

## Review: The Munich 2010 Minesweeper Championship

I arrived in the Munich Airport at 2100 and waited a few minutes for Rupert to arrive. It was soon clear neither of us planned the trip in detail. We knew the name of the Hostel, and a quick look at Google Maps before boarding the plane suggested some train stations in the general area. We decided to get off at Donnersbergerbrücke (obviously named after Robert Donner) and found Landsbergerstrasse with the help of some local folk.

We found the Hostel at 2300 but there was no evidence that we had a room. After some confusion it turned out Fritz had booked the rooms with a different name! Neither of us had eaten for more than 12 hours so we went looking for food. We walked about a mile before finding a kebab shop, with a TV on the street showing Scotland losing to the Netherlands in football. Then Fritz called because we had not arrived at the correct station and he was waiting for us. Eventually we all met at the Hostel pub after midnight. Bertie had travelled for more than 24h and went straight to bed, but the rest of us (Rupert, Joni, Fritz, Edu, Tommy, Damien) stayed up talking.

On Saturday morning some of us met for breakfast. Those of us staying at the Hostel (Joni, Bertie, Edu, Rupert, Tommy, Damien) left at 1130 to find the internet cafe. We arrived at noon and found Fritz, Christoph and Eva busy setting up the computers. Manuel and Nicole arrived next, then Arsen and Maria, followed by Arseniy with Roman and his wife. Other players continued to arrive. Sebastian Schmidt did not compete but came to watch the competition. Yannis shared a computer with his girlfriend and they competed in the tournament as a team.

The original plan was to start at 1400, so we sat around talking and playing Rubik cubes. It turns out that all the best players are excellent cubers - except for me, who has never solved one. Bertie tried to give me tips, while Manu showed off by solving them consistently in less than 30s. Around 1300 most of us started practicing minesweeper. I soon noticed my mouse was acting strangely, lagging and jumping. In the end I used the slightly better mouse at the cafe for the tournament. Some players like Joni never bring their mouse! By 1500 Fritz, Roman and Arsen had each made only a 61, Rupert and I had 60, Tommy had 56 and Manu had a 55 on Expert. This was very interesting, and it looked like the competition was wide open.

In the meantime, Christoph and Tommy were having problems with the tournament program. The cafe was new and used computers with several different operating systems. Every once and a while, the two programmers would get excited and declare victory, only to find another problem. After two false starts, we started the tournament without the program at 1618. Fritz had to shorten the tournament to 2.5h so we would not miss the bowling later.

It was strange to play without knowing who was winning. Soon there were shouts of Sub50 from Manu, Fritz and Tommy. That made it clear Top 3 was not an option. Rupert, Arsen, Roman, Bertie and I were finding it difficult to Sub60. My goals for the tournament were to break either my tournament Expert or Intermediate record, and make sure the best 5&5 were all Sub20 and Sub60. I wasted an annoyed hour trying to get the 5th Sub60, not realising I had already made them. There was no chance of getting a Sub50 so I switched to Intermediate, hoping to get a lucky game. This worked and I got a new record of 13, which became the only reason Roman finished 5th instead of 4th. If we had played a full 3 hours I would have finished lower in the ranking, because I played worse as the tournament continued. It was great to have so many good players in the same building.

When the tournament ended we ran around writing down scores and copying the videos. Unfortunately we missed some players. Manu copied his videos but they were lost, and some players like Joni could not copy files because of the operating system. There was only time to award 15th and 16th places before running to the Bavaria bowling centre. The first game was average - Roman 128, Stephan 125, Arsen 121 and Damien 118. Fritz had a terrible 37 after 5 rounds but suddenly learned how to throw straight and finished with 100. In the second game I opened with 3 strikes in a row - then the next party arrived and kicked us off the lane. Fritz borrowed a microphone and we held the ceremony at the centre. Most of us then headed back to the Hostel and we stayed up partying until 0230.

The next morning Rupert was up first as he had to get a plane that left at 0900. Bertie and Tommy left to join the Nonosweeper tournament, and the rest of us met at the Rathaus to spend the morning as tourists. We climbed the bell tower at Peterplatz, watched the marathon taking place, then went to the famous Hofbrauhaus for breakfast. Breakfast was boiled sausages, large pretzels and litre glasses of beer for everyone - except the weak! Then we walked through English Park, before meeting the other sweepers at the Rathaus again. It was agreed to visit Olympiapark, where we watched the runners entering the stadium, ate hotdogs (or a German version of them) and visited the BMW museum.

The survivors met at a little restaurant near where Fritz lived as a child. Food was fantastic - I think everything on my plate was deep fried! Manu and Nicole arrived late after going to the wrong place, but the meal was a nice way to say goodbye to everyone. I left at 1900 to head to the airport, and arrived back in Edinburgh just before midnight with my medal and many good memories.

Damien  
12 December 2010

