

CalChess Top 20 Masters -- May 2012

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by Michael Aigner



GM Shankland

The **CalChess Top 20 Masters** list reveals a mixture of rapidly improving juniors and capable veterans. Grandmasters Josh Friedel, Jesse Kraai and Vinay Bhat no longer live and play in the area, and therefore cannot occupy the top spots in these rankings. Taking their place are Grandmasters **Sam Shankland**, **Nick DeFirmian** and teenage IM **Daniel Naroditsky**. *All three grew up in Northern California and rose through the chess ranks in the Bay Area.*

Shankland and Naroditsky, both products of the area's youth movement, were invited to the **2011 US Championship**, which "Shanky" almost won! Two more juniors pop up further down the list: soon-to-be FM **Yian Liou** and America's **youngest master Samuel Sevian**, now 11 years old and approaching 2400.

now works at the **Mechanics' Institute** chess club, teaching and giving weekly lectures.

Fresno born DeFirmian recently **returned home** after spending years in New York and Europe. A 3-time **US Champion**, he



GM DeFirmian

The most active veteran is #5 IM **Ricardo DeGuzman**, *the veritable 800 lb gorilla of Bay Area chess*. Two other IMs who show up at some tournaments are #6 **Vladimir Mezentsev** and #10 **Ray Kaufman**. Perhaps the strongest Northern California resident in his prime is 6-time **US Champion Walter Browne**.

CalChess Top 20 Masters (USCF rating, FIDE rating)

1. GM Shankland, Sam 2656 2581
2. GM DeFirmian, Nick 2574 2510
3. IM Naroditsky, Daniel 2546 2479
4. GM Browne, Walter 2501 2449
5. IM DeGuzman, Ricardo 2476 2400
6. IM Mezentsev, Vladimir 2472 2368
7. IM Zilberstein, Dmitry 2467 2402
8. IM Pruess, David 2462 2390
9. FM Chumachenko, Andrey 2436 2327
10. IM Kaufman, Ray 2420 2336
11. SM Kotlyar, Gregory 2412 2306
12. IM Donaldson, John 2408 2390
13. NM Ishkhanov, Tigran 2374 2324
14. NM Liou, Yian 2374 2312
15. NM Arun Sharma 2366 2331
16. IM Winslow, Elliott 2365 2337
17. FM Cusi, Ronald 2341 2316
18. NM Schwarz, Daniel 2339 2251
19. NM Sevian, Samuel 2333 2247
20. NM Pearson, Michael 2330 2212



IM Naroditsky

*N.B. This list is based on **state rankings** at the USCF website. In general, players must participate in at least one (local) tournament within the past year. Those who move out of state will be dropped. I reserve editorial judgement to make exceptions for players with well-established ties to Northern California.*