

# **VANCOUVER CHESS SCHOOL**

SPRING BULLETIN  
2016

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# STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

## JAMES LI

**PATIENCE & PERSEVERANCE:**  
THE STORY OF HARD WORK AND  
UNRELENTING DETERMINATION THAT  
LED JAMES LI TO CHESS SUCCESS

When James Li first came to the Vancouver Chess School in 2013 at the age of thirteen, he had already been studying the game for four years. However, interested to learn more and take his game to the next competitive level, he began to pursue more serious classes and tournaments.

From Coquitlam and spending over three hours to commute back and forth to the chess school at least once, sometimes two or three times a week, already shows the level of commitment James was ready to invest in chess. On top of this, even when he started out he was spending roughly two hours a day devoted to his game. Even now after so many years of experience, he is still dedicating the same amount of time to improve his skills.

Despite a strict work ethic, success wasn't always easy to come. Times of minimal improvement and hard work yielding no results were not uncommon. About this,



James says: *"I often had to work very hard through periods of minimal improvement and success to achieve the improvement I sought. I set many goals for myself including crossing certain rating barriers and beating certain rival competitors and despite some harder times I always worked hard to improve in the long term."*

This unrelenting and determined attitude led James from his first tournament success

where he finished 2nd in his first tournament, to his latest exploit where he won over 3000USD at the North American Open in Las Vegas in Dec. 2015. In true competitive spirit, each victory only propelled James to aspire for more success, noting of his Vegas win: *"Just like my first ever tournament success, this victory propelled me to aspire to achieve even greater results and made me determined to work even harder for chess."*

# STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

Through his years learning to play chess, James has found that he has learned many lessons, not just about the game itself but about studying and about himself as a person. Not only has he found it has helped him improve his logic, creativity and memory, but he has become a more focused student in school as well. With regards to a broader view, James had these wise words to share:

*“As far as work ethics and studying go, the hard work required for any player to succeed in chess has made me a more determined, perseverant and patient student and person.”*

Like any serious competitive hobby, James knows he could not have achieved this success on his own, and credits both VCS to help him with the game itself and his parents for all their financial and more importantly unconditional emotional support.

*“VCS has greatly helped me improve my chess skills. I think they have a really good teaching system in place that has been very effective in allowing me to improve as a player.”*

*“My parents have always supported me from the beginning not just financially but with their time, driving me to tournaments, directing me in my studies,*



*and most importantly, encouraging me to persevere with chess.*

*They always directed me in my chess studies, pointing out to me and helping me point out to myself areas that needed to be improved upon. More broadly, they always told me not to worry about results or losses and to keep working hard regardless.”*

Not one to rest on his latest successes for very long, James already has his eye on the future. He hopes to continue to improve his level of chess, but remains humble and knows it will take as much, if not more work than he has already put in. Nevertheless, the

people he has met, games he has played and experiences he has gained has made continuing well worth it.

Finally, when asked for some advice for young aspiring chess players, James reflected carefully before giving the following answers:

*“With regards to improving in the game itself I recommend studying every game, win loss or draw, as that is a great way to improve. I also suggest taking time during your games to carefully consider each move and its implications, as this ensures you play to the best of your ability.”*

*“As for the study of chess, take your time! Learning chess is not a process of rapid improvement and it requires a lot of time, effort and determination. However, despite all the time, energy, and hard work I have put into chess over the past 10 years, I know without a doubt the results I have achieved, the experiences I have gained, and the way I have grown made it all worth it.”*

Thank you James for your hard work, your consistent dedication to chess, and your humble attitude throughout everything. We wish you all the best in your future endeavors!

# STUDENTS OF THE MONTH



## STEPHANIE GU

My name is Stephanie, and I am 13 years old. I was 12 when I was first introduced to chess. It was my classmates from school who taught me some basic rules. I found chess a very interesting game and wanted to take lessons. My family and I moved to Vancouver in July, 2015, and we found the Vancouver Chess School.

