

Chess whizzes capture 10 trophies in best showing ever at state championships

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<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/highlandpark/lifestyles/currents/2957706,highland-park-ypchessteam-121610-s1.article> (includes photos)

Highland Park chess players excelled at the November 13th Illinois All Grade Chess Championship, winning two first place team trophies and eight individual awards. It was the best showing ever for Highland Park, whose district-wide program is now in its third year.

The event was held at Whitney Young Magnet High School in Chicago's west loop. It marked the first time the tournament has been held in Chicago. 505 players attended, the largest turnout for the November event since 1994. 24 players from Highland Park participated.

In the team competition, Indian Trail Elementary School captured first place in the 3rd grade section, competing against nine other teams. The 3rd grade group has been surprisingly cohesive since its members started playing as kindergarteners, capturing two 3rd place awards and one 4th place trophy at previous state championships. The top 3rd grade finishers for Indian Trail were Sam Lichtman (the club's top player), Max Kaplan, Jesse Blank and Henry Coplan. Evan Rosenblum and Jack Goldberg also had strong tournaments.

The Wayne Thomas club also performed well, with four players winning trophies for finishing in the top ten of their sections.

Highland Park's top two individual players, Jonathan Hrach (Elm Place) and Elli Faletsky (Northwood), finished in 6th and 9th places respectively in the 7th grade section.

Noah Greenberg (Sherwood) took 4th place in the first grade section. Harrison Burns (Northwood) took 7th place in the 6th grade section.

Ezra Boldizar (Wayne Thomas), who also started as a kindergartener, captured the 6th place individual trophy in the 3rd grade section. Boldizar is tied for first place in the internal ratings at the Wayne Thomas club.

Victoria Walsh, a 5th grader and one of Indian Trail's top players, won three of her four games and finished ahead of 24 players with much higher ratings from the U.S. Chess Federation.

Levi Goldberg, a 1st grader at Indian Trail, captured 10th place in his section.

Morgan Yontez from Wayne Thomas took the 9th place individual trophy in the kindergarten section.

Indian Trail's kindergarten team, comprised of two up-and-coming stars, Shea Walsh and (pre-K) Zach Lichtman, also won the first place team trophy in a small field. Walsh took 4th place in

the section. Lichtman fell victim to pairing errors at the tournament and was paired in the first two rounds against 2nd grade players, but ended with a score of two out of his last three games for a strong finish.

Also competing for Highland Park were Jason Rosenblum, Josiah Davis, Nathan Weisskopf, Joey Harrigan, Patrick Tippens, Matthew Warshell, Jack Jarvis, and Alex Rosenbloom.

Several of Illinois' top titled players attended the event and did game reviews for participants who recorded their moves in chess notation. Herb Lichtman, an Indian Trail parent who is spearheading statewide efforts to train coaches to teach chess with Promethean and Smart boards, conducted two demonstrations of the new technology for interested coaches.

The Highland Park program started three years ago, and now reaches approximately 400 kids. Jerry Neugarten, who runs the program, gives much of the credit for the program's success to Highland Park's coaches, who include many volunteers. This year, the coaches include three of Illinois' top titled players: International Master Florin Felecan (Indian Trail); National Master Eric Rosen (Sherwood); and National Master Adarsh Jayakumar (Wayne Thomas). Felecan and Rosen were among the titled players doing game reviews at the Saturday tournament.

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