberate setups. They miss the opportunity to create potentially game-changing opportunities on the board that they know they can exploit, while it's difficult or unlikely for their opponent to do the same.

A well-executed setup is a nightmare to defend against. The opponent is left stuck between two equally poor choices. She can destroy her rack and score relatively little to block, thereby allowing their opponent to nevertheless score well elsewhere, gaining the advantage he was seeking to avoid in the first place! Or leave the spot, score well elsewhere, control his rack, but then suffer a potentially devastating play. All of this analysis will need to be made in circumstances when the setup could be a bluff. You gain the opportunity to bluff when you develop a reputation as someone that creates setups.

Creating a setup can carry some risk. Often, to create the setup, one might give up some points on the current turn. There is also the potential that the spot may be blocked or used profitably by the opponent, leaving you to take an average score, having settled for a lower one on your previous turn. These probabilities will have to be assessed.

Like all potential moves, you should consider the total amount that you are

likely to score across your current turn and the next turn (and subsequent turns if possible, but this is often unnecessary if not impossible), weighed up against your opponent's likely response(s). When considering a setup, you need to consider the likelihood that the setup may be blocked based on an assessment of the unseen tiles and, sometimes, inferences based on your opponent's recent moves. This assessment is about the equity of each of your best options. You must choose the move that is winningest.

Early in the game, because there are so many moves still to come, equity tends to correlate very well with the winningest move. Later in the game, however, when there are a determinable amount of moves to come and you know that you are either ahead or behind, the move that scores the most on average might not be the winningest move because your only chance to win might be to create the chance to score, once-off, at the upper end of the spectrum of possibilities that a move creates. This is why setups tend to shine towards the end of the game.

Here's a setup by the world's best player, Nigel Richards from New Zealand, now living in Malaysia.

What would you play here? Look at all the high-scoring tiles that have already been played:



The answer is to play IN/WEEN on the right-hand side setting up the J or Z to the Triple Word Score square, to score over 100 points. The opponent has very few good blocking options if you consider what has already been played.

Jay Page is a lawyer practicing in Cape Town. He is a lover of games and is a driven competitor. He is a past Collins Cup, Nationals and Grand Masters champion. He has represented South Africa at two World Championships, in Australia and India, at home and in Zambia. He has also had the privilege of playing at the prestigious Causeway Tournament in Malaysia.

Unscramble these alphagrams*

ABEIMSU

ACCDEIO

AEILOSS

ABDEIRX

ACDEHIP

AGEFIRU

AEIMPSW

AEFILVY

AEHIKSY

CEHILRSU

AECHIMS

AACEIMU

AAELMNOT

ABELRRTU

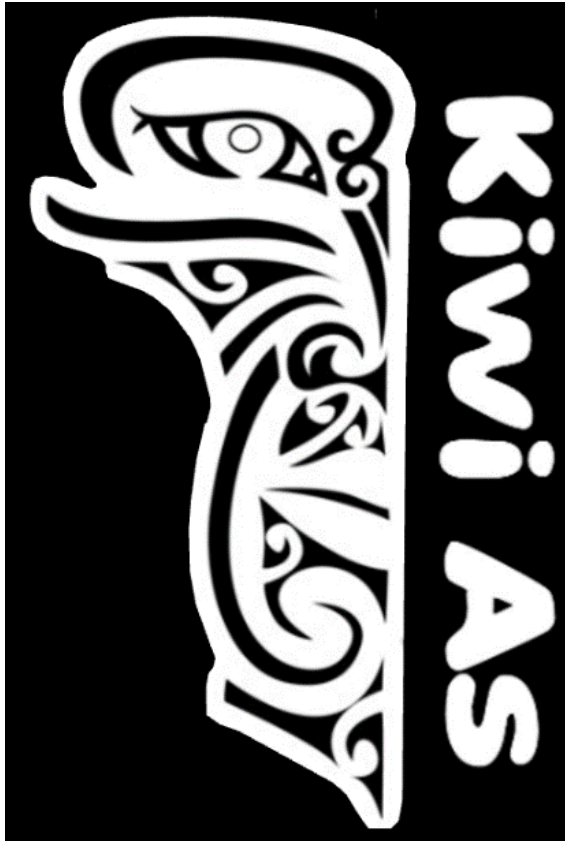
ADEIMMS

AIEFGIRTW

Answers on page 36.

Kiwi As Continued

Dylan Early



In the last edition of Scrabbabble, I introduced you to some of the more unusual New Zealand words playable in Scrabble. Here are some more of my favourite Kiwi words.

TANGI: While Cyril has declared a public holiday in honour of the Springboks and Faf de Klerk runs around the country in his patriotic undergarments, New Zealanders have entered a period of gloomy self-reflection typical of any TANGI after the Rugby World Cup (TANGI: a funeral or ceremony of mourning).

TOITOI: Imagine my surprise when my Kiwi friend said his kid is playing in the

TOITOI. I was relieved to discover it's not the same as a Johannesburg TOYI-TOYI*, but a type of wild grass with beautiful blonde plumes growing near the beach. (TOITOI and TOETOE: a tall reedlike grass native to New Zealand, not a loud, warlike dance native to SA).



TOITOI or TOETOE

WAHINE: Maori word for a woman or wife. As opposed to TANE, which is Maori for a man. These words are typically found on toilet doors signs in New Zealand.



WETA: As much as the Parktown Prawn is vilified in South Africa, its Pacific cousin, the WETA, is lionised in New Zealand as the largest insect in the world.

