

## 32 nd Annual CalChess States-Final Report

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The Program-Tu's Photo

### The 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual CalChess Scholastics, April 27-29, 2007

by Alan M. Kirshner, Ph.D.

Frisco del Rosario, author of the acclaimed chess book A First Book of Morphy and who has been a tournament director at the CalChess State Scholastics for many years, said to me after the tournament that he felt this was the most successful one too date. While, after some thought, I decided from my perspective that the 2000, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary CalChess Scholastics States, was the most successful. Certainly the 2007 competition comes in a close second. Almost everything went off like clockwork. The San Mateo Expo Center was children friendly and the weather was quite pleasant. We had a great volunteer staff—the largest ever. Nuzhath Quadri, the Volunteer Coordinator, did an amazing job seeing that everyone carried out their jobs as well as handling many other tasks to numerous to list. We had US Chess Federation licensed tournament directors from both ends of the Northern California State, from many of the major chess schools in the Bay Area with most not attached to any scholastic program or club. John Mc Cumiskey, an Associate National TD and soon to be a National TD, took charge of the officials. The results show that 1172 players played with over

1200 registering for the competition. Not the largest number of players we have had, but a very respectable turnout and the largest chess event of the year on the West Coast.

To many, the highlights of an event like this one are the tournament games. From my perspective, what made this event successful was seeing so many children having fun and making new friends. I loved looking out on the lawn and seeing a fair size group of players from Mendota playing touch football with their coaches out on the lawn. This team, via school bus, drove all the way here and back three plus hours on both Saturday and Sunday—right, they did not sleep over. Even the older “kids” from Berkeley High School got outside in the sun and played some baseball and Frisbee between rounds. Granted, when they wandered off towards the antique show area, they had to put their ball and gloves away at the orders of the Expo Center's staff. And yes, no matter where I walked outside I saw children playing chess, bughouse and even that dastardly sack city—the game where the winner is the one who loses the most pieces.

During the three day festival we had loads of side activities as well as information tables and a chess vendor. If you got a chance to go to the Meeting Pavilion you would have run into National Chess and Games. Jay Blem, who has been bringing his wares up to the States for at least 15 years from Orange County, had a busy weekend. Adjacent to his booth you would see the T-shirt pick-up and sales. Mountain Lake Chess Camps, iD Tech Camps and the Chess Magnet School had information tables. The Chess Magnet School, I am pleased to report, provided a free year's membership to the winner (including ties for first place) of every section. Coffee Shop Treats of San Leandro raffled off a chess cake and gave all the trophy winners of the Primary School Varsity Division chocolate chess pieces. ID Tech Camps, with programs at Stanford, UC Berkeley and Santa Clara University gave away a free week at their computer camp that is worth \$700. The winner was a Shray Bandal from Fremont. MathEdge, who placed their table outside, provide three certificates worth \$100 for a week at either their Fremont or Cupertino locations. Since things were pretty hectic at the awards ceremonies, I failed to get the names of the winners, but they were all there to pick up their prize.

Kerry Lawless, the historian for chess in Northern California, provided a touch of his extensive materials in his display in the Meeting Pavilion. You can check out some of the photographs and documents at his ChessDryad.com site. Parents in the Meeting Pavilion had an opportunity to view a DVD from the new cable TV show in Palo Alto—Chess Divas. Lauren and Barbara Goodkind are producing this show about chess—especially women's and girl's chess. On Sunday, after a multitude of calls by me on Saturday, the Expo Center finally got the promised wireless internet connection up and running. This enable us to project the top chess boards in the High School Division to the Meeting Pavilion as well as get most of the results online after each round as we promised. International Master Vinay Bhat commented on the games in progress. Mark Shelton, with his unending energy and determination, made all this happen. International Master Ricardo De Guzman and National Master Eric Schiller spent all day Saturday and Sunday analyzing the games of any player who brought them a notation sheet—recording of the game. It is not often that you can get this kind of expert analysis free--so once again, a big thanks to all!

