

2010

U.S. CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP



MEDIA KIT

SAINT LOUIS
MAY 13 - 25, 2010

HISTORY OF U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP

No series of tournaments or matches enjoys the same rich, turbulent history as that of the United States Chess Championship. It is in many ways unique – and, up to recently, unappreciated.

In Europe and elsewhere, the idea of choosing a national champion came slowly. The first Russian championship tournament, for example, was held in 1889. The Germans did not get around to naming a champion until 1879.

The first official Hungarian championship occurred in 1906, and the first Dutch, three years later. But American chess fans knew as early as 1845 who their champion was: the little-known Charles Stanley – and many non-players knew it, too, because the title match of that year was well publicized.

Twelve years later the industrious American organizers mounted their first tournament for a national champion. And that event, New York 1857, won by the “pride and soul of chess,” Paul Morphy, was only the fourth true chess tournament ever held in the world.

In its first century and a half plus, the United States Championship has provided all kinds of entertainment.

It has introduced new heroes exactly 100 years apart in Paul Morphy (1857) and Bobby Fischer (1957) and honored remarkable veterans such as Sammy Reshevsky in his late 60s. There have been stunning upsets (Arnold Denker in 1944 and John Grefe in 1973) and marvelous achievements (Fischer’s winning debut as a precocious 14-year-old in 1957, and his remarkable perfect score of 11-0 in 1964, to his record-breaking eight title wins).

The championship has seen scandals and swindles, boycotts and brilliancies, bitter controversy and theoretical innovations. The games have been won and lost by geniuses and drunkards, prodigies and émigrés, college dons and coffeehouse hustlers.

It has also been a truly national championship. For many years the title tournament was identified with New York. But it has also been held in towns as small as South Fallsburg, New York, Mentor, Ohio, and Greenville, Pennsylvania.

Fans have witnessed championship play in Boston, and Las Vegas, Baltimore and Los Angeles, Lexington, Kentucky, and El Paso, Texas. The title has been decided in sites as varied as the Sazerac Coffee House in 1845 to the Cincinnati Literary Club, the Automobile Club of Detroit. The U.S. Championship has been held in the auditorium of a fundamentalist Christian college in Pasadena and, in 1984 the Student Union Building of the University of California at Berkeley, as well as the Seattle Center in the shadows of the Space Needle. The most recent title was decided at the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis, widely recognized as the premier chess club in the country if not the world.

U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP FACTS

With a heritage line that includes great legends of the game, no series of tournaments or matches enjoys the same rich history as that of the U.S. Chess Championships.

The first player to be termed, by popular acclaim, “U.S. Champion”, was Charles Stanley in 1845.

The first championship to name a true national champion was New York 1857, won by Paul Morphy. It was only the fourth chess championship ever held.

The first “official” U.S. Champion was Jackson Showalter (who is also credited with the invention of the curve ball in baseball) in 1890.

From 1905 through to 1936, the title was decided by a match between the top two players in the country; Frank Marshall holding the title throughout.

The longest gap between title wins is 33 years when Sammy Revshevsky won his first title in 1936 and his last, in 1969.

The first U.S. Women’s Championship was held in 1938 and was won by Gisela Gresser.

The youngest winner of the title at 14 in 1957 was Bobby Fischer. He also holds the record for the most titles won with eight.

The player with the best score is Bobby Fischer, who in 1964 recorded a perfect 11-0.

CHAMPIONS BY ACCLAMATION FROM PAST YEARS

1845-1889

1845-1857	Charles Stanley, defeated Eugène Rousseau in a match in 1845
1857-1871	Paul Morphy, won the first American Chess Congress in 1857
1871-1889	George Henry Mackenzie, won the 2nd, 3rd and 5th American Chess Congress

Match Champions: 1889-1935

1889 - 1890	S. Lipschütz
1890 - 1890	Jackson Showalter
1890 - 1892	Max Judd
1892 - 1892	Jackson Showalter
1892 - 1893	S. Lipschütz
1893 - 1894	Jackson Showalter
1894 - 1895	Albert Hodges
1895 - 1896	Jackson Showalter
1897 - 1906	Harry Nelson Pillsbury
1906 - 1909	Jackson Showalter
1909 - 1935	Frank Marshall

CHAMPIONS BY ACCLAMATION FROM PAST YEARS continued ...**Tournament Champions: 1936-1980**

