

TRAVELOGUE

By Anand Bharadwaj

This is a travelogue of my World Youth Scrabble Championship campaign in 2011. I will be writing about each game.

Introduction: I had come to the same place in 2009 for a previous WYSC finishing 28th out of 81 contestants. My goal was to finish in the top five this year and show that I had definitely improved my game since 2009.



Figure 1: I am standing in front of Zon Regency hotel where the tournament was held

Round 1: I was unfortunately drawn against the top seed – Cheong Yi Wei of Malaysia who started in great fashion with BOLETES for 89. I was struggling with fairly painful racks and the score soon turned into 99 – 200 in his favour. With a rack of RETINA and an N, Wei luckily floated an I to allow me to play TRIENNIA for 68. This cut the deficit to a mere 17 points. However, my joy was only temporary as Wei replied soon with STORAGE with the first blank for 79. I picked the second blank and played TEREDOS for 73 but this was answered by his 74-point play PILSNER. Despite trailing by over 120, I finished the game with a creative endgame sequence – AX for 54, followed by something for 19 and then went out by extending his play CRAW to CRAWLIES for 39. After receiving 28 points for the tiles on his rack the final score was 451 - 503 in his favour.



Figure 2: My final board position for the game against Cheong Yi Wei from Malaysia

Results: Bharadwaj 451 lost to Cheong Yi Wei (MALAYSIA) 503.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 0-1, (-53), 53rd position

Round 2: Because of my loss in Round 1, I was floundering in the second half of the field. The only positive by this outcome was that I got an easier opponent, namely Kukiath Khunpanitchot of Thailand. I had a lovely, flowing game, starting with ZOWIE for 54, then OVERSIZE for 90 through the Z racking up a big lead which he could never quite haul in. Later I had two more bonuses resulting in a final score of 549 - 353 in my favour.

Results: Bharadwaj 549 defeated Kukiath Khunpanitchot (THAILAND) 353.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 1-1, (+144), 29th position

Round 3: Whew! That win sure restored my confidence. Because it was a lagged Swiss draw, the pairings for this round were based on the standings of Round 1. I drew the strong British player Tim Butcher. I had a fairly nice game, managing only one bonus TOADIES for 71 to his one as well, but eked out some other decent scores to win 400 – 296.

Results: Bharadwaj 400 defeated Tim Butcher (GREAT BRITAIN) 296.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 2-1, (+248), 18th position

Round 4: After a pleasant lunch, I had a look at the draw and sat down to play Malaysian player Harendraraj Mohanraj. I had never heard of him before, but it turned out to be a great game for me

with DONATION for 66, ABSTAIN for 74, WEXE for 58 and ZOWIE for 54 resulting in a 526-243 thrashing.

Results: Bharadwaj 526 defeated Harendraraj Mohanraj (MALAYSIA) 243.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 3-1, (+531), 7th position

Round 5: I was drawn to play against Pakistan's top seed Shahzaib Khatri. The game was fairly close throughout, but he phoneyed twice with TEARLIKE and VIOLINE (suppose he was thinking of OLIVERS and VIOLERS). With some careful endgame play, I ground out a win by 59 points despite getting no blanks.

Results: Bharadwaj 375 defeated Shahzaib Khatri (PAKISTAN) 316.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 4-1, (+590), 6th position

Round 6: I was to play another Pakistan player, Javeria Mirza. I took out an early lead with two bonuses, but she came back with one of her own and some other strong scores to get in front. However, I soon got my third bonus down to retake the lead. By finding out her last rack, I managed to spoil her best plays leaving her with no hope. She tried a phoney in desperation, but I instantly challenged it off. After this, I ended up as the victor by 20 points.

Results: Bharadwaj 421 defeated Javeria Mirza (PAKISTAN) 401.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 5-1, (+610), 4th position

Round 7: My opponent was the undefeated Premkumar Nimalan from Sri Lanka. Anyway, I had a flowing game with FEARERS for 82 early on and TOLERANT midgame for 66. This gave me a 100-point lead. After my next move, Nimalan phoneyed with LINEATES and lost his turn. Despite getting SEALINE next turn he began fishing for another bonus as that was his only hope of victory. To rub the salt into his wounds, I played CRUSTING for 86 through the C he opened up which resulted in a lopsided 498 – 337 score.

