

Labor Day Festival in San Francisco

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by Michael Aigner

The annual **Labor Day Festival in San Francisco** is coming up soon. In an era of declining attendance at adult chess events, this has been the lone exception, *drawing at least 160 players* to the **Holiday Inn Golden Gateway** at Van Ness and Pine for each of the past seven years. Certainly one big reason that people keep coming back is the friendly and competent staff: organizer **Richard Koepcke** assisted by TDs **John McCumiskey**.

Over these years, *no other adult or open tournament in Northern California has attracted this many players*, including multiple International Masters and even an occasional Grandmaster. The list of recent winners is quite formidable: **Sam Shankland** (2008), **Josh Friedel** (2006, 2007), **Alex Yermolinsky** (2005), **Vladimir Mezentsev** (2004), **Dmitry Zilbertstein** (2003) and **Ricardo DeGuzman** (2002). *Who will win this year?*

Holiday Inn Golden Gateway

- Location: **Van Ness at Pine** in San Francisco
 - Format: 6 round swiss in 6 sections (*Open, Expert, A, B, C and D/E/Unrated*).
 - **3-day schedule**: Reg: Sat 8-9:30. Rounds: Sat 10, 4; Sun 11, 4:45; Mon 10, 3:30.
 - **2-day schedule**: Reg: Sun 8-9, Rounds: Sun 9:30, 11:45, 2, 4:45; Mon 10, 3:30.
 - Time control: 30/90, G/60 except G/60 for rounds 1-3 of 2-day schedule.
 - Entry fee: \$70 adults, \$60 juniors postmarked by August 31; \$10 more on-site.
 - Prize fund: \$5400 based on 160 players, including \$700 for 1st place in Open section and \$380 for 1st place in each lower section.
 - **Tournament flyer**
 - **Advance entry list**
- Event: **Labor Day Festival**
 - Date: **September 5-7** (3-day) or **September 6-7** (2-day)

I highly recommend this event to all of my students and friends! Of course, I will be there, with or without my power wheelchair. I *suggest the 3-day schedule to serious players* because G/60 tends to be like roulette (*i.e. more luck than skill*), but the 2-day schedule requires less of a time commitment. A weird feature of this tournament is that many kids *play up a section*, especially those rated within 100 points of the next class.

WARNING: The Bay Bridge will be closed over Labor Day weekend! If you are driving, please make sure to take I-280 or US-101 or cross at the San Mateo Bridge. You may also take **BART** to Embarcadero Station, walk one block north to California street and **catch a #1 Muni cable car** to the hotel on Van Ness. **Use the trip planner at 511.org** for maps and route schedules.

Finally, I must lodge a small protest. Most readers are probably unaware that the **CalChess Board voted to strip this festival of its longtime "state championship" designation**. Mind you that the USCF encourages states to use Labor Day weekend for state tournaments, and, in fact, **many big states** do run theirs on Labor Day. Instead, *the Board saw fit to endorse a yet untested big money event at a brand new venue on Thanksgiving weekend*. The motto "*Build it and they will come*" has not worked well at Bay Area tournaments in the past (*e.g. the Firecracker Open fiasco in 2001*). I won't say more now, but count me as a big skeptic of this Board decision. We shall see in November.