

# Owls Diplomacy News



MAY 2007

## Still standing!

To the many players who have enquired, yes I'm still alive and well in Sydney and committed to the Owls games! Real life caught up with me through late March and April and so despite missing the April ODN, here is the May issue. I'll have to see how busy things are for me through May, and maybe I'll keep ODN as a bi-monthly newsletter...

So what have I been doing when not focussed on Diplomacy? Late last year a friend and I decided to form a consulting partnership in the field of organisational culture. It is the sort of enterprise that gains traction through engaging our network of business acquaintances and then grows via referrals and word of mouth. I am surprised to see the growth pattern is shaping up very similarly to the growth of the Owls community and activities over the past two and a half years. There is something organic and healthy in the process, no hard sells or forcing. Which mirrors our approach and values in working with clients!

Anyway, while this development has kept me busy I also spent a three-week working holiday on my mother's country property. I built her a 'bush' shed and spent days trimming the encroaching mountain wilderness. My two young children loved the 10 acres of freedom, compared to city parkland.

OK, so back to Diplomacy! The first round of the 2007 tourney has completed and the results are published here. There is a mix of familiar faces and newcomers in the lead. The feedback is that tournament games really bring out everyone's 'best' play and are great challenges. So if you missed the first round, you are still welcome to join in the second round...and thanks to James Leadley and Thava Visvanathan for their contributions in this issue.

## Contents

Owls Open – Round 1 Results	...	p1
Thava Visvanathan Interview	...	p2
Growth of a Diplomacy Player	...	p3
Owls Player Feedback	...	p5

## Owls Open 2007 – Round 1

From 12 first round games there were four solo victories, two French and one to Russia and England. Surprisingly Turkey was the least successful power.

POWER	AVG SC	SOLO	DIAS	ELIM
Austria	7.750	0	6	4
England	6.583	1	5	6
France	12.271	2	5	4
Germany	6.458	0	6	4
Italy	6.750	0	6	3
Russia	8.479	1	5	5
Turkey	4.125	0	2	7

The first round scores follow. As you know, I have abandoned any attempt to hide players identity other than not specifically naming who is in which game and the usual dpjudge anonymity when powers are allocated. Once the games are underway, being 'private' games, you are free to conceal, declare or impersonate as you so choose!

I have seeded the second round games based on this list, splitting ties using the current Owls Ratings. As there may be some that do not play round two and some newcomers, there will be minor variations to the pure Swiss pairing. So once again, please don't assume you know exactly who your opponents are. Caveat emptor as usual!

Eric Kirwan	71jF	35.000
Ivan Milovanovic	71gR	35.000
Jonty Klassnik	71kF	35.000
Kyle Billingsley	71cE	35.000
Brad Basden	71iA	20.000
Robert Schwartz	71IT	19.000
Rohan Light	71bF	18.000
Thava Visvanathan	71aR	18.000
Matthew McDonald	71fA	16.000
Aaron Denton	71eF	15.000
Brian McCain	71hA	15.000
Dale Gander	71dl	15.000
Greg Alderman	71hG	15.000
Kyle Kalember	71dR	15.000
Andrew Crollard	71dG	13.000