Results: Bharadwaj 498 defeated Premkumar Nimalan (SRI LANKA) 337.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 6-1, (+771), 2nd position

Round 8: The last game of the day was a classic with Jeremy Khoo of Singapore. I was consistently picking up junk for the first five moves or so while he played a bonus early on. After move 5, when he phoneyed with JAS, I had to weigh up the possibilities:

If I play EMIGRANT for 64, he will be able to respond with VERITAS for 90. If I don't, well I may have to just kiss this game goodbye. So after playing EMIGRANT, he responded with the move I expected. After a couple of high non-bingo scores I was within 50 points of Khoo. He phoneyed again later and we were about level. Next turn, he banged another bonus down, however I replied with OUZO for 60 making the score 428-421 in his favour. It looked dead and buried when Khoo played his fourth bonus, EARLOBES for 70 more, giving him a lead of 498-421. Meanwhile I was left with a rack of BENDIES. As I was shuffling my letters, my eye saw the R of EARLOBES in fourth position from the top. I separated the S from my rack and saw that the remaining letters (including the R) made

BENDIER. From my Zyzzyva study, I recalled that BENDIER has an anagram, INBREED. If I pluralise it, I will be able to bonus out! I rechecked the score of INBREEDS. It is 76 points, making the score 498-497 in his favour. But wait a second; my tile tracking says that he has an O on his rack giving me two points more. I will win by one. When I played INBREEDS, Khoo looked shocked. He asked for a recount which ended up in my favour after we found out that I underscored EMIGRANT by one point. Final score: 500 – 498 and my reward is that I am leading the field overnight on margin from Eden Choo who I will play the next morning.

Comments: I am now first of five players on 7 wins.

Results: Bharadwaj 500 defeated Jeremy Khoo (SINGAPORE) 498.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 7-1 (+773), 1st position

Round 9: This game against Eden Choo was a high scoring clash in which I had two bonuses to his three, but his BRONZE for 74 made the key difference. The final score was 535-402 in his favour, giving me my biggest loss of the tourney. Ouch.

This game is viewable online at <http://www.cross-tables.com/annotated.php?u=9931#0#>

Comments: That loss sent me plummeting down to fifth. I came this morning with the Essendon Bombers song (See the Bombers fly up) echoing in my head, but I seem to be flying the wrong way!

Results: Bharadwaj 402 lost to Eden Choo (SINGAPORE) 535.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 7-2(+641), 5th position

Round 10: Because of the lag draw, I stay at board 1 and my opponent is Britain's youth champion, Oliver Garner. I have played him a few times online, but don't remember his game style much. I played INSIDER early which Garner replied to with a bonus of his own. Later, I played IXIAS for 60, but he answered back with ETHERISE for 65. However, three scores of 60+ in four turns made the difference for me as I prevailed 501-443.

This game is viewable online at <http://www.cross-tables.com/annotated.php?u=9934>.

Comments: Good to get a win on the board. I am now third, with Choo one game clear on 9 wins. I am flying up again!

Results: Bharadwaj 501 defeated Oliver Garner (GREAT BRITAIN) 443.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 8-2 (+699), 3rd position

