

# Northern California Teams and Players Winners and National Elementary Championships

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by Alan Kirshner PhD

Forty-seven players showed up in Nashville to compete in the National Elementary Championships over the weekend of May 11 through the 13. Registration figures showed a total of 2234 players from around the country. The vast majority came from New York—648. Anyone who has attended Nationals knows that New York teams are the schools to beat. Private schools and some public schools in New York provide chess daily within their curriculum as well as providing scholarship money for players. Many of the schools get corporate funding.



Tournament program



K-1 playing area before round 1

Players who have attended Nationals can tell you that they are an endurance contest. There are seven rounds contested over three days. The K-1 section plays game in 90 minutes and the other sections (8 of them) play game in 120 minutes. Under the new U.S. Chess Federation rules time delay of 5 seconds should be used without deducting time from the clocks. So some games lasted more than the four hours allotted. Players and teams, knowing that this is the Super Bowl of scholastic chess, are not only confronted by an endurance contest, but by extreme nervous tension.

A few of my players who always smile had very serious looks on their faces when round one began. Perhaps they felt the weight of the world on their shoulders as Weibel came in as the number one seed in the country in the K-6 Elementary Championship division. In round one in this section there were 13 upsets among the top half of the players. Unreal. In a sense, this event—at least in the championship sections (K-1, K-3, K-5 and K-6)--is a survival of the fittest. Not very often do you see any player finish with a 7-0. This did occur in the K-1 Championship with a tie between two players whose ratings were 896 and 1163.



Ready to go in K-1 before round 1

Let me note that there were a fair number of 1400 and 1500 rated players in this section. They fell to the pressure of the event and perhaps underrated players. To be fair, the 896 player was from the Washington. They have their own rating system in which the individual had a rating above 1500. Perhaps the U.S. Chess Federation rating of 896 made our players over confident. The Washington rating system has been a bone of contention among many coaches for a number of years. The question as to why the U.S.C.F. does not simply use the Washington rating caused a heated debate at the Scholastic Coaches this year. I will provide more information on the placement of our top Northern California players a little later.

The location of these championships was the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. This site is massive and also took a bit of endurance to get around. Next year it will hold the Super Nationals. Around 6,000 players (yes, I said 6000) will converge



Gaylord Opryland Hotel Photo

on Nashville in April 2013 to compete in all three Nationals—the National Elementary, the National Junior High School and the National High School. While there were other conventions going on this year, next year chess will consume the whole resort.



Hotel area near playing Hall



Grand Ole Opry with Carrie Underwood

A few of the parents took advantage of the proximity of the Grand Ole Opry and took their children to the 9:30 show on Saturday night. Some took advantage of tours downtown and the kids loved the “Batman building” –the AT&T office center that does look a little like Batman. For the first time since my children went to Nationals nearly 20 years ago, my wife came along. She is a fan of country music and decided to take this opportunity to enjoy the Nashville scene including Carrie Underwood and Brad Paisley. Not that those names mean much to me. My music comes from the Broadway show of years ago: “Chess.”

While this competition was not in Bangkok between the East and the West-Russia and the U.S. as in the musical, but between the East Coast and the West Coast. In the K-6 National Elementary Team Championships a three-way tie occurred. Weibel Elementary School of Fremont, California coming into the event with what I called my Dream Team, almost turned into my Nightmare Team. The Team that had an average of 100 rating points above the other teams saw upset after upset. In the last round the four-team members (Kevin Moy, 6<sup>th</sup> grade-2015, Michael Wang, 5<sup>th</sup> grade-1941, Anthony Zhou, 4<sup>th</sup> grade-1723 and Steven Li, 6<sup>th</sup> grade-1592) did what few Weibel Teams have done in recent years, they all won their games in the seventh and final round. This not only brought them into a tie with New York's Lab Middle School and New York's Dalton School. Détente! Weibel had the best tiebreaks and brought home the Championship that had eluded them for a number of years, and a first place trophy. The players and their coach, Anthony Corrales, Scholastic Director at the Mechanics Institute in San Francisco, each received a plaque. The first place tiebreak win also meant that all four Weibel players received \$500 scholarships.



**The Weibel K-6 National Elementary School Championship Team (Anthony Zhou, Kevin Moy, Steven Li, Michel Wang)**

Mission San Jose Elementary School, also from Fremont, tied for sixth. They had won the K-6 Championship three years ago. I can't deny that their win inspired Weibel to bring teams to the Nationals again in 2010 after an 8-year hiatus. Weibel went home in 2010 as co-champions in the K-3 Primary School Division.



