



20⁺
Years
of
Spelling
Bees

Explore Over Two Decades of
National Spelling Bee Highlights, Word Lists,
and Stories from Contestants

BY LINDA TARRANT & THE SPELLING SISTERS

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20+ Years of Spelling Bees

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Dedication

This collection of *After a Spell* newsletters is dedicated to the spellers who have generously shared their stories to make each issue possible.

Thanks to you, the love of spelling continues ...

Linda Tarrant & "The Spelling Sisters"

(who are Valerie Tarrant Browning, Natalie Tarrant, and Huntley Tarrant)



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AFTER A SPELL

Annual newsletter from Hexco's *SpELLING SISTERS* Volume 1
A report of the 1991 season of National Spelling Bees October, 1991

THE NATIONAL FINALS

by Natalie Tarrant

"It was like a death match in boxing, no limit on the rounds, only instead of punches the two girls were socked over and over with bizarre words," writes Joel Achenbach for the *Washington Post* article entitled "The Bee That Got Spellbound." The story appeared in the paper on Friday, May 31, the day following the exhausting conclusion of the seemingly endless event.

In his review, Achenbach first discusses the rule changes. He writes, "A rule change, designed to make the contest fairer, instead helped turn it into a nearly interminable battle between the two final spellers ... trapped in an excruciating endgame." And, indeed, the case was so. Two breaks were called during which the staff met together to discuss the situation. "The first break was motivated simply by mercy ('we're trying to be humane here,' said bee co-director Sondra Austin)." During the second break, staff members met in the comfort room and examined their options, including calling a tie. However, "as it turned out, they chose to plow on, and the words suddenly got a lot easier."

Also, Achenbach discussed the word selection for this year, including words that "bear only the faintest, most mutant

relationship to the English tongue." During a second break, pronouncer Alex Cameron "swore these words were really English words." Achenbach then salutes the attempts spellers made to spell the impossible. He says, "Despite heroic efforts, the spellers got the PING! bell each time, a noise that grew increasingly maddening." To sum up his impression of their words given, Achenbach writes, "One can only hope that these bright young people aren't led to believe that these terms are worth remembering or, gad, using in an actual sentence."

Also in his article, Achenbach explores a less recognized topic for discussion: pressure. He says, "Critics of the bee have argued that they put too much pressure on children." He cites the Gilroy school district in California as an example of schools having "dropped spelling bees altogether because the competition is too much for both students and, not less so, the parents." However, "Austin, the co-director of the 64th annual bee, sponsored by the Scripps Howard newspaper chain, said, 'Lots of things are competitive. Life is competitive.'"

Overall, the story was mostly



a critique of the event, pointing out its many problems and exposing this past year as "the year the National Spelling Bee got too hard."

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST PARENTS' OF CHAMPIONS BEE

New at the 1994 National Spelling Bee was a competition for parents of spellers. Parents were assigned to teams of 3 for the competition, and each member of the top three teams received awards. Twenty-five of the 64 teams of aspiring adults had at least one member whose student had used our products. The exercise certainly gave parents an appreciation for the agony and ecstasy spellers experience on stage.

In this very challenging of bees, teams spelled for 13 rounds to declare a winner. The difficulty of words would have challenged most seasoned spellers.

A review of the 241 words in the bee showed that 180 of them were in *Nat's Notes*™ which is an astonishing **75%**. Our Surprise Disks contained 39 which is **16%** of the words, and these disks have only 1500 words. Our UIL products contained 140 of the words. If UIL had been studied in addition to our

Nat's Notes™, a contender would have encountered an **astounding 85%**. Thus, it seems the same "best sellers" that students rely on for bee preparation serve the parents.

The team made up of Runi Niyogi (NJ), Steve Urban (TX), and Dorothy Leong (CO) won the bee with the word *xyloglyphy*. They spelled the 13 words listed below to win, and **all of their words were in *Nat's Notes*™**. . .

..an impressive percentage!

Three of their words (nearly ¼) were on Surprise Disk 3 (only 500 words).

rapport	luteovirescent
dalliance	ichneumon
kinetosis	terreplein
secernment	rhyparography
dysgraphia	leiotrichous
esquisse	xyloglyphy
corymb	



*Carolyn Andrews spells for teammates,
Sandy Barrus & Prakash Babu.*

Second place team, was comprised of Linda Loeffler (CA), D.K. Sharma (LA) and Ruth Ann Crites (WV). They succumbed on *ophelimity*. Only Mr. Sharma had used *Nat's Notes*™ for his daughter Jaya who was spelling in the D.C. bee for her second time.

