

National Junior High in San Diego (Day 1)

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by Michael Aigner



The **2012 National Junior High School Chess Championship** is underway at the **Town and Country Resort** in San Diego. Players compete for national titles in both K-9 and K-8 sections. There are ten rated masters in attendance--nine in the much stronger K-9 division. The overall turnout



seems disappointingly light at **only about 650 kids**, owing both to the weak economy and the location at one corner of the country. People complained about the attendance of nearly 1000 at the same tournament in **Sacramento in 2007**. This year, a modest **local delegation of 64 players** traveled south, a week after 840 youngsters descended on Santa Clara for the **CalChess Scholastics**.



I don't expect to find many **chess tourists** in San Diego, certainly not among Bay Area kids. In fact, seven are rated over 2000, led by newly minted master **Cameron Wheeler** (*photo at left*). Fielding four of the top eight seeds, including Cameron and two-time **CalChess 6-8** winner Neel Apte (*photo on right*), **Kennedy Middle School** from Cupertino plans to Occupy San Diego. Can they pull off national honors, both as individuals and as a team? *I believe!!*



However, **national attention will focus on Intermediate School 318**, an inner-city Brooklyn public middle school that took 1st place at the **National High School Championship** two weeks ago. As a reward, World #1 **Magnus Carlsen** (*see photo below*) visited their school on Monday! Readers may be disappointed that the top players of I.S. 318, including two masters above 2300, switched from K-8 to K-9 at the last moment. *Did the High School champs duck the challenge from 2136 average rated Kennedy? Maybe!!* They probably hoped to split their masters and win both sections, just like **last year**, but coach **Elizabeth Spiegel** realized that she would need her team's full strength 2162 rated lineup just to win K-8. While K-9 is more competitive with nine masters at the top, the Brooklyn team has a much easier path to victory.



Saturday AM Update: The first day passed well. Most Northern California participants are 2-0. Kudos to Hemang for drawing a master in round 2. All five Kennedy Middle players are seated at consecutive boards this morning in round 3. Good luck everyone! Check out [Cameron's blog](#) for a first-hand account and [Chess Life Online](#) for a TV news report.

Northern California Watch List (after round 2 of 7)

K-9 Championship

- Colin Chow 2.0
- Vignesh Panchanatham 1.5
- Hemang Jangle 1.5 - draw with master
- Taylor McCreary 1.0
- *I.S. 318 TEAM 8.0/8 (Next best teams have 5.5.)*

K-8 Championship

- Kesav Viswanadha (*Kennedy*) 2.0
- Cameron Wheeler (*Kennedy*) 2.0
- Neel Apte (*Kennedy*) 2.0
- Udit Iyengar (*Kennedy*) 2.0
- Allan Beilin 2.0
- Art Zhao 2.0
- Gabriel Bick 2.0
- Naveen Janarthanan 2.0
- Pranav Srihari (*Kennedy*) 2.0
- Michael L. Wang 2.0
- Vikram Vasani 1.5
- Daniel Ho 1.5
- *KENNEDY M.S. TEAM 8.0/8 (I.S. 318 is 2nd, but way back at 5.5.)*