This beloved entomological aberration is revered and even used in the name of Sir Peter Jackson's companies that created props for the Lord of the Rings movies – Weta Workshop and Weta Digital. (WETA: a large brown insect whose name means “God of Ugly Things”)



WETA

TIKI: Have you ever been on a Contiki tour? Contiki is a New Zealand company that organises tours around the world for 18-35-year-olds, famous for their hedonistic shenanigans. TIKI is a Maori word for a scenic tour. It's also a verb, giving us: TIKIS, TIKIED and TIKIING. The word is derived from HEITIKI, a greenstone necklace and Maori good luck charm.



HETIKI

HONGI: A traditional Maori greeting where two people press their noses together. It's as common as a handshake and a good viral transport mechanism that inexplicably went out of fashion for a couple of years recently. Happy to say it's made a comeback after COVID-19. Just be careful not to HONGI your colleagues if they're not expecting it. It is also a verb, giving us HONGIS, HONGIED and HONGIING.



HONGIING

MOKO: Tattooing has a rich history and cultural significance among various Polynesian peoples, including the Maori of New Zealand, Samoans, Tahitians and Hawaiians. Tattoos (also TATUS) are not merely decorative; they convey cultural identity, social status and personal history. The MOKO is a facial tattoo and a rite of passage for Maori men and women. Tattoo artists (TOHUNGA TA MOKO) use AWATO (also AWETO, AWHETO and AWHATO), a dye derived from the mummified remains of a native caterpillar.



MOKO

TIRITI: A treaty, especially The Treaty of Waitangi, a historic document that was signed in 1840 between the British Crown and various Maori chiefs (RANGATIRA) in New Zealand. Some RANGATIRA signed by drawing their MOKO on the parchment. It is a foundational document for the relationship between the indigenous Maori people and the British Crown. However, there are differences of interpretation between the Maori and English versions of the treaty. The TIRITI (plural TIRITIS) is often the subject of political debate to this day.

Dylan Early is an IT project manager and lives in Wellington, New Zealand with his wife and three children. When he's not playing Scrabble, he spends his time walking the dog, mountain biking and watching Joseph Herscher videos on YouTube. He has been playing competitive Scrabble for 30 years and has won national championships in both SA and NZ.



People enjoying the day at the Johannesburg Scrabble Club

Eating the elephant one morsel at a time

Llewelin RG Jegels

I know as word lovers we all have our preferred way of learning words, from reading books, to dictionaries, to learning stems, to using software programs such as Zyzzyva. The methods seem to be as varied and diverse as the players employing them! Some like to wade right into the deep end and tackle huge word lists head on, while others prefer a more structured, methodical approach.

In Scrabble, I have always been drawn to systems of study that give more bang for your buck — more return on the time invested. In other words, when I study words, I want to maximise my learning efficiency. I'm looking to cram as many obscure letters into my cranium as possible without causing a messy implosion of verbiage! There must be a solid, mathematical routine rooted in strategic optimisation, not just haphazardly absorbing words through osmosis while sitting on the porcelain throne perusing the dictionary (though I admit this can be an amusing way to pass the time).

I guess my inherent laziness at acquiring the full Collins dictionary has a lot to do with a distinct lack of studying on my part, but it hasn't stopped me from fantasising about knowing the word LOLZ. And, might I add, it has spilled over into my feverish search for a method to make it 'easier'. Alas, the words still have to be learnt, the work still has to be done. I recall the legendary heavyweight boxer,

Evander 'The Real Deal' Holyfield telling journalists that his mother taught him an important lesson when she said: "Evander, many boxers may have more talent than you but don't let anyone ever say they outworked you!"

I digress...

Now, you may wonder what the big whoop-dee-doo is with my method. Well gather round for story time! *clears throat dramatically*.

There are — drumroll please — 34,254 seven-letter words in Scrabble. That's a truckload of words! Now imagine an elephant waltzing into the room. A great, big, lumbering pachyderm suddenly appears before you in all its gray glory. "My dear friend Behemoth!" you exclaim. "However, shall I ingest such a creature?" Right. One tasty morsel at a time.

But where to begin? Some Scrabble players like Boeta* Neil Horne like to start with the playability rankings—ordering all 34 thousand-plus seven-letter words statistically from most to least likely to be played in an actual Scrabble game. He then takes the top 50 most playable words and emblazons zany images in his mind to help him remember them. Talk about bang for your buck! With playability-ordered word lists, you tackle the vital vocabulary pieces first before nibbling around the extremities. But remembering tens of thousands of intricate words can still feel akin to

swallowing a long floppy giraffe tongue! Gulp! How do we trim the fat on this beast for easier consumption?

My slice of the elephant BILTONG (BOLTING) is a bit different. Instead of raw playability, I utilise Zyzzyva's magical wizardry to show me all the seen-letter words with at least two anagrams. POOF Word pairs appear! Answer? 3,502 words have an anagram twin. That's 7,004 words accounted for with only 3,502 to initially memorise! Now we're cookin' with gas!

Learning these 3,502 words essentially unlocks 20% of all 7-letter words by memorising just 10% as my entry point. With some assimilative imaging, that's only around 117 word pairs a day to cover the list in one month. I can handle that mammoth morsel!

