

Bay Area IM David Pruess Samford Chess Scholarship Winner

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IM David Pruess

By Eric Hicks

David Pruess is the winner of the prestigious 2006 Samford Award given to one extremely talented young adult a year. The Samford Scholarship is the biggest money pay off award available in American Chess. The Samford was created to entice the country's best young players to stick with professional chess full time instead of pursuing a more financially prosperous career. The Samford was meant to offset the fact that it is very difficult for an American chess player to make a living at chess compared to Europe. The Samford is around \$32,000 a year and can be renewed the 2nd year. So David potentially was awarded over \$60,000!

David is one of the few (if not the only) west coast Samford winner ever...US Chess has been historically an east coast oriented group...perhaps the move from NY to Tennessee is doing the USCF some good now that they are now closer to the west coast. In any case many of us are proud to have a Samford winner in our midst.

David plans to use the award to support himself while he pursues his GM title full time. To obtain a GM title requires a heck of a time commitment and the Samford will hopefully give David the financial flexibility he needs to completely focus on the incredibly difficult task of becoming GM. To become a grand master he must have 3 GM performances (GM norms) in very difficult fide competitions, and have a fide rating of 2500. Most masters find it difficult to obtain the GM title without travelling to Europe where high rated FIDE tournaments are more common.

It has been a good year for chess for David just recently receiving his International Master title after earning his 3rd IM norm in Turin Italy. To receive the FIDE title of International Master a player must have 3 IM performances (norms) and have a minimum fide rating of 2400 at one point in his life.

David is one of the strongest players active in Bay Area chess and is one of the 3 master founders of the East Bay Chess Club. He recently graduated from UC Berkeley and grew up in the bay area. If you want to see the road of a young player to IM, David's tournament history is entertaining to look at for young bay area chess dreamers...check out David's meteoric rise: <http://www.uschess.org/msa/MbrDtlTnmHst.php?12601834> He made the road to strong master look

easy! He has several young private students he coaches in the bay area. David is known for his tactical style and emphasizes tactics in his teaching and coaching. Once asked about the importance of tactics in coaching, David told me "if you asked me what I needed to get to GM it would be better tactics".

Last years winner was former US Champion GM Hikaru Nakamura. Other past winners are: Gregory Shahade, Dean Ippolito, Michael Mulyar, Josh Waitzkin, Boris Kreiman, Benjamin Finegold, Dmitry Schneider, Varuzhan Akobian, Rusudan Goletiani, Tal Shaked, and Eugene Perelshteyn. Not all the young players on the list of recipients became GM but as you might recognize several did. We at Calchess wish David the best of luck pursuing his GM Title.



David at Calchess State Championships 2005 (thanks fpawn)