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SFA graduate wins state war of words

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Sometimes friendly competition turns into a lifetime preoccupation. From Charles Foster Kane (Citizen Kane) to Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook founder), a rival can ignite a spark in a person that propels them to the top of their field.

That was the case for SFA graduate Phillip Collier, the new Division 4 title holder in the State of Texas Scrabble Championship.

"A buddy of mine said he could beat me in Scrabble and I thought I knew a bunch of big words," Collier said. "Ever since then, I wanted to get better at it."

The tournament was held two weekends ago in Salado, Texas, about an hour north of Austin. In his first go at the state level competition, Collier had nine wins, two losses and one tie. His average score for the 13 games was 410, enough to net Collier the Division IV title. For his efforts, Collier was awarded a trophy and cash from the North American Scrabble Players Association.

"I didn't even know it existed," Collier said. "Apparently it's a big deal."

Collier grew up splitting his time between Houston and Nacogdoches. After getting a degree in English from Stephen F. Austin State University, Collier had big plans.

"I was going to move to the big city," Collier said. "But somehow I wound up in Beckville."

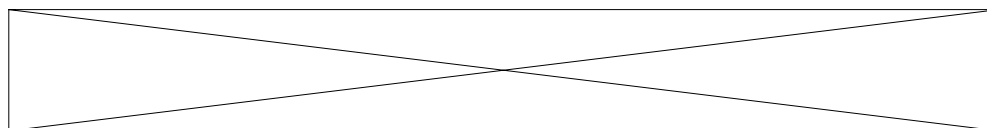
Collier works as a business account advisor for Cellular One in Beckville, though Nacogdoches beckons once a month when the Nacogdoches Scrabble Club meets at Java Jack's.

"I'm the vice president of the Scrabble Club in Nacogdoches," Collier said. "I'd like it to be a bigger deal around here. We meet on the second Sunday of every month."

So how does Collier hone his Scrabble skills?

"I use the Scrabble dictionary a lot," Collier said. "I keep it by my bed. It's about the nerdiest addiction you can have."

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