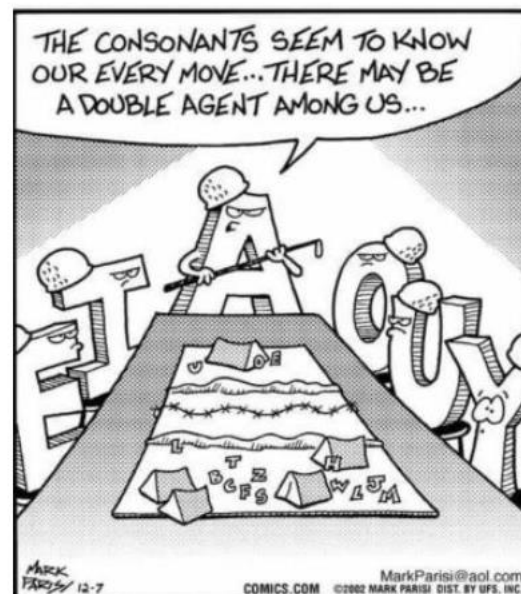
Here I've dispensed with playability rankings, probability metrics, or even STEMSON methodology which some unnamed top players *cough cough* employ so religiously, uncovering delectable word duos like ABRASAX|ABRAXAS and HAGGADA|AGGADAH and SALAAMS|MASAALA. Ah yes, I can already envision a scene to remember the latter pair featuring yours truly belting out greetings to a delicious Indian meal! "My SALAAMS to you, oh tasty MASAALA feast!"

Some word pairs come easy like FATBACK|BACKFAT, TABLEAU|

TABULAE, BAGWASH|WASHBAG. Others prove more brain bending like CAVEOLA|COAEVAL and LACUNAL|CALLUNA. But all get incorporated into my vast imagery databank in due time.

So, as I sign off, I leave you with an inquiry, my dear friend Rex RAWHEAD: Might you know the whereabouts of that missing WARHEAD? If found, please handle gently as explosions tend to disrupt one's meticulous study schedule. Ta ta for now!

Llewelin RG Jegels is a Scrabble enthusiast, once a Shining Star now dimmed to Mid-Table Mediocrity



From Forwards, the New Zealand Scrabble Magazine

Forget the face, remember the name!

Roshelle Pillay

With South Africa's diverse people and tapestry of cultures, we also have a myriad of names, which can give us a competitive edge when playing Scrabble. There are thousands of names that we would come across in our social circles and we have started compiling a list and invite you submit suggestions. You can use apps like Wordbiz (Android) and ULU (iPhones) to verify whether names are accepted in the current version of the Collins Scrabble Word list (CSW21).

Two letters

AL BO DI EM JO LA

Three letters

ANA ANN AMA AMI AVA BEN CAT
DAN DOM JAI JAY JOE JOY KAT
LEE MAX MEL NAN NED OMA OPA
PAM RAJ SAM SRI TED VAS VIS

Four letters

AIDA ALAN AMIN AMIR ALMA
AMLA ANNA BETH BOET CARL
CHER CRIS DALE DICK DINO
DEVI DONA EMMA ERIC FERN
GENE HANK JACK JAKE JANE
JANN JILL JACK JEAN JEFF
JOCK JOEY JOHN JOSH JUJU
JUKE KAMA KANE KHAN LILO
LILY MALA MARA MARG MARK
MARY MONA NOAH NOEL OTTO
PAUL RAJA RAKI RANI RAYA

SADE SEAN TINA TOBY VERA
WILL ZACK

Five letters

AARTI ABRAM ALIYA ALECK
AMEER AMRIT ANELE ANNAT
ASANA BARRY BASIL BELLE
BEATY BENNY BERYL BETTY
CARLE CARLS CAROL CHUCK
CLINT CRAIG COLIN DANNY
DEBBY DIANE DICKY DOLLY
DONNA DONNE ELAIN ERICA
ERICK FERNY FONDA FRANK
FRITZ GEMMA HAMED HARRY
HOGAN HOLLY JACKY JACKS
JAMES JARUL JERRY JESUS
JESSE JIMMY JOCKY JOHNS
JONES JUDAS KANDY KANJI
KELLY KHAYA KHAZI LEWIS
HENRY LANCE LAURA MADGE
MARGE MALIK MARIA MARRA
MASON MAVIS MERIL MICKY
MILES MOSES MOLLY NANDU
NELLY NETTY NKOSI NGANA
NORMA PEGGY PERRY PETER
POLLY PORGY RAJAH RAKEE
RANDY RALPH RAVEN RAVIN
RIVEN ROBIN ROGER SALLY
SAMAN SAMMY SANDY SHIVA
SUGAN TAMMY TERRY TOMMY

VEENA VENUS WALLY WILLY
WIMPY ZACKS ZILLA

Six letters

ALBERT	ALDRIN	ALEXIA
AMELIA	AMRITA	ARCHER
BARBIE	BAXTER	BERTHA
BILLIE	BONITA	CARINA
CARTER	CARMEN	COLINS
COREYS	DAPHNE	DEXTER
GARUDA	GIBSON	GLORIA
HAMLET	INDUNA	ISABEL
JESSIE	JOHNNY	JORDAN
JOSEPH	JULIET	KELVIN
KUMARI	MARCEL	MARTIN
MICKEY	MILLIE	MOREEN
MORNAY	MORRIS	MURRAY
NELLIE	NELSON	NEWTON
NHANDU	NORMAN	OLIVER
PARTON	PASCAL	RAGINI
ROGERS	SAMARA	SANNIE
SIENNA	SHEILA	SHIRAZ
STEVEN	SYLVIA	VICTOR
WARNER	WALLIE	WILLIE
WARREN		