David Conway	71iE	13.000
John van Voorhis	71fl	13.000
Sam Jones	71hl	13.000
Adam Schofield	71bA	12.000
Chris Mosakewicz	71eG	12.000
Andrius Krivas	71bl	11.000
Jason Gibbs	71aF	11.000
Lars Adolfsen	71iF	11.000
Alex Woodcock	71eA	10.000
Matan Harel	71IG	10.000
Luke Dwyer	71el	8.000
Gerry Evenwel	71fR	8.000
Dennett Ingram	71IF	8.000
Colden Rouleau	71fG	8.000
Joshua Shank	71IR	7.000
Brendan Billingsley	71gF	6.750
Alex Collins	71jR	6.000
Henrik Rudstrom	71cT	6.000
James Leadley	71aG	6.000
Lee Lovejoy	71aA	6.000
Steve Franey	71bE	6.000
Alex Lee	71eR	5.000
Bill Perry	71aT	5.000
John Pomeranz	71fE	5.000
Chris Zepf	71kT	5.000
Edward Rustin	71aE	4.000
Erik Hanberg	71cG	4.000
Mike Cosgrave	71gA	3.750
Byron Hynes	71jT	3.500
Peter Schubert	71gl	2.750
Bob Herbert	71kG	2.500
David Dessau	71dF	2.000
Molly Aichele	71kA	2.000
Andrew McCraith	71cF	2.000
Chris Burgess	71jG	2.000
Chris Kinsella	71jl	2.000
David Robertson	71iG	2.000
George Caruana	71bT	2.000
Jeff Edwards	71hE	2.000
Karl Swetland	71bG	2.000
Kyle Doyle	71iT	2.000
Mark Haines	71hT	2.000
Martin Williams	71bR	2.000
Michael Bilow	71jE	2.000
Robert Pace	71kE	2.000
Shane Serafin	71cR	2.000
Thomas Hultgren	71fF	2.000
Gary Rolfe	71dA	1.750
Tim Beaulieu	71cl	1.750
Mike Penzato	71fT	1.500
Alistair Lauchlan	71ll	1.500
Craig Thibeault	71gT	1.500
Scot Hicks	71hF	1.500
Scott Dutcher	71IA	1.500
Rick Inman	71gE	1.250
Mark Banta	71iR	1.000

Josh Holland	71dT	1.000
Martin Podkrivacky	71gG	1.000
Adonai Zahi	71jA	1.000
Ron Rider	71il	1.000
David Start	71hR	0.750
Adam Boynay	71eE	0.750

In fact, the open nature of the results and fair degree of transparency around pairings produced this enjoyable form analysis by Gerry Evenwel on completion of game 1f, the last game to finish and the only forced time draw.

"In case any of you are wondering...using the pairing that Thorin seems to favour the next games will look like this...

Matthew will likely get the "b" game. Be thankful, it will allow you to get a good score in the second round. Go for the kill when the opportunity presents itself.

John, you look to be heading for the "c" game. Good luck. David Conway (great diplomat), Sam Jones (watch out for him), Andrius Krivas (very dangerous) or Lars Adolfsen (I hear he is good). You will likely have a difficult second round. On the bright side if you do well in that game, you will have bested some of the best.

I will end up in the "d" or "e" game. I am hoping for the "e" game. Too many frustrated black belts in the "d" game. Colden you are in the same boat as me. Thorin may try to break us up, so I hope you get the "d" game (I hope Thorin is not reading this too carefully).

John, Mike, and Thomas, you three have lower ranked games. There are a few surprises down there and don't be surprised if you bump into a few good players that missed the first round. I was surprised at some of the people who did not get into the first round.

Good luck to all of you! Gerry"

Maybe it's just me watching from the sidelines, but I thoroughly enjoy the kibitzing and the reputations and relationships forming!

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**Interview – Thava Visvanathan**  
by TM

Thava has been a regular Owls player since late 2005 having played in more than 20 games. He finished 6<sup>th</sup> in the 2006 Owls Open Tourney and is a very succinct and pragmatic player, as his interview proves!

TM). Thava what is your background? Family, study, profession, interests, location etc

TV) Originally from Malaysia I now live in Adelaide, Australia. I am an anaesthetist by profession. My personal interests are Politics and Economics.

TM). How did you start to play Diplomacy? Then find the dpjudge?

TV) I was introduced to diplomacy by a friend at University. I enjoyed it but found it difficult to find face-to-face games and playing with "Normal" friends was a bad thing as they tend to take stabs personally and out from game and into real life.

I discovered the judge 4-5 years ago on the net and prefer to play on line. I can be as bad as needed yet not lose too many friends.

TM) what attracts you to the game?

TV) Well the most ingenious part of the game is the lack of a dice. So basically its like 7 man chess all the pieces are on view and all depends on people's choices.

TM) how would you describe your style of play? Has your style changed over time?

TV) My style changes. But I try primarily to not lose rather then necessarily win. I only will support a solo as vengeance if I am going to be eliminated. If offered a place in a DRAW I will always accept.

