

San Francisco Mechanics Gear Up for US Chess League

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by Michael Aigner

The San Francisco Mechanics finalized their roster for the upcoming season of the US Chess League. Can the local team add to a rich tradition that includes four straight winning records and the 2006 league title? To find out, **watch beginning August 31** live on Wednesday (occasionally Monday) nights at the **Mechanics' Institute Chess Club** or follow the games at the **Internet Chess Club**. Of course, I plan regular reports on this blog and my **Twitter** page.

2009 San Francisco Mechanics' Roster (first rating is 9/08; second is current)

1. GM **Josh Friedel** 2581 (2601 = +20) -- see photo at right
2. GM **Jesse Kraai** 2573 (2584 = +11)
3. GM **Vinay Bhat** 2481 (2491 = +10)
4. IM **Sam Shankland** 2398 (2534 = +136) -- age 17
5. IM **John Donaldson** 2425 (2390 = -35) -- captain
6. FM **Danya Naroditsky** 2339 (2376 = +37) -- age 13
7. NM **Gregory Young** 2227 (2272 = +45) -- age 14
8. NM **Yian Liou** 2019 (2226 = +207) -- age 12
9. (alt) GM **Patrick Wolff** 2623 (2623 = +0) -- his 2623 rating actually counts as 2590 for league
10. (alt) IM **David Pruess** 2464 (2419 = -45) -- assistant captain

Each week, the captain chooses four players with an **average rating under 2401**. Most of the key participants return from last year. The Bay Area's top rated player, GM **Josh Friedel**, will man the top board for a majority of the matches. GM **Vinay Bhat** and **2008 World U18 co-Champion** IM Sam Shankland (*with two GM norms*) are two of the more successful players in the history of the league. **2007 World U12 Champion** FM Danya Naroditsky and **2008 US Junior co-Champion** NM Gregory Young offer a lethal one-two punch on boards 3 and 4. The captains are Mechanics' Institute chess director IM John Donaldson and Berkeley's own IM David Pruess.



The 2009 team adds two new faces. At the top, GM Jesse Kraai will see action on board 2 and perhaps even a couple of games on board 1. And on board 4, **CalChess High School co-Champion** NM Yian Liou (*see photo at left*) may be San Francisco's secret weapon. "Kiddie" is only 12 years old, but has already proven himself against the best that California has to offer. Continuing the Mechanics' tradition of fielding underrated juniors, *Yian counts as merely 2019 for the league, while his actual rating is nearly 200 points higher at 2212.* These rating points are valuable because they allow the team to field stronger players on the top boards without sacrificing strength on board 4.

For more information, check out the official **San Francisco Mechanics homepage** or browse through the 2009 **US Chess League schedule**.