

Grade Level Championships 2006, A great Tournament in Stockton!

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By Joe Lonsdale

The North Stockton Rotary once again put on an excellent Northern California Grade Level Championship Tournament on the University of the Pacific Campus in Stockton the weekend of December 2nd and 3rd. A record total of 347 students battled for Northern California team and individual grade level championships. Not only is this a great event but, the North Stockton Rotary uses all profits from the event for local scholastic chess and future scholastic tournaments.

This was the second year in a row that all the big guns of Northern California scholastic chess (Mission, St. Marks', Berkeley Chess School, Weibel, Tierra Linda) showed up in Stockton. They were not disappointed. Everything that was done correctly last year, a great TD job by John McCumiskey, well marked directions to parking and playing areas, a spacious and well lighted playing area was repeated this year. The one minor problem from last year, a late start to some rounds, was corrected, just as the organizer Tom Biglione said it would be.

Seventeen children competed in the kindergarten section. Tanuj Vasudeva of Bunker Elementary in Newark, CA scored a perfect 5-0 to take the first place trophy and title on Northern CA Kindergarten Chess Champion. Alisha Chawla of Weibel finished second and Leonardo Cardarelli of St Marks finished third.

There were 22 competitors in grade one. This competition resulted in a four-way tie for first place (4 out of 5) between Linus Li, of Stratford school, Cameron Wheeler of Regnert, and Shalin Shah and Rahul Rawat of MSJE (Mission San Jose, Fremont). All four players earn the title of Grade One Champion. A speed play-off was held for trophies. Linus finished first and Cameron finished second in the speed play-off.

In grade level competition the team score is the score of the top three players from the same school in that grade. The team championship for grade one was decided before the last round began as MSJE took a four point lead into the last round. MSJE took first with 11.5 points. Granada School took second place with 7.5 points and St Marks was third with 6.5. Salman Alzhar is to be congratulated on creating a team for Granada and leading them to trophies in grades one and four and coming close to trophies in grades 5 and 6. Since Salman has a son playing in grade one we expect he will be involved in youth chess for quite a few more years.

There were 39 competitors in grade two. Armaan Kalyanpur of MSJE had the top rating at 1019. Armaan was drawn by Allan Beilin of Baywood Elementary, San Mateo, CA in the fourth round. This left Julie Yeung (842 County) and Alex Yin (709 MSJE) as the only perfect scores. Julie beat Alex in the last round to win the title of Grade two champion. Armaan and Allan tied for second with 4.5 points and Alex took the fourth place trophy with 4.0.

In the team competition Weibel and MSJE tied for first with 11.0 points. Weibel took the first place trophy in tie breakers. Heather Elementary took third place with 9.5 points.

Grade three had 54 competitors. Kyle Shin (1660) of SSFS (San Francisco Friends School) had over 300 points on the number two participant. Kyle scored a perfect 5.0 to win the first place trophy and the title of grade three champion. Kyle is a student of Eric Hicks. Moadhav Shah of Rock Rocklin Academy (Roseville, CA) scored 4.5 to take the second place trophy.

Weibel had 11 participants in grade 3, Heather Elementary had 12 participants, but their top rating was 521 in the #25 spot, St Marks had 4, and MSJE had 7 participants, but three of the MSJE participants were unrated, (playing their first tournament). This looked like the grade in which Weibel could prevent a MSJE sweep as the top two Weibel players were rated above the top MSJE player (by almost 500 points on the top board). Also, the top eight Weibel players were all rated above the #3 MSJE player.

With one round to go MSJE and St Marks were tied with 9.0, Weibel was third with 7.5 and Heather Elementary was fourth with 6.5. Anton Wang of Mission won his last round game to finish 5th with 4.0 points. This was the leading score of the top three teams and let MSJE take the first place trophy with 10 points. Weibel scored 2 wins in the last round to move to 9.5 to take the second place trophy and St Marks did not add to their score in the last round and ended in third.

Grade four had 43 competitors. The top two rated players were the co-captains of the MSJE team, James Kwok (1499) and Hemang Jangle (1425). James and Hemang each won their first five games. They played to a draw in the last round to share the title of grade four champion. James Kwok, who is a student of Michael Aigner, won the speed play-off for the first place trophy.