**Elementary School Champions from Northern California: Vignesh Panchanatham and Kevin Moy**

The individual championship was also split between East and West with a five-way tie with each player obtaining 6 points out of a possible 7. Well, not exactly a split for three of the five winners came from the West. Two from our own state—Vignesh Panchanatham (2127) from Lawsen Middle School in Cupertino, Kevin Moy (2015) from Weibel in Fremont and Roland Feng (2168) from Seattle, Washington. Vignesh obtained the second place trophy, Roland the fourth and Kevin the fifth. The first place trophy went to Amir Moazami from New York City with Alex Bain from Lincolnshire, Illinois getting the third place trophy. All of these players will go down in the record books as the 2012 National Elementary School Champions. OK, so Illinois is not East Coast, but one thing I learned when I moved to California was that nearly everyone would refer to the Middle West as back East.

Twenty place trophies were awarded in this division with extra trophies for those who tied at the twentieth position. Other North Californians who won trophies: Michael Wang (Weibel, Fremont), Abhishek Handigol (Challenger-Ardenwood, Newark). They tied for sixth place with 5.5 points.

Another battle between East and West broke out in the K-1 Championship section. Once again a tie creating two championship teams. Mission San Jose Elementary School, Fremont, California tied with Hunter College School of New York. Tie-breaks gave the first place title to Mission. While the highest four point scorers are used for team points, others obtaining equal points are listed as well. The members of the 2012 Mission San Jose Championship K-1 Team listed were: Rishith Susarla (1400), Edwin Sony Thomas (809), Amulya Harish(723), Annapoorni Meiyappan (684), Kevin Pan (516).



**The Mission San Jose K-6 Team**

Weibel Elementary School finished tied for sixth place doing their usual thing of losing all their last round games. The Weibel Team consisted of Louis Law (1135), Oliver Wu (994), Vincent Wang (738) and Eshaan Mistry (572).

This division awarded thirty trophies with extras at the thirtieth position. Northern California winners: Rishith Susarla (6 pts, 1400), of Mission San Jose tied for 3<sup>rd</sup>, Milind Maiti (6 pts, 1518), of Cupertino tied for 3<sup>rd</sup>, Agnes Williams (6 pts, 1368) of Santa Clara tied for 3<sup>rd</sup>, Edwin Sony Thomas (5.5 pts, 809) of Mission San Jose tied for 15<sup>th</sup> (note—this was an excellent result as he enter as number 66 and took home the 16<sup>th</sup> place trophy), Balaji Daggupati (5.5 pts, 1433) of San Ramon tied for 15<sup>th</sup>, Louis Law (5 pts, 1135) of Weibel took home the actual 30<sup>th</sup> place trophy, Zhiyi Wang (5 pts, 1121) of Sunnyvale tied for 30<sup>th</sup>

The K-3 Primary School Championship division was a landslide victory for the East with New York Schools taking home the first four place trophies. Mission San Jose Elementary finished in 7<sup>th</sup> place and Weibel Elementary a half point behind tied for 8<sup>th</sup> place taking home the 10<sup>th</sup> place trophy.

Mission San Jose once again had more than four people whose scores could have been used: John Andrew Chan (1430), Mihir Manish Bhuptani (1120), Tommy Koh (951), Luke Zhao (1276), Soorya Kuppam (1232), Jeffrey Liu (806). Anvi Surapaneni (899), Atri Surapaneni (1316), Suryateja Mandadi (1046) and Enya Mistry (968) earned Weibel's Team points.



**1**The Weibel parents, coaches and players from the young teams in the Primary School Championships.

Individual trophies went to the following Northern California players: Chenyi Zhao (5.5 pts 1362) of Fremont and Jason Shuhe Zhang (5.5 pts 1285) of Fremont tied for 8<sup>th</sup> with Ben Rood (5 pts, 1637) of Contra Costa tied for 22<sup>nd</sup>. In the rating group 800 to 899 a second place trophy went to Anvi Surapaneni (4.5 pts, 899) of Weibel.

In the K-5 Championship division Western teams were not well represented. Weibel did not have any entries and Mission San

Jose only had three players. This did enable them to take an 18<sup>th</sup> place trophy. The only individual trophy for Northern California went to Amit Sant (5pts, 1636) from Mission San Jose who tied for 19<sup>th</sup>. In this section nine people tied for the Championship all with six points. Most of the winners came from the center of our nation. In the end we did not really see a battle between East and West, but one nation unified in the love of chess.

PS: You can see all the full results at <http://www.alchess.com/chess/12/elem/>