Besides the Bughouse on Friday night and the Blitz Saturday night, one other event deserves a mention—Nicholas Nip's simul against 12 players. I had arranged for eight year old Nicholas Nip and International Master Ricardo De Guzman to provide simultaneous games against 15 opponents on Saturday night. Well, how does that go, we gave a simul and no one showed. Actually, one person had pre-registered. Much to my regret I had to return his \$5. Eric Hicks, Nicholas' coach, asked me on Sunday if I would mind allowing Nicholas, during a lull in the Awards Ceremonies to do a free simul. Of course, I said “What lull?” One of these days we will find a way to get the trophies out rapidly. We did at least on Saturday. Lanette Gordon of Marin Chess spent hours—and I truly mean hours—planning how to move things along. As it goes—“the best laid plans of mice and men . . .” I won't bother you with the details of the trophy problems, but it sure wasn't Lanette's fault. She really suffered tremendous stress in her drive for efficiency and I am so glad I had her help. I am not sure what would have happened with out her drive to make the ceremonies perfect. Oh, and thanks to Lanette for the beautiful logo banner that decorated the outside center of the Oak Hall playing area.

In any case, Nicholas did have an opportunity to test his mettle against 12 players of all ages. If my memory isn't failing me he drew one and lost to ten year old Aamir Azhar, the son of Dr. Salman Azhar, who became my trainee and able assistant the last few months in preparation to replace me in the near future.

On Sunday, right after the first round started, we had a Parents and Coaches Meeting. Eric Hicks, Vice President of the CalChess Board, ran the meeting for the Board's Scholastic Committee. The President of CalChess was also present—Richard Koepcke. Richard had one of the most difficult tasks at the tournament. He was the Senior TD in the field. His job was to be outside all weekend to handle any parent and player problems. With nearly 1200 players and thousands of parents, relatives and coaches, need I say he had a lot to do. Obviously, no one can make all the people happy all of the time—especially, those who fulfill their lives by complaining--but Richard at least explained the national and state chess rules to the satisfaction of most.

Eric started the meeting with a discussion of the weekend's activities and I responded to questions. A main task for the meeting is to recommend to the

CalChess Board changes for future years. The Board will vote on whether to implement these. While I do not have the formal minutes, I believe there were only two issues voted on by the coaches. One was to maintain the Elementary School 4-5 Championship Division for two more years. After that time, the coaches will have more information to decide if the new division is worth keeping. The second recommendation to the Board was to follow the National rules and allow home-schooled children living in a School District that allows them to compete on teams to join a school group but only if they are enrolled in that Club for the year. Added to the National rules is the recommendation that the same privilege be accorded to private schools if the player lives within ten miles of the school. The player would have to provide evidence to the Chief TD that s/he has met the conditions as set forth by CalChess. Some discussion took place on the divisions below the Championship ones for next year. Since the CalChess bylaws leave the lesser sections to the organizer, it was decided that these recommendations would be discussed with the organizer of the 2008 Championships.

If I have left out any other side events, activities or special occurrences, please forgive me. I am sure you are aware I did not do so intentionally. Please do add a comment to this article to let everyone know of some of the other positive activities that took place this year.

I have provided links to the official results and 1000's of photographs at <http://www.CalNorthYouthChess.org/photographs.html>. The US Chess Federation has rated the tournament: <http://www.uschess.org/msa/XtblMain.php?200704291771>

Warning—the US Chess Federation does not list the official results of the tournament since they do not use tie-breaks.

And, now on to the Kudos to the State Champions and winners of the other divisions--

#### **The 2007 State Champions are:**

KINDERGARTEN = Tanuj Vasudeva, (745) 5-0

No team award in Kindergarten!

PRIMARY SCHOOL = Jessica Zhu (1351), Daniel Ho (1293), David Paravyan (reportedly 1800 in Russia), Neel Apte (1302), Rohan Desikan (1160) all with 5-1 in order of tie-breaks

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEAM = Weibel Elementary School (Fremont)

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 4-5 = Steven Hao (1373) 6-0,

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 4-5 TEAM = Mission San Jose ES (Fremont)

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 4-6 = Nicholas Nip (1981) 6-0,

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 4-6 TEAM = Mission San Jose ES (Fremont)

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL = Steven Zierk (1860) 6-0,

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEAM = Redwood Middle (Saratoga), Hopkins (Fremont)

HIGH SCHOOL = Daniel Naroditsky (2145) 5.5-.5

HIGH SCHOOL TEAM = Saratoga High School (Saratoga)

#### **2007 Winners of the Other Divisions:**

Primary School Novice U 500 = Archana Gopalakrishnan (449), Alexander Zeng (unrated), Akhil Ravoori (457), Will Baumbacher (unrated), Christopher Nip (488), William Weber (306) all had perfect 5-0 and are in order of tie-breaks

Primary School Novice Team = Heather Elementary School (San Carlos)

Primary School Junior Varsity U 800 = Sahlik Khan (750) 6-0

Primary School JV Team = Weibel Elementary School (Fremont)

