

Chess Earthquake Strikes Milwaukee, Felt in New York!

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David Chock

By NM Michael Aigner

The Saratoga High School chess team travelled to the National High School chess championships in Milwaukee with a healthy dose of optimism and a goal to bring home a couple of trophies. They returned home having shaken the course of the entire tournament. Short of winning a national championship, the team accomplished just about everything else. Simply said, the SHS Falcons terrorized the top boards in Wisconsin!

The wild ride began in round 2 when the team's #2 player faced the tournament's #2 seed. Jeff Young, rated 1881, did not appear at all intimidated by FM Salvijus Bercys of Murrow High School in New York. Despite having the apparent disadvantage of playing with the black pieces, it took Jeff only 34 moves to dispatch his 2451 rated opponent.

Perhaps overshadowed by the success of his teammate, Saratoga top board David Chock cruised through the first four rounds, defeating two B players and a 1927 opponent. The opposition became much stiffer in round 5 as David, rated 2009, was paired the #3 seed, NM Atakan Sirin of Kansas, rated 2298. Playing the same opening with the same black pieces as Jeff just 24 hours earlier, David achieved the identical result. He was now 5-0 and had a date on top board.

David's round 6 opponent was Godzilla himself. Alex Lenderman does not require an introduction, having conquered the World U16 Championship last summer in France and earning the title of International Master. In Milwaukee, he was the #1 seed, representing Murrow H.S. of New York (same school as Bercys). David spent two hours preparing the Scotch Game opening prior to the game and then played his heart out. David reached an objectively drawn position when, in a time scramble, his much higher rated opponent chose to try to win--and subsequently lost. This was

David's first win against any FIDE titled player.

Unfortunately, Cinderella's slipper fell off in the final round. Returning to the stage for round 7 and needing merely a draw for first place, David obtained a pleasant position as black against NM Landon Brownell (rated 2237) from Catalina Foothills H.S. in Tucson, AZ. After one tactic, it was all over. Landon was the national champion with 6.5/7 while David had to settle for a share of third place at 6.0/7.

The rest of the Saratoga H.S. team also finished well, scoring a total of six upset wins (all over 200 rating points) while suffering only two upset defeats. When all the points were added up, the Falcons took the third place team trophy at 20.0 out of a possible 28 points. That is even more impressive when you realize that Saratoga's top four players averaged 1867 while schools like Murrow and Catalina Foothills averaged well over 2000.

Credit for the team's success goes foremost to the players: David Chock (6.0/7), Jeff Young (5.0/7), Jojo Zhao (4.5/7), Aaron Garg (4.5/7), Marvin Shu (4.0/7) and Avinash Kumar (3.0/7). The team manager who handled most of the organizational aspects of this trip was Stayton Chock. Finally, the players have had the privilege of studying chess with three Northern California masters over the past year: FM-elect Shiv Shivaji, NM Albert Rich and NM Michael Aigner.

TROPHIES:

David Chock = 4th place K-12, 17th blitz, 2nd bughouse

Jeff Young = 29th place K-12

Jojo Zhao = 2nd place for U1800, 25th blitz, 2nd bughouse

Saratoga High School = 3rd place team for K-12

All photos by Stayton Chock and Jojo Zhao.



David Chock on board 1 in last round.



Jeff Young



Look at all of the trophies!!!