After an assessment done by Maxim, I became a student of VCS. My first few lessons were with Joe, he taught me the basic rules of chess, and introduced me to many different openings that I could play. After several private lessons, I moved on

to the pawn level group class taught by Stephen. After a few months, I was in the knight level class that was taught by Slaven. Now I am in the Pre-Bishop class taught by Gyan. I love playing chess because it helps improve my logical thinking and my problem solving skills. Also, I can make many new friends and get to know many teachers. I am very thankful to have wonderful teachers such as Joe, Gyan, Slaven, and Stephen. My goal for these few months is to raise my rating over 1100 before summer vacation so that I would have more opportunities to play against strong players and learn from them.

# STUDENTS OF THE MONTH



## **MATTHEW JI**

Hi, My name is Matthew Ji from James Mckinney Elementary School in grade 3. And this is the story of how I learned chess.

One day at my school I was watching a game of chess that two of my classmates were playing. After they finished the game I thought that it was very interesting. I asked the winner, my friend Matthew Santha how to play, and then he taught me the basic rules of chess like the moves, promoting, what counts as a checkmate and lots more. After he told me the rules I played him and I won because he king-chopped his king.

When I got home I played with my dad but I lost every time. My mom found the chess school for me. I started taking classes at the Vancouver Chess school from September and I learned many chess tactics and skills. After that I can very easily beat my dad because I use these tricks.

Right now I am very interested to learn chess and play tournaments and Friday quads. This is very helpful to improve myself and I enjoy winning the game but am not scared to lose because this is only a game not the end of life.

# COQUITLAM CHESS STORIES

## COQUITLAM CHESS STORIES



Hi, my name is Alex. I am a grade 6 student and have been learning to play chess for one year. Here is something I want to share. If you go to a chess tournament it can test the skills that you learned in class. It is good practice of the tactics you learned in class, because the skills and tactics you learned in class are for when you play your chess games, and not to just sit around in your head until you forget it. If you worry about losing, don't worry! Everyone will lose a game at some point, and it gives you experience playing chess. If you are worried about your rating going down, it's OK. You still gain experience playing chess and your rating doesn't go up either, if you don't play. Overall I think playing in the tournaments is good practice of your skills, and great fun.

我的名字叫Alex，我是一名6年级学生，学习国际象棋已经满一年了。我想和你们分享的是：参加比赛可以测试你在课堂上学到的技巧，可以练习你的战术，你在课堂上学习那些致胜的战术可不是为了存在你的脑子里直到有一天你忘了个一干二净，而是用来打败对手的。千万不要担心会输，每个人都会有输棋的经历的，不过你可以从中吸取到教训。如果你担心你的积分会下降，那没什么，你不参加比赛，你的积分也不会上涨。总之，参加比赛是很好的练习机会，而且很有趣。

Please click here [https://vanchess.ca/media/static-content/Coquitlam\\_chess\\_stories.pdf](https://vanchess.ca/media/static-content/Coquitlam_chess_stories.pdf) to read full version of the Coquitlam Chess Stories.

# CHESS AND CHOCOLATE

## CHESS AND CHOCOLATE

By Cheryl Shizgal

Every year, birthdays in our family are accompanied with some sort of special cake, usually designed with a theme in mind. Sometimes, the theme goes along with the birthday party theme, but sometimes the theme is just about what we are interested in that year. This year, for Rachel's 9th birthday, the theme of the cake was "chess". Rachel discovered chess this year and it seemed appropriate to make her birthday cake to go along with this new interest.

Apparently, making a chess cake is not particularly common. A quick internet search for ideas turned up a few very fancy cakes, but nothing we could really manage, since we are not particularly great cake decorators in our house. However, it turns out that with a little creativity, and some chocolate molds, making a chess cake is quite possible.

First, we ordered chess piece molds from a shop in Langley (they arrived by mail a few



days later). Then to make the pieces, we melted the chocolate and used the molds to make halves of each piece which we then glued together with more chocolate. Some of the pieces were trickier than others so they had to be done a few times in order to get them just right. We made the squares of the chess board out of more chocolate melted into a silicone mold used for baking squares. Then we put it all together on the cake.



# HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

## HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

Beginning in January 2016, this is a highly selective class that admits students by application only. This group is specifically geared towards rapidly improving the skills of the most hard-working, most promising and most dedicated students at our school. Through longer classes, increased homework and a more committed and competitive classroom environment, this group aims to achieve high results very quickly. In order to maintain the quality of the class, students are carefully selected on a range of criteria, and new applicants must meet these criteria as well. The criterion is intended to be clear and objective, and admission to this group is based solely on past results and dedication to chess, most certainly not on a favouritism basis. The admission criterion is as follows:

**Rating:**

The applicant's rating must be within the

rating range of the top 5 students already in the group

**Homework:**

Completion must consistently be 100%

**Behavior:**

Any behavioral issues will not be acceptable

**Commitment:**

The applicant must consistently participate in the minimum number of monthly required tournaments

Please note that upon acceptance, failure to maintain these admission criteria may result in the student no longer being admissible to this group.

If you are interested in becoming a part of this advanced, competitive and result-oriented class, please contact us with an application.

# VCS SOFTWARE UPDATES

As part of our mission to deliver the best possible supplements to our weekly classes, we are consistently adding to and upgrading our online homework and software features. Our goal is not to make homework a test or a source of anxiety for students, but to use it as a tool to help them hone their skills faster, remain sharp in their tactical vision, and allow coaches to understand which students are most attentive to their homework. Homework is a crucial component to chess success and we cannot stress enough how important it is for all students to be diligent and for all parents to remind and encourage their children to complete it each week.

## HOMWORK PROGRESS

From Date  To Date  [Show](#)

Activity	Positions	Positions to play
Homework	60	10
Chess Mentor Exercises	130	10
Tests	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>20</b>

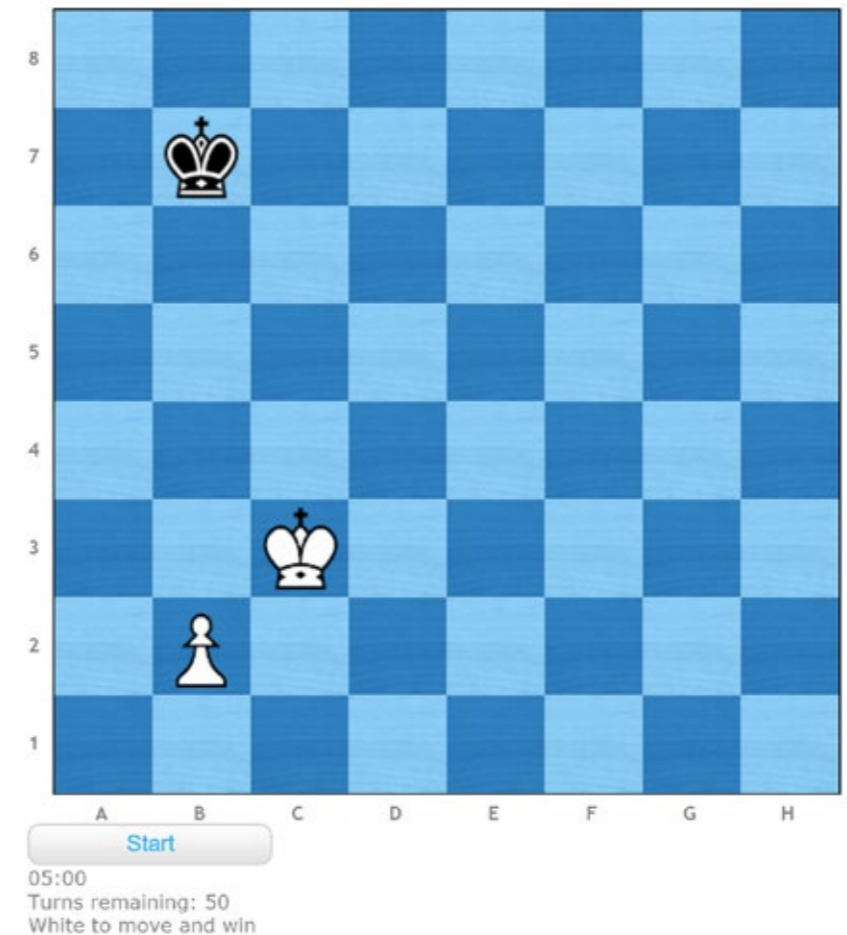
As part of our attempt to aid coaches in quickly and easily seeing which students are dedicating the most efforts to their homework, we have created a new feature that allows parents and coaches alike to view the amount of time spent on the homework positions. Often students will claim the homework is too difficult, but more often than not this can be attributed to a lack of time invested in the positions. To view this, under the students account simply go to 'progress'. It will be different depending on the student, their level, and their class but homework likely should take 30-90 minutes per week. Needless to say, the more time spent dedicated to doing and studying the homework, the more quickly the student will experience vast improvement.

