

CalChess Scholastic Champions!

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by Michael Aigner

The **37th annual CalChess Scholastics** took place last weekend at the traditional venue, the Santa Clara Convention Center. A total of **844 youngsters** played in one of 14 different sections, ranging from Kindergarten and K-3 Unrated up to the competitive 6-8 and 9-12 Championships. Thanks to organizer **Salman Azhar**, CalChess President **Tom Langland**, Chief Tournament Director **John McCumiskey** and the rest of the staff for putting this event together.



Without further ado, here are the **2012 State Champions!** *Congratulations to all!!*

High School 9-12: **Joshua Cao** and **Sudarshan Seshadri**

Middle School 6-8: **Neel Apte**

Elementary 4-6: **Siddharth Banik**

Elementary 4-5: **Ben Rood**

Primary 1-3: **John A. Chan**

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I focused mostly on the **High School** section, headed by a quintet of experts and several former students. While most of the top seeds struggled in 9-12, two surprise winners emerged: 8th grader Joshua and 1835 rated Sudarshan! Joshua took home the 1st place trophy on tiebreaks, but Sudarshan earned the biggest prize: a ticket to the **Denker Invitational** this August in Vancouver, WA.

Three of the top four seeds in **Middle School** attend Kennedy Middle in Cupertino, and predictably, two squared off in the final round. My longtime student Neel finished strong to clinch his second straight 1st place trophy. In fact, he became state champion for the fifth time in six years (K-3, 4-5, 4-6 and 6-8 twice). Actually, nobody has ever won all of the major sections in the long history of this tournament. Neel and another of my students, 9th grader **James Kwok**, only need to win 9-12 to achieve this record.





The **Elementary section** winners both finished with perfect 6-0 scores. Siddharth went coast-to-coast as the favorite in 4-6, defeating his closest challenger in the final round. Ben knocked off the top two seeds in 4-5, including one rated nearly 400 points higher. After winning K-3 as a 1st grader last year, Ben won 4-5 as a 2nd grader! *Way to go!!*

The team competition was rather anticlimactic this year. National power **Mission San Jose Elementary** easily won all of the Primary and Elementary sections while Mission San Jose High earned a second straight 9-12 title. *See the embedded photos for a few of the victorious kids at MSJE.* Props to Coach **Joe Lonsdale** for directing such a successful program over so many years! Unfortunately, one reason for the lack of team competition was a boycott by rival **Weibel Elementary**. *I find it really sad that certain adults choose to teach their young children the wrong way to resolve their conflicts.*

Normally my report would include photos of winners in each section, sometimes from my own camera. Due to ongoing health issues, I could not attend. Alas, I have only seen one **album from Saturday** by **Richard Shorman**, plus a handful of photos from Sunday's awards presentation. **If you can share additional photos, please send them to michael (at) fpawn (dot) com.** *Thanks!*