

Amateur Team Fever hits the Bay

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by Michael Aigner

For more than 35 years, the President's Day weekend has been dedicated to the **People's Tournament**. Unfortunately, the traditional venue at **UC Berkeley** no longer was available for the past four years. Local organizers tried to find a viable replacement.



*(The photo at left shows the **2011 Amateur Team West champions, USC** captained by IM **Jack Peters**. On the right is the **2000-01 Stanford chess team** at the **Pan Am Intercollegiate**, with FM **Philip Wang** playing against GM **Yuri Shulman** of UT-Dallas.)*

Now I can recommend a unique national tournament on **February 18-20: Amateur Team West**. Instead of playing just for yourself, **join a 4-player team** (plus an optional alternate). If you score 2.5 or more, you win the match and your team earns a point. Pairings each round are done by team, not individual players. (The individual scores contribute to the first tiebreaker.) The team that scores the most out of 6 rounds wins the tournament and advances to an **internet playoff against champions from East, Midwest and South**.

Sound fun? Yeah! Here are the details:

- **Event:** **Amateur Team West** (there's also East, Midwest and South)
- **Dates:** **Feb 18-20** (no 2-day schedule)
- **Venue:** Santa Clara Hyatt Regency (\$109/night)
- **Rating:** Average of **top 4 < 2200** + board 4 within 1000 of board 3; use January ratings
- **Format:** 6-SS (team), all teams in one big section
- **Rounds:** Sat/Sun 11:30 and 5:00, Mon 10:00 and 3:30
- **Time control:** 30/90, SD/60 (max 5 hours per round)
- **Prizes:** **Team Trophy and four Commemorative Clocks:** top 3 overall, top U2000, U1800, U1600, U1400, U1200, top family, top all-junior, top school, top company plus board prizes
- **Playoff:** 1st place team faces winners from East, Midwest and South in an internet playoff!
- **Entry:** \$188/team or \$47/player by Feb 14
- **Flyer:** <http://www.bayareachess.com/events/12/usatw12.pdf>
- **Info:** <http://www.bayareachess.com/events/12/usatw.php>

If you are trying to win the tournament and thus qualify for the internet playoff, then you will probably need a team with average of 2100+. No doubt, whoever is on board 1 will face strong masters, probably a few IMs and maybe a GM. There are **two common strategies to build a winning team**:

- **Balanced team**, meaning everyone between 2050 and 2300
- **Stack team**, meaning two (or three) high rated masters and a low but underrated board 4 to keep the average under 2200 (note: the 1000 point rule prevents a team of 2600, 2500, 2400, 1299)

I prefer a balanced team, but the stack lineup can be very successful if board 4 is a B player who draws against experts. Keep in mind that **this event uses the January rating list**, generated shortly after Thanksgiving, so December and January tournaments do not count.

How to find a team? If you can play with your *family, school, or long time chess buddies*, then that always seems the most fun. Although everyone plays in the same section, there are plenty of **class prizes (by rating)** so a high average is not mandatory. If you can't find anyone, or have just 2 or 3 players, then register and get onto the "**Looking for**" lists.

Finally, **make sure to pick a creative team name**--there are special prizes! The 99 percent have already chosen to "*Occupy FIDE*". The "*ChessPunks*" (see photo at right from a year ago) may sound like a rap team from Da Hood, but instead they study the openings of classical composers like Taimanov, Reti and Philidor. And the organizer **Salman Azhar** asked me if I knew of any "*fPWNers*". *Regretfully, I will not be able to attend, so my students will have to PWN for me.*