Seven letters

ABIGAIL	AURELIA	CAMELIA
CARLINE	CARMINE	CAROLUS
CELESTE	CHIMERA	CHIMERE
COLLINS	CZARINA	DAGWOOD
FARADAY	GILBERT	JACKIES
JOHNNIE	KHALIFA	PATRICK
LAMBERT	LIONEL	MADONNA
MICHAEL	RASCHEL	SAVANNA
TIMOTHY	VANESSA	WILLIAM

Eight letters

BENEDICT BENJAMIN CHRISTIE
CLARENCE EBENEZER EINSTEIN
FLORENCE FRANKLIN GERONIMO
HERCULES ISABELLA MARYJANE
ROSEMARY SAVANNAH THATCHER
VERONICA VICTORIA VIRGINIA

Longer

CHRISTIAN CLEMENTINE
NIGHTINGALE

Scrabbled

By Vicki Snyman

The shake and rattle of square plastic letters

In soft cloth bags

What hidden words will be revealed

By the sliding of tiles on green racks?

More consonants!

More vowels!

No, not those vowels

Aye yai yai

These u's I do not need.

I probably won't even get the q!

Vexed

In competition with yourself

Anagrams of meaning

Finding perfect places for obscure words

Power letters on power squares

The beautiful game

Welcome back

Segun Durojaye

I had had two major surgeries and a small one. My floundering health had finally found itself on the recovery path. The dark days seemed gone.

In 2022, I was determined to strike my rhythm quickly. I didn't want the pity party to drag for too long. Having had a semblance of strength, I convinced myself that I could play Scrabble once again.

I entered a city competition and in my first game I was pitched against Dunsin Adebola.

For those who know Dunsin, each game of Scrabble is as intense as any examination can be. He gives his all to each game, winning or losing. He shuffles his racks endlessly, no matter how awkward and formless they were. He would shuffle IIIUOV as he would RETINAS. The rapacious grit will leave the uninitiated flustered.

On this occasion, I noticed he wasn't shuffling his tiles. He was merely looking at me and observing me. He is the ultimate Opponent Watcher. But here he wasn't interested in the game at all. He was studying me as Sherlock Holmes would study a crime scene.

I would make a move, he would perfunctorily make his, never counting

properly, never tracking, he just was not interested in the game.

For me, winning the game mattered. I needed to convince myself that I had the spark to make a return to the scene.

For him, a different scenario was playing out. One that mattered far above the rattling and cringing cymbals of a hundred odd tiles.

Suddenly, as if aroused from a deep slumber, Dunsin bubbled, he picked my hand and shook it excitedly.

And he uttered those words:

"Segun, welcome back"

You see, Dunsin is a medical doctor who had seen me in February, 2022 and was sorry for me. He had thought a nail would drop. I thought otherwise, though.

Well, seeing my naked green veins meant so much to him than losing a game, or winning one. I saw those veins too. They were a thousand. Where did they come from?

Well, all those niceties have since disappeared. Each game is to the death. He spares no missile these days.

Let me document those moments with gratitude to the Giver of Life, and the Taker thereof. He gave me life and abundantly too.

Segun Durojaye is one of Nigeria's top ranked Scrabble players.

Trevor's tips

Dr Trevor Hovelmeier

You're probably interested in Scrabble because you love the English language, thrive on mental stimulation and enjoy problem solving. The beauty of Scrabble is that it can be played at any level, and no matter whether you're a beginner, a social player or a club player, your game can be improved by learning a few more words.

The easiest way to improve your Scrabble

Words are your weapons in Scrabble, so it follows that learning more words is the key to becoming a better player. The most important rule when you set out to learn new words is this: "Don't be intimidated by word lists!" Start in a relaxed manner by learning the short and easy lists of commonly occurring words, and slowly build up your knowledge from there. As you learn more words, your brain will become trained to unscramble the jumbled-up letters quicker, so the more you learn, the easier it gets!

Winning is the best fun!

The more words you know, the more games you'll win, and winning is not only great fun, but a well-deserved reward for the word studying you'll do. The words that will help you the most are the ones which occur most commonly in Scrabble, namely the two to four letter words, and the top 100-500 high probability sevens and eights.

Tips to make word study easy!

With certain printed word lists, it helps to cross out the words that are very obvious to you. This can cut down the number words to learn by quite a lot. Some words are harder to learn than others, and there are various ways that you can mark the more difficult ones so you know that you need to revise those more often. You may highlight the words that are difficult to remember, or put a pen or pencil line next to the question whenever you don't get it right. Very soon the most difficult words will have a number of lines next to them, so you'll end up with a small list of the words that you know aren't that easy for you, thereby making revision so much more effective the next time you look at the list.

What are "alphagrams*", and why are they important?

When you start with a study list, you'll notice that the question is in the form of a jumbled-up word that you have to unscramble. If you look carefully, you'll notice that the jumbled-up letters are always in alphabetical order. This is called an 'alphagram'. For example, the alphagram of DOG is DGO, the alphagram of FOOD is DFOO, the alphagram of HAPPY is AHPPY, and the alphagram of TAINTED is ADEINTT. Studying from alphagrams is the best way to learn new words, because your brain eventually learns the pattern of the

alphagram, and when you see that alphagram again, your brain will often automatically unscramble it to give you the word! Virtually all top players study from alphagrams, and because of this, the majority like to arrange their racks in alphabetical order before they start shuffling their tiles. By doing this, their brains may recognise an alphagram almost instantly and the word then “jumps out at them”. For example, a good player who’s familiar with the alphagram AEHNORT will immediately spot the word ANOTHER. Try to make a habit of always first arranging the tiles on your rack in alphabetical order before you start shuffling, and you’ll notice that many of the words you studied will be easier to see.