1994 PARENTS' OF CHAMPIONS BEE WORDS

These words given alphabetically by round comprised the 1994 Parents Bee

<p>ROUND 1</p> <p>abrasion absolve abstinent abysmally accolade acquittal antithetical armadillo bizarre bureaucracy cajole callously calypso chicanery cologne commandeer commiserative comradeliness convalesce corroborate crescendo decelerate delicatessen designee disaffiliate dyslexia emissary enticement enunciator envisagement fieriness immaculate inculcate ingenuity intermittence italicization lugubrious macabrely marriageable metaphor mozzarella nefarious</p>	<p>objurgate obliterative occultism palpability paradoxical paraphrasable peremptorily precipitately prejudicial prodigiously rapport reminisce repartee reticence rhetorical roguishness roulette saboteur sacrosanct serendipitous smuggleable tambourine</p> <p>ROUND 2</p> <p>accessible acquiescence adolescence ascension asymmetrical baroque benignly cappuccino colloquial commensurable commercialize commodious credenza crocheter crotchety crystalline dalliance debauche deciphering deferential</p>	<p>demography ebullient encroachment entourage ephemeral ergot euphoric exacerbate exhilarate hectare herbaceous ingenue loquacity maelstrom mediocrity microfiche narcissist obfuscate retaliator ricochet rotisserie sartorial staccato stanchion statistician statuesque styptic supplanter synonymy tertiary tortellini transcendental zephyr</p> <p>ROUND 3</p> <p>abstrusity achromatism calculiform calisthenium campanology circadian coadjutor crepitate cutaneous</p>	<p>edulcorate emphysema empeleomania entrepreneur eucalyptus garlion gramophile hysterogetic intertriginous inumbate justiciable kinetosis loquacity laureation lyncine malacology meringue mesoseismal metagnomy mucilaginous mysticity numinous olericulture oniomania paralogize rescindable schefflera segue silhouettist subphylum surcease terrazzo trousseau ventriloquy zymosis</p> <p>ROUND 4</p> <p>acrotarsium alkalescence belemnoid bisagre cancellous defeasible demagoguery</p>	<p>depurate deuteranopia fibrillogenic filasse fruticetum graphospasm hypalgnesia hyperglycemia isohyetal klendusity laudanum misogynistic mycophile orismology phonasthenia putrescent radiesthesia reliquian rissole saponaceous secernment seneschal tautophony thanatophidia thoracodynia thylacine uranometry</p> <p>ROUND 5</p> <p>brannigan cerebration croupier devastavit discinct dysgraphia ferruminate fusillade glaucope glottogonic hebdomadad nescient oneiric plumbeous prosaical</p>	<p>quinquagesimal recrementitious sanguinolent</p> <p>ROUND 6</p> <p>bourgade cointise esquisse keratoderma oriflamme rathymia schokker sgraffito</p> <p>ROUND 7</p> <p>cachinnate cerecloth corymb zygoneure</p> <p>ROUND 8</p> <p>glacon luteovirescent putsch rheophilic</p> <p>ROUND 9</p> <p>ichneumon lagniappe plebiscitary</p> <p>ROUND 10</p> <p>coccygeal langouste terreplein</p> <p>ROUND 11</p> <p>oenophilist parocemia rhyparography</p> <p>ROUND 12</p> <p>leiotrichous ophelimity</p> <p>ROUND 13</p> <p>xyloglyphy</p>
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ersatz	isosceles	Promethean	crecive	pastiche	kishke	Round 8
eucharistic	juvenescence	psychomachy	depurate	patois	largitional	annelid
fabiform	kinesiology	ptomaine	embouchure	patriciate	luftmensch	cataphract
factotum	legerity	quomodo	epenthesis	peccant	lutaceous	cloze
fete	logogriph	risibility	eudiometer	pheromone	lyonnaise	echt
flagon	lucre	rococo	euphuism	pleuropneumonia	macilency	ramage
flambeau	lymphocyte	rottweiler	ferriferous	polysaccharide	minacious	rosemaling
frangibility	mackinaw	rowel	fibrinogen	rubicundity	mnesic	Round 9
frenetically	mammon	scabrous	furcate	sciatica	nuncupative	escritoire
friable	manducatory	scalene	gaucherie	sequaciousness	ophidian	forcificorm
frittata	manicotti	scumble	hauteur	siliciferous	Pyrrhic	morceau
froufrou	mariachi	serried	immured	stridulatory	rariora	trophobiosis
garrulity	martinetish	shaman	incunabulum	succorance	seine	Round 10
gastrostomy	masochistic	stanchion	indicia	supererogation	solivagant	gitano
gendarme	mercerize	teratism	internecine	surfactant	stygian	gourami
geniture	misogamist	transhumance	interstic	tenebrosity	sufflaminate	psilosis
gerontology	mortadella	transtracheal	isotropic	toreador	triquetra	rouleau
glasnost	mountebank	treacly	lederhosen	troglydote	vesicant	Round 11
glissando	naology	truculent	lipogenous	verjuice	viticetum	nonpareil
golem	neoteric	truncal	malison	Xanadu	Round 7	quodlibet
Gouda	nephrectomy	tumulus	metoposcopy	Round 6	aureate	sphingine
Grandisonian	noctilucent	Round 5	micurgy	alnico	calceiform	Round 12
gynecocentric	occipital	acetaldehyde	mikado	avgolemono	emmetropia	eudaemonic
hackamore	osseous	amaranth	mores	bordereau	galbulus	lucifugous
hemiplegic	pariah	avogram	mutagenicity	burin	lacertilian	venire
herpetology	persiflage	barbellate	myelitis	chautauqua	laniary	Round 13
howitzer	philistine	bedizen	nonage	dengue	lumpen	ditokous
hoyle	Pimpernel	boutonniere	nugatory	diazepam	mult	phrontistery
humectant	platypodia	calumet	nuncio	fughetta	musciform	Round 14
impedance	potamologist	chromatin	oncogeny	girandole	purslane	apotropaic
imperceptible	presentient	colligate	oviparous	Graustarkian	sialoid	propaedeutic
innocuity	procrustean	conchitic	parapraxia	hegemony	vivace	Round 15
inumbate	profligacy	coterie	paroxysmal	heterodyn		demarche

