

Wheeler / Rood Among Winners at Elementary Nationals

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Nearly 2,000 players competed in this year's **K-6 Elementary Nationals** in Dallas, Texas. The tournament included great performances from individual players and schools from all over the country. Christopher Wu scored 6.5 out of 7 and outlasted a group of players scoring 6-1 to win the K-6 Championship section by a half-point. Team favorite Daniel Wright JHS coasted to victory with a strong showing from the team's top four players.



California's Cameron Wheeler (left) won the K-5 Championship section with a perfect 7-0 score. In doing so, he led his team, Regnart Elementary School to a dominating first place finish ---3.5 points ahead of its nearest competitors.

In the K-3 Championship, PS 6m's Max Aeon Chung tied with Andrew Titus and Joseph Wan for first place. Max won the first place trophy on tiebreak, besting players nearly 300 points higher rated. Nest + M won the team award by a half a point over their NYC rival Dalton.

Ben Rood and the under-rated Aydin Turgot both went 7-0 in the K-1 Championship with Turgot taking the 1st place trophy on tiebreaks. Dalton continued their K-1 Championship dominance, winning the section for the third year in a row.

Two of the country's top scholastic players were bound to battle in the K-6: Jeffrey Xiong and Christopher Wu each had a perfect 5-0 score heading into the final two rounds.

When Xiong and Wu drew their head to head encounter, the door was opened for a third challenger to enter the fray. After conceding a Round four draw, Andrew Liu won his fifth and penultimate games to create a three-way tie atop the leader board. Heading into the final round the pairings were as follows: NM Jeffrey Xiong – Andrew Liu and Christopher Wu – Kesav Viswanadha. Jeffrey Xiong and Andrew Liu proved worthy of each other, drawing to both finish with a powerful 6 out of 7. At the tournament's decisive moment, Christopher Wu showed his mettle and emerged victorious, making him the K-6 National Champion with 6.5 out of 7.

One player's name best reflects the outcome of the K-5 National Championship: Cameron Wheeler. The Regnart Elementary (team picture below) standout scored a thumping 7-0 to win the individual title by a clear point and lead his team to first by a convincing 3.5 point margin. A further illustration of Regnart's dominance is that their second scorer Udit Iyengar took second place overall on tiebreaks. After Cameron won first place, we caught up with his father and he had the following to say.



We have a small group of Bay Area kids that all hang out together, train together, and push each other to improve their chess. We informally call this group the Chesspunks, and it includes Cameron, Vignesh, Allan Beilin, Kesav Viswanadha, and Udit Iyengar. The first four all traveled to Greece together for the WYCC. Going into round #7, four of the five Chesspunks had a shot at winning a national title (or a share of the title): Cameron and Vignesh in K5, and Allan and Kesav in K6. Unfortunately, we weren't able to bring home both titles this year, but it is a testament to the efforts these kids have put in, and the strength of Bay Area chess.

Cameron also annotated the following win over Roland Feng:

1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 e6 3. g3

I was thinking it would transpose if he did Nc6 g6 Bg7 and d6

3...d5 4. exd5 exd5 5. d4

Now I realized that Ne2 was better because I could take the pawn with my knight.

5...cxd4 6. Qxd4 Nf6 7. Bg5 Be7 8.O-O-O Nc6 9. Qa4 Be6 10. Bg2 O-O 11. Nge2 Ng4

I missed this move but the pawn he wins is no big deal.

12. Bxe7 Qxe7 13. Rhf1 Nxh2 14.Rfe1 Ng4 15. Nxd5 Bxd5 16. Rxd5 Nf6 17. Rdd1 Qc5

He should have challenged the open files because now I have both files.

18. Bxc6 bxc6 19. Nd4 Qg5+ 20.Kb1 c5 21. Nc6 Rae8

Again another mistake and he should have moved the f rook.

22. Ne7+ Kh8 23. Qxa7 c4

Now I win another pawn while he is tied up.

24. Qd4 c3 25. Qxc3 Ng4 26. f4 Qh5 27. Qf3 f5 28. Re5 Rf6 29. Nxf5

He missed this move completely but it was already over.