The final word

Remember that studying words is quite easy, as long as you start with some basic lists and steadily build up your word knowledge from there. You get to decide the number of words to add at any time, and the pace of studying that you’re comfortable with. The more you study, the more your brain becomes trained to

unjumble words, so the easier it gets! Don’t be intimidated by word lists – start with the essentials and add more words when you feel ready. Make your own lists, if you like, and think of creative ways to remember the words. Some suggestions for word lists are the words that end in -WOOD, or -FISH. Playing a lot of games will improve your strategy and tactics, but this isn’t nearly as important as learning some new words if you want to be a better Scrabble player.

Finally, always keep in mind my favourite mantra: “The more words you learn, the luckier you will get!”

Trevor Hovelmeier is a medical doctor. He is a seven-time National Scrabble Champion and the only non-Nigerian to win the African Scrabble Championship, in 2002. He has represent South Africa at Scrabble 11 times international. He is the only SA player who has never had a rating below 1800 since his first competition.

Scrabble reflections following the Gauteng Open Championship

Rajen Pillay

Scrabble is a great leveller. 100 tiles, randomly selected each turn, 225 squares to place them on, the clock ticking away – anything could happen. The tile gods could be smiling or scowling at you; you find exotic bucket-list words, or rue missing them; you take chances, or adopt a measured approach; you quickly spot high scoring opportunities, or they escape you ... This is all relative to whether you're a heavyweight highly ranked wordsmith, a social-to-intermediate player or a newbie. The Gauteng Open Championship (GOC) is one such opportunity to lock horns across the spectrum as everyone is lumped into one group; opponents from different worlds hesitantly size each other up in the initial games. Some measure of sanity does eventually prevail as, gradually, players are pitted against others of their own ranking, or those performing at the same level on the day. It is thus an opportunity to get 'slaughtered' or be a 'giant slayer', as the fast improving Scrabble and Jimny enthusiast Roshelle Pillay quipped after finishing above some seasoned players.

My own journey along the Scrabble path is a somewhat mazy one. After having relocated from Durban in the early 2000s, I was bewildered to find a group of individuals playing Scrabble outside the Mugg and Bean Restaurant at Killarney Mall. Curious, I stopped to chat, and met Scrabble stalwart Larry Benjamin. The

rest is history. Larry introduced me to the Johannesburg Scrabble Club (JSC) members, who usually played at Paterson Park Community Hall in Norwood, or at restaurants, on occasion, so this was my lucky day.

Like most others, I started off playing family Scrabble, which transitioned into adulthood, playing with friends who equally loved the game. Armed with this 'experience', coupled with a love of reading, studying and teaching a language, I naturally assumed I would hold my own at the JSC. Was I mistaken! What a rude awakening this was. Firstly, there were all these strange two- and three-letter words they played, seven letter (bonus) words emerged with such regularity, seeming to just topple off their racks. Then there was the adjudication of these words via 'special' Scrabble Dictionaries. As I began to slowly take in all of this, I felt rather sheepish, thinking back to how we played in threes or fours, settled disputes via the revered Oxford Dictionary, and if all forms of the word were not listed, it was settled by consensus, or on occasion, the ability to use the word in a sentence! (Of course, I now cringe at the absurdity of all of this.) Still, my fascination with words and love of the game left me undeterred; if anything, it spurred me on. Larry, and the late Lynn Roff were great inspirations, both instrumental in spearheading

Johannesburg Scrabble at the time I entered the fray.

Hence began my long and arduous journey of club and tournament Scrabble, learning about rack management, strategising, tile tracking, identifying high scoring possibilities etc. Over the years, I found myself languishing in the Intermediate Section, occasionally flirting at the fringes of the Advanced Section when they were short of players, when my ratings got a temporary boost, or in the mixed open tournaments, such as the GOC. A turning point was perhaps at the GOC last year, when I miraculously prevailed for eight games on the trot, earning 78 rating points! I suppose the 1800s+ were absent, but someone did point out the hefty presence of the 1500-1700s, so I was punching above my weight category to some extent, the whack of points earned bearing testimony to that. I thereafter resolved to try to stay afloat, to work on shortcomings, trying to benefit from the wealth of experience at club and tournaments. I suspect I must be something of an enigma to some of my fellow Scrabblers, as I constantly battle both my opponents and the clock, regularly have three-letter words challenged off etc., but here I am, persisting, still rubbing shoulders with the Scrabble elite. As always in competitions, I approached the GOC with the usual silent promises: “be mindful of time, don’t play words unless absolutely sure, ditch the lure of ‘all or nothing’ kamikaze Scrabble” that invariably flattens me to smithereens, except for the odd success along the way. I recall, for example, with bemusement, the look on Gary Birch’s face when I once played BOPEEPS and

figured he must have thought I was off my rocker; then, his utter bewilderment upon finding that it is a playable word! The element of luck in tile picking, finding floaters or intricate bingo channels, pulling off bizarre high scoring plays, clinching unlikely victories at the death bring a wild exhilaration that only the passionate Scrabble player can understand.

