

SpielChamps 2008

Pevans took part at Manorcon

Yes, this year's board games championship took place at Manorcon's new home at Leicester University. It was a nice venue, though the blazing sunshine was making it pretty warm under the big windows. I shall have to try to get there for the whole thing one year.

SpielChamps took place on the Saturday (26th July). Sadly, there were only four teams involved – I'm told that several others had booked, but only four showed up. The To Win Just Once team was there. Me, Pete Card and Michael Colao were the usual suspects. Ben Brown stood in for Sebastian Bleasdale, who couldn't make it.

The Championship is played over four games: everybody plays all four against a changing array of opponents from the other teams. Players score points for their position in the game (5 for first and 3, 2 and 1 for 2nd-4th) and the team's score is the total of its members' scores. With four games to play, an average score is 11 for an individual and 44 for a team.

This year we had four substantial games to play, which made for a full day. The first game, *Augsburg 1520*, was familiar to most of the team as it was used in the European tournament (EuropeMasters) in 2006. Designed by Karsten Hartwig and published by alea and Rio Grande, this is a neat bidding game. The trick is not just winning the auctions, but hanging onto cards for the subsequent auctions, too. It has some clever barriers that players have to negotiate. It was certainly a good start for us, as Ben and Michael both won their games and I was only second thanks to the tie-break rule.

Second up was *Caylus Magna Carta*, which is the card game version of *Caylus*. It is a clever adaptation of his board game – crucially, without the board – by William Atta and published by Ystari and Rio Grande. Learning the game for the tournament, I was surprised that it's almost as long a game as *Caylus* despite not having several of the mechanisms that the board game does. Something I learnt must have stuck as I won my game (the tie-break was on my side this time!), but the team's result was completely average.

Game three was *Maestro Leonardo* (aka *Leonardo da Vinci* from da Vinci Games and Mayfair). Acchitocca's clever game is played over a set number of turns during which players accumulate the resources and facilities to create some of Leonardo's inventions. I messed up the end game by playing for the next set of cards only to realise they would not actually appear. D'oh! I still managed second place, but none of the team did any better and our score subsided a little.

We finished off with Martin Wallace's *Brass* from Warfrog. This can be a lengthy game, but was played with gusto by players who knew the game and went by quite

briskly. Sadly, despite all my practice, I clearly don't understand this game. The way to play the game was demonstrated to me by two of my opponents (take a bow, Jerry Elsmore – playing for another team, hah! – and Adam Siejka) and all I could manage was third. Oh dear. It was almost a clean sweep of third place for the TWJO team and our worst result.

At the end of the tournament, we had accumulated an average score. Three of us had, though, managed to win just once. Our 44 points were enough to give us second place in the tournament, which brought some very unexpected cups and prizes. The winning team was Shark Bait (Luke Ellis, Marek Siejka, Adam Siejka and Simon Forth). Well done to them. There was also a prize for the best individual score, which went to Timothy Luffingham. Congratulations, Tim. The teams now represent Britain in the European Championships, EuropeMasters, in Essen (as part of the Spiel games fair) in October.

Next year's event should be part of Manorcon again and I do hope some more teams will participate. Give it some thought and keep an eye on the Manorcon website: <http://www.manorcon.org.uk>

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Shark Bait celebrate their win