SURPRISE WORDS ANALYSIS FOR THE 2000 NATIONAL BEE

A total of 591 "off-list" words were given in The 2000 National Spelling Bee, 38 more than in the 1999 event. The bee accelerated in difficulty with each round. Rounds 5 and 6 were the most devastating, with over 50% dropping out in each. Round 6 lost 19 of the 31 contenders for 61%, the largest percentage missed.

Spellers having studied both *Nat's Notes* and *UIL Notes*, had encountered a remarkable **80%** of all Surprise Words...**a ponderous advantage!!** Spellers also studying the *Spelling Rules Book* and *Etyma Mentors* increased the advantage. *Bee Prepared* listed **92%** of the off-list words, but without definitions and pronunciations.

UIL Notes alone provided the most help in the first "off-list" rounds. *Nat's Notes* was usually predominant from Round 5 to the end of the bee, indicating that the difficulty level veered to the abstruse *Nat's Notes* words and away from vocabulary-enriching words found in *UIL Notes*.

Round	Nat's Notes	UIL Notes	Bee Prepared	NN & UN
(# of words)	54%	68%	92%	80%
2(187)	40%	70%	97%	78%
3(162)	59%	77%	95%	86%
4(110)	62%	72%	87%	81%
5(64)	72%	55%	86%	81%
6(31)	61%	52%	81%	68%
7(12)	25%	42%	67%	50%
8(6)	67%	17%	100%	67%
9(4)	25%	25%	50%	25%
10(4)	50%	75%	75%	75%
11(3)	100%	67%	100%	100%
12(3)	67%	0%	100%	67%
13(2)	100%	0%	100%	100%



Spellers Spotlight

Through Focus and Friendship

My Bee Experience

By Anamika Veeramani, 2010 National Spelling Bee Champion

I started participating in local spelling bee contests at the age of seven. It was a lot of fun and I enjoyed the experience very much. I did not win for the first few years but really loved participating since it gave me the opportunity to get together with my friends and play with them after the contests. I became more seriously involved after my fourth grade teacher came out of the blue and asked my mom if I would be interested in being coached for Scripps' Spelling Bee. She thought that I had the potential and promise to excel in spelling. I decided to give it a shot. My teacher has been very supportive and encouraging and has invested several hours of time and effort on me. My family has been very supportive and has helped me maintain my focus on the spelling bee and still keep a balance with other equally demanding schoolwork and extracurricular activities. Wise and thoughtful advice from previous years' local champion also served me well.

