

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 58 (1992)
Heft: [7]

Artikel: Jass world championships
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-945184>

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JASS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Better late than never. Although the Championships took place almost a year ago, we feel that many members would still be interested to learn how it all went. So here is the report from Uli Elmiger as we received it just a few days ago:

On Wednesday August 4, 1991, 45 Swiss expatriates assembled at the hotel Postillon outside Beckenried. Represented were Canada, USA, Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, South Africa, Hong Kong, the Phillipines, Australia and the Glausers and Elmigers from New Zealand

On Thursday at 7.30, 496 Jassers met at the huge marquee in a tournament for all-comers paying chf10 each. It was early in the morning when the "Rangliste" was declared and to my surprise they had me in third place behind two locals, which netted me a TV set. All the prizes were amazing.

On Friday evening the marquee hosted a country and western evening with a Harley-Davidson competition, which resulted in a fairly rough element taking charge of the proceedings.

Saturday morning was the big day and you could feel the tense atmosphere in the tent, with 440 finalists divided into section, about 2/3 playing german and 1/3 french cards.

Luck immediately deserted me and while the cards were not too bad, my suits never matched any of my partners. With 300 players eliminated after the first round of six tables, I had a fair idea that my day could be short. Of the 45 foreigners only Nancy Neukomm from Hong Kong, an ethnic Chinese married to a Swiss, and a Canadian made it to the second round.

Toward the end of the first round, tempers really flared, with a lot of people not being able to take the elimination. The verbal abuse one sometimes had to take would have got you sinned in any other sport.

We foreigners were also disadvantaged through lack of experience with such competitions, since most locals play the circuit regularly and the mode of play is fairly rigid. When a glance at the scoresheet at each table showed my partner and myself in second place, I started to take a few gambles and even then they resulted in a 157 match for us more than once. The comments heard could not be found in any dictionary. Having travelled half-way round the world and, probably due to my excellent Thursday evening placing, I was a popular subject with newspapers and radio stations. I realised the following week that some of my comments were fairly widely published.

After playing a third round the four finalists were announced: Agnes Thomet (Sins), Rene Isler (Villmergen) Robert Amman (St Gallen) and Werner Wichtermann (Pratteln). The final, over 6 rounds, with a change of partner after each round, was played with german cards. The clever Swiss had cards showing both german and french pictures, half and half in case of need.

Each player was handed his 9 cards in a sealed envelope, computers having worked out all possible combinations to give each player an equal chance and luck playing no part. With the advance in technology, perhaps any future tournament could be played that way from the start so giving all players a more equal chance.

Seventy year old Wichtermann collected the CHF45,000 Pontiac first prize and the cup. Never having held a car drivers licence in his life, he was looking for a buyer immediately. Unfortunately the whole competition suffered through rifts in the organising committee. Major sponsors, Jass card producer Neuhausen and Jass newspaper Dietikon were regarded as "fremde Fötzel" by the somewhat stubborn locals. A negative press report beforehand also caused financial problems. With a budget of CHF285,000 a fairly big loss occurred and any future championships are in doubt. The planned Finale on the Rütliwiese had to be abandoned after Federal Government intervention.

All 45 overseas competitors agreed they were well looked after, but all the same were pleased to return to their adopted countries, realising that old Switzerland is not quite the paradise it used to be.

Note from the Editor: Who said that Jassen was a relaxing sport? It seems that stamina and an expletive vocabulary are now the main requirements



Sieger: Werner Wichtermann aus Pratteln



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**Zürcherstrasse 1 • 5400 Baden
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