

Review: The UK 2011 Minesweeper Championship

Tommy and Elias arrived Thursday evening at the Stirling train station. I met them and we checked into the hostel and found adapters for their computers. There was time for a brief tour of town before I took the last bus back to my place. The next morning we met at 1030 and walked to the university. They spent the next few hours setting up the tournament program while I played minesweeper. None of my games were any good and I struggled to get Sub20 and Sub60, but I had not expected to do well at the tournament because of mouse problems and the fact I have not played much this year. Tommy and Elias fared better, and eventually we tested the program by playing a tournament where the winner had the lowest sum of three Beginner games. The lead changed several times between Tommy and myself. With five minutes left I stopped playing because Robert called to say he was on the train, and during the call Tommy passed me to win the tournament! Soon Gergely and Adrienn arrived after visiting the Wallace Monument, and finally at around 1630 everyone walked back into town. We decided to have dinner together, and the most memorable moments were Dave being served two desserts, extreme confusion paying the bill, and Fritz awarding everyone Rubik Cubes. Fritz had arrived at 2000 but we all forgot to meet him at the station so he had to call for directions. Most of us returned to the hostel to talk and practice cubing.

On the day of the tournament I collected the trophies and went to the hostel at 1130 to meet Tommy, who was still in bed! All of those at the hostel walked to the university and we were soon joined by Jen, Gergely and Adrienn. The start of the competition was delayed until 1430 to allow more time to practice sweeping and so Yvonne could arrive with the medals. As soon as we started I received an error message on my computer. After trying three computers and logging in multiple times, Tommy hacked the database to allow me to register as a new user and extended the tournament so we could both recover the 35 minutes lost. The plan was to have a break after 90 minutes, and everything went well until Fritz played his first Intermediate game and received the same error message! During the break Elias discovered the problem was that video filenames were too long if someone with a long username played Intermediate. We extended the break so Tommy could program and I could play the 35 minutes lost. Tommy voluntarily sacrificed his lost time, and Fritz agreed to also play only 2h25m. The second half of the tournament worked perfectly. His program automatically uploads finished videos, inserts them into a database and displays scores live online.

Most players were happy with their scores. Gergely finished his 10 games in 28 minutes, before Tommy and I even started playing! He also set a new Expert 3bvs record. Fritz and Tommy battled hard and easily made multiple Sub50 Expert games. In the end Fritz won but Tommy had the best Expert score. Third place was a fight between Robert, Dave and myself - we all had mouse problems and struggled to get Sub60. While warming up I had scored a 51 but could only get 57 during the tournament. Several players improved their tournament ranks: David improved his Intermediate score, Jen and Yvonne improved their Expert scores, and Robert and Elias both joined the tournament ranking for the first time. Everyone received a medal inscribed with "Top 10 Sweeper UK 2011" and the winners were given trophies. After group photos outside, Yvonne drove everyone into town for dinner at Molly Malones. I play football with the restaurant manager, and we were all amused to find a table reserved for "The Finer Miner". As part of a long minesweeper tradition, we then went bowling. Tommy amazed us by scoring a Sub50 in the first round! I won the first round with a 139 but David annihilated everyone with a 166 in the second round. Afterwards we went our separate ways, with everyone returning to their hotels and hostels. Everyone left Stirling on Sunday, with good memories and anticipation for the upcoming tournament in Zurich. Hope to see you there!

Damien
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