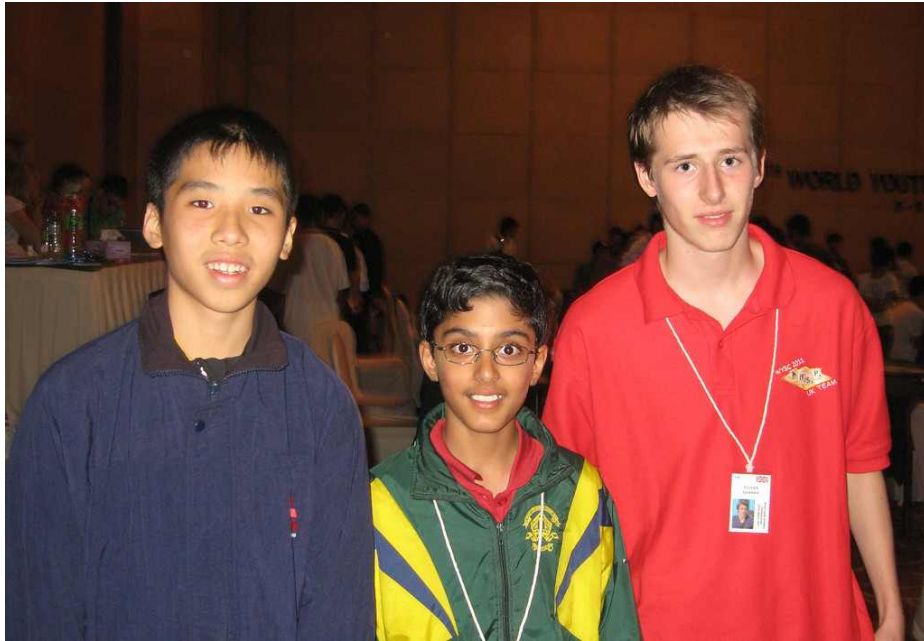


Figure 3: With Victor Gwee from Singapore and Oliver Garner from Britain

Round 11: My opponent was Joe Knapper of Britain who had upset some higher rated players on Day 1. Against me, he started with two easy bonuses in the first three turns leaving me 56-202 in arrears. Very nice... just when I wanted to fly up, this is happening to me. Well I suppose I should try to cut the spread. I got 51 and 62 on my next two turns which reduced Knapper's lead to only 50. Maybe I can win this one. I play JAI on the second last turn to make a double-edged opening for a possible bingo, a tip I learnt from Andrew Fisher. On the final turn, being 336-391 down I had the rack of OSUTLO?. It was Knapper's turn and he played SUQ for 43 leaving me 98 down. My tile tracking showed he had 16 points on his rack. I separated OUT from my rack. The remaining letters were LOS?. I knew that this combination made something. It was either OUTSOLE or OUTLOSE. I went with my instincts and confidently played OUTSOLE, hooking JAI to make JAIL (Thanks Andrew). It was challenged, but came back acceptable. I breathed a sigh of relief as I had snatched a victory by 9 points.

Comments: Choo lost so I am third on margin. Three people including me are on 9 wins.

Results: Bharadwaj 443 defeated Joe Knapper(GREAT BRITAIN) 434.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 9-2(+708), 3rd position

Round 12: I am matched with fellow Aussie rival Michael McKenna. We have had an even 2-2 head to head in Australia. I play UNEASIER early on for 70 whereby he responds with a blank bingo for 77 to take the lead by 8. I play LOMENTA for 76 to take a 60-point lead. McKenna sits there pondering for several minutes. I can tell he has the other blank. Finally he plays NEPOTISE* for 68 which I successfully challenge off. He fishes and gets his bingo, but I hold on for a 443-428 win.

Comments: Choo loses again to Nimalan, so I am one game clear of the field. Great!

Results: Bharadwaj 443 defeated Michael McKenna(AUSTRALIA) 428.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 10-2(+723), 1st position

Round 13: Nimalan again. This was a straightforward win with some solid scores and good tiles. I took a big lead and never lost it, finishing with an 80-point win after Nimalan fought back with a bonus in the endgame.

Comments: Still one game clear of the pack.

Results: Bharadwaj 447 defeated Premkumar Nimalan (SRI LANKA) 376.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 11-2(+794)

Round 14: This was a fantastic high scoring game with Aussie Kitty - Jean Laginha. I started with a bonus LINGOES, but Kitty replied with PLACINGS. We again traded bonuses on move 6 and late in the game. With some clunky consonants on my rack, I was thankful to be able to play JUNK for 60 on the triple. Some copious tile tracking allowed me to seal the game 511-470.



Figure 4: Final board position for the game against Kitty-Jean Laginha

Comments: McKenna loses so I have flown up to lead by two games.

Bharadwaj 511 defeated Kitty –Jean Laginha(AUSTRALIA) 470.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 12-2(+835)

Round 15: I draw Jessica Pratesi of England and she takes an early lead with HAJIS for 64. I respond with a bingo. I pick up the other blank to take a 50-point lead. She tries to open a bonus line for herself with NAT, but I thwart her plans with ATUA. I hold on to win a tight game 377-355. This game is viewable online.

This game is viewable online at <http://www.cross-tables.com/annotated.php?u=9941#0#>

Comments: I consolidate my lead of two games with this win.

