

Looking Back On MSO 2015



ENTERTAINMENT FEATURED

By Alexander Baron



The Nineteenth Mind Sports Olympiad is now over. Held in North London from [August 23-31](#), the second year in a row at what is likely to be its new permanent venue, 2015 saw not only the usual Cosmopolitan crowd but a large contingent from South Korea. This was not surprising because mind sports are big in that country, and a mini-MSO was held at Seoul in June.

As well as many new faces were veterans including Pentamind supremo Demis Hassabis, chess player Tim Hebbes, and others. The two men who are largely responsible for the day to day running of the event are chess organiser Tony Corfe – who has been with MSO since its inception in 1997; and Etan Ilfeld, who came to play in 2010, got hooked, and now flits between organising and playing whatever games he can.

The one downside of this year’s event was the death of 9 year old chess player [Michael Uriely](#), who had already picked up a prize or two in what would undoubtedly have been a stellar career.

This year saw the addition of a learn to play room where people could come along and do just that. Over the years, new games have been introduced to MSO, including Pacru, which has now been around for a while. Its inventor, Londoner Mike Wellman, put in an appearance at this year's event. He came up with Pacru in 2002, and the first world championship took place the following year in Manchester where the MSO was then held, and for the next two years.

Newer games include Quoridor – this has been around somewhat longer than Pacru, but was introduced to MSO only this year. Cities & Knights is an adaptation of a German boardgame The Settlers Of Catan. Settlers was first held at MSO way back in 1998, at the second event; it was won that year by Demis Hassabis; his brother George was runner up.

Another veteran in spite of being only 26 is Ankush Khandelwal who this year picked up his usual fistful of medals and then some, including gold in one of the chess events. And yet another youthful veteran is fellow chess player James Heppell, who won this year's Pentamind. His mother is also a regular at MSO, and over the years she has picked up a good few medals too.



Pictured with your correspondent is multi-gamester Dario de Toffoli from Italy. Dario is another veteran of this event, and is a two time Pentamind winner; this year he didn't pick up so many medals but says not only is he getting older but the young ones are getting tougher. Dario's involvement with games and with the MSO goes much further than mere playing; he is a games inventor and author; he has also recorded a series of video interviews with players which can currently be found on the [MSO Facebook page](#).

Finally, another new feature was introduced to MSO this year, the [Eurogames World Championship](#). This is similar to the Pentamind and consists of the best results in the new – including some very new – games developed in Europe. The inaugural championship was won by Bijan Mehdinejad, who is no stranger either to MSO or the medal winners.



The gold and silver medalists in the 9/9 Go: Joanne Leung and Tony Atkins.



Mental calculations wizards Gert Mittring and Londoner George Lane.



A tournament in progress.



One of the chess tournaments.