Once again the team competition was MSJE, Weibel, and St Marks. The team competition in grade four did not have much excitement as MSJE had a three point lead after round 4 and a 2.5 point lead after round 5. Since MSJE was assured a full point in round six regardless how the James-Hemang battle on board one came out, the team championship was decided before the last round began.

MSJE took the first place trophy with 15 points, Weibel was second with 13.5 points, St Marks was third with 11.5 points, Heather Elementary was fourth with 9.5 points and Granada School was fifth with 8 points.

Grade five had 54 competitors. The grade 5 competition was won by Austin Lloyd (1318 of the Berkeley Chess School) with 5.5 points. Austin is one of the 30 members Elizabeth Shaughnesseys' Berkeley Chess School that attended the tournament. These 30 students took home an amazing 19 trophies. Elizabeth has done more for youth chess than anyone in Northern California. She is also a very classy lady and a serious chess player. She has played as a member of the Irish National team.

The other top finishers in grade five were Jerry Wu (1202, MSJE, 2nd place trophy), Kevin Zhu (1511, of Faria School, Cupertino, CA, 3rd place trophy) and Angus Wu (922, Weibel, 4th place trophy) all tied for second place with 5 points.

The team competition was once again MSJE, Weibel, and St Marks. With one round to go MSJE was in first with 11.5 points, Weibel was second with 10.0, and St Marks was third with 8.5. I took a quick look at the pairing and saw Angus Wu (922) of Weibel playing a 1405 player and Ankur Gupta (772) of Weibel playing MSJE player David Ma (1057). A good last round for Weibel seemed very unlikely with these pairings.

In 2005 MSJE came from behind in grade 5 with a three point last round to beat Weibel. This year Weibel scored three points in the last round (including upset wins by Angus Wu and Ankur Gupta) to defeat MSJE 13.0 to 12.5. St Marks was third with 10.5, Bob Blatts' Tierra Linda team of San Carlos was fourth with 9.0 and Jon Frankles' Blossom Hills team was fifth with 8.0.

Grade six was the largest section with 58 competitors. Nikita Shenkman (1382) of San Francisco won the first place trophy and the title of Grade six champion with 5.5 points. Samyukta Bhat (1281 2nd place trophy) of Brookvale Elementary, Fremont, Chris Cai (1032 3rd place trophy) of MSJE, and Nicholas Huey (959 St Albans in Roseville) 4th place trophy) all tied for second place with 5 points.

The grade six team competition saw Tierra Linda school join MSJE, Weibel, and St. Marks just like they did in the grade five competition last year. After three rounds MSJE and Tierra Linda were tied for first with 8.0 with St Marks at 6.5 and Weibel at 5.5. Going into the final round MSJE had a comfortable 2.5 point lead with 12 points. Weibel was second with 9.5, Tierra Linda was third with 8.5 and St Marks was in fourth with 8.0.

MSJE took first place in grade six with 13.5 points. Tierra Linda put on a 2.5 point surge in the last round to tie Weibel for second place at 11.0 points. Tierra Linda took the second place trophy on tie breakers, Weibel taking the third place trophy. St Marks was fourth with 10 points and Gomes of Fremont was fifth with 8.5 points.

The Gomes team of Brian Chao (1046, 4.5 points 6th place) and William Cheung (1224, 4 points, 12 place) deserves a special mention as they were only a two person team and they beat several teams of

five or more players for the fifth place trophy.

The grade 7 competition was a continuation of last years' grade six competition which, like many of this years elementary school grades, was a tough competition between Mission San Jose, St. Marks, and Weibel. The differences were that the Mission players are now Hopkins students and the Weibel players are now at Horner. Early in the tournament Vincent Tian (1295) of Hopkins complained to me, "We'd win easily if Arthur was here." Last year Arthur Liou (was 1580 last year) scored a perfect 6.0 and led Mission to a first place tie with St. Marks and the first place trophy. Arthur is now rated over 1900 and decided that playing in a section where the second rated player was < 1400 would not be a good use of two days.