Elementary School Novice U600 = Kevin M Tang (unrated), Samuel Saldinger (513) 6-0

Elementary School Novice Team = Cherrywood (San Jose)

Elementary School Junior Varsity U 900 = Anthony Chan (760) 6-0

Elementary School JV Team = Weibel Elementary School (Fremont)

Junior High School JV U 900 = Jason Park (789) 6-0

Junior High School JV Team = Horner Jr. HS (Fremont)

High School Junior Varsity U 1000 = Ashwin Aravind (971) 5.5-.5

High School JV Team = Marin County Day School (Marin)

Bughouse 7-12 = N. Yap and M. Zavortink

Bughouse K-6 = S. Decker and G. Kimura

Blitz 7-12 = N. Yap

Blitz K-6 = Isaac Zhang

### **A FEW—VERY FEW—HIGHLIGHTS IN THE SPECIFIC DIVISIONS**

Michael Aigner has placed his report up in the CalChess News Section and others have posted comments in the CalChess Forum. I will take just a little time to spotlight a few of the highlights of the competition that stand out in my mind. I welcome others to add their observations in the comment section of CalChess.org to share with all.

**KINDERGARTEN**—I always love watching the Kindergarten children play. My favorite experience occurred a number of years back when I saw two children each using their own clock. They were having a ball.

As always we have very diverse abilities and experience in this sections as maturation rates differ so dramatically at this age. This is why we have kept this section developmental giving trophies to every competitor and not awarding team trophies. Tanuj Vasudeva (745) came in ranked first and finished first. I met Tanuj the first time at a Weibel Quad in the Fall. He had a smile through every move of every game. He attends Bunker Elementary School in Newark that lacks a chess program so he took his initial training in the SCS Newark Community Center program. At the beginning of this year Mark Shelton, his coach there, begged me to let him play at Weibel. I figured that since I had a group of fair Kindergarten players, including Alisha Chawla (407 Weibel) who tied for second with Seaver Dahlgren (476 Parkmont) and Leonardo Cardarelli (605 St. Marks), he would have some company and competition. What I did not anticipate was Tanuj defeating so many of my upper grade level players. Watch out for this talent in the future.

Rio Popper, a blind kindergartner under the tutelage of NM Eric Schiller, was a wonder to watch. I observed her for the first time in February at the Young People's in Berkeley. She uses a special chess board and pieces to feel her way through the game with the help of a neutral staff helper. See obtained 2.5 out of 5 for a 500% finish—good in anyone's book.

### **PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Months before the competition parents at various tournaments speculated on whether Kyle Shin (1675) would win the State Primary Championship. Then when it was learned that a young Russian, allegedly with an 1800 rating, was in San Jose and would be entering our States in the Primary Championship, people wondered whether third grader Nicholas Nip (1981) would compete here. I shared my view with a few parents at a Cal Classic Scholastic that neither Nicholas nor Kyle would compete in the Primary section, but move up. I felt that either Jessica Zhu or Neel Apte would be the new Primary Champion with an outer possibility of Daniel Ho. Our rules prohibit anyone not residing in the NorCal State from claiming the title. Well, for once I was basically correct—this, to be honest, is unusual. What I was not aware of was that the Russian boy, David Paravyan, was not residing in NorCal and had been brought over for a week to help train the Cherrywood, San Jose players and specifically to compete in the States. His entry in the tournament was legal, however. Some questions were raised about his actual grade in Russia even though his age matched national guidelines for this section. The young boy and his parents, by everyone's report, were great and humble people. Yet, they had difficulty with the U.S. rules on pairing that differ from the international rules. In round three a controversy arose on the pairing and I learned afterward that the young Russian allegedly had said that he was adjusting a piece in his language. From what I can tell this was not brought to the Senior Directors attention and no TD ruling was made. Candidly, it is always difficult to deal with such claims even in the English language. Play continued and Jessica won the game. She then lost to Neel who only needed a draw against Daniel Ho to take home the title. Daniel spoke to me before going in to play his game. Daniel had lost to Neel at the Cal Classic and was sure he was going to lose. I gave him the typical coach pep talk that makes the kid feel good, but may or may not have an impact on the game. Daniel, from what I learned later from Neel's mother, offered Neel a draw twice. Neel turned him down and lost. We had four State Champions and five first places. As I announced at the awards ceremony, the players can all change their plates to first. Yet despite this, over the years I have had to complaints that it really isn't first when you bring home a trophy that says second, third, fourth or fifth place and even in changing the plaque the trophy sizes are different. I guess I will never be able to solve this conundrum with the wisdom of Solomon. Weibel Elementary School won the State Team Championship title with Mission San Jose Elementary School behind by 1.5 in second place and Faria in third.

