

Shankland leads Northern California International

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by Kostya Kavutskiy



The 2012 Northern California International is turning out to be one of the most prestigious and well organized tournaments in the United States, mainly due to the strong effort put in by the organizers to meet all of the players' needs. The event was planned and is being run by Arun Sharma and Ted Castro, at the Nor Cal House of Chess (located in Northwestern Polytechnic University), which is also run by Castro. The NCI also feels every bit like a top-level international tournament which is quite rare to find in the United States. Every round the players are provided with boards, pieces, clocks, scoresheets, pens, water, and even food! The spectators are allowed to roam freely and even have a skittles room (where more sets are provided) for casual play.

The opening ceremony of the tournament was pleasant, and had several special guest speakers, including USCF President Dr. Ruth Haring, CalChess President Tom Langland, Northwestern Polytechnic University President Dr. George Hsieh, and the Mayor Jose Esteves of Milipitas. Also featured in the opening ceremony were two young students of the Nor Cal House of Chess who performed with their instrument of choice—Jade Zhang on violin and Solomon Ge on piano.

The last but definitely not the least of the reasons that this tournament should be regarded to as elite is the extremely strong field participating, which includes seven Grandmasters and sixteen international masters. Furthermore, entry was limited to players with a FIDE rating of above 2000, and the number of players let in under 2200 FIDE was also limited, to keep the average rating of the tournament high, thus increasing norm chances.

After seven rounds GM Sam Shankland is leading the event with 6/7 points. In round seven he quickly defeated the pre-tournament favorite GM Georg Meier of Germany, who outrated him by over 100 points. Here is Sam's win over IM Shahade:

Northern California International, Fremont 2012

White: Shahade, Greg

Black: Shankland, Sam

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Bf4 Bg7 5.e3 O-O 6.Nf3 e5 7.dxc5 Qa5 8.Rc1 Nbd7 9.cxd5 Ne4 10.Nd2 Ndx5 11.Nxe4 Nxe4 12.f3 Nxd2 13.Qxd2 Qxa2 14.b4 Qa3 15.Kf2 Bd7 16.Be2 Rfc8 17.e4 Bc3 18.Qd3 Bxb4 19.Qxa3 Bxa3 20.Rb1 b6 21.Be3 Rc2 22.Rb3 Ra2 23.Rhb1 Rc8 24.Kf1 Ba4 0-1

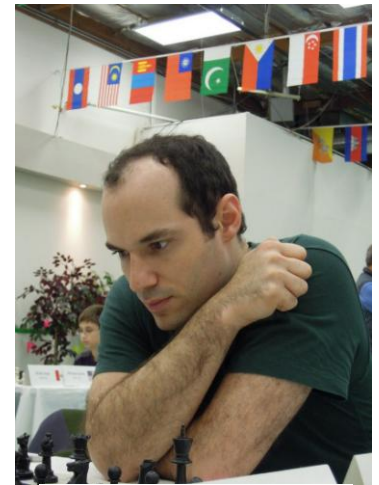
In second place is IM Marc Arnold with 5.5/7, thanks to a win over GM Axel Bachmann at the same time. Following them is GM Yury Shulman, GM Giorgi Margvelashvili, GM Josh Fridel, IM Enrico Sevillano, SM Faik Aleskerov, and FM Kayden Troff, each with 5/7.

So far there have been many upsets, as Shankland and Shulman are the only grandmasters to remain undefeated. IM Greg Shahade, who earlier led the event with 4/4, took out GM Alejandro Ramirez and GM Axel Bachmann in rounds three and four.

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White: Ramirez, Alejandro
Black: Shahade, Greg

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Qb3 dxc4 5.Qxc4 Bf5 6.g3 e6 7.Bg2 Be7 8.O-O O-O 9.Nc3 Nbd7 10.Re1 Ne4 11.Qb3 Qb6 12.Nh4 Bxh4 13.gxh4 Ndf6 14.Qxb6 axb6 15.f3 Nxc3 16.bxc3 e5 17.dxe5 Nd7 18.f4 Be6 19.a4 Ra5 20.Rd1 Rfa8 21.e4 g6 22.h5 Rxa4 23.Rxa4 Rxa4 24.Be3 Ra3 25.h6 Kf8 26.Bd2 Ra2 27.Be1 Ke8 28.Bf3 g5 29.fxg5 Nxe5 30.Bh5 Bb3 31.Rb1 Bc2 32.Rxb6 Ra1 33.Kf2 Nd3+ 34.Ke3 Rxe1+ 35.Kd2 Rb1 36.Kxc2 Rxb6 37.Kxd3 Rb2 38.h3 Rb5 39.h4 Kf8 40.Bg4 Rb2 41.Bf5 Kg8 42.Kd4 Rh2 43.Kc5 Rxh4 44.Kb6 Rh1 45.e5 Re1 46.c4 Rxe5 47.Be8 Re4 48.c5 Rb4+ 0-1



IM Greg Shahade

FM Farai Mandhiza contributed to the action by upsetting GM Bartlomiej Macieja and GM Josh Friedel in rounds two and three.