# VCS SOFTWARE UPDATES

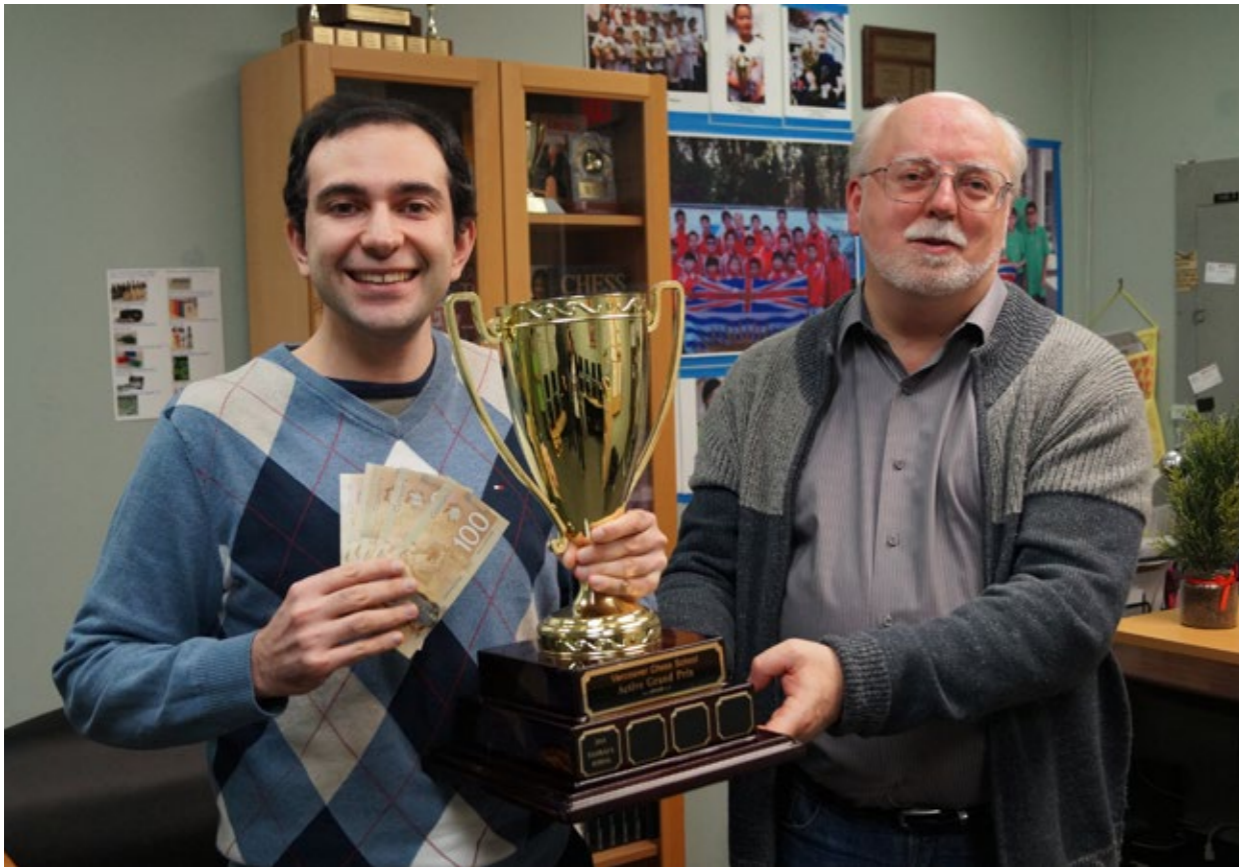
## POSITIONS TO PLAY START BUTTON

While most weeks students find their homework all under 'positions' there are some topics that entail some 'positions to play'. These are all timed positions with several minutes for the student to achieve the necessary goal. Previously these timers would begin as soon as the position is clicked on, but now there will be a start button to allow the student to study the position before commencing the exercise. All students are encouraged to take advantage of this by spending additional time evaluating the given position before beginning to make moves. This subconsciously trains them to be more patient, cautious and attentive before making moves in their real games.