I told Vincent that he was now the big gun for the team and he had to carry the load if Hopkins was going to win. Puneeth Gadangi (1346 up from 1257 last year) was the top rated player from St. Marks. Apparently, Ray Orwig, the well-respected coach of St Marks, said the same thing to Puneeth as Puneeth was a one man wrecking crew working on the Hopkins team. In round 2 he gave the 4th rated Hopkins player, Gurman Shoker (1082) his first loss. In round three he gave the second rated Hopkins player, Ray Hua Wa (1258) his only loss, and in round 4 he gave the third rated Hopkins player, Kevin Hsu (1220) his first loss. In round five Vincent Tian was paired with Puneeth. This made four Hopkins/Mission players in a row for Puneeth! Vincent won a tough game (shown below) to put Hopkins a comfortable two points ahead.

I have two comments about this game, first apologies to Puneeth for publishing your only loss. Puneeth scored 5 out of 6 and won three of four games against Hopkins players. The four-person Hopkins team lost only six games and three of those losses were to Puneeth. Second, to me this looks a lot more like two 1800 players, than two players below 1400. If you two keep working at it I expect to see each of you above 1800 very soon.

White: Vincent Tian Hopkins 1279

Black: Puneeth Gadangi, St Marks 1349

Date: Dec. 3, 2006

Event: CalChess Grade Level Championships, Stockton

Round: 5

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. ed ed 4. Nf3 Nf6 5. c4 c6 6. Nc3 Be6 7. cd Nd5 8. Bd3 Bb4 9. Bd2 Nd7 10. 0-0 0-0 11. Re1 Qb6 12. Qc2 N7f6 13. a3 Bc3 14. bc3 Rac8 15. c4 Ne7 16. Bg5 Ng6 17. Rab1 Qc7 18. Ne5 Ng4 19. f4 N4e5 20. de5 h6 21. Bh6! Kh7 22. Bg5 Qd7 23. f5 Qd4 24. Be3 Qg4 25. fe6 Qe6 26. Bf5 Qe7 27. Bc8 Rc8 28. Ba7 Rh8 29. Rb3 Kg8 30. Qf5 Nh4 31. Qg4 f6 32. Rbe3 f5 33. Qd4 Rh6 34. Bc5 Qg5 35. Rg3 Qh5 36. Qf4 g5 37. Rg5 resigns 1-0

Vincent drew his last round to take a clear first with 5.5 points. Puneeth and Ray Wa tied for second with 5.0 points with Puneeth taking the second place trophy.

Hopkins took first place in grade seven with 14.5 points, St. Marks was second with 12 points and Horner was third with 9 points.

Grade eight has 23 competitors. Steven Zierk, (1527) Fisher Middle School of Los Gatos, CA, was the top rated player by over 200 points. Steven was drawn by Carlos Penikis, 1094, in the second round. Steven won the rest of his games to score 5.5 and win a clear first place and the title of Grade 8 State Champion. Joey Goodman, 1290 Marin County Day School lost only to Steven and took second place. Carlos Penikis finished with 4.5 to take third place. In the team competition, Marin County Day School took first place, Fisher Middle School took second place, and Tierra Linda took third place.

I have always felt the success of a chess coach should be measured both by the success of the teams that are in the school, but also by how many of the players continue playing after they leave the school. Applying this important criteria to the results of grade 8, Bob Blatt at Tierra Linda won an important victory in grade 8 by having two participants and winning a team trophy. MSJE is represented by Hopkins in grade 8 and we only had one player. St Marks also only had one player in grade 8, and Horner (Weibel) had no players.

Participation in the high school section is still a little light. Grades 9 through 12 had a total of 16 participants. It was combined into one section for playing purposes. Individual trophies and championships were still handed out by grade. Gabe Gordon, grade 11, of Tamalpais High School was the top rated player at 1720. Gabe scored a perfect 6-0 to take the first place. He is the grade 11 State Champion.

Second place in the High school section went to Brandon Lee (1418 Grade 9) of Mount Vista High and the Berkeley Chess School. This makes Brandon the Grade 9 Northern California Champion.

Sharon Tseung (1354, grade 11) of Mission High (Fremont) came in third. Don Pham (UNR, grade 10) of Edison High School came in fourth and won the title of grade 10 Champion.

Again congratulations to Organizer Thomas Biglione of the North Stockton Rotary and to tournament director John McCumiskey for a great tournament.