FM Farai Mandhiza

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White: Friedel, Josh
Black: Mandizha, Farai

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 e6 4.O-O Nge7 5.e3 a6 6.Ba4 b5 7.Bc2 Bb7 8.Re1 Ng6 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 Nh4 11.Nbd2 Rc8 12.a3 Bd6 13.b4 Bb8 14.Bb2 O-O 15.d5 Nxf3+ 16.Nxf3 Ne7 17.Qd4 e5 18.Qd2 d6 19.Bd3 h6 20.a4 f5 21.axb5 axb5 22.Qe2 fxe4 23.Bxe4 Qe8 24.Qd3 Rc4 25.Nd2 Rxb4 26.Bc3 Rxe4 27.Nxe4 Bxd5 28.Bb4 Qc6 29.f3 Bc4 30.Qa3 Nf5 31.Qa6 Qc7 32.Red1 Rd8 33.Ba5 Qa7+ 34.Bb6 Qxa6 35.Rxa6 Rf8 36.Ra8 d5 37.Bc5 Rd8 38.Nc3 Nd4 39.f4 Nc6 40.fxe5 b4 41.Bb6 bxc3 42.Bxd8 Kf7 43.Rxb8 Nxb8 44.Ba5 c2 45.Rc1 Bd3 46.Kf2 d4 47.Ke1 Nc6 48.Kd2 Bh7 49.Bb6 Ke6 50.Rf1 d3 51.Re1 Bf5 52.h3 Bg6 53.g4 Kd5 54.e6 Ne5 55.Rxe5+ Kxe5 56.e7 Be8 57.Ba5 Kf4 58.Bc3 g6 59.Bg7 Kg5 60.Bb2 Bb5 61.e8=Q Bxe8 62.Kxd3 Ba4 63.Bc1+ Kh4 64.Bxh6 Kxh3 65.Bd2 Kxg4 66.Ke2 g5 67.Kf2 Bc6 68.Bc1 Kh4 69.Bd2 g4 70.Bf4 Kh3 0-1

Along with them IM Marc Arnold, IM Enrico Sevillano, SM Faik Aleskerov, and FM Kayden Troff have decent chances to make a GM-norm. Also worth mentioning is NM Adarsh Jayakumar, who recently achieved his first IM-norm at the 27th North American Masters, as having good chances of earning his second IM-norm. Organizer Arun Sharma sums up the norm chances:

FM Kayden Troff is having an amazing tournament with a performance above 2550 and would have already clinched at least an IM norm, but he is unfortunately unable to get a norm as he cannot reach the four foreigners needed in this nine round event.

IM Marc Arnold: Must play a foreigner in Round 9. Will score second GM norm with 1.0/2 if Round 9 opponent is rated at least 2556 - otherwise needs 1.5/2

IM Enrico Sevillano: Will score final GM norm with 1.5/2 if last round opponent is rated at least 2518 - otherwise needs 2.0/2

SM Faik Aleskerov: Must play a foreigner in Round 9 and score 1.5/2 for first GM norm.

IM Greg Shahade: Will score second GM norm with 1.5/2 if Round 9 opponent is rated at least 2325 - otherwise needs 2.0/2

IM Sam Collins: Must play a foreigner in Round 9. Will score final GM norm with 1.5/2 if Round 9 opponent is rated at least 2463 - otherwise needs 2.0/2

NM Adarsh Jayakumar: Will score second IM norm with 1.0/2 if Round 9 opponent is rated at least 2449 - otherwise needs 1.5/2

WGM Tatev Abrahamyan: Must play a foreigner in Round 9. Will score second IM norm with 0.5/2 if Round 9 opponent is rated at least 2517 - otherwise needs 1.0/2

FM Erik Santarius: Must play a foreigner in Round 9. Will score final IM norm with 1.5/2 if Round 9 opponent is rated at least 2361 - otherwise needs 2.0/2

NM Samuel Sevian: Must play a foreigner in Round 9. Will score first IM norm with 1.5/2 if Round 9 opponent is rated at least 2299 - otherwise needs 2.0/2

IM Marc Arnold and GM Sam Shankland face off in round eight in a battle for first place. It will be interesting to see how things play out as several players still have a chance to earn norms and fight for the top places.

Please visit www.dotq.org/chess for full standings, pairings, games, and photos from the event.