

# Golden State Open Begins

by Michael Aigner  
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GMs Melikset Khachiyan and Josh Friedel

The most significant open chess tournament in Northern California for more than a decade kicked off on Friday night at the Concord Hilton. Tournament veterans from around the country may remember this hotel as the venue for the [1995 US Open](#). The location seems ideal: spacious and well-lit ballrooms with ample space for the crowd to disperse into the hallways and lobby, wide variety of restaurants nearby and even a jogging trail passing behind the hotel. The Golden State Open optimistically projected paying out \$60,000 based on 450 players, with 2/3 guaranteed. A smaller prize

fund last March attracted 229 participants, more than any other Bay Area adult event since the 1995 US Open. Unfortunately, the advance entries were fairly light—only about 220. I still expect additional players to join the 3-day schedule today and then the crazy 2-day schedule beginning tomorrow. Update 1/17/2010: GM Melik Khachiyan has the only perfect score of 3-0 after defeating IM Emory Tate and GM-elect Alex Lenderman on Saturday. Five are tied for second at 2.5: GM Josh Friedel, GM Jesse Kraai, GM Walter Browne, IM Enrico Sevillano and NM Andy Lee (who upset IM Ricardo DeGuzman last night).

The strength of the Open section, however, is quite impressive. Three and a half Grandmasters joined last night (Melik Khachiyan, Josh Friedel, Alex Lenderman and Jesse Kraai), making this the strongest Open in the Bay Area in decades, perhaps since the 1981 US Open in Palo Alto. (The "half GM" is Lenderman, referring to that he has four norms but FIDE hasn't officially awarded him the title yet.) No doubt some of the International Masters will have a say in determining the winner, including [2-time Northern California State Champion](#) Sam Shankland and Southern California star Enrico Sevillano. Last, but not least, is [6-time US Champion](#) Walter Browne. Most of my young students have never seen the infamous huffing, puffing and body jerks whenever Browne gets into time-pressure, which seems to be nearly every game. They'll certainly be in for a show!

Speaking of young players, there are quite a few talents in attendance this weekend from California, Arizona, Washington, Utah, Idaho and even Texas. The following trio of FIDE Masters will be familiar to the readers: Steven Zierk (#3 age 16), Daniel Naroditsky (#1 age 14) and Darwin Yang (#1 age 12). In fact, Daniel and Steven, both from the Bay Area, broke 2400 at the end of 2009! Other young stars to watch against the adult masters include: NM Yian Liou (#2 age 12), NM David Adelberg (#3 age 12), NM Kayden Troff (#1 age 11) and Luke Harmon-Vellotti (#2 age 10). Kudos to David and Kayden for recently earning their Master certificates!



Yian Liou and Steven Zierk

One of the biggest news stories brewing in the Northern California scholastic community is the chase of the **USCF Youngest Master record** by 9-year-old Sam Sevian. The precocious yet self-confident youngster has approximately 9 months to gain the final 51 rating points, breaking the record set by another Bay Area kid, Nicholas Nip, just two years ago. Having faced Sam twice in the last six months, I can safely say that he already plays at master strength. We drew last August and then I won two weeks ago-only after fighting toe and nail

for five long hours! Good luck Sam!

The first round of the 4-day schedule took place last night. Your reporter got to bed at 1:30am, finally succumbing to noted Southern California coach GM Melik Khachiyan after nearly 60 moves.



Michael Aigner's battle against GM Melik

Five lower rated players were more fortunate than me, earning draws in their games. I occasionally glanced over to board 2 at the strange endgame of Q+N and 7 pawns each; amazingly FM Eugene Yanayt managed to draw with GM Josh Friedel. The top rated players had to work hard in round 1, with only GM-elect Alex Lenderman able to win in under four hours.

#### Round 1 Results

GM Melik Khachiyan 1-0 NM Michael Aigner  
FM Yanayt 1/2-1/2 GM Josh Friedel  
IM Alex Lenderman 1-0 NM Paul Gallegos  
NM Kayden Troff 0-1 GM Jesse Kraai  
IM Sam Shankland 1/2-1/2 NM Yian Liou  
Joshua Gutman 1/2-1/2 FM Steven Zierk

Finally, an exciting rumor running around Concord is that Lenderman will demonstrate his **famous dance** if he can win the tournament. We shall find out by Monday night!