### CHESS CHALLENGE #3



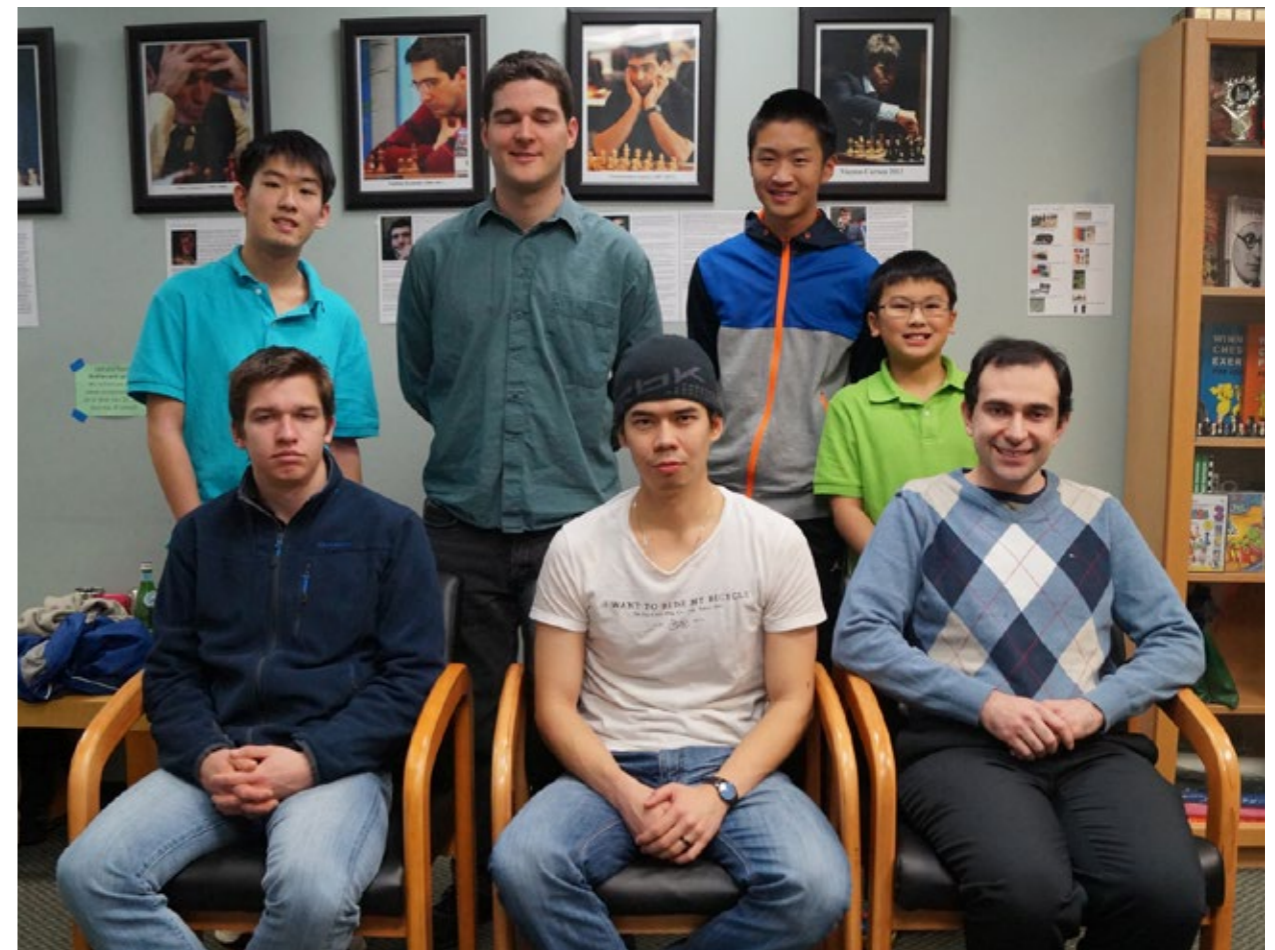
# TOURNAMENT RESULTS



## ACTIVE GRAND PRIX (DECEMBER 19)

Held at the Vancouver Chess School on December 19, the tournament brought together the twelve winners of the 2015 VCS monthly actives (or the next highest-placed individual, if that month's winner had already qualified). With such a field the competition was tough, especially since there was only one prize in each section – \$500 for the open, a trophy for the juniors, winner takes all. With anyone being capable of beating anyone else on a good day it all came down to who was in form (or lucky), and on this particular day

