

CalChess Scholastic Coordinator's Winter Chess Report

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by Chris Torres

This winter, the Northern California Scholastic chess community continued to grow both in size and strength. California's young players continue to occupy many top spots on national rating lists while the Golden State's scholastic chess organizers see to it that their players always have endless opportunities to play rated chess.

In late November, several young chess players from California traveled to the World Youth Chess Championship in Maribor, Slovenia. Samuel Sevia and Cameron Wheeler earned the world's respect for Northern California chess by winning the Gold and Silver medals in the 12 and under category. Part of the prize also included the chance to hang out with former world chess champion Garry Kasparov. Both boys have extremely bright futures in chess and remain friends despite being adversaries at the chess board.



Cameron Wheeler and Samuel Sevia
(photo Rob Wheeler)

The same week Samuel and Cameron received awards from Garry Kasparov, the World's number 1 rated chess player Magnus Carlsen came to the Bay Area to talk and play chess. After dining with dignitaries, Magnus played a blitz match with chess prodigy and former u12 world champion Daniel Naroditsky. Later in the trip, Grand Master Carlsen performed a blindfold simultaneous exhibition against Elias Nasr, Reka Sztyry, Agnes William and Anirudh Seela. All five young chess players from the Bay Area now have a new career highlight of playing against the "Mozart of Chess."

In December, over 400 chess players from Northern California attended the CalChess Grade-Level State Championship. The large event was expertly organized by the Berkeley Chess School. The most dominant school team was easily Mission San Jose Elementary School whose team members won almost all the first place team trophies. Mission San Jose Elementary School's head chess coach is Joe Lonsdale and the program is run under the auspices of the Torres Chess and Music Academy.

In January, Ray Orwig once again did a stellar job running the CalChess Girls' State Championship in San Rafael. This was Ray's seventh year running this event and, as always, it proved to be an ideal showcase for California's girls to demonstrate their chess talents. Onlookers quickly recognized that the largest contingent of girls wore the black shirts of the Weibel Elementary School Chess Team. Head Coach Alan Kirshner's efforts in promoting chess to girls at Weibel Elementary School evidently paid off as his team won first place in most of the team divisions.

February's feature scholastic event was Alan Kirshner's CalNorth Age Level Championships. Despite the tournament being held on Super Bowl Sunday, 500 children showed up and the Newark Pavilion was once again filled to capacity. Coaching demonstrations, simultaneous exhibitions and televised action of the Superbowl kept everyone who was not playing a game of chess thoroughly entertained.

March's premier scholastic event will be the United States Junior Chess Congress on March 23 and 24. Salman Azhar will again be organizing the event which brings National Championship titles to the Bay Area. More information on this event can be found at <http://www.CalChess.org>.

Finally, the winter season is the time of year when astute chess parents make plans for their child's summer chess camp. The Torres Chess and Music Academy will once again be offering an all-day summer chess camp in Fremont, California at Mission San Jose Elementary School. 15 year veteran chess coach Chris Torres will work with the Mission San Jose Elementary head coach Joe Lonsdale and other talented teachers to run the famous Fremont Summer Chess Camp. In the past this camp has attracted attendees from all over the Bay Area and even as far away as China. As is usually the case, space will be limited and parents are encouraged to visit <http://www.ChessAndMusic.com> to sign up as soon as possible. The Berkeley Chess School and Bay Area chess are also running quality summer camps with information available on their websites <http://www.BerkeleyChessSchool.org> and <http://www.BayAreaChess.com>.