The first day of this year’s GOC went quite well. Except for three losses due to the usual self-inflicted blunders and the late afternoon jading, when I quickly forgot Lynn’s advice not to hold on to ING but persisted for three consecutive turns, scoring abysmally, then inexplicably topped this with a phoney that was rightly challenged off with contempt! Such aberrations led to losing my short-lived lofty perch atop the standings, but overall, a reasonable performance (six out of nine wins) in a strong field. I had teased Fern Wheelwright not to fly too close to the sun, but when I came hurtling down to earth, I realised that it was I who had wings of wax!

On the brighter side, I was chuffed at finding some cool plays: UNSTRIPS (“You strip, how do you ‘unstrip’?” retorted a disgruntled Kathy Cameron). Most satisfying were wins over the two early and eventual leaders, Jared Omolo and Steven Gruzd. Why didn’t I use the common sense approach (coupled with some luck, of course) in the other losing debacles? No response. Started off nicely with FOIBLES, then followed with DEVIATES and ASATINE against Jared, just managing to keep him at bay, despite his relentless champing at the bit with some impressive strong plays. Against

Steven, I stared dejectedly at my opening rack, lamenting the dreaded duplicate AA's in my pick of AADPIOT, then rubbed my eyes and stared again at the inviting N's from his opening play of FUNNY. Without further ado, I placed down ADAPTION, which withstood the challenge, and I suspect, was not found to be funny. This was further exacerbated by an imminent fortuitous play of MEDIATES, abetted by the first blank. Still unamused, Steven countered with his usual high scoring plays. Down to the wire at the end, a bingo separating us, Steven held the last S and threatened the only (triple word) bingo lane remaining on the far right. Trying to restrict his scoring, I plonked down LOCO (both H's and blanks were out), but he craftily played VOG through this, leaving the -S hook open, stopping short of the triple word square, in order to bingo and score heavily both ways. I had no counter to this. He then smacked his lips and authoritatively played the seemingly convincing BINNERS* which, if good, would have clinched the game. The ensuing challenge ruled in my favour, resulting in a rare win against the champ. He, of course, characteristically got his revenge in the return match the next day.

Day two started off with a humdinger against Idris Idemudia. I started brightly with UNSOILED, satisfyingly played through a floating L, then followed with a 'double-double' nine-letter bonus. While I rested on my laurels with a perceived healthy lead, the quick-fire Idris hit back

with three big scores, leaving him on the brink of victory, the smugness now on his face. Thankfully, and appropriately, I found TIMELIER through my previous smouldering play of CIGAR, clinching victory at the death. I had to calm the now irascible self-reproaching Idris, coaxing him into returning to the table to complete the result sheet and help pack away the tiles.

The second game against the fast-playing and my fast becoming nemesis, Fern, was a disaster. Arranged FLESHER on my rack, but the more I looked at it, the more RESHELF* seemed more plausible. After the latter was played and promptly challenged off, I then stupidly saw the missed HERSELF. However, by now, it was too late, and whilst I had dithered, my wily opponent had had enough time to score steadily and block off all channels, winning the game convincingly. Another dimension to the enigma must be 'Isn't he just his own worst enemy?'

Still, I'll take Llewelin Jegels' aptly articulated observation on our chat group, that 'that is the lowest spread (+9) he's seen in a top 4 position!' ... that I must have been 'grinding out close wins!' (Indeed) ... lauding 'taking the wins and letting the spread take care of itself!...' and, finally, being 'almost at the mythical 1600!'

Rajen Pillay is a retired teacher an

South African Scrabble ratings on 10 December 2023

RANK	NAME	PROVINCE	# GAMES PLAYED	RATING	LAST TOURNEY
1	Trevor Hovelmeier	GP	2094	1950	20220814
2	Harry Wiggins	WP	1007	1868	20231126
3	Steven Gruzd	GP	1772	1856	20231202
4	Jarrold Page	WP	1488	1812	20230321
5	Ashley Willenberg	WP	1538	1713	20231210
6	Andrew Goldberg	GP	1071	1686	20231111
7	Llewellyn Jegels	WP	1748	1681	20221127
8	Howard Rayner	GP	1763	1599	20231202
9	Pam Field	WP	2066	1584	20231210
10	Ola Gbadamosi	GP	441	1579	20231202
11	Solomon Lephoto	GP	1006	1573	20230218
12	Susan Rayner	GP	625	1562	20231202
13	Diana Mason	WP	2471	1555	20231210
14	Fern Wheelwright	GP	2156	1540	20231202
15	Chili Dunx	WP	1860	1510	20231029
16	Rajen Pillay	GP	1482	1510	20231202
17	Ike Obidike	GP	775	1454	20231202
18	Gerald Davids	WP	2020	1451	20231210
19	Gary Birch	GP	1224	1447	20231202
20	Idris Idemudia	GP	92	1440	20231202
21	Gwen Rea	GP	2349	1438	20231202
22	Denise Le Bron	WP	2929	1388	20231210
23	Ross Landy	GP	208	1386	20231202
24	Debbe Hossy	GP	2190	1376	20231111
25	Kathy Cameron	GP	2589	1367	20231202
26	Grant Rea	WP	8	1364	20220716
27	Verlaine de Wit	GP	6	1352	20220814
28	Diane De Wit	GP	6	1352	20220814
29	Ata Sondag	WP	783	1351	20231126
30	Carol Parker	WP	2269	1348	20231126
31	Pam Page	WP	969	1347	20231210
32	Roshelle Pillay	GP	387	1303	20231202
33	Mary Botha	WP	532	1290	20220716
34	Raquel Lightley	GP	626	1275	20231202
35	Joy Palm	WP	2409	1267	20231210
36	Fredrick Ogada	GP	8	1250	20221015
37	Estelle Marney	WP	1078	1244	20231126
38	Leah Fitzpatrick	GP	924	1225	20231111
39	Zubeida Brey	WP	2242	1215	20220527
40	Riyaz Hoosain	WP	585	1197	20231126
41	Lloyd Parkerson	WP	347	1194	20230910
42	Seena Yacoob	GP	357	1185	20230617
43	Vicki Snyman	GP	108	1158	20231202