Results: Bharadwaj 377 defeated Jessica Pratesi (GREAT BRITAIN) 355.



Figure 5: Final board position for the game against Jessica Pratesi (UK)

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 13-2(+857), 1st position

Round 16: Well, I suppose all good things must come to an end. And they certainly did, as my 6 game winning streak was halted by Jeremy Khoo. After he picked up RATENS? on move 2(how good can it get!) things went south for me. I was getting painful tiles till I picked the blank on my final rack. By that time it was useless and I suffered a 339-384 loss.

This game is viewable online at <http://www.cross-tables.com/annotated.php?u=9942#1#>

Comments: I am only leading by one game after my loss to Khoo.

Results: Bharadwaj 339 lost to Jeremy Khoo(SINGAPORE) 384.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 13-3(+812), 1st position

Round 17: I got Tawan Paepolsiri of Thailand this round. I knew that he was a formidable opponent as he came sixth in 2010 WYSC and won the recent Princess Cup. I opened with ENJOY for 38 and he

tried extending it to the triple with OUS, but I immediately challenged it off. From this point I was always in the driver's seat, keeping a 30-40 point gap throughout. At the end, however, he started fishing and opened a bonus line up with TA leaving nothing in the bag. I went out with TARRIED for 74 to win the game by 150 though I did not get any blanks. That was definitely a handy boost to my margin.

Comments: I hold on to my one game lead over Khoo and McKenna.

Results: Bharadwaj 466 defeated Tawan Paepolsiri(THAILAND) 316.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 14-3(+962), 1st position

Round 18: For the final game of the day, my opponent was Thai Sinatarn Pattanasuwanna. He played well, but I kept in front with some strong plays including SEQUIN for 75. We got two bonuses each and the game ended in a quick ten moves apiece. In the end, I won a tough game 452-427.

Comments: At the end of Day 2, I have a one game lead over McKenna and a two game lead over Khoo and Paepolsiri. McKenna is my opponent in Round 19.

Results: Bharadwaj 452 defeated Sinatarn Pattanasuwanna 427.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 15-3(+987), 1st position

After this game, we took time off to take group photos.



Figure 6: Along with my team mates: Kitty-Jean, Jayden, Michael, myself, Marvi and Maree

Round 19: This game was fairly close throughout. We both played bonuses on move 4 (MATADORE and NOOGIES) and I bonused again later to take a 339-318 lead. However, McKenna replied

immediately with TRIPTANE for 89, and despite my valiant endgame fight including a play of MERCY for 54, he edged me 426-397.



Figure 7: Playing against Michael is always fun and challenging

Comments: This loss pushed me down to second on margin to McKenna, both of us being 15-4. Khoo was the only 14-5 with four 13-6 players not out of contention yet. Things were definitely heating up.

Results: Bharadwaj 397 lost to Michael McKenna(AUSTRALIA) 426.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 15-4(+958), 2nd position

Round 20: Against Singaporean Victor Gwee this round, I had bad letters for the first half of the game. Gwee took an early lead and played an easy bingo to take a 100-point lead. He phoneyed a couple of moves later with a rack of RISIER? and I knew that his second bingo would be inevitable. I fought back with a bingo of my own, but it was to no avail as I lost in a close endgame 400-408.



Figure 8: With second place winner Victor Gwee from Singapore

Comments: McKenna won against Khoo so he takes a one game lead over me. He is 16-4, I am 15-5 and Khoo, Paepolsiri and Gwee are 14-6. Bad start to Day 3, but hopefully I could come back.

Results: Bharadwaj 400 lost to Victor Gwee (SINGAPORE) 408.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 15-5(+950), 2nd position

Round 21: I had Jeremy Khoo again for the third and final time. We were neck and neck throughout; whenever I had a bingo he replied with a strong score of his own! Near the end, he took a 65-point lead with his second bonus. I replied with REDUX for 59 to keep it close. By tracking, I can tell he has WAVE on his rack. He instantly played WETA through a T for 28 thinking he had sealed the deal, taking a lead of 26. He had one tile left on his rack: the W. I could see a spot for his tile, WE for 5. After scanning the board thoroughly, I noted that it was his sole place to go out. To his shock, I blocked it with TE for 2. He passed. I remember a game Andrew Fisher played earlier this year where he stuck his opponent with the Q and slowly played one tile at a time to haul in a 70-point deficit and win by 3. I got inspiration from this and played the P on my rack for POO, PAH for 13. The scores were 447-458. I played another tile for 9. He passed again. Finally I went out by playing my final tile for 6 and scraped a win by 12. Phew!