In the Primary School Junior Varsity what struck me was that all three of the top players came from the same school. Sahlik Khan (750) won first with 5-0 and Brian Lai (700) and Matthew J. Li (565) tied for second (4.5-.5), both drawing Austin Chen of Dilworth one of the nine players who tied for fourth. Weibel Elementary School won the Team trophy with 17 points and St. Mark's coming in second with 14 points. Only the top four players points count towards the team trophies. Sahlik Khan paid an extra seventy dollars for a late entry, getting three zero point byes, and joined his team in the Championship Division on Sunday. He won all three of his Sunday games to perhaps set a record of eight games won with zero loses in the two days of the States. I would say he was a sandbagger if I did not know the child personally. It was simply his weekend. An aside—Tanuj Vasudeva, the Kindergarten Champion, also paid the late fee and re-entered on Sunday in the Elementary School 4-5 Championship and won two and a half out of three of his games for a total of seven wins and one draw

The Primary School Novice Division had 271 players. I knew it would be large and announced on the application an additional 25 trophies for the

unrated players. I anticipate that next year there will be a separate unrated section as was done a number of years back. The tie at 12<sup>th</sup> place went down to 46—all having four wins. Adding the extra 25 trophies, I awarded 71 place trophies four grade level trophies and three medals for rating groups. Heather won the team award here with 16.5 points with St. Mark's and Weibel finishing a very close second with 16 points each.

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Third grade student Kyle Shin (1675) was the favorite in the new 4-5 Championship section. Players are always allowed to play in a higher section, but never lower. Last year the coaches recommended and the CalChess board approved this new championship division. I am not sure for how long the Nationals have had this section. Many coaches in the Bay Area have complained that we have near half the schools that are K-5 designations. Some have even said it was more than 50%, but those figures are not the ones I have viewed. Either way, the numbers justified to most coaches at the meeting that this section should be tried out for three years to see how it draws. However, Kyle had to take a half point bye first round and then drew in round 3. This gave him a tie for second with Mission San Jose's Warren Tian (1160) who lost to the winner. I congratulate Warren for his truly outstanding tournament. He came in ranked 13<sup>th</sup> and finished 2<sup>nd</sup>. No mean feat. Warren's school—Mission San Jose ES--had a clear victory over the others in this division with 16.5 points to its closest rival Weibel with 13. Murdock-Portal Elementary School took third with 10.5. Mission will go down in the record book as the first State Team Champion in this new, but experimental, division. 1st place honors in the k-5 division goes to Steven Hao (1373) with a perfect 6-0 score.

Third grade student, and chess prodigy, Nicholas Nip (1981), who trains with Kyle Shin under the skilled hands of Eric Hicks and his wife Liina won the 4-6 Elementary School Championship with a perfect 6-0 score. If you check the results you will see that the next places fall to people with high ratings for this age group. For example, Samuel Bekker at 1731 took the tie-break trophy for second and following as tied for second were Rahul Desirazu at 1604, Andrew Yeh at 1624 and Isaac Zhang at 1726. Who says ratings don't mean much in children's tournaments? Mission San Jose Elementary School won its second team championship of the weekend outscoring Harker School by 14.5 to 11 with Forest Park (Fremont) coming in third with 10 points. While Mission San Jose failed to pull off the clean sweep of the lower grade State Championships as the pundits predicted, they could still be proud of their fine results in the 2007 States.

I am not sure I heard much about the Elementary School Junior Varsity U 900 Division. All I know was that some of my players kept coming over to me to report that the Weibel Team was in first place. They finished with 16.0 with Mission San Jose second at 14.5 and Moraga Intermediate third with 13.5. As reported earlier Anthony Chan (760) from Hart won all six of his games. There was a six way tie for second place—Kyle Chan, Darryl Mar, Anton Whaley, Abhishek Rao, David Levitsky and Joshua Barnhart.