it was Alfred Pechisker. While the various contenders beat up on each other it was Alfred who won game after game, finally giving up a draw in the last round to clinch first place with 5.5/6. Madiyar Amerkeshev placed second a full point behind, while Grigoriy Morosov and Tanraj Sohal tied for third. Watch for upcoming VCS actives, where with a good result YOU could qualify for the next Grand Prix finale.



Final Standings <https://vanchess.ca/tournaments/view/id/617>

# TOURNAMENT RESULTS

## JANUARY 10TH ACTIVE

The first VCS monthly active tournament of the year attracted a total of thirty-three players, eighteen in the Open Section including eight rated over 2000. The competition was intense, indicated by multiple previous-winner Mayo Fuentebella only scoring 50% and Davaa-Ochir Nyamdorj finishing even further down the field. In the end it was the two titled players who showed their mettle, as FMs Grigoriy Morozov and Max Gedajlovic drew with each other and won the rest of their games to tie for first. In fact, all the prizes were split: Kevin Low and Richard Ingram tied for third, a full point and a half behind the winners, Ethan Low and James Li split the first and second U1800 prizes, while Andrew Hemstapat, Chuyang Gu, Daniel Du, and Sherry Tian earned pocket money by tying for U1800 third.

The fifteen-player Junior Section employed a new prize distribution: instead of trophies for the top three places, champion trophies were instead distributed by class (U1300, U1000, U600), while those scoring 3.0 points or above were awarded medals. Having won his first three games Daniel Zhang was on track to take the top prize, but despite having the winning side of a king and pawn vs. king ending in round four he only drew – learn your elementary endings, kids. A loss in the last round allowed Jerry Wang, Navid Samiei, and Andrew Xu to pass him and tie for first with 4.0 points; Jerry took the champion trophy after computer tiebreaks were applied. Eric Jiang won the U1000 trophy and Raphael Chong the U600; medals went to Navid Samiei, Andrew Xu, Daniel Zhang, Ryan Yang, and Zhenshu Luan.

Final Standings <https://vanchess.ca/tournaments/view/id/697>



# TOURNAMENT RESULTS

## VANCOUVER WEST OPEN (JANUARY 23-24)

As with the previous events in this series there were three sections: a two-day Open for adults and stronger juniors, a two-day Junior Open, and a one-day Junior Open. Both the two-day sections consisted of six games played at the time control of one hour per player (50 minutes with a 10- second increment), the minimum necessary for regular rating; the one-day section was five games at 25 minutes with a 5-second increment. The two-day Open attracted an even dozen competitors – for some reason most of the usual contenders were missing this time round. The sole exception (and only player rated over 2000) was Davaa-Ochir Nyamdorj, who unsurprisingly cruised to victory with 5.5/6. The single draw he gave up was to James Li, rated 1499 and only ranked seventh in the field, who had an excellent event in tying for second with Kevin Low on 4.5 points (they split the 2nd overall and 1st U1500 prizes). The 2nd U1500 prize was divided between Chuyang Gu, Kai Wang, Andrew Hemstapat, and Brandon Zhu.



Seven players entered the two-day Junior Open; six rounds were planned, but the games were over so quickly (slow down kids, give yourselves time to think!) that a seventh round was added to produce a round robin. This was dominated by Daniel Wang and Samuel Taplin who each scored 5.0/7, with Daniel taking the U1400 trophy on tiebreak. The remaining trophies were distributed by class rather than overall place, and these went to Jenny Jiang (U1200) and Eric Jiang (no relation, U1000), while Taplin and Ryan Yang won medals. And in the one-day Junior Open Codrin Pompas (U800) and Gillian Mok (U600) were the trophy winners, while Jeremy Reyes, Terry Xu, Jocelyn Reyes, Jeremy Liang, and Alex An were awarded medals.

