

## Nicholas Nip Becomes Nations Youngest Expert

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In a forum post last week I mentioned the difference in scholastic chess of playing for title or playing for rating. While team member Kyle Shin was away trying to win a k-3 title which has been in the bay area for 2 consecutive years, Nicholas Nip, last years winner of that title, and the undisputed strongest 3rd grader in the United States decided to stay home...and play for rating. Play for rating he did and thus became the Youngest expert in the country and perhaps the youngest expert ever.

For those wondering why Nicholas did not compete in the national championships where he would have been top board in the k-3, k-5 or k-6, Nicholas does not like playing as the top rated person in a section..never has. When he took 1st place in the k-3 nationals last year for example he came into the tournament as the 8th strongest. As he said to me at the state scholastic championships, where he played "up" in the k-6 but was still a few hundred points above his nearest competitor, "it is not fun beating players hundreds of points lower rated". I noticed during the states, Nicholas kept running back and forth to check the results of the high school section. Even after winning 1st in the k-6 states, amazingly Nicholas wished he had followed Danya's lead and played in the k-12. Nicholas from the beginning has always liked stepping up to challenges and playing higher rated players..and thus almost always "plays up."

So instead of travelling to Tennessee to play in the nationals, Nicholas stayed home and competed in the Mechanics game in 45, and managed there to achieve national glory by breaking the expert barrier. Nicholas finished with an amazing 4 out of 5. His only loss was against tournament winner 1M DeGuzman. Nicholas had a performance of 2290, and thus lifted his rating to 2008. If he can hold this rating until the next supplement he will be officially an expert....and no..he is not taking a break from chess until then...Nicholas Nip has bigger fish to fry...in other words he does not plan to camp out long at expert level....

Nicholas has been experimenting lately with an attacking tactical style, and i was very proud to see him wallop an expert in his last game of the tournament in true Morphy style. Lately Nicholas is blossoming with confidence...and he will need that if he is going to make the push to 2200.

Nicholas broke 2000 at 9 years and 2 months old.... I noticed on the USCF forums that chess organizers around the country were following Nicholas's rating to see how quickly he would break the expert barrier. We are not sure exactly his position since exact birthdates of other young experts in history arent known..but he is definatley close to being the youngest expert ever in US chess history..

Now Nicholas has his eyes on the biggest and most prestigious record in scholastic chess.... Youngest Master. Nicholas has a little over a year to beat Nakamura's record as the youngest master in US history....watch out...one thing i have learned is that Nicholas likes stepping up to challenges...getting to 2200 will be the most difficult step he has ever had to make...as Michael Aigner put it the step from 2000-2200 is 10x more difficult than 1800-2000.

So will Nicholas manage to make that giant step in time? The next year will be entertaining to watch...stay tuned to calchess.org for updates...