

It's close at the top



Gobbling wins in Woburn

At this year's Saturday After Thanksgiving Scrabble Tournament organized by **Judy and Joel Horn** and **Brad Whitmarsh**, 31 players competed in the main event. In Division 1, **Chris Kulig** finished third at 5-2, with **Joel Horn**, **Bob Becker**, and **Don Finkey** also competing. In Division 2, **Beth Mix** and **Judy Horn** finished 3rd and 4th, with **Joe Waldbaum** also competing. In Division 3, **Megan McMahon** won with at 5-2 +359, improving her rating to 1123. **Nicole Kazarian** was 4-3 and placed 4th. In Division 4, **Judi Boviard**, **Harolyn Meyer** and **Nora Keil** were among four players at 4-2, with Judi winning on spread. In Collins, **Richard Buck** finished second at 4-2. And the four-game Late Bird was dominated by our club, with Joel going 4-0 to best Bob and Don in Division 1, Beth edging Judy to win Division 2, and Judi going 4-0 to win Division 4, with Megan and Nora Nicole placed 3rd in Division 3.

For much of the current club season, **Chris Kulig** has been steadily piling up victories and drawing every closer to the top of the club standings, measuring by winning percentage. While there are many ways to gauge player ratings, our club has long used a simple winning percentage, assuming that, over time, most



everyone plays most everyone else more or less evenly. (It's also a lot easier for the statistician!) This past Tuesday, Chris K. went 5-0, including a 377-372 win over **Carol McDonald**, pushing him to a .702 winning percentage, just a statistical nose ahead of **Joel Horn**. Chris K. is now the club's season leader in total wins, total games played, points scored, winning percentage, and scoring average. His 1716 NASPA rating is good for 119th overall in North America at this moment. It's just plain hard to maintain a .700

winning percentage, so look for an exciting battle for the top as the second half of our season unfolds. And don't count out **Mike Wolfberg** and **Carol McDonald**, both of whom are just a handful of games behind, in 3rd and 4th place, respectively. Among the interesting plays this past week were **Chris Sinacola's** GASO^hOL and the British English TARSEAL#, the bitumen surface of a road;



Chris Kulig's BELDAME, meaning an old woman, crone or witch (and also a brand of

pilsner, see right); and **Nora Keil's** nice nine-letter play of SkEtCH(IN)G through IN on the board. Two phonies survived this week. Chris K.'s BOUSERIE* looks like many acceptable words, but isn't. The only defense in such situations is to learn definitions with your anagrams, then ask yourself what (if anything) your opponent's latest play might mean. The other phony was **Bob Becker's** BEWARNED*. The OED has a long entry on BE- as a prefix, and how it came about, how it is used, and what shades of meaning it imparts to words. But whether those guidelines would suffice to give one confidence to challenge off this particular BE- word is not so clear! See page 2 for more on that.



To BE- or not to BE-? That is the question.

Bob Becker's BEWARNED* is phony, but short of knowing the entire lexicon — something beyond the reach of most of us — is there any way to gauge whether a BE- word is likely good or phony? The Oxford English Dictionary declares that the original meaning of BE- was “about” (as in beyond (“about the yond”), and then came to be used as a mild intensive, as in BEMUD#, BESPATTER. By that logic, one might surmise that almost any verb that could logically be intensified might take BE-. So, BECROWD? Sure. But BEHIT*? No. The OED entry continues to say that “...the force of be- passes over to an object, and renders an intransitive verb transitive,” — as in BESPEAK, BETHINK, BEWAIL, and BELIE. (You cannot “wail” a thing, but with be- you can “bewail” it). The dictionary continues: “BE- being still in some of its senses a living element, capable of being prefixed wherever the sense requires it, the derivatives into which it enters are practically unlimited in number.”

Maybe this much info will help you decide on the quiz words at right? If not, the OED has nine more columns of fine print exploring the topic of BE-!