Final Standings <https://vanchess.ca/tournaments/view/id/778>

# TOURNAMENT RESULTS



## FEBRUARY 13TH ACTIVE

This, the first VCS monthly active held at the new location of Columbia College (on Terminal near Main), attracted a total of fifteen players. Many were the usual suspects, but there were several returnees we haven't seen in a while (Gilberto Igharas, Ashley Tapp) and a number of players new to these events (Lex Lawless, Paul Burke). Among the latter were Elias Oussedik, winner of the last New Brunswick Closed, who had tied for first in the B.C. Open the previous weekend, and dark horse Lehi Laceste, elder brother of 2011 B.C. co-champion Loren Laceste, who has an online blitz rating of 2100+ but is otherwise unknown.

These two turned out to be the class of the field, sharing first place with 5.0/6 each. Oussedik beat Laceste in their individual encounter but blundered an exchange to

junior Ryan Leong and suffered the eventual consequences, thus setting up the tie. Richard Ingram had a good event, defeating Kevin Low en route to scoring 4.5 points to come clear third and claim the first U1800 prize; Ryan Leong was second U1800 a half-point back. Notable also was Ashley Tapp, playing in her first active in a long time, who achieved full points against Paul Burke and Joe Roback. Watch for the next active coming up on March 12.

For more information or to sign up, visit our website:

<https://vanchess.ca/tournaments/view/id/879>

## 2016 B.C. CHESS CHALLENGE

This year's BC chess challenge turned out an incredible number of 115 players in grades K-12. The biggest event to date at our new tournament venue of Columbia college, this location did not disappoint and it allowed for a very smoothly and successfully run tournament. Stakes were high, with pride, trophies and the chance to represent BC all on the line, and with an impressive and competitive turnout competition was fierce. However, VCS students did not disappoint and did their school proud. With over 50% of the top prizes, VCS takes home 7 gold medals, 3 silvers and 10 bronzes. This tournament caps off the season of regional qualifiers, fierce rivalries and new but long lasting friendships. We hope to see everyone at regionals and provincials next year.

For more information or to sign up, visit our website:

<https://vanchess.ca/tournaments/view/id/823>

# TOURNAMENT RESULTS



**The winners by grade  
(VCS representatives only)**

**Gr 1:** Ryan Yang

**Gr 2:** Daniel Wang

**Gr 3:** Andrew Xu

**Gr 4:** Lucian Wu

**Gr 7:** Ethan Low

**Gr 11:** Janak Awatramani

**Gr 12:** Jeremy Hui



Ryan Yang



Daniel Wang



Lucian Wu



Ethan Low



Janak Awatramani



Jeremy Hui



Andrew Xu



# TOURNAMENT RESULTS



**The winners by grade  
(VCS representatives only)**

**Gr 1:** Ethan Song

**Gr 8:** Brian Butchart

**Gr 9:** Kevin Li



Ethan Song



Brian Butchart



Kevin Li

# TOURNAMENT RESULTS



The winners by grade  
(VCS representatives only)

