

Shankland Takes First at NorCal International

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by Michael Aigner



Fifth seed GM **Sam Shankland** won the **2012 Northern California International** with an undefeated score of 7.0 out of 9. Rounds 6 and 7 turned out to be critical, when Sam defeated the early leader, IM **Greg Shahade**, and the top seed, GM **Georg Meier** of Germany, both in under 30 moves! A trio of Americans shared second place at 6.5: GM **Alejandro Ramirez**, GM **Josh Friedel** and IM **Marc Arnold**.

The tournament attracted 60 competitors to **Fremont** on January 2-8, including **8 Grandmasters** and **16 International Masters**. Players arrived from around the World, representing Georgia, Mongolia, Peru, Zimbabwe, and 9 other countries. The many flags hanging from the ceiling at the playing hall underscored the international flair.

One goal of any such event is to offer **GM or IM norms** to players who perform above 2600 or 2450, respectively. *Three norms are required to earn a title.* Kudos to Azeri master **Faik Aleskerov** for earning an IM norm with 5.0/9! IM Arnold and IM Shahade were among the leaders, but missed GM norms in the final round. *C'est la vie!* Unfortunately, the number of foreign participants (**18**) was less than expected (*at least 20*) due to multiple last minute dropouts, decreasing the norm opportunities. WGM **Tatev Abrahamyan** and 13-year old FM **Kayden Troff** both played very well to finish at 5.5/9, but alas, neither faced the requisite number of foreign opponents. *Tragic!*



- [Final Standings](#)
- [Chess Life Online Article](#) (by FM Kostya Kavutskiy)
- [Games in Java Viewer](#) OR [Download PGN](#)
- [Brillancy Prize](#) (judged by GM Vinay Bhat)
- [Photos](#)



Many thanks to **organizers Arun Sharma and Ted Castro** for hosting the tournament. By all accounts, people enjoyed a week of chess and mild weather in the Bay Area. For local participants, this was a chance to play against strong masters without traveling far. And the nine players under the age of 16 received an invaluable face-to-face learning opportunity. *Given the high level of enthusiasm, hopefully the Bay Area will host many future Internationals!*