TM) is there anything that frustrates you in relation to Diplomacy?

TV) The NMR. And the players that do not follow the logic of self-interest as it makes them hard to predict.

TM) Have you found any applications of skills learned from Diplomacy to 'real life'?

TV) There are all sorts in diplomacy as there are in life and all the best laid plans can go up the creek with an unforeseen NMR

TM) Do you have a favourite opening or power to play?

TV) well not really a favourite but I seem to prosper best with ITALY

TM) Do you have a view on lies and ethics in Diplomacy?

TV) Diplomacy is about politics, there are no ethics in POLITICS (LOL)

TM) Have you ever played FtF Diplomacy?

TV) Only socially

TM) What is the most important and most difficult aspect of the game to master?

TV) Reading the personalities on the board

TM) Any advice for new players?

TV) Good luck and enjoy!

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### **The Growth of a Diplomacy Player**

by James Leadley

It's amazing to watch the growth a person undergoes during their playing career at this deceptively simple game called Diplomacy.

"Career" you ask? Why yes I say! When a person undertakes a challenge; be it a sport or work or even a game, and during that challenge finds significant personal growth I would suggest the word "Career" aptly applies. All the long-time players understand this only too well, looking back at their play style and how it has evolved over the years. All the new players with only a year or less at it are wondering if I'm not taking this game just a bit too seriously. Well, let's look at some of the stages a Diplomat progresses through so you can judge for yourself, like all Diplomacy players tend to demand anyway...

#### Stage 1 – The Meek Mute

Ah that brand new player to the game! Still getting support orders cut and not understanding the rules on bouncing. Press from other players arrives and an offer of a DMZ brings further mystery to the game. These players tend to only speak when spoken too, answering questions but never really understanding the full ramifications of the answer. It's a rare stage of development as players quickly move forward in their Diplomacy career. This player is usually gone by Year 3.

#### Stage 2 – The Self-Absorbed Brazen Bastard

We've all seen a few of these low-level Diplomats running around out there. Completely focused on their immediate

personal gain. So direct in their press that no words above a Grade 4 level of education are needed. They'll sell their untrained soul and alliance for a supply center in Spring only to get crushed in Fall and ultimately an early exit from the game. This player is insignificant in world affairs by Year 3, if even bothering to enter orders at all anymore.

### Stage 3 – The Sneaky Bastard

It's a mystery why people go straight from Brazen to Sneaky without any pause...but they seem to do exactly this in Diplomacy! Suddenly players, who used to directly state what they want, start being terribly vague about everything. They finally have understood that they must offer something to get something, but they always want their supply center gain first and they invariably fail to follow through with their end of the bargain. This player can occasionally even survive to the end of the game, but not that often.

### Stage 4 – The Grand Alliance Bastard

If you've ever had that introduction press offering an immediate Grand Alliance to win the game together then you've dealt with this Diplomat. Having realized that offering to assist someone get a supply center can provide benefits, this higher evolved player is willing to offer even more in hopes to get even more in return. This player never stays in an alliance longer than a couple moves, finding it way too limiting on 'personal growth' in that game. This is a mid-game regular however never seems to be able to translate into an end game power.

### Stage 5 – The Comparative Shopping Bastard

Ever felt squeezed to offer more than someone else to secure an alliance? Didn't appreciate the 10 press messages it took to get the deal done? Got stabbed quickly anyway? Oh I think you've met this Diplomat already! Their still looking to get supply centers first and expose your underside with grand plans to take over the world...right after your gutted like this mornings fresh Salmon! This player is usually completely eliminated before the end of the game, having upset all his neighbors and finding a strong alliance forming against him for some 'unknown to him' reason.

### Stage 6 – The Ally Today

Finally each Diplomat makes that breakthrough in understanding. That eureka game where an alliance works so well they just

stabbed their partner and cruised to an easy win. From this moment on the Diplomat looks for that solid ally they can kill at the exact moment to propel them to the Solo. They enter into real negotiations on what is best for the alliance, although they tend still tend to stab their partner much too early and suffer terribly for it. Occasional Solo's start happening at this point although there is still much more pain than pleasure at the end of the game.