RANK	NAME	PROVINCE	# GAMES PLAYED	RATING	LAST TOURNEY
44	Stephen Peter	GP	975	1154	20231202
45	Elaine Lizzi	WP	1190	1118	20231210
46	Viv Ridyard	GP	346	1103	20231202
47	Joe Leqoalane	GP	180	1099	20230617
48	Colleen Thrupp	GP	39	1089	20231014
49	Cecil Petersen	GP	506	1084	20231210
50	Sono Leqheku	GP	24	1064	20230708
51	Alison Lazarus	WP	239	1055	20231210
52	Debbie Dooley	GP	101	1043	20231202
53	Analize De Swardt	WP	6	1031	20220909
54	Sheba Bagg	GP	996	1018	20231202
55	Arlene Cerfontyne	WP	38	1018	20231029
56	Gill Nomis	GP	713	1012	20231202
57	Barbara Dreyer	GP	87	1001	20230121
58	Priya Maistry	GP	85	989	20231210
59	Annalie J v Rensburg	WP	394	979	20230730
60	Barbara Montgomery	WP	473	970	20220716
61	Joy Kleve	WP	134	960	20230730
62	Brian Civin	GP	100	958	20230415
63	Amien Jacobs	WP	313	951	20231210
64	Brenda Afargan	GP	584	938	20230617
65	Gerrie Durrheim	GP	171	937	20231014
66	Roi Simpson	WP	31	929	20231029
67	Gill Gray	GP	21	927	20230910
68	Anastasia Demertzis	GP	1104	899	20231202
69	Sheila Civin	GP	133	888	20230415
70	Evelyn Athimoolam	GP	6	871	20220814
71	Ugi Athimoolam	GP	6	871	20220814
72	Rosemary Tod	GP	853	851	20231202
73	Moira King	WP	5	841	20230910
74	Peggy Ferhily	SA	16	834	20231029
75	Joy Rubenstein	WP	63	833	20231210
76	Tasneem Khan	WP	24	826	20221126
77	Ruth Pressler	GP	192	783	20231111
78	Vijay Ekambaram	WP	18	758	20231210
79	Leatitia Morgan	WP	8	757	20221126
80	Glenda Charles	WP	614	756	20231210
81	Potlaki Motshweneng	GP	23	725	20230708
82	Karini Govender	WP	30	724	20230910
83	Nando Moeketsi	WP	16	717	20220814
84	Debbie Hutton	WP	17	703	20230910
85	Chris Legg	WP	37	698	20230910
86	Shihaam Schroeder	WP	5	698	20230910
87	Jenny Zincke	WP	430	693	20231202
88	Ruth Kay	GP	12	661	20231210
89	Joan Oosthuizen	GP	39	658	20231202

RANK	NAME	PROVINCE	# GAMES PLAYED	RATING	LAST TOURNEY
90	Motsumi Molapisi	GP	23	656	20230708
91	Rod Comer	WP	41	652	20230910
92	Simone Kaplan	GP	64	636	20231111
93	Molifi Lethebe	GP	23	622	20230708
94	Marian Thornton	GP	62	606	20231202
95	Thabo Tsotetsi	GP	8	551	20230708
96	Janice Clifton	GP	6	526	20220909
97	Leah Ferrington	GP	276	502	20220514
98	Graham Ashkettle	GP	856	500	20231202
99	Shihaam Jacobs	WP	80	500	20230514
100	Timothy Mokgoadi	GP	35	500	20230319
101	Marcelle Donald	GP	16	500	20231202
102	Roy Macrobert	WP	6	500	20220716
103	Annette Thompson	WP	6	500	20220814
104	Jeanette Sakko	WP	6	500	20220909
105	Natanya Rumbles	GP	4	500	20230514
106	Terence Ndlovu	GP	3	500	20231111

Thank you to Kathy Cameron and Denise Lebron for your amazing work in running tournaments and organising the ratings.



2024 EVENTS CALENDAR

2024 Scrabble South Africa Membership Fees:

R275 per year and R165 for pensioners (no increase in fees). Can be paid in cash during a tournament or into a bank account by **31 March 2024**.

