

RBL 2022-2023 Wrap-up.

Hi everyone,

the maiden RBL season 2022-2023 has come to an end. First and foremost: thank you to all fifteen participants for playing all twenty-three duels in true sportsmanship spirit and within the set time frame.

All duels (in RBL and RBL Q) were transcribed and overseen by a TR (= Transcriber/Referee) making every duel effectively a RBL *threesome*. A special thanks therefore to Guy Van Middeltem, Nick De Ruyck, Geert Van der Stricht and Robin Bilderbeek for transcribing a big chunk of duels and helping make this start-up season a success.

Now, here is what happened:

RED BEAVER LEAGUE		
	Season 2022/2023 1st Season - Initial Starting Grid	Season 2023/2024 2nd Season - New Starting Grid
		<div style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Levels Gained / Lost ↓</div> <div style="background-color: #f0e68c; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <i>RBL Champion:</i> ★ Geert Van der Stricht ↗ ↘ </div>
Level 1	★ 1 Marc Van Damme ★ 2 Geert Van der Stricht	★ 1 Marc Van Damme - 0 ★ 2 Michel Lamote ↗ ↘
Level 2	★ 3 Johan Huyck ★ 4 Michel Lamote	★ 3 Johan Huyck - 0 ★ 4 Robin Bilderbeek ↗ 3
Level 3	★ 5 Johan Segers ★ 6 Paul van Dijke	★ 5 Paul van Dijke - 0 ★ 6 Paulus van Rooijen ↗ 1
Level 4	★ 7 Paulus van Rooijen ★ 8 Bert Van Kerckhove	★ 7 Johan Segers ↘ 1 ★ 8 Bert Van Kerckhove - 0
Level 5	★ 9 Robin Bilderbeek ★ 10 Guy Van Middeltem ★ 11 Alain Chif ★ 12 Maurits Pino	★ 9 Guy Van Middeltem - 0 ★ 10 Maurits Pino - 0 ★ 11 Itzhak Solsky ↗ 1 ★ 12 Alain Chif - 0

(Graphics: Rain)

Twelve players who, over a four-year period, had earned their spurs in the Backgammon Master Series Belgium (1 to 12 in the left column) played 17 duels for a total of 75 matches. Some duels were matter-of-fact affairs, while others saw dramatic turnarounds and/or sensational endings.

As the dust settled, seven players ended up in the Level they started in at the beginning of the season. Nothing to write home about, but fine performances, nevertheless.

Four players achieved upward mobility: Geert Van der Stricht, Paulus van Rooijen and Michel Lamote (up one level) and Robin Bilderbeek (up three levels).

Johan Segers lost two coin toss duels in disheartening fashion and drops one level.

In RBL Q three players competed for Q1 and Q2 status. They played six duels for a total of 18 matches. Itzhak Solsky and Nick De Ruyck came out on top, leaving Sonja Custers a close third.

In the end, **Geert Van der Stricht** was the last man standing. He is **BGFed.be 2023 UBC Champion**. Dedicated and determined, he convincingly beat Johan Huyck in Level 1 and was the better of Marc Van Damme in the Final with a fine OPR of 4,37. He becomes the first Guardian of the BGFed.be UBC Champion trophy.

Player of the Year has to be **Robin Bilderbeek**. He started off in Level 5, where he beat Maurits Pino, then surprised Bert Van Kerckhove (Level 4) and Johan Segers (Level 3), only to be narrowly (and extremely unluckily) beaten in Level 2 by Michel Lamote. Robin put a nice cherry on his RBL cake by winning his Level 2 barrage duel against Paul van Dijke and thus secured a Level 2 spot in the RBL 23-24 start-grid. This *crazy* string of victories will forever be known as *Robin's Run of 2023*. His phenomenal achievement was also reflected in the Final Leaderboard where he ended on the top spot.

Rank	Player	Matches	Match wins	PR wins	Points	Average PR
1	Robin Bilderbeek	18	11	11	22	5,87
2	Michel Lamote	16	10	8	18	4,91
3	Geert Van der Stricht	14	9	7	16	4,37
4	Marc Van Damme	13	7	8	15	3,83
5	Johan Huyck	16	6	7	13	4,59
6	Guy Van Middellem	11	6	6	12	7,09
7	Paulus Van Rooijen	10	4	7	11	6,31
8	Alain Chif	13	6	4	10	12,24
9	Paul Van Dijke	12	5	4	9	6,68
10	Bert Van Kerckhove	8	4	4	8	5,7
11	Maurits Pino	7	3	3	6	9,3
12	Johan Segers	7	3	1	4	5,89

A **Special Mention** goes to Marc Van Damme, Alain Chif, and Itzhak Solsky:

Marc Van Damme confirmed his status of Belgium's best backgammon player by ending up with an OPR of 3,83 (thirteen matches), the only OPR below-4. Marc is Runner-up and secures spot (1) in the RBL 23-24 start-grid. He is now the prime contender to challenge Geert's title.

Alain Chif found himself in the doldrums after two lost duels in Level 5. The only way for him to stay in RBL was to beat Q2 Nick De Ruyck in a relegation duel consisting of five matches. In this two-session thriller Alain was 1-5 down after M3 with a worse OPR but showed great resilience by winning M4 and M5 *and* overcoming his 1,5 OPR deficit. A spectacular fightback and a fine display of mental fortitude, all accomplished while relishing a refreshing Westmalle Tripel.

Itzhak Solsky prevailed in RBL Q. He won all his duels and did so in masterly fashion with a below-5 OPR of 4,80 (twelve matches). Will he emulate Robin and force his way up the RBL 23-24 ladder by elbowing aside some of Belgium's top-8 players? We will know soon!

What now?

Important to know is that the 2022-2023 schedule cannot be replicated as there are now 13 players in the field, instead of 12. To assure that there are 4 players in Level 5 at the end of the season, *two* players need to come back down from each level (and not *one* like last season).

Therefore, after losing for the first time, players will play two more duels: a Barrage duel *and* a Relegation duel.

After the Barrage duel, players have a couple of months off to prepare for their crucial third encounter, the Relegation duel, set to be played after New Year.

Other small changes will be announced in the upcoming **RBL 23-24 Kick-off** mail. This document will include a graphic representation of the Schedule plus some further specifications about the number of matches in a duel, the Analyse Settings used, the venue and home advantage.

RBL wishes everyone an exciting and rewarding 23-24 season. We all look forward to the two opening duels (three matches) (before 15 June):

Level 5: A (9) Guy van Middellem v (12) Alain Chif

Level 5: B (10) Maurits Pino v (11) Itzhak Solsky

"Love winning, but do not fear losing" (Luca Brecel).

For RBL,

Michel

