

Regional High School Chess Championship: University High School Irvine Claims Victory



In the photo: Gordon Xu (University High School) vs Kevin Du (Del Norte High School)

SAN DIEGO – The 2nd Annual San Diego Regional High School Team Chess Championship, organized by San Diego Chess Club board members Irina Nizmutdinova and Jonathan Frye, saw a surge in participation, drawing teams from across Southern California and even Arizona. Building upon the success of the inaugural event in May 2024, the tournament expanded beyond San Diego County, attracting a diverse field of 17 high schools, ranging from experienced competitors like University High School Irvine and Canyon Crest Academy to newcomers from across the region. The tournament's popularity was evident, with a waiting list forming to participate.

The championship embraced inclusivity, welcoming players of all skill levels, from chess masters to unrated players experiencing their first club tournament. A unique format was introduced, allowing teams greater flexibility in player order for each

round, departing from traditional USCF rated approaches where higher-rated players typically occupy top boards. Teams were awarded based on their overall team score and tiebreaker scores.

The championship's success was made possible by continued support of students, teachers, advisors and parents.

- **Student Leadership:** Beyond the guidance of experienced players like FIDE Master Sihan Tao (University High School Irvine), International Master Ming Lu (Scripps Ranch High School), National Master Vedant Maheshwari (Westview High School) and Candidate Master Roger Shi (Canyon Crest Academy), many student leaders played a crucial role in assembling their teams. Alfonso Sanchez from South Bay Independent Study, Thomas Mitchell and Lorenzo Antonio from Mission Hills High School, and Christian Burns and Vinson Nguyen from Eastlake High School exemplify the dedication displayed by students who worked tirelessly to recruit teammates and build team spirit. Returning leaders included Kathryn Mokhov (Patrick Henry High School) and Ethan Huynh (Fountain Valley High School), who demonstrated continued commitment to their teams.
- **Teacher Support:** The support of educators was instrumental in the tournament's success. Stephanie Macceca (Valhalla High School), Danny Collins (Cathedral Catholic), Chima Ikeme (Paloma Valley High School), and Ivan Rubio (Hilltop High School), all provided invaluable support to their respective teams.

San Diego Chess Club president Chuck Ensey and Southern California Chess Federation president Alaa Moussa were also in attendance to show their support for the teenage chess players.



The opening round saw a clash of titans as University High School Irvine faced off against Canyon Crest Academy. Top board matches, including FM Sihan Tao versus David Liu (Canyon Crest) and Warren Zhang (San Marino High) versus NM Vedant Maheshwari (Westview High), were streamed live.

After five rounds of intense competition, University High School Irvine emerged victorious with an undefeated record of 5 out of 5 team score. Canyon Crest Academy secured a strong second place with 4 out of 5 team matches won, followed by Del Norte High School with 3.5 out of 5 and San Marino High School with 3 out of 5. Westview High School placed fifth on team tiebreaks also with 3 out of 5 points.



In the photo: Warren Zhang (San Marino High School) vs FM Sihan Tao (University High School)



In the photo: Alfonso Sanchez (South Bay Independent Study) vs Alex Huynh (Fountain Valley High School).

Top Four Teams:

1st Place Team: University High School Irvine (Orange County) - NM
Gordon Xu, Brian Lantz, FM Sihan Tao, Alan Yang, CM Tori Porat, NM Taiwei Wu. Team lead: FM Sihan Tao.



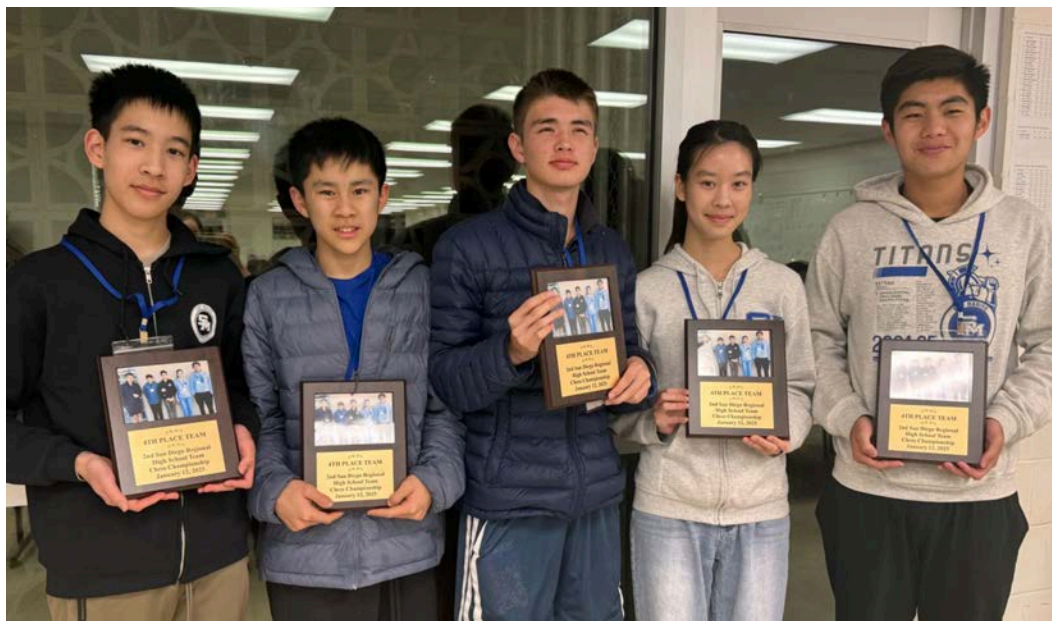
2nd Place Team: Canyon Crest Academy (San Diego County) - CM
Roger Shi, NM Sepehr Golsefidy, David Liu, Tan Vu, Nathan Guo, Shane Sitaram. Team lead: CM Roger Shi



3rd Place Team: Del Norte High School (San Diego County) - Jacob Gelle, Aarav Sonara, Harrish Ahilan, Zoe He, Kevin Du, Manasvi Macha. Team lead: Kevin Du



4th Place Team: San Marino High School (Los Angeles County) - Evan Lew, Andersen Yang, Charlie McDermott, Adelynne Yang, Warren Zhang. Team lead: Warren Zhang



Participating Schools: University High School Irvine, Canyon Crest Academy, Del Norte High School, San Marino High School, Patrick Henry High School, South Bay Independent Study, Mission Hills High School, Westview High School, Hilltop High School, Fountain Valley High School, Scripps Ranch High School, Rancho Bernardo High School, Paloma Valley High School, San Luis High School, Valhalla High School, Cathedral Catholic High School, and Eastlake High School.

The event not only provided a platform for talented young players to compete but also fostered a sense of sportsmanship, camaraderie, and leadership among all participants. The 3rd San Diego High School Team Championship is planned for January, 2026. For more information, please, consult the San Diego Chess Club website.