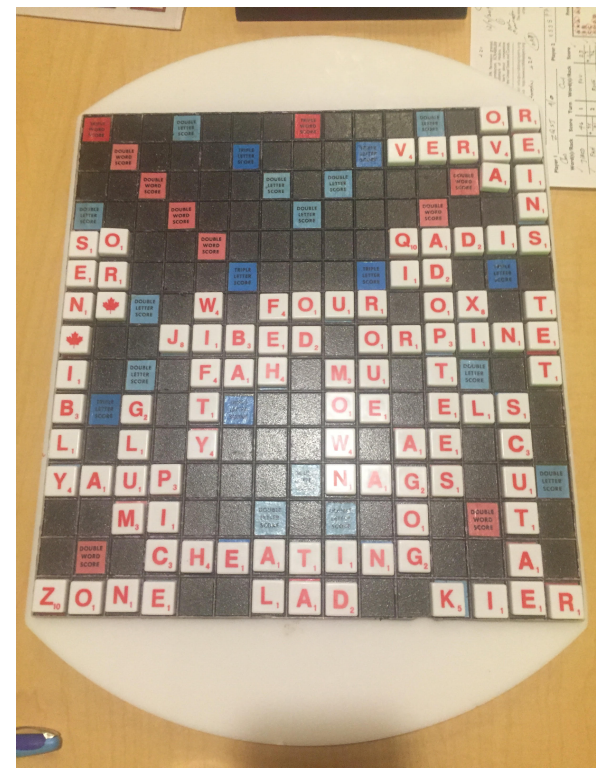
Which of these BE- good?

BESTOP	BEWENT
BEWET	BEFOOL
BEPIMPLE	BEDRY
BEBOP	BEDUNCE

Meet some (possibly) new words

One of the benefits of reading is you tend to meet new words. In the pages of Walter Alvarez's “T. rex and the Crater of Doom,” comes **TURBIDITES**, which are sand beds produced by turbidity flows. They played a key role in locating the comet or asteroid strike in the Yucatán Peninsula that led to the demise of the dinosaurs. From the same source comes **SCABLAND**, rocky land with little soil cover. Geology is a rich vein of words indeed. © From Francis Parkman's “The Oregon Trail” comes **PARFLECHE**, perhaps more familiar in the spelling **PARFLESH**. It is a French word meaning rawhide that is soaked in lye and water, and then dried on a stretcher and used in making shields. In Jean Lartéguy's “The Centurions” — a novel that vividly and brilliantly describes the Indo-China war in which the French were defeated by the Vietminh, one finds many words, from Vietnamese and other Asian languages, including **TAIPAN**, which most commonly means a venomous snake, but is used in the novel to mean a powerful foreign businessman living in China or Hong Kong, and **ASSAM#**, which means tamarind used in Malaysian cooking, but seems to refer in Lartéguy's book to a kind of nurse or serving woman. Have you met any new words in your reading or travels? If so, send them in with some context about where and when you met them, and the exact meanings they carried.

Editor's note: The calendar for December lines up so that a certain editor of this newsletter has a string of commitments outside Scrabble — a birthday, wedding anniversary, Christmas Eve, and New Year's Eve. Meaning that he likely won't be at Scrabble much, at least on Tuesdays. There may be opportunity for meet-up groups, or alternative days since very few players are likely to show up on Dec. 24 or 31, and the NuKitchen's holiday hours are likely to vary. So stay tuned, stay in touch, and for those who do make the Nu scene, keep the scores coming. Your newsletters will continue as usual, assuming sufficient raw material.



Find the missed walkoff win!

Chris S. led **Carol M.** by 383-316 toward the end of the game shown above. Carol held a rack of **EIKORR?** Neither **KIER** nor **OR?** was on the board. Carol chose **KIER** for 47 points, and while **Chris** didn't like **SCUTAE*** much, he wasn't sure and accepted it, calculating Carol could not win the game after his **O(V)A** in the upper-right. He won 393-376. But Carol did have a winning play from the **S** at **A5**. What was it?