

IM Norms for Liou and Sevian

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by Michael Aigner

A pair of popular Bay Area juniors traveled to downtown Los Angeles for the **20th Metropolitan Chess FIDE Invitational**. Despite stiff veteran competition and long odds that became longer at the last minute, *they shared first place and each earned an IM norm*. Congratulations to 15-year old FM **Yian Liou** and 11-year old NM **Sam Sevian**!

The 10-player round-robin (*all-play-all*) featured three International Masters, four foreign players (*including two of the IMs*), plus a trio of talented juniors. The competitors clashed in a grueling schedule of nine rounds over five days, each game taking up to six hours. Originally, the organizer **Ankit Gupta** of **Metropolitan Chess** planned for a score of +4 (6.5/9) to earn one of the three **norms** required for the IM title. Unfortunately, one foreign player was replaced by a lower rated one on short notice, thereby increasing the norm threshold to a very demanding +5 (7.0/9).



11-year old Sam Sevian with coach IM Andranik



FM Yian Liou

Yian and Sam squared off right away in round 1, and after some adventures, they agreed to a draw. After that, their results mirrored each other for much of the tournament. Both found a way to score points with either color, and both won three games in a row. Indeed, Yian and Sam finished with the same result (*win or draw*) against six of the other eight participants. Both drew with top seed IM **Andranik Matikozyan**, who is Sam's personal coach. *Most importantly, neither lost a game*. At the end, they easily clinched norms by splitting the point in the last round.

For my former student Yian, this was a well-deserved **first IM norm** after some close calls. *Bravo!* Local whizkid Sam picked up his **second norm** of the summer, further confirming the **#1 FIDE rating in the World for U-12**. To qualify for the IM title, Yian and Sam will need to complete three norms and raise their FIDE rating to 2400. While both **broke 2400 USCF** this week, their international ratings lag behind at about 2350 and 2320, respectively.

In case anyone wonders, the **youngest International Master in history** appears to be **Sergey Karjakin** of Ukraine at 11 years and 11 months. Karjakin then became the **youngest Grandmaster ever** at 12 years and 7 months, and now is **ranked #6 in the world**.

A third Bay Area junior also left his mark. Kudos to 12-year old **Kesav Viswanadha** for fighting hard against challenging opposition. After a slow start, he finished with 50% over the last five rounds. Kesav won one game--against second seed IM **Zhanibek Amanov** of Kazakhstan. No doubt, he gained tons of experience in addition to a few rating points.



Kesav Viswanadha