29...Ref8 30. Nh4 Qxe5 31. fxe5 Rxf3 32. Nxf3

Now the queens are off so I can push my passed pawns like crazy.

32...h6 33.Nd4 Nxe5 34. b4 Kh7 35. Kb2

I try to support my pawns with my king but this was a waste of time.

35...Kg6 36. Kb3 Kh5 37. a4 Kg4 38. a5 g5 39. Re1 Nd7 40. Re7 Nf6 41. a6 Nd5 42. Rb7 Kxg3 43. a7 Ra8 44. Nc6 g4 45.

Rb8 Nc7 46. b5 Kf2 47. b6 g3 48. Rxa8

I calculated that I will get two queens and he will run out of checks.

48...Nxa8 49. b7 g2 50. bxa8=Q g1=Q 51. Qf8+ Ke2 52. a8=Q Qb1+ 53. Kc3 Qe1+ 54. Kc4 Qh4+ 55. Nd4+

Now there is a quick mate.

55...Kd2 56. Qg2+ Kc1 57. Qa3+ Kd1 58. Qe2#

1-0

There was a three-way tie in the K-3 Championship section between Joseph Wan, Andrew Titus (pictured to the left, other two winners photo above) and Max Aeon Chung earned the 1st place trophy on tiebreak. The winner of the K-3 Championship section, Max Aeon Chung, deserves an introduction to the national audience. Respected in NYC scholastic chess for his solidity and focus at the board, Chung's chess year already included a 6-0 sweep of his city championship. In Dallas he transferred his skills to the largest stage, topping a star studded field with his 6.5 out of 7 score. Paired far up twice on the last day, Chung beat the second seed and drew the first, Aravind Kumar, in the final round to take the title.

In the K-3 team championship, a titanic battle took place between NYC rivals Nest + M and Dalton. Nest grabbed the lead early on, but relinquished it with one round to spare, necessitating a major comeback. Their balanced attack proved equal to the task. With a mere point separating their top players, Nest + M rode their strength in depth to a hard

fought victory.

The next section's reputation for unpredictability may need to be revised: [Kele Perkins' K-1 preview article](#). correctly predicted big things for Ben Rood, who took second on tiebreaks with a flawless 7-0 score. However, the player taking top spot on the podium may rightly be credited with a historic upset. Aydian Turgot played up in his last six games (!), shrugging off his opponents' ratings en route to a stunning 7-0 result.

Dalton continued their dominance in the K-1 Team Championship, winning it for the third year in a row. Among other things the school is known for its focus on younger chess players, which has clearly reaped dividends.

In the tournament's under sections, several performances are worth noting. PS 166m continued its dominance of the K-6 U1000, taking the title for the third straight year. This program's 40+ players walking to the last round chanting "166" projected a certain blend of confidence and determination. By capturing the K-3 unrated section, PS 166m became the only team in the tournament to grab two under sections.

In the K-6 Under 1000 individual tournament, Gabriel Safalla earned clear first with 7/7 while 2nd grader Akash Vijay (left) impressed by scoring 6/7 and taking home the second place trophy on tiebreak. Howard Zhong earned clear first in the K-5 Under 900 with a perfect score and Dakota Grant Bibeau won the K-3 Under 800, also a with a clean sweep.

This tournament also played host to non-competitive attractions. David Pruess and Daniel Rensch of Chess.com set-up a kiosk where they went over student games and promoted their website, alongside its younger brother for scholastic players, chesskid.com. Maurice Ashley was also in attendance, signing books, teaching lessons, and lending his star power to the event. Ashley also presented his new iPad and iPhone application, "Take." [His first app, MATCH is an acronym for Maurice Ashley Teaches Chess.](#)

The spacious venue was welcomed by players, coaches, and parents alike, enabling weary competitors to blow off steam in between rounds. Impromptu team rooms were also spotted around the site, leading one tournament organizer to wonder if team trees should be rented out next year. This wraps up the Spring Scholastic season though that hardly means the players will be taking a long rest—it's never too early to prepare for 2012.