1936	Samuel Reshevsky
1938	Samuel Reshevsky
1940	Samuel Reshevsky
1942	Samuel Reshevsky
1944	Arnold Denker
1946	Samuel Reshevsky
1948	Herman Steiner
1951	Larry Evans
1954	Arthur Bisguier
1957/8	Bobby Fischer
1958/9	Bobby Fischer
1959	Bobby Fischer
1960/1	Bobby Fischer
1962/3	Bobby Fischer
1963/4	Bobby Fischer
1965/6	Bobby Fischer
1966/7	Bobby Fischer
1968	Larry Evans
1969	Samuel Reshevsky
1972	Robert Byrne
1973	Lubomir Kavalek and John Grefe
1974	Walter Browne
1975	Walter Browne
1977	Walter Browne
1978	Lubomir Kavalek
1980	Walter Browne, Larry Christiansen, Larry Evans

Tournament Champions: 1983-2009

1983	Walter Browne, Larry Christiansen, Roman Dzindzichashvili
1984	Lev Alburt
1985	Lev Alburt
1986	Yasser Seirawan
1987	Joel Benjamin and Nick de Firmian
1988	Michael Wilder
1989	Roman Dzindzichashvili, Stuart Rachels, Yasser Seirawan
1990	Lev Alburt
1991	Gata Kamsky
1992	Patrick Wolff
1993	Alexander Shabalov and Alex Yermolinsky
1994	Boris Gulko
1995	Nick de Firmian, Patrick Wolff, Alexander Ivanov
1996	Alex Yermolinsky
1997	Joel Benjamin
1998	Nick de Firmian
1999	Boris Gulko
2000	Joel Benjamin, Alexander Shabalov, Yasser Seirawan
2002	Larry Christiansen
2003	Alexander Shabalov
2005	Hikaru Nakamura
2006	Alexander Onischuk
2007	Alexander Shabalov
2008	Yury Shulman
2009	Hikaru Nakamura

2010 U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP CALENDAR OF EVENTS

ARRIVAL DAY

Thursday, May 13

3:00pm - All Players', Arbiters' and Commentators' need to be checked into the Chase Park Plaza or Choice Hotel
4:00pm - Players' Meeting, Signing and Photo Shoot

OPENING CEREMONY

Thursday, May 13

6:00pm - Chess at the Plaza Park
Opening Remarks and Program
Drawing of the Colors
Announce all the Rounds Pairing
Hors de oeuvres and Cocktails
Open to the Public
General Admission \$25 per person
Old Post Office Plaza
801 Locust Street

CHAMPIONSHIP ROUNDS 1 - 7

Open to the Public
Chess Club Scholastic Center of Saint Louis
4657 Maryland Avenue

Friday, May 14

2:00pm - 8:00pm
Championship Round 1

Saturday, May 15

2:00pm - 8:00pm
Championship Round 2

Sunday, May 16

2:00pm - 8:00pm
Championship Round 3

Monday, May 17

2:00pm - 8:00pm
Championship Round 4

Tuesday, May 18

2:00pm - 8:00pm
Championship Round 5

Wednesday, May 19

2:00pm - 8:00pm
Championship Round 6

Thursday, May 20

2:00pm - 8:00pm
Championship Round 7

PLAYERS' REST DAY

Friday, May 21

12:00pm - Human Chess Event
2:00pm - Possible 4th Place Playoff

CHAMPIONSHIP ROUNDS 8 - 9 and ROUND 1-3 OF QUAD FINALS

Open to the Public
Chess Club Scholastic Center of Saint Louis
4657 Maryland Avenue

Saturday, May 22

2:00pm - 8:00pm
Championship Round 8 and Round 1 of
Quad Finals

Sunday, May 23

2:00pm - 8:00pm
Championship Round 9 and
Round 2 of Quad Finals

Monday, May 24

2:00pm - 8:00pm
Round 3 of Quad Finals

OPEND BLITZ TOURNAMENT

Monday, May 24

8:00pm
Chase Park Plaza Hotel
Khorassan Ballroom
212 N Kingshighway Boulevard

POSSIBLE TIE BREAKER

Tuesday, May 25

10:00am - 12:00pm

COMMUNITY DAY

Tuesday, May 25

12:00pm - 5:00pm
Saint Louis Science Center
5050 Oakland Avenue

CLOSING CEREMONY AND RECEPTION

Tuesday, May 25

7:00pm - 9:00pm
Chase Park Plaza Hotel
212 N Kingshighway Boulevard

DEPARTURE AND TRAVEL DAY

Wednesday, May 26, 2010

MAURICE ASHLEY, \$10,000 blitz tourney highlight 2010 U.S. Chess Championship



SAINT LOUIS, March 23, 2010 -- Grandmaster Maurice Ashley, the first African-American GM in the history of chess, will provide expert analysis and commentary at the 2010 U.S. Chess Championship, set for the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis May 13-25. Ashley was featured on ESPN in 1996 when he provided commentary for the Man vs. Machine match (Garry Kasparov vs. IBM's super-computer Deep Blue) and again in 1997 for the Kasparov vs. Deep Blue rematch. Ashley earned the title of grandmaster in 1999. He and WGM Jennifer Shahade will provide in-depth commentary throughout the 2010 U.S. Chess Championship.

