

Western States Open in Reno

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By NM Michael Aigner

Each year in October, Grandmasters and amateurs alike travel to Reno, Nevada for both a chess tournament and a mini vacation. The 23rd annual Western States Open on October 14-16 at the Sands Regency Hotel & Casino combined both chess and fun. The tournament itself is organized and directed with the chess players in mind, meaning coffee and cake before the rounds and a spacious well-lit ballroom to play the games. The seven hour time control provides each player with plenty of time to contemplate their moves and still have a chance to relax before the next game. Of course, there also is plenty to do between rounds in Reno, including sightseeing and gambling. Over 350 chess players, parents and friends showed up for this year's tournament.

The highlight for the second year in a row was a visit by former World Champion Boris Spassky. He hosted a simul on Thursday night, giving up seven draws out of 25 games against a very difficult field. Our own CalChess Board member NM Roger Poehmann was one of those who shared the point. GM Spassky also gave two wildly popular and instructive lectures that were open to all tournament players. Other events included a welcome banquet and a book signing session.

Spassky wasn't the only strong player in town, as 11 GMs and 11 IMs showed up to play in one of the strongest annual events west of the Rockies.

The competition in the 58 player open section was fierce,

with Grandmasters facing each other as early as the second round. After six rounds, two were left standing at the top: GM Alexander Ivanov of Massachusetts and GM Ildar Ibragimov of Connecticut. GM Ivanov won a rapid play tiebreak to take home the title of champion.

Many Northern Californians played both in the open section and the various lower groups. This is exemplified by three of the top four club prizes going to teams from the Mechanics' Institute, East Bay Chess Club and the Sacramento Chess Club. Some individuals also were fortunate enough to bring home part of the large prize fund. Hopefully I didn't miss anyone in the following list.

OPEN

3rd: GM Alex Yermolinsky and SM David Pruess

8th: IM John Donaldson, IM Vladimir Mezentsev, IM Ricardo DeGuzman

top U2400/U2300: NM Michael Aigner and NM Tigran Ishkhanov

EXPERT

Co-Champions: Philipp Perepelitsky and Batsaikhan Tserendorj

CLASS A

Champion: Jeff Mallett

3rd: Alexander Francisco and Michael DaCruz

CLASS B

2nd: Michael O'Brien

3rd: Nelson Sowell and Jason Cruz

CLASS C

3rd: Nicholas Nip, Brian Astle and Nathanael Crawford

CLASS D

Co-Champion: Andrew Grethlein

3rd: Mike Rhoads

CLASS E

Champion: Kimberly Tom

3rd: John Larkin

Many kudos go to organizer Jerry Weikel, his wife Fran, their entire family and the rest of the tournament staff. Each year they put on a high quality event, smiling all the way. The final key player is Barbara Rainey from the Sands Regency, who ensures that the playing site is as perfect as possible.

The 2006 Reno tournaments will be the Far West Open on April 7-9 and the Western States Open on October 6-8. As announced before the final round, next year's Western States Open will be a qualifier for the United States Championship. Be there!

The games below appeared in the Mechanics Institute Chess Newsletter written by IM John Donaldson. The following pictures are courtesy of Eric Hicks.

Crosstables

More Pictures



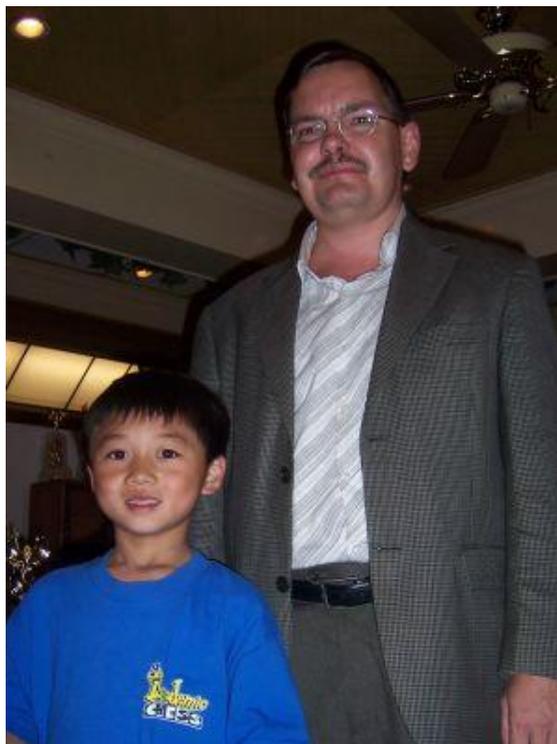
NM Michael Aigner (white) against SM David Pruess.



NM Batchimeg Tuvshintogs vs IM Jesse Kraai, with Daniel Schwarz in the background.



CalChess Board member NM Roger Poehlmann.



7-year-old Nicholas Nip vs GM Jaan Ehlovest.