

A Novel High School Event

Beginning early this year, participants from nine schools in Northern California competed over Free Internet Chess Server (FICs) every Sunday from 2 to 3 P.M. After a close semi-final round, Irvington destroyed Monta Vista in the finals with the overwhelming score of 5-0, and emerged as the stronger High School in Northern California. Monta Vista, however, finished first in the section Junior Varsity. According to Sydney Liu, the founder and president of the league, the first year turned out to be a success. He hopes to use the lessons from this year to enlarge and improve the league each successive year.

2011 Season Standings VARSITY (not necessarily in tiebreak order)

NorCal High School Online Chess League

Rank	Team	G	W	D	L	GP	OP	GD	MP
1	American	8	6	0	2	25.5	14.5	11	18
2	Campolindo	8	5	1	2	27.5	12.5	15	16
3	Irvington	8	5	1	2	25.5	14.5	11	16
4	Monta Vista	8	5	1	2	23	15	8	16
5	Dougherty Valley	8	5	0	3	23	17	6	15
6	Saratoga	8	3	0	5	16.5	23.5	-7	9
7	Monte Vista	8	2	2	4	15.5	19.5	-4	8
8	Rio American	8	1	1	6	13.5	25.5	-12	4
9	Northgate	8	1	0	7	3	31	-28	3

Playoffs: 1) American 2) Campolindo 3) Irvington 4) Monta Vista
Championships: Irvington vs. Monta Vista

Champions: Irvington

G= Games Played

W=Match Wins

D=Match Draws

L=Match Losses

GP=Game points, total points scored

OP=Opponent's game points, total points scored

GD=Game difference (the GP minus OP)

MP=Match points (the most important)

F= Forfeits

2011 Season Standings JUNIOR VARSITY (Final Standings)

NorCal High School Online Chess League

Rank	Team	G	W	D	L	GP	OP	GD	MP
1	American	6	4	0	2	19	10	9	12
2	Monta Vista	6	4	0	2	17	11	6	12
3	Monte Vista	6	3	1	2	15.5	13.5	2	10
4	Rio American	6	2	2	2	13	14	-1	8
5	Saratoga	6	2	1	3	12.5	13.5	-1	7
6	Dougherty Valley	6	2	1	3	10	16	-6	7
7	Campolindo	6	1	1	4	9	18	-9	4

Forfeits:

Saratoga: 8

Campolindo: 2

Dougherty valley: 5

Monte Vista: 8

Rio Americano: 3

American: 1

Monta Vista: 3 + late check

**PLAYOFFS: 1) American 2) Monta Vista 3) Monte Vista
4) Rio Americano
Finals: Rio Americano @ Monta Vista**

Champions: Monta Vista

(Note that students from these schools played in the league. The schools did not necessarily sponsor the team).

The teams consisted of up to twenty chess players, although ten students played each week: five in junior varsity and five in varsity. The students were usually part of the school's chess club. The varsity section played nine rounds, and the top four teams advanced to play-offs. Games in the nine rounds were twenty minutes per side with ten seconds increment, and games in the play-offs were thirty minutes with ten seconds increment. Aside from playing only seven rounds instead of nine, junior varsity followed the same format. Each victory in the original rounds constituted three points, a draw one point, and loss no points. American High School led both sections after the regular season of the league, but lost in the play-offs. Irvington deserves an honorary mention of not forfeiting any game throughout the tournament. The winning teams, Irvington and Monta Vista, were awarded trophies as a reminder of their excellence.

The idea of creating this league came to Sydney at the beginning of this year. After entering high school, he felt that he and other high school chess players were losing touch with the game. Playing online in a competitive tournament would not only popularize chess, but also earn more respect for players. He chose FICs because of its user-friendly interface, similarity to Internet Chess Club (ICC), and its cost (none). Through contacts, he persuaded various schools to join. Finally, he programmed a bot on FICs with help from friends such as Steven Hao and a

kind member on FICs (whose username is PyroFire). The foundations of the league had been formed.

Although Sydney was the original founder of the league, he could not have run it alone. Nicholas Karas served as vice-president and Kyle Chan as treasurer. With a little more help, the team created a professional website. Soon after this, the first games of the match were played.

In the following interview, Aditya Kumar of Irvington High School talks about the League:

What did you think of the league this year?

Well, I thought the league was pretty good for its first year considering that nothing like this has been done (at least in Northern California). But, I think, it might have been better if a couple more schools had participated and the rules were more strictly enforced. But, again, for the first year of participation, this is a really great tournament.

Do you think the league was worthwhile for your team?

Definitely, and not just because we won. Actually, I started the club this year. This is our first year as a chess club. I think the tournament really got us together and really solidified our image for the school as a legitimate club who can actually win awards. And, I think, it really brought more awareness to both our team and our school.

Do you feel the team format helped?

The team format helped because, we used to meet 30 minutes before the game and to discuss our game plan (Who is playing who? How to play against these players?). Kevin and I could help the fourth and fifth boards who usually don't play in USCF tournaments. We would help them by showing old games of the players they are about to play. So, that really helped us get to know each other as a team and get to know other players to make sure that we got the maximum score in each match.

Final thoughts?

I'd like to quickly say that all the schools who participated were really great. It's an honor to be the winner of such an exclusive group of schools.

This interview has been transcribed and slightly modified for better comprehension.

The following video features IM Chandrashekar Gokhale analyzing a game from the league and Aditya being interviewed:

<http://ncachessleague.weebly.com/>

NorCal High School Chess League Championships, FICS
Rohankasi vs. KwiXz, 1800 + 10

This league turned out to be a great opportunity for high school students to experience a little friendly competition and keep in touch with chess. Sydney has a larger team working on improving the league next year. Everyone is looking forward to another great year.

If you know a high school from Northern California interested in joining this league, please send an email to campochessclub@gmail.com.

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