### Stage 6 – The Rough Multiple Ally

By this time Diplomat's tend to gain the ability to manage multiple alliances at the same time. They negotiate different agreements that don't interfere with each other, allowing both partners to stay happy. Much like 'playing the field' in love affairs the agreements usually end in heated global press releases when one partner is spurned and blinding revenge for betrayal is extracted. Surprisingly a drop in performance materializes as alliances against this Diplomat are stronger at the end of the game. However this Diplomat is an end of game regular.

### Stage 7 – The Smooth Talker

A very advanced level of Diplomat, never seeming to upset rational people while gaining various benefits from multiple alliances at exactly the right time of the game. This tends to be the pinnacle of the Diplomats Soloing career as tactical ability meets diplomatic development. Only a natural disaster keeps this player from being a force to reckon with at the end of the game.

### Stage 8 – The Philosopher

Strangely Diplomats go past their prime in gamesmanship and begin to perform somewhat worse in games. However this never seems to upset these advanced Diplomats as they dole out lessons in ethics and brief flashes of tactical genius. They'll always be a player at the end of the game, and they'll be happy to end the game in a multiplayer draw with all those deserving and unfortunate souls.

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So there you have it...the life cycle of a Diplomacy Player! Armed with this knowledge you should be better prepared to manage your future diplomatic relations, for no matter where you are on the cycle it always helps to recognize the experience your potential allies bring to the table!

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## Owls Player Feedback

"Hi again Thorin!

I must admit I'm impressed with all the effort you put into providing a great Diplomacy community for the World. Your work is appreciated, often in silence I fear!

I wanted to send you a little thing I wrote for consideration to include in your Newsletter. I enjoy writing and it was my pleasure to write this article this Friday afternoon as my boss was away. Hopefully to ease your burden somewhat and add some value to the community. Keep up the great work!

James Leadley"

[James I really appreciate the contributions that flow through and I hope your boss has many more days off! April has been an interesting month in that not publishing an issue of ODN sparked a number of enquiries and notes of encouragement from across the Owls community. Thanks to each of you for the positive feedback.]

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"Hi Thorin, Just a quick reminder that the deadline for the S2007R issue of the DP Zine is coming up on Tuesday! :-)

You mentioned earlier that if you can't write something new this time round, we might publish your Axis Alliance article or the Grief Process article instead. I've located both of them in the Files section of the Yahoo! group, so I can take them from there if necessary. I did have a few questions about them, though:

1) To my way of thinking, an Axis alliance in Diplomacy would be between Germany and Italy alone (even though the actual Axis did expand to include Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria as minor powers). It seems to me that the alliance you describe is more commonly referred to as the Central Powers, since that alliance actually included Italy instead of Turkey up until the actual outbreak of WWI. Are you still using Axis to describe an AGI these days?

[Historically Axis is not the right name for an AIG alliance. Now I think about it AIG sounds like an insurance company's name. The formation of an AIG alliance is definitely a good insurance policy in my view! Does anyone have a better name? TM]

2) Are you the author of the Grief Process article? I assume so, but it doesn't actually say who wrote it! [It was me. TM]

Also, I asked earlier when the next ODN is coming out. If it's okay with you, I'd like to encourage owls players to submit articles to the DP Zine as well, if they are so inclined!

Thanks, Charles Roburn"

[For those who don't know, Charles co-edits the DP Zine <http://www.diplom.org/Zine/> which is read by the wider Diplomatic Pouch community. I have recycled an ODN article "On Lying" in the last issue and may well provide more. I know Charles would prefer original material, but... I would be very happy if anyone who has previously contributed to ODN would like to supply their articles to the wider audience of the DP Zine. Charles may approach you directly and has my support.]

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"Wow, those are very interesting numbers. [Owls Rating List. TM] As a newcomer I had no idea that you kept a running score like that. I look forward to more games! Jim Fitzgerald"

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Some broadcast humour exchanged in a recent Owls game...

Q: How many Germans does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Von

Q: How many Owls does it take to change a light bulb?

A: None. Owls see perfectly well in the dark!

Thorin Munro  
Sydney, 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2007