

Checkmate! A Chess Team Update

by A. G. Basoli

The chess season started with a bang at PS41: the year's first meet was our biggest tournament ever, enrollment in the "Chess with Jeremy" afterschool program was robust, and fourth grader Nico Chasin represented the United States—and PS41—for the third year in a row in the Under 10 section at the prestigious FIDE World Cadets Chess Championship in Batumi, Georgia.

Though PS41 tournaments are generally well attended and are cherished among chess families as one of the city's best beginners' tournaments, the Columbus Day event beat all expectations, selling out three days in advance with more than 160 participants. In the spirit of raising the bar for the more experienced scholastic players, program director Jeremy Scheinbach successfully introduced an Open Section last spring for players rated 1400 and up. Also continuing from last year was the new format for the two upper sections, which resulted in shorter overall days—a boon for parents—and longer, more focused games for the kids.

The afterschool program, which takes place on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays each week, continues to attract the youngest of players all eager to "capture all those pieces," as Leif, a kindergartner, put it. There has been a slight spike in girls' enrollment. "It's too early to call it a trend," said Jeremy, but he estimates that with eight girls in attendance, PS41 will have the most participants yet at next spring's All-Girls National Championships in Chicago, IL. As the team gears up for the K12 National Chess Championship in December, it welcomed back Nico Chasin from the FIDE World Cadets Championship.

"The tournament is grueling," said Nico's mother Michelle. The world's top players, ages eight through twelve, vie for the title of World Champion in their categories. There are eleven rounds of daily games lasting up to six hours. "It requires tremendous stamina, focus, and determination. Apart from the clear benefits that chess provides in terms of strategic thinking and problem solving, the most valuable

lesson comes from learning how to lose and not give up," she added. "Nico has felt supported at PS41 in pursuing his dreams. As a family, we are extraordinarily grateful for that."

Seeded fifteenth in a field of 150 players, Nico gave his best performance yet, finishing seventh at tiebreaks. "Only one point behind the leader," Jeremy explained.

Next on the PS41 Chess Team's calendar is the Annual January fundraiser. The team accepts tax-deductible donations through the newly-established not-for-profit PS41 Chess Club, Inc. These contributions will partially cover team expenses for the larger tournament, and establish need-based scholarships for players who would be a positive addition to the team, but could not otherwise afford to travel to these events.

Mark your calendars for upcoming PS41 Chess Team events:

Register online for PS41 Chess tournaments (December 4, March 26, April 29) at <http://www.nycknights.com/tournaments>.

December 16-18, 2016: 2016 National K-12 Grade Championships in Nashville, TN. Register through Jeremy or at <http://www.uschess.org/content/view/10015/95>

PS41 Chess Club: Fundraiser in January. Date and location TBA

February 4-5, 2017: Greater New York Scholastic Chess Championships at the Marriott in Brooklyn. Register online at <http://www.gnyscc.com/>

March 11-12, 2017: 50th Annual New York State Scholastic Championships in Saratoga Springs, NY <http://www.chess-tour.com/nyssc17.htm> register at <http://chessaction.com/>

April 7-9 2017: All-Girls National Championships in Chicago, IL

May 12-14, 2017: Supnationals VI in Nashville, TN.



PS41 Chess Team at the 2016 National Elementary Championship, Nashville, TN



2016 World Cadets Championship, Batumi, Georgia. Round 11 Nico Chasin (left) shakes hands with his opponent Arden Davtyan from Armenia before the last game.