

National Junior High School Championships Final Report

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Anyone who has attended a spring national scholastic championship can attest to the fact that predicting an out come is near impossible. Players contest seven rounds of grueling chess over three days with a game in two hours(four hour potential playing time) plus a five second time delay on each move. Yes, it is an endurance contest for all players competing, not just the best in the country. Ratings often mean little as the tensions mount and players become tired. I have never been to a national scholastic event where upsets did not abound. This year's National Junior High School Championships held at the Town and Country Resort in San Diego, April 27 to 29, was no exception.



I had looked forward to a battle between the two most powerful teams in the nation, I.S. 318 from New York and Kennedy Middle School in the K-8 Championship Division. I.S. 318 had a team average of 2154 and Kennedy enter with a team average of 2109 based upon the April ratings. The most current ratings of the Kennedy team, on the day of entry, came to 2139. My money was on Kennedy because they had a much

stronger fourth player. Perhaps, so was that of I.S. 318. A short time before the show down of the giants was to begin, the I.S. 318 team switched to the K-9 section. The excuse to move their team was to take on Catalina Foothills High School from Tucson with a team average rating of 2000. Catalina Foothills was no pushover, but it was not to be a contest. The school whose phone's answering machine starts out with "Thank you for calling I.S.



318 the home of the National Chess Champions" won the K-9 title. Kennedy can take some solace in that they won the K-8 Championships with a score of 22 points while I.S. 318 team took first in the K-9 Championships with 20.5. Both teams saw their top players upset in earlier rounds. I would be remiss if I did not mention the Coalinga College Prep Academy taking eight place in the K-9 section. Coalinga is part of the Northern California State. Ed Wong, who coaches in this group and whose two sons are part of this team teased me a few years ago about missing his team in my report. I vowed not to do so again.

Horner Junior High School of Fremont took a second in the K-8 Championships. Up until this year only one Northern California team had won the championship K-8 division--Hopkins Junior High School of Fremont in 1996. Hopkins in those years drew their students from two of the strongest teams in Northern California, Mission San Jose and Weibel Elementary Schools. Two of the scoring players on the Hopkins team came from Weibel and two from Mission San Jose. Today, the Weibel students go to Horner. This year, 2012, Northern California Junior High School chess team took both first and second in a championship section—Kudos.



In all national scholastic championships there are a number of rating sections. Teams do compete, but they are not allowed to use the title Champion if they win. This title is reserved for the winners of the Open Division. A few Northern California teams did receive team trophies in these other divisions. Weibel Elementary School took a fourth in the K-8 Under 1000 rating group. Weibel was a half point out of first after round 6 and they fell to the same thing that has plagued them for a few years now—an inability to do well in round seven. They finished 1.5 points out of first. Redwood Middle School obtained an eleventh place trophy in this K-8 Under 1000 group. This group had 21 teams in competition. Only two of which had less than four players. You can compete with two person teams, but obviously the odds are against being able to get a top score with the strong four player teams. In the K-9 Under 1250 rating group Weibel placed sixth. One other Northern California team was listed in this section, but they only had two players. St. Mark's School of San Rafael finished 15.

In the K-9 Championship section only Colin Chow of Sutter Middle School in Folsom brought home an individual trophy—seventh place.

With the I.S. 318 top player moving over to K-9 the odds were in favor of at least one of the Kennedy players returning to Cupertino as a National Champion from the K-8 Open. This did not come to pass due to unexpected loses by the Kennedy players. However, Udit Iyengar did tie for third. Kesav Viswanadha tied for sixth along with Cameron Wheeler. Also tied for sixth with 5.5 points was Daniel Ho of Horner and Gabriel James Bick of Davis Waldoff. Neil Apte of Kennedy, Allan Beilin of North Star Academy (Redwood City) and Art Zhao of St. Mark's School (San Rafael) brought home trophies tied for the fourteenth spot.



Bryce Wong from Coalinga College Prep took home third place for ratings from 1300 to 1399 in the K-8 Championship division. Sara Kaushik, a Weibel fifth grade student, won a trophy for coming in first in the K-8 Championships rating group between 1000 and 1099.

Desiree Ho, in the K-8 under 1250 section entered round seven on top of the pack sitting at a special table set up for the board one players. Tragically, she lost her final game and took home a trophy tied for fifth place.

In the K-8 Under 1000 section Jeremy Chen and Shivangi Gupta, both from Weibel, and Rishi Veerapaneni from Redwood Middle School in Saratoga came home with trophies for their tie at sixth place. Deric Chen, of Matsumoto Elementary School in San Jose, tied for eleventh place.



National Championships have two side events—Blitz (5 minute chess) and Bughouse (two person team chess). In the Blitz team competition Coalinga College Prep took a fourth and Redwood Middle School finished tenth. I am not sure if any of the bughouse players were from Northern California.

There was also a Parents and Friends chess competition with a rated and unrated section. Kyle Hui, brother to Horner player Kory Hui, finished second in the rated and won a few dollars--enough to buy a dinner for himself and his brother.

I will be attending the National Elementary School Championships on the weekend of May 11 to 13 in Nashville. I am looking forward to see the Mission San Jose Elementary School and Weibel Elementary School go head to head since they did not face each other at this year's States due to the refusal of the Weibel parents, fearful for their children, to attend this year's CalChess Scholastic State Championships.