Waiting at the microphone for my word at the semifinals and finals was the most interesting moment of the spelling bee. Press meetings and media interviews are also equally interesting. I have trained myself to remain calm under pressure over the years, and that really came in handy during the bee. I try to ward off all external pressures and concentrate my focus fully on the task at hand. The only pressure I allow is from within me, to just do the absolute very best that I can, at that moment. This way, if I failed, I could take comfort in the fact that I tried my absolute best within my powers and that is all there is to it. I never really prepared myself for the media interviews, but I try to be just my own self, in my natural skin and try to articulate my thoughts around questions as best as I can.

Meeting new friends and socializing with my peers with similar interests was another interesting aspect of the bee. I loved the camaraderie that existed among the competitors. We respected each other's differences, applauded each other's success with every round and felt the pain when one of us misspelled a word in a round. We chitchatted during commercial breaks and cheered each other over a successful spell. Our siblings had a good time too with each other. Amidst all our differences, we had one thing in common – we all worked very hard to get to where we were and were determined to do our very best. So, irrespective of whether we lost or won, we all were winners and deserved to be treated as such.

Overall, I am very thankful to God, my family, sponsors, coach, mentors, school, well-wishers, and community for giving me the opportunity, honor and pleasure of experiencing the spelling bee and with it a memory of a lifetime. I sincerely hope that many more generations of middle and elementary school students will continue to experience this 'royal' spelling bee tradition for millenniums to come!



Photo (left to right): The Hexco Spelling Sisters - Valerie Browning, Natalie Tarrant, and Huntley Tarrant.

All's well with the Spelling Sisters, who were the instigators of our business. Huntley is working at MindBites in Austin after receiving her MBA from Harvard; Natalie is a pediatrician in Austin, married with a 5-month-old daughter, Cora; and Valerie is married, working for Veritas, and raising daughter Claire, who is now 2-1/2. All still participate in the workings of Hexco.



Above: Grace Remmer and Neetu Chandak at the 2010 Scripps' National Spelling Bee. A 5th grader at the time, now in 6th, Grace is one young speller we will keep our eye on. Grace was sponsored by The Florida Times-Union, Jacksonville, Florida; her recap of the NSB is below. Neetu was the only speller returning for the 4th consecutive year, a pinnacle above her peers in 2010.

A Monumental Journey

The trip to the Scripps' National Spelling Bee marked my first time in Washington D.C., as well as my first time on an airplane, and I found things to be a little different than what I had expected. Behind airport security, I was surprised to see restaurants and stores. I even saw a bird that had made its way into the building on accident. As the plane neared the ground, it was thrilling to glimpse the famous monuments that I had previously only seen in books.

At the registration for the Bee, each speller received two T-shirts, as well as a drawstring bag filled with gifts, including a special National Spelling Bee watch, a "Bee Keeper", which is an autograph book, and a certificate for a Scripps' Bee DS game. Spellers were also privileged to attend events such as an elaborate barbecue picnic, a party with a DJ, and an extraordinary formal dinner. Being on stage was exhilarating. Often, someone would announce, "We are now taking a two minute commercial break." During that break, cookies and cups of water were offered to the Bee participants. People were always taking pictures. It sounded kind of amusing, all of those little clicks at once. When not involved in Bee activities, spellers were either exploring D.C or congregating in the hotel. Spellers swarmed throughout the hotel at all hours. They were pretty recognizable in their unique shirts. Frequently, spellers gathered in groups to swap signatures for their Bee Keepers.

Now about those spellers! They were all really friendly and supportive. We would laugh and joke together. During commercial breaks onstage, we would get up and high-five each other. After the Bee, another speller saw me, ran up, and hugged me.

As for my own experience, I misspelled two words: *bouleversement* (from the computer round) and *jehu* (in Round 6). I left a single letter E out of *bouleversement*, and added a letter E to *jehu*. I like to joke that I had all the correct letters, just not in the right places. Bee Week was fantastic and I'm working hard towards my goal of being a part of it in 2011.

~ By Grace Remmer



Congratulations to 8th grader **Anamika Veeramani** for taking home the gold in 2010!