

BC Chess Challenge 2009

Over 230 players registered to compete in this year's BC Chess Challenge. All players qualified for this event by demonstrating superior chess skill in one of five Regional events. As expected the competition was intense. There were many surprises before the day was done. Congratulations to all!

The Kindergarten Championship was back for its second year with an eager bunch of kids challenging for top spot. After some intense play it was Luke Pulfer from South Meridian School in Surrey who emerged undefeated in top spot. In addition to the Champion's trophy Luke won a talking chess trainer to help him continue to improve. Arman Hosseinpour from West Vancouver finished close behind in Second place while Mircea Oprea from New Westminster finished third.

Grade One competition was very close. Three players tied for top spot with 4.0 points after 5 rounds. It took another three rounds of play-offs before one of them gained a small advantage over the others. In the end Zexi Jesse Li from Laurier in Vancouver was crowned Grade 1 Champion. Matthew Geng from Campus View Elementary in Victoria was awarded second while Ashton Taylor from St John's took home the third place trophy.

Grade Two saw 20 challengers trying to dethrone reigning champion Edwin Xu from Waverly Elementary. He did not flinch however and went 5.0 for 5 to keep the title. Hot on his heels was Maggie Macinnis from Queen Elizabeth Annex in second place. A log jam of 4 player tied for third place with 3.5 points. Computer tie break gave the trophy to Alex Stolz from Surrey's Harold Bishop Elementary over Qing Yang Li, Andrew Datcu-Romano and Luc Lavallee.

Twenty nine players contested the Grade Three section. To win this one they would have to defeat Richmond's Jonah Lee, fresh off his trip to contest the Under 8 World Championship in Vietnam. Jonah played flawlessly to retain the title, leaving four contenders to fight for second place. Lionel Han from Richmond's Donald McKay Elementary School, Mark Liu of Ecole Sperling, Tony Liu of Rogers Elementary in Victoria and Andrew Sabaratnam from Lord Roberts all finished the day with 4.0 points.

Grade Four produced some of the best action of the entire tournament. Last year perennial Janak Awatramani won the National Championship after a titanic struggle with his rival, Dezheng Kong of Manitoba. When Dezheng moved to Vancouver we found ourselves with the top two grade 4 players in the country. Add to that mix the perennial challenger John Doknjas and you have a trio that could challenge in any grade. First John and Janak battled, with John unable to defeat his rival. This set up a classic final between Janak and Dezheng. Intense concentration and superb play followed. A small mistake, an advantage gained and Dezheng Kong emerged as the new BC Grade 4 Champion. Janak, John, Evan McFee and Ian Ang all finished tied for second with 4.0 points.

One of the season's most improved players, Hector Rathburn Mackay from l'École Bilingue, made his mark by winning the Grade Five title, defeating reigning Champion Jeremy Hui from Seaforth in the final. Jeremy, Jacob Jensen and Jenna Wild finished tied for second with 4.0.

Alex Sabaratnam from Lord Roberts was flawless in winning the Grade Six title. No less than 5 players tied for second behind Alex. Donovan Zhao, Hanson Kang, Jack Qian, Algerd Karavai and Ryan Lo all finished the day with 4.0.

Grade Seven saw 26 players challenging for top spot. When all the checks were done it was National Champion and BC Junior Champion Tanraj Sohal on top with 4.5 points. Changhe Li and Joanne Foote were just a half point behind. Computer tie breaks gave the second place trophy to Li and third to Foote.

Grade Eight was a very tough section to play. Jack Cheng from St John's school played a perfect 5.0 to win the championship. Yifei Han from Capital Hill lost only to Jack in finishing second. Carson Evans from Courtenay and Nichos Sorko from Sherwood park tied for third with Yiming Han, who took home the trophy.

Jeff DeGuzman from Cariboo Hill has worked hard to improve his game and it paid off. He won the Grade Nine title ahead of Dylan Parker from Burnaby Mountain and John Gong from Magee.

Grade Ten saw perennial champion Thomas Chow unseated by newcomer Tian Tian Geng from Victoria's Mount Douglas High School. Rafaat Mir from David Thompson Secondary took second place, relegating Thomas to the unfamiliar territory of third place.

Another regular winner who was unseated this time out was Grade Eleven's Elliott Raymer from Mount Douglas Secondary. Elliott had to settle for second place after Henry Ji from Semiahmoo Secondary defeated all challengers and took first place. Ollie Zhou from Johnston Heights finished in third place.

Grade Twelve saw the highest rated player in the tournament, and the highest rated Junior in BC, prove his skill. Noam Davies took his 2207 rating to first place, followed by Matthew Cheah from Centennial in second. Madhav Goyal and Tuaha Younas tied for third.

The Champions:

Kindergarten Champion:	Luke Pulfer
Grade 1 Champion:	Zexi Jesse Li
Grade 2 Champion:	Jingzhi Edwin Xu
Grade 3 Champion:	Jonah Lee
Grade 4 Champion :	Dezheng Kong
Grade 5 Champion :	Hector Rathburn-Mackay
Grade 6 Champion :	Thiruvaran Alex Sabaratnam
Grade 7 Champion :	Tanraj S Sohal
Grade 8 Champion :	Jack [Kun] Cheng
Grade 9 Champion :	Jeff Anthony De Guzman
Grade 10 Champion :	Tian Tian Geng
Grade 11 Champion :	Henry Ji
Grade 12 Champion :	Noam Davies