**Gr 1:** Hovey HoDak Ma

**Gr 2:** Eric Jiang

**Gr 3:** Stanley Wu

**Gr 4:** Elvin Sun

**Gr 5:** Andy Zhang

**Gr 6:** Victor Zheng

**Gr 8:** Ryan Leong

**Gr 9:** Maven Zheng

**Gr 10:** James Li

**Gr K:** Ethan Zheng



Hovey HoDak Ma



Eric Jiang



Stanley Wu



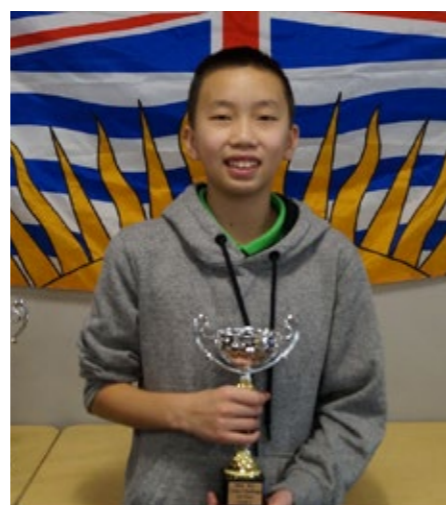
Elvin Sun



Andy Zhang



Victor Zheng



Ryan Leong



Maven Zheng



James Li



Ethan Zheng

# VANCOUVER RAPID TEAM CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

Vancouver Rapid is a Team Chess Championship held in Vancouver every year. The competitions consist of two stages. During the first stage, the teams are playing Round robin or Swiss system tournament against each other (depending on the quantity of teams). In the end of qualification tournament, the strongest teams take part in the final play off to identify a sole winner. The first year was victorious for the Vancouver Chess School as it was represented mainly by VCS teachers. Starting 2014, VCS team consists exclusively of VCS students.



The VCS team for 2016-2017 will be formed based on CFC ratings. The **Top 10 CFC rated players** (on Sep-01-2016) from our school will be invited to join the team in September 2016.

# TOP 10 CFC/CMA

## TOP 10 CFC/CMA RATED PLAYERS FROM OUR SCHOOL AS OF MAR 1, 2016.

#	NAME	CFC RATING
1	Kevin Low	1922
2	Maven Zheng	1806
3	Victor Zheng	1712
4	Ethan Low	1708
5	Kevin Li	1672
6	Ryan Leong	1618
7	James Li	1603
8	Daniel Chen	1574
9	Daniel Du	1563
10	Jim Guo	1490

Check your CFC rating  
<https://www.vanchess.ca/rating-cfc>

#	NAME	CMA RATING
1	Kevin Low	2013
2	Ryan Leong	1858
3	James Li	1822
4	Maven Zheng	1704
5	Ethan Low	1689
6	Victor Zheng	1656
7	Daniel Chen	1616
8	Kevin Li	1597
9	Dylan Fox	1594
10	Daniel Du	1580

Check your CMA rating  
<https://www.vanchess.ca/rating-cma>

# RECOMMENDED MINIMUM RATING TO ADVANCE TO THE NEXT LEVEL

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>RATING</b>
Pawn->Knight	600 (CMA)
Knight->Bishop	1100 (CMA)
Bishop->Rook	1500 (CMA)
Rook->Queen	1800 (CMA)
Queen->King	2000+ (CMA)

# INTERIM TEST

As VCS follows the school calendar and will be closed from Mar 14-Mar 28, we have created an OPTIONAL interim test for students to complete over the break if they choose to do so. Covering all the material they learned this past semester this test helps both the student and the coach gauge how much of the material the student is grasping. This test can be found on the student account, under Test -> Chess Mentor Exercises. The students can start, pause and continue the test over the course of the break, and also have the choice to reset the test if they wish to improve upon their score. Each question can be attempted 1-2 times. With a score of 75% or higher on this test the student will be awarded a diamond on their Wall of Fame.

It is not mandatory to complete this test, and the completion of this test does not count for or against the student in any way. It is simply extra practice for those who are interested, and a good way to judge their own improvement.

# TEAM BC AT THE CANADIAN CHESS CHALLENGE 2016, REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN. MAY 22-23, 2016.

Following tradition, the top players in the province in each grade are invited and will be representing BC at the annual Canadian Chess Challenge, to be held in Regina over the May long weekend this year. With one of it's strongest teams ever, featuring both seasoned veterans such as past Canadian champions Janak Awatramani & Joshua Doknjas and former world champion Jason Cao, as well as young rising stars with still untapped potential, BC holds high hopes for it's formidable team this year. As a provincial team, the divide between VCS students and other players is non existent. We play as a team for BC, and we wish the very best of luck to all these promising young players at the Canadian pinnacle of youth chess.



**Gr1** Ryan Yang



**Gr 2** Daniel Wang



**Gre 3** Andrew Xu



**Gr 4** Lucian Wu

# TEAM BC AT THE CANADIAN CHESS CHALLENGE 2016, REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN. MAY 22-23, 2016.



**Gr 5** Neil Doknjas



**Gr 6** Leo Qu



**Gr 7** Ethan Low



**Gr 8** Joshua Doknjas



**Gr 9** Matthew Geng



**Gr 10** Jason Cao



**Gr 11** Janak Awatramani



**Gr 12** Jeremy Hui



[WWW.VANCHESS.CA](http://WWW.VANCHESS.CA)