
The Open also held form on the top board, with IM Tom Bartell winning with a 4-0 score, and the 4 players over 2000 all finished in the top 6. The surprise of the day was Aryan Roy, who finished 2nd, after drawing in round 1. This unintentional Swiss Gambit kept Roy from playing the top players in the tournament, but helped him finish the section at 3.5. The other class A player to finish in the top 4 was Kevin Shen, who finished tied for 3-4 with Expert Denis Markov.

Playing up has become a major problem for CCA events, where more than half a field can qualify for a section below the one they are playing in. There was not nearly as much of that going on at the state championship. In both the Open section, 5 people, and the Under 1600 section, 6 people, chose to play up. For the most part the results were expected, though in the Under 1600 two Methacton players, Benjamin Warunker and Declan Nice both had nice results picking up over 130 points. In the Open section, Shivam Wagh broke 1600 for the first time by gaining over 130 points from victories over two victories over 1800s and drawing a National Master before losing to a third 1800 in the last round.

While the last round had been going on, Samika Nettem, ever industrious, set up the Winter Open. So, the next day, though we did have a little work from late signups, it was much easier to handle than the 30+ last-minute signups for the G/75 d5. Nettem also had control of the Under 1000 section.

Unlike the G/75 d5, a pretty traditional time control, the Winter Open, a brainchild of Perumalla and Christopher Romeril, was a five-round G/30, d10, with just two sections - Open and Under 1000. Money, over \$600 in the Under 1000, and almost \$2000 in the Open, also makes this event a bit different from our usual fair.

The Under 1000 section had 29 players, including 4/5 of the Neilson family. The elder Neilson daughter, Lily, coached by Vahini Sadhu Venkata, won first place with a 5.0 score. While the rest of the family in that section didn't fare as well, how could they*, Maddy and Jamie had solid performances considering their rating. Dr. Naoko Neilson, internationally known astro-physicist, is probably too busy to join her daughter for Sadhu Venkata's lessons and should be applauded for playing, something many parents talk to me about but few do.

The 25 non-Neilsons had an interesting event as well. As mentioned earlier, top seeds in scholastic events (technically, this is not a scholastic event, just had many scholastic players, and more parents should absolutely feel free to play in sections like this), and that was true here. Second place went to Divin Kennyth Peter Francis, who was playing in his first over-the-board tournament with a 4-1 score. Alex Lau came in third, and Bheema, fresh off his State G/75 - East Under 500 championship, came in fourth, both 4-1.



Playing and advertising for us all at the same time! Thank you Dr. Naoko Neilson! (Photo by Samika Nettem)



Perumalla making IM Bartell think? Perumalla later said, "I made Bartell's bishop pair the value of at least a queen." So, maybe not! (Photo by Joshua Anderson)

In the Open section, IM Bartell and FM Matthew O'Brien did as expected, finishing first and second. In fact, the top 6 seeds all finished in the top eight. The two who had joined them had events they will not soon forget.

Perumalla spent the first round assisting Nettem, as his opponent had been unclear about what section he had wanted to be in and got double-listed. The reward for this help was a game with IM Bartell.

In round three, Perumalla sacked two rooks to mate Wagh (game on pg. 5.) To have a good day, sometimes you need a little luck,