Comments: McKenna loses to Gwee, so we are even on 16-5, with him leading on margin. Gwee and Paepolsiri are 15-6. The tourney is set for a close finish.

Results: Bharadwaj 470 defeated Jeremy Khoo(SINGAPORE) 458.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 16-5(+962), 2nd position

Round 22: I get Nimalan for the third time. At this point I am getting frustrated as I have just had 5 blankless games in a row. Nimalan bonuses early but I come back with ISODONT for 75 a few moves later to take a 30-point lead. Two moves later, I had QUIZ on my rack. Seeing an S on the board, I play SQUIZ for 99 onto the triple to shut out Nimalan's hopes of taking the game. To add insult to injury, I challenge off his three-letter phoney NAR and play AGISTERS for 77 in the same spot. I end up taking the game 505-316 despite not getting any blanks again.

Comments: McKenna wins, but my big win allows me to come back to the number one position on margin. The top three are the only ones with chances to take the title and they are myself, McKenna and Gwee who is 16-6.

Results: Bharadwaj 505 defeated Premkumar Nimalan (SRI LANKA).

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 17-5(+1151), 1st position

Round 23: I have Tawan Paepolsiri again. We start fairly close after trading bonuses on move 4 (SEDGIEST for him, SEROTINY for me). SEROTINY places the Y into third position on a triple-triple line, but the chances of a triple-triple through the Y are very low, so I am not too worried. Tawan spends over 3 minutes on his next move. He shuffles and shuffles. I can see a glint in his eye and I start feeling worried. Soon he lays down WAYSIDES through the Y for 176 points giving him a lead of 303-123. The game looked gone, but I knew that I had to fight with all my might. Next turn, the score was 343-161, but I steadily chipped at his lead with some high scores. With the score at 375-253, I played my second bonus, AGINNER for 79 to cut his lead to 373-332. Two turns later, I picked my first blank in a while and played ISLETED for 74 to tie the scores at 419 apiece. My rack was OAYHIRP. Tawan played RUNE for 31. I responded with OKAY for 43 to take the lead 462-450. With my remaining tiles HIRP, I could see an outplay of CHIRP for 30. I was praying that he wouldn't spoil it. He didn't and I went out and took the game 496-477. Thank goodness I won that one.



Figure 9: The final board position against Tawan Paepolsiri

Comments: McKenna loses to Garner and the top four are as follows:

1 [Anand Bharadwaj \(AU\)](#) 18 +1170 beat [Tawan Paepolsiri \(TH\)](#) **496:477**

- 2 [Michael McKenna \(AU\)](#) 17 +1028 lost to [Oliver Garner \(UK\)](#) **395:467**
- 3 [Victor Gwee \(SG\)](#) 16 +1053 lost to [Yeshan Jayasuriya \(SL\)](#) **326:398**
- 4 [Oliver Garner \(UK\)](#) 16 +657 beat [Michael McKenna \(AU\)](#) **467:395**

Only McKenna or I can take the title as there is only one game left. If I win, I am the 2011 WYSC winner. If both McKenna and I lose, I am still the winner. If I lose and McKenna wins, there is a chance he will overhaul me on margin. My opponent for the final round is Garner, and McKenna will play fifth placed Yeshan Jayasuriya of Sri Lanka.

Results: Bharadwaj 496 defeated Tawan Paepolsiri (THAILAND) 477.

Standings: 2011 WYSC: 18-5(+1170), 1st position

Round 24: I got some good tiles and three consecutive scores of 60+ midgame had me leading 347-129. I didn't lose my lead and won 475-323. I had won the tournament!

Comments: I end up two games clear of second place. Interestingly McKenna ended up losing to Yeshan and Gwee won, so Gwee ended up second and McKenna third.

Results: Bharadwaj 475 defeated Oliver Garner (GREAT BRITAIN) 323.

Final Standings: 19-5(+1322), 1st position.



Figure 10: With Karen Richards, the organizer and Johor tourism director