Gauteng: Bank: FNB Account Name: Scrabble GP Cheque Account Number: 62237957579 Branch: universal/250655 Reference: Your name	Western Cape Bank: Nedbank Account Name: Scrabble SA Cheque Account Number: 1153261790 Branch: universal/198765 Reference: Your name
--	---

JANUARY 2024

Date	Event	Province	Venue	Organiser	Qualifiers?	Format	Cost
20	New Year	Gauteng	TBC	Ike Obidike / Rajen Pillay 074 781 4588/ 083 787 7781	Open	Round Robin	TBC
27	Summer CT	Cape	Pinelands Library	Denise LeBron 083 749 6103	Open	Swiss pairing 8	TBC

FEBRUARY 2024

Date	Event	Province	Venue	Organiser	Qualifiers?	Format	Cost
17	Summer GP	Gauteng	TBC	Andrew Goldberg 083 260 7530	Open	Round Robin	TBC
25	Sunshine Cup	Cape	Pinelands Library	Denise LeBron 083 749 6103	Open	Swiss pairing (7 + 1 KOH)	TBC

MARCH 2024

Date	Event	Province	Venue	Organiser	Qualifiers?	Format	Cost
16	Autumn GP	Gauteng	TBC	Steven Gruzd 084 581 0777	Open	Round Robin	TBC
23	Autumn CT	Cape	Pinelands Library	Denise LeBron 083 749 6103	Open	Swiss pairing (7 + 1 KOH)	TBC
29- 31	ECASA	Gaborone Botswana	Travelodge, Block 3	Kem Bonno +276 75 424 335 (Ike will coordinate	2 sections	?	USD 50

APRIL 2024

Date	Event	Province	Venue	Organiser	Qualifiers?	Format	Cost
------	-------	----------	-------	-----------	-------------	--------	------

13	Easter	Gauteng	Blandford Manor Northriding, Johannesburg	Howard Rayner 082 905 3277	Open	Round Robin	R300
21	Cape Town Cup	Cape	Pinelands Library	Denise LeBron 083 749 6103	Open	Swiss pairing (7 + 1 KOH)	TBC

MAY 2024

Date	Event	Province	Venue	Organiser	Qualifiers?	Format	Cost
18	May	Gauteng	TBC	Steven Gruzd 084 581 0777	Open	Round Robin	TBC
26	Winter	Cape	Pinelands Library	Denise LeBron 083 749 6103	Open	Swiss pairing (7 + 1 KOH)	TBC

JUNE 2024

Date	Event	Province	Venue	Organiser	Qualifiers?	Format	Cost
01	TBC	Gauteng	TBC	Roshelle/Raque	Open	Swiss pairing	TBC
15-16	SA Nationals	Cape	Pinelands Library	Cape town team	Open	Swiss pairing (13 + 3 KOH)	TBC
17-18	SA Masters/ B Masters	Cape	Pinelands Library	Cape town team	Open for B Masters	Double round robin or swiss (13 + 3 KOH)	TBC

JULY 2024

Date	Event	Province	Venue	Organiser	Qualifiers?	Format	Cost
13	July	Durban	TBC	Steven Gruzd 084 581 0777	Open	Round Robin	TBC
13	Pinelands Club	Cape	Pinelands Library	Pam Page 082 946 2003	Open	Swiss pairing (8)	TBC

27-28	Gauteng Masters	Gauteng	TBC	Howard Rayner 082 905 3277	Ratings based	Double round Robin	TBC
-------	-----------------	---------	-----	-------------------------------	---------------	--------------------	-----

AUGUST 2024

Date	Event	Province	Venue	Organiser	Qualifiers?	Format	Cost
18	Rondebosch Club	Cape	Pinelands Library	Denise LeBron/Gerald Davids 083 749 6103/083 466 8378	Open	Swiss pairing (7 + 1 KOH)	TBC
24-25	Collins Cup	Gauteng	Bryanston Country Club, Bryanston, Johannesburg	Howard Rayner 082 905 3277	Open	Swiss 13 + 3 KOH	TBC

SEPTEMBER 2024

Date	Event	Province	Venue	Organiser	Qualifiers?	Format	Cost
8	Retreat Club	Cape	Meadowridge Library	Carol Parker 082 595 7368	Open	Swiss 6 +2 KOH	TBC
14	Rotary	Gauteng	NICHE, Plot 19 Havelock Street, Willow Park, Pretoria	Anastasia Demertzis 082 818 0726	Open	Round Robin	TBC

OCTOBER 2024

Date	Event	Province	Venue	Organiser	Qualifiers?	Format	Cost
19-20	Gauteng Open	Gauteng	TBC	Rajen Pillay 083 787 7781	Open	Swiss 5 + 3 KOH	TBC
23-27	African Champs (ASC)	Sierre Leone	Freetown, Sierre Leone	PANASA Co-ordinated through Ike	TBC	TBC	TBC
26-27	WP Open	Cape	Pinelands Library	Denise LeBron 083 749 6103	Open	Swiss pairing (13 + 3 KOH)	TBC

NOVEMBER 2024

Date	Event	Province	Venue	Organiser	Qualifiers?	Format	Cost
9	Lynn Roff Memorial	Gauteng	TBC	Ike Obidike 074 781 4588	Open	Round Robin	TBC
23-24	WP Masters	Cape	Pinelands Library	Denise LeBron 083 749 6103	Highest rated	Double round robin	TBC

DECEMBER 2024

Date	Event	Province	Venue	Organiser	Qualifiers?	Format	Cost
7	Benoni	Gauteng	All Souls Anglican Church, 38 O'Reilly Merry Street, Benoni	Kathy Cameron 082 938 8744	Open	Round Robin	TBC
8	Year Eng	Cape	Pinelands Library	Denise LeBron 083 749 6103	Open	Swiss 8	TBC

Unscramble these alphagrams* from
page 15

MAUBIES

ACCOIED

LOIASES

AXEBIRD

EDAPHI

REFUGIA

MAPWISE

IVYLEAF

SAKIYEH

CULSHIER

CHAMISE

CAMAIEU

MALONATE

BARRULET

MISMADE

GIFTWARE