

School Chess Association History

Lawrence Lampert founded the School Chess Association in 1969 to provide an opportunity for elementary students to play chess against one another in conditions that recognize the needs of young players. Prior to 1969, elementary players had only one option - adult chess tournaments, which often lasted until 10:00 p.m. or later. The first School Chess Association tournament was the first Minnesota Elementary State Tournament, which was held in 1969 at Noble Elementary School in Golden Valley where 136 players participated in the six-round tournament. The registration was \$1.00 per player. The tournament director was Irwin Heisler. Halfway into the tournament someone pulled the fire alarm and the entire building had to be evacuated until after the fire department deemed it safe to return.

The 1st place trophy was a 6th grader, Suzann Carpenter, who attended Noble. Noble Elementary won the State Championship, with 5 of the top 8 finishers; Cottage Grove finished second. There wasn't a team trophy for 3rd grade and under, but Noble's Brian Follase won first place among the 3rd grade and under.

In 1969 junior and senior high players were included in the tournaments. The following year, 1970, Marlow Manos from Clinton Elementary in Minneapolis won the second Elementary State Championship in a seven round tournament held at Central Junior High in St. Louis Park. Noble again won the team championship. Brian Campbell of Cottage Grove won the third State Championship in a memorable final against Robbie Holbrook of Edina. Before the 1990's, tournaments were all hand paired, including the 550 player tournament held at Westwood Junior High School in St. Louis Park where players were bused back and forth from Aquila Elementary School which held 150 of the players. That tournament still remains the largest scholastic tournament ever held in Minnesota.

In the early years Noble dominated the team results with either a first or second place finish in six of the first seven years. The most dominating teams were the Lincoln powerhouses, which won seven State Championships in a row, including 4 consecutive national champions, coached by Ted Haugen. This team included two national champions, Joe Longen and Tim Radermacher, both of whom became chess masters. Lincoln was in Brooklyn Park, but like the vast majority of the team champions were a part of the Robbinsdale School District. Non-Robbinsdale students to win were J.J. Hill of St. Paul, Barton of Minneapolis, William Byrne of Burnsville and Glen Lake of Minnetonka (Hopkins School District), and Meadowbrook Elementary School (Golden Valley School District) coached by Richard Goldstein.

In the nineties team trophies were added to the primary tournament. Winner of the first Primary State Championship was Sunny Hollow coached by Iric Lampert. Zachary Lane coached by Russ Erickson, Pilgrim Lane coached by Jean Scheau, Moreland Elementary coached by Bill Heinemann, and Robbinsdale Spanish Immersion coached by Sandy Mullaney have also won the State Primary Championship.

Through the years the School Chess Association has widened its mission to include summer chess day camp and helping schools to include a chess club in their buildings. There may well be some mistakes and names that I have not included in this short history. These were not intentional. If you know of any please send them to me and I will include them. I will include some of the coach's names in an update. I would also like to know coaches and schools of the two Cottage Grove schools in the early days of the SCA.

The School Chess Association is affiliated with USCF (United States Chess Federation) and MAEF (Minnesota Academic Excellence Foundation).

Merit Points History

Dick Harbeck developed a system of Merit Points to further encourage kids in his chess club to play tournaments in the Hastings area. Merit Points were incorporated into the School Chess Association in the early seventies. It was based on a percentage of performance. If you were in the bottom half of a tournament you would get 1 merit point, top 50% you would receive 2 merit

points, the top 25% you would receive 3 merit points, the top 10% you would get 4 merit points. If you earned a trophy you would receive 5 merit points. The top was 100 merit points. The School Chess Association has changed the merit points and made it more accessible to everyone. We now have added merit point awards to include a 200, 300, 400, and 500-point awards.

The merit points had to be done manually, a complete crosstable of the tournament results had to be done, including tie breaking of all scores to come up with a ranked finish for the players so they could be grouped in percentiles and converted into merit points. Imagine the time it took to do a large tournament of 300, 400, or even 500 players! Frank Manos, the first vice-president spent many hours on calculating the merit points for each individual. All the merit points had to be recorded for each player. Penciling in the results for each player in a ledger was done by hand. Eventually the ledger amounted to nine large, heavy volumes that would be brought to each tournament so we could show people their merit points. In the 90's Robert Altman, a computer programmer, developed a system for computing the merit points with the score automatically updating the merit points at the end of each tournament. This is the system that is used today.