Fans are also invited to play with the best in a \$10,000 Open Blitz tournament held on Monday, May 24, at the Khorassan Ballroom in the Chase Park Plaza.

The U.S. Championship Blitz Open will feature a \$7,000 prize fund in the open section and a \$3,000 prize fund in the reserve, U2000 section. The nine-round Swiss will begin at 8 p.m. and will feature a game-in-five-minute (G/5) format. Pre-register at the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis until 6:30 p.m. the day of the tournament. On-site registration is available at the Khorassan Ballroom from 6:30 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. The entry fee is waived for GMs, \$50 for non-annual club members and \$40 for annual members. More details, including prize breakdown, will appear on the CCSCSL website soon.

This year's innovative championship format will culminate in a "Final Four" quad from May 22-24. The 2010 edition will also feature the strongest Swiss field in history and the richest per capita prize fund. Fans from all over the world are invited to Saint Louis to participate in the blitz, watch GM Ashley's commentary and see the quad finals.

Prospective spectators just need to become a CCSCSL member. Student rates are \$5/month or \$30/year and adult memberships cost only \$12/month or \$80/year. A family membership costs only \$120/year for the entire household. Those who purchase an annual membership, or existing annual members who renew their membership, will receive one complimentary pass to either the opening or closing ceremony.

The Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis is located in the beautiful and historic Central West End district, just minutes from downtown Saint Louis. There are a number of hotel options within walking distance of the club including the Chase Park Plaza Hotel, the Indigo Hotel and the Parkway. The downtown area also features numerous hotel options and is just a 10-minute cab ride from the club. Saint Louis features some one-of-a-kind attractions including the Saint Louis Science Center, the Art Museum, the History Museum and one of the top zoos in the nation, the Saint Louis Zoo. Other one-of-a-kind attractions include the Gateway Arch, the Missouri Botanical Gardens and Busch Stadium, the home of the St. Louis Cardinals and the 2008 All-Star game.

Don't miss your chance to be a part of the 2010 U.S. Chess Championship at the most beautiful chess club in the entire country. The CCSCSL will also host the 2010 U.S. Women's Championship and 2010 U.S. Junior Closed Championship, July 9-19. Saint Louis is the home of U.S. Championship Chess! Join us! For more information, please call 314-361-CHESS (2437) or visit www.saintlouischessclub.org.

EXCITING NEW FORMAT DEBUTS AT 2010 U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP

SAINT LOUIS, January 22, 2010 -- The 2010 U.S. Chess Championship, scheduled to be held May 13-25 at the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis, will feature a new format, which includes a 24-player, seven-round Swiss tournament followed by a four-player Championship final. The idea is designed to ensure drama in the final three days of play and to avoid the potentially less climactic pairings that are typical in a 24-player, nine-round Swiss.

This innovative new format will ensure an exciting finale for chess fans around the world. After seven rounds of play, the top four players will face off in a round robin (also known as a quad). The scores from the Swiss tournament will carry over into the final.

Players who do not make it into the top four places after seven rounds will play two more rounds of the Swiss event. They will also have much to play for as fifth place will be awarded \$10,000 and the total prize fund of the "Challenger's Swiss" will exceed \$90,000.

"By structuring this year's event with both a preliminary Swiss and climactic final, we hope to host a U.S. Championship that fans will never forget and that will help advance the cause of chess as telegenic and thrilling," said Tony Rich, executive director of the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis. "Come out to Saint Louis for a long weekend during the finals to see for yourself!"

Tournament Chairperson WGM Jennifer Shahade will provide live commentary of the tournament alongside a Grandmaster Maurice Ashley.

