

## No Flushes in Reno

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The annual Western States Open took place at the Sands Regency Hotel & Casino in Reno on October 6-8. This was the 24th year that Jerry Weikel and his wife Fran have put together a big chess tournament. Some things never change from year to year: friendly atmosphere, good chess, free lectures and simul, large number of GMs and IMs and nearly 100 prizes paid in cash on Sunday night. A weekend tournament in Reno is almost like a mini vacation--many players bring their spouses, parents, children and non-chess friends to join in the fun.

Unfortunately, this year's turnout was somewhat lower than in the past. Many chess enthusiasts appear to be reluctant to take a day off work (on Friday) in order to play a weekend of chess. Perhaps Reno needs a 2-day schedule to invigorate the attendance. This year's event was also impacted by the last minute illness of special guest GM Boris Spassky. After suffering a stroke in San Francisco less than a week before the tournament, Spassky followed doctor's orders and flew home to France rather than endure a weekend of lectures and public appearances.

Nonetheless, 315 people came to Reno to play chess. Players competed in class sections ranging from Open to under 1400. The 56 player Open section was conquered by **GM Sergey Kudrin** of New Jersey, who scored an undefeated 5.0 out of 6. **IM Enrico Sevillano** of southern California, who led for most of the weekend, finished tied for second place at 4.5 together with GMs Eugene Perelshteyn, Jaan Ehvest, Ildar Ibragimov and Gregory Serper. At the last minute, America's Foundation for Chess announced that two qualifying spots were available for the 2007 US

Championship. These went to GM Kudrin and IM Sevillano.

The top northern California finishers were **GM Alex Yermolinsky**, **IM Josh Friedel**, **IM Vladimir Mezentsev** and expert **Dana Mackenzie**, all at 4.0/6. IM Friedel, the 2006 CalChess state champion, faced four Grandmasters with a 50% score and ultimately lost to Kudrin in the money game of the last round. Mackenzie likely completed the tournament of his life, winning his last three games including scalps of FM Renard Anderson and IM David Pruess, the latter following a prepared queen sacrifice.

To read more about the Western States Open and to view some games from the Open section (e.g. Kudrin-Friedel and Mackenzie-Pruess), please visit the USCF homepage. IM Friedel has added blogging to his bag of tricks and filed two reports in his own unique writing style.

rounds 1-3: [http://beta.uschess.org/frontend/news\\_7\\_140.php](http://beta.uschess.org/frontend/news_7_140.php)

rounds 4-6: [http://beta.uschess.org/frontend/news\\_7\\_146.php](http://beta.uschess.org/frontend/news_7_146.php)

The lower sections saw plenty of action as well, including many local players. How often do you see a pairing in an adult tournament between a 10 year old and an 8 year old, both ranked #1 in the nation for their age? In this case, 10 year old Daniel Naroditsky and 8 year old Nicholas Nip squared off in the *expert section*. (Daniel won, in case anyone is keeping score).

Many local players won money, but only one managed to win his section. Congratulations to Michael O'Brien of the South Bay for winning the B section outright! Please see below a list of northern California players who finished in the top five of their section.

Open:

4.0 GM Alex Yermolinsky, IM Josh Friedel, IM Vladimir Mezentsev, **Dana Mackenzie (top U2300)**

3.5 Michael Aigner (2nd U2400), Romulo Fuentes (2nd U2300)

Expert:

4.5 Batsaikhan Tserendorj

4.0 Larry Snyder, Daniel Naroditsky

A section:

4.5 Kevin Storms

*B section:*

**5.0 Michael O'Brien (champion!)**

4.5 Richard Haggstrom, Eric Fingal, Von Motschenbacher and Jose Guerrero

*C section:*

5.0 Jesse Turner

4.5 Aaron Asay, Matthias Grabiak, Kartik Chillakanti

*D section:*

5.0 Daniel Ho

4.5 Ken Bailey, Nikita Shenkman and **Nicholas Karas (top U1200)**

One special feature of the annual Reno tournament is the club competition. The top 10 scores for each club are added together to earn additional money prizes. The **Mechanics' Institute** chess club ended up tied for second place, together with Seattle but behind the home club. In fact, the MI was so strong that their second squad finished in fourth place! There is no lingering doubt where the strongest concentration of local chess is located.