

Jamal Blakkarly win Cane Toad Classic Brisbane 2024

The Champions Corner is where recent tournament winners share the moves or strategies that helped them emerge victorious.

This week, we welcome Jamal “The Jade Buddha” Blakkarly, winner of the inaugural Cane Toad Classic.

- *article initially published in Diplomacy Briefing of august 230th 2024*

The Jade Buddha Turns in to a Frog

Basho's Frog Haiku

- Furu ike ya
- kawazu tobikomu
- mizu no oto

Translation:

- The old pond;
- a frog jumps in -
- the sound of the water!

The Australian Hobby is Growing. We have gone from one yearly tournament (most years) to 5 this year alone. I'm not a TI-84 calculator, but that's some exponential growth by anyone's standards. And with this growth, I feel a certain community character is developing. A form of Larrikinism, if you will. Australian Diplomacy is silly, fun and super impressive.

These things are all related. As I have spoken about before (see Briefing Issue #233) we have had a real targeted focus on player safety and wellbeing, and putting the community before competition. And when everyone is feeling safe and included, people can focus then on having fun. When everyone can have fun, then we can play hard and competitive, in the safety of knowing we will be supported when doing so.

The inaugural Cane Toad Classic was, to me, a perfect example of exactly where the Australian Hobby is at right now. People had a heap of fun, and played their hearts out. We had the Australian Android doing his usual thing and suddenly being on 15 centres; we had Cthulhu himself (Andrew Goff) remembering that he knew what a stab was; we had notorious solo thrower Jason Gray (aka 000) trying his darndest to find someone to throw to. And in the end, it took a solo result to win the tournament, and there was 1 centre between 4th and 2nd. That's impressive, all-out-play if you ever saw it.

But the fun was more important, and that was clear from the start. In the most Australian way, the tournament teased itself: the ‘Cane Toad Classic’ so named for the noxious pest that infected the host State. The Australian nickname tradition took flight, the lunch breaks were long, and the whole tournament got behind convincing a player’s dad to play his first ever game in round 3. The son is

now known as 'Daddy B'.



"Daddy B, can you move to Paris so I can give Peter the solo?"

What impressed me the most about this tournament, however, was how everyone got behind it, and the community rallied to make it a success. This event had never been run before, there hasn't been a tournament in Queensland in 20 years, and yet we had people traveling from all over the country and even internationally make sure there were at least two boards. It was a real show of force that, if you're willing to put the work in and create something down under, we will back it all the way.

So, what is the Jade Buddha lesson from all of this? I know that's what you really came here to find out. Well let me refer to Basho's Frog Haiku for some recollections on the three rounds.

The old pond

Round one was old school diplomacy. No Australian triples, no whacky-ness, just the east and west fighting in their own theatres, and the game timing out before anyone crossed any kind of line. The theme was water. Russia and Germany decided they needed 6 fleets to fight Goff's England, and even then they couldn't kill him. He is Cthulhu, The Sleeper of R'lyeh, after all. I got to 'help' by providing French fleet power in ENG and NAO while making sure those pesky Germans paid for their treachery. Heaps of fun.

a frog jumps in —

I jumped. I just leapt from the get-go and it was free fall. I found a friend in Russia who was willing to do trusting fast play, I got Italy to jump in on Austria and then we negotiated to establish that natural Turkish path out of the east: through the Med. France decided in 1906, with a Turkish fleet in MAO that the number 1 priority was finally convoying to Edi.... Fly frog, fly!

the sound of the water!

And a splash! Of course I land Russia, surrounded by two players who know they need to eliminate me to stand any chance of winning, and another from whom I borrowed all of their centres to solo in the game before. Yikes! But I braced myself, hit the pond hard, got down to 2 home centres, and just waited for the water to settle again to find that I was still breathing. Slowly swimming back to the surface, I discover a slim but hop-able path to a respectable 5 centre survival, and to lock away the gold toad.



Dominick – and his “Toadiest Toad” award

The lesson I took from this, is that if you have fun you win. You might not win a trophy, but you win by the very act of having a good time. What does Basho’s frog have to do with any of this? Nothing. That’s the point. It’s all pointless nonsense in the end. It is just about having fun playing a game. You can, and should, find any meaning you like in it.

If we can make a tournament be all about a toad, then you can make any game of Diplomacy be as joyous as a sunny day in a pond. Even if your tournament score gets you the nickname 000. Practically everyone I saw last weekend had fun playing the game as hard as they possibly could, and we all walked away winners for it.

You should all come and play in Australia. We promise to give you a nickname. Just ask Kartho.

JB

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Last update: 2025/11/22 19:08

