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Foursome represents Quincy at chess tourney

Posted by Sebastian Moraga on Feb 13, 2017 in Community

Foursome represents Quincy at chess tourney



Four guys, three tables, two possible outcomes, one common hometown.

The foursome of Cyril Berndt, Travis Harris, Gates Petersen and Sutinan Tadalimavad were among the Quincy students playing at the Waypoint Foundation's annual chess tournament at Parkway School in Ephrata last weekend.

Playing opponents they knew well, such as when Berndt played Harris, or total unknowns, the group managed to have a good time at the tourney, which offers \$500 to the winner, and \$5 to each participant.

Among many serious faces, the Quincy crew proved a zany bunch, especially when



sitting together, as it happened when Petersen played Michael Novitsky, from Ephrata, and on the board next to them, Berndt played Harris.

Cyril Berndt had it in the bag. Until he didn't.

One wrong move was all it took. Sitting at a table during the Waypoint Chess Tournament in Ephrata last weekend, a game both he and his opponent predicted would go Berndt's way instead turned into two tense minutes of hoping the fellow across the table would not catch his mistake and swipe his king.

Harris, the fellow across the board, did catch it, although he had a hard time believing it. After several minutes insisting that he was going to lose, and that he didn't like having his picture taken while losing, he found himself the winner.

Two rows behind Berndt sat Tadalimavad, an exchange student from Thailand, looking very much like a chess player, statue-like, hand to chin, eyes glued to the 64 squares in front of him.

Next to Berndt sat Petersen, far more relaxed than on the basketball court, and, like Harris, certain that he was going to lose. Contrary to Harris, Petersen actually had reasons to think that way. His opponent Novitsky had won the tournament four times before.

The tournament welcomes children grades K-12 from the school districts in Ephrata, Soap Lake, Moses Lake and Quincy, including children who live within those districts but attend school elsewhere, home-schooled children and children attending private schools.

With that broad of a range of students, sometimes seniors end up playing kindergartners. And to hear Berndt tell it, few things are harder than playing a kindergartner.

"You want to win, but you don't want to make them feel bad," Berndt said. "It's tough." And if the kindergartner wins – oh, boy.

"Size doesn't matter in chess," tournament co-founder and organizer Troy Pugh said. "Years ago we had a senior play a kindergartner in one of the first rounds, and he lost. The senior wasn't really experienced in chess, he came and thought he would have a fun time, and he did. He was very positive about it. We see all sorts of stuff happening in tournaments."

Everybody plays five matches, with players listed by age and then matched up using the Swiss Pairing system, in which the list is split in half and then placed side-to-side for the next round's matchups.

The winners of that round get split the same way, as are the losers, and that makes up the next round. Then players are listed by record (2-0, 1-1, 0-2,) and split yet again, for the next round. Players get a pizza lunch after their third match.

If there's no clear winner after five rounds, the top players enter a playoff round.

Having grown up in Lynden near the Canadian border, Pugh and his brother Roger got the idea for the tournament from the Theresa Tromp Chess Tournament, which occurs there thanks to a trust fund Tromp set up for it many years ago. The Tromp tournament is 47 years old, 36 years older than the Pugh siblings' brainchild.

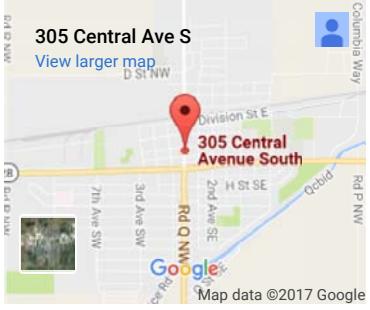
In years past, tens of students have come to the tournament from Quincy. This year, fewer showed up, but they still managed to have a good time. Berndt said he felt no pressure playing in a tournament his brother Titus won a few years back. Petersen said he knew he was toast playing against a four-time champion. Harris had a slightly different take on things.

"It's fun," he said, then adding with a smile, "But I'm just here for the money."

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