The Elementary School Novice Division has become a show place for Cherrywood School from San Jose. For six years Cherrywood has entered teams in the novice divisions at the States due to their players seldom if ever competing in any other sanctioned events. The coaches have prepared them well to win this beginners section. Sadly, last year, due to the coach apparently not realizing that he had two players who had competed before and a data processing error that allowed them to compete illegally, CalChess disqualified the team. This year the coach was determined to be sure that all his players were eligible and our data processors were determined to carefully check—over and over again--every Cherrywood entry. The school proved once again that it remained on top of the novices with 21 points to Heather's 19 points and Forest Park's 17.5. Cherrywood's Kevin Tang, a second grader, tied for first. Since the vast majority of Cherrywood players are fifth grade, I hope that the coaches there will encourage this talented young man to improve his skill by competing in rated tournaments before next year's States. He deserves to move ahead against stronger competition. Samuel Saldinger also had a perfect 6 and 0 for first. Kairui Zeng went 5.5-.5 to stand alone in 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

## JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

The top two seeded players were 100 plus points above their competition in the Junior High School Championship Division. I knew this would be a battle of the child prodigy and the "late bloomer." I first heard of Steven Zierk from a Senior Master, Art Wang. He reported to me on this Kindergarten child who had an unreal sense of the chess board and amazing talent. Steven proved this during his Primary School days. During that time he attended Blossom Hill receiving excellent training from National Master and Open State Champion Jon Frankle. I believe it was in fourth grade that he won \$5000 at a major national adult event. I believe that remains a record for any young scholastic player in our state. After fourth grade he played very sporadically. Rohan Agarwal came in to his own in sixth grade at Weibel. He fell into the hands of what is now his guru—Richard Shorman. He won \$2500 that year at an open event in Nevada. Steven entered the States on the come back trail with 1860—he had remained around 1500 for 4 years. Rohan had reached 1942, gaining some 300 points since leaving Weibel for Horner. They met in the sixth round. I have not seen the game nor received Richard Shorman's commentary, but I am sure it was excellent on both players part. Steven Zierk became the 2007 State Junior High School Team Champion with Rohan Agrawal tying with four others for second. Redwood Middle School and Hopkins tied for the Team Championship with 17 points and Steven Zierk's Fisher Middle School took third with 15.5 points. Most of Rohan's teammates from Horner were in the Junior Varsity Division.

Horner Junior High School, in the JV Division, found its leader in a young lady named Jessica Hseuh. Jessica was one of the few girls in this tournament to place in the top three positions. She tied for second along with Jason Zhao, Eric Lo, Sean Jennings and Tom Ou. All had 5-1. The winner was Jason Park with 6-0. Horner defeated Egan of Sunnyvale, a perennial competitor and winner, by half a point 17 to 16.5. Chaboya Middle School took third with 15 points.

## HIGH SCHOOL

Earlier I mentioned late bloomers. Well, the winner of the Junior High School Junior Varsity Section was one of those late bloomers. He has been playing chess since primary school and in 10<sup>th</sup> grade sports a 971 rating. This year, Ashwin Aravind of Irvington High School, decided to volunteer his time to help teach chess. He really took the game to heart deeper than ever before and got himself a coach. He offered his opponent a draw in the last round knowing he would take first place with his 5.5 points. Lucas Peck (unrated) and Stephen Leung tied for second with 5-1. The first and second place teams in this division are both coached by Lanette Chan and her husband Jeff Gordon. Marin County Day School had 16 points for first with Del Mar coming in with 15.5 points. I wonder which one they favored, if any at all—I also wonder who will take the first place coaches plaque and which the second place. :) In any case—congrats! Tierra Linda placed third with 14.5.

As I eluded to earlier, National Master Michael Aigner has written a short report on the States with an emphasis on the High School Championship Division posted at CalChess.org as "A Child Shall Lead Them at the CalChess Scholastics." The child is Daniel Naroditsky (2145) in fifth grade. I believe he is by far the youngest player to ever win that section. I know that IM Vinay Bhat won it in Junior High School, but looking at the names of previous

winners, I do not believe any were in Elementary School. The winner of the High School Section is usually our state representative to the Denker Tournament of State High School Champions. However, the state representative must be in High School. According to our rules a playoff must be held to determine the representative in case of a tie with the same time controls as the States. This means that the six second place finishers will meet on a neutral playing field in the near future. They are Sam Shankland (2239), David Chock (2095), Nicholas Yap (2296), Adarsh Konda (2084), Michael Zhong (2042) and Micah Cohen (1807). Keep posted to find out who heads east this summer to represent our Northern California state.

Chess is Forever,

Alan

Alan M. Kirshner, Ph.D.

Organizer

32<sup>nd</sup> Annual CalChess State Scholastics



The Crowd Awaits by John Tu



Lanette Chan by Gabe Gordon



A Lull by John Tu



Bear and Human Power by Tu