This year's prize fund is being increased from \$135,000 to more than \$170,000 with a grand prize of \$35,000, a minimum of \$3,000 for last place and more funds going to second place in particular (\$20,000 as compared to \$15,000 in 2009). The prize fund is differentiated at every single place with the exception of the fourth- and fifth-place finishers, who will both receive \$10,000. "We are proud to present the largest per capita prize fund in U.S. Championship history," Rich said. In the event that there is no clear U.S. Champion after the quad finals, there will be a championship playoff. The U.S. Champion will receive \$5,000 more than other players tied for first prior to the playoff, but other tied players throughout the tournament will share monies equally. If after seven rounds, there are ties for the four places into the final round-robin quad, then there will be a concise fourth-place playoff on May 21, the scheduled rest day.

"Rules to break possible ties (and multiple ties) for fourth and first will be fully outlined," said U.S. Championship Rules Advisor Greg Shahade. They will appear in the player's contracts and on the CCSCSL Web site closer to the tournament start.

2010 CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYERS

**GM Hikaru Nakamura**

Status: Accepted
Residence: Seattle, Wash.
Rating: 2778
Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2009 World Team Championship: Silver (Individual Gold), 2009 U.S. Champion, 2005 U.S. Champion, 2007 North American Open Champion, 2007 National Open Champion

Bio: Hikaru Nakamura is a record-breaking, medal-earning phenomenon. Since winning the U.S. Championship in May 2009, Nakamura has soared, climbing well past 2700 to the #1 spot in the U.S. rankings and #17 in the world rankings. He became the youngest master in American history at the age of 10, then broke Bobby Fischer's record by becoming the youngest American Grandmaster at 15. In 2004, he advanced into the sweet 16 at the World Championship in Libya. He also won his first U.S. Championship at the age of 16.

He's racked up numerous championships over the past decade, and despite his aggressive, individualistic style, Nakamura has proven to be a great team player: He was a two-time bronze medallist in the 2006 and 2008 Olympiad, playing for the U.S. team. His gold-medal-winning performance on board one at the 2009 World Team Championship helped the U.S. team earn silver medals. Last year, Nakamura won the 2009 U.S. Championship and is quickly becoming one of the top players in the entire world.

**GM Gata Kamsky**

Status: Accepted
Residence: New York
Rating: 2768
Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2007 World Cup, 1991 U.S. Champion

Bio: Gata Kamsky came to the U.S. in 1989 and, at 16, became a Grandmaster in 1990. He played Karpov for the World Championship in 1996. Although he lost the match, he was the first American since Bobby Fischer to go that far. After losing, he gave up chess, attended and graduated from law school. After a break of nearly a decade, Kamsky returned to chess, to win the 2007 World Chess Cup just three years after his comeback. Kamsky lost his February 2009 match against Veselin Topalov and with it, the chance to advance to the this cycle's World Championship, but he is as determined as ever. Kamsky participates in one elite event after another in Europe, making him a top GM to watch in Saint Louis.

2010 CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYERS continued ...**GM Alexander Onischuk**

Status: Accepted

Residence: Baltimore, Maryland

Rating: 2734

Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2009 World Team Championship: Silver (Individual Gold), 2006 U.S. Champion, second in the 2007 Grandmaster Tournament of International Chess Festival Biel

Bio: Alexander Onischuk has placed first in more than 20 tournaments, including the 2000 Ukrainian Championship. He became a Grandmaster in 1994 at the age of 19 and relocated to the U.S. in 2001. When he won the 2006 U.S. Championship, he called it the happiest moment of his career to have his name on a trophy alongside players such as Fischer and Morphy.

Onischuk was key to America's bronze medal finishes in 2006 and 2008 Olympiads. He has an impressive international record: He placed second in the International Chess Festival in Biel and also won the super strong Moscow Open in January 2009. He delivered a gold-medal performance on board two at the World Team Championship in Bursa, Turkey.

**GM Varuzhan Akobian**

Status: Accepted

Residence: North Hollywood, California

Rating: 2699

Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2009 World Team Championship: Silver, 2004 World Open, tied for first place in the 2002 World Open

Bio: Varuzhan Akobian is a strong Armenian-American player who emigrated to the U.S in 2001. In 2002, he won the Samford Chess Fellowship, which allowed him to focus on chess for two years. It paid off: Akobian reached his first long-time goal of becoming a Grandmaster in 2004. Var is known for being a great team player: He was a member of the bronze medal Olympiad teams in 2006 and 2008. He also represented the US. team in Bursa, Turkey at the 2009 World Team Championship where he helped the U.S. earn silver medals. He was featured on MTV's "True Life" series. Akobian is the highest-ranked Californian player.

2010 CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYERS continued ...**GM Yury Shulman**

Status: Accepted
Residence: Chicago
Rating: 2682
Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2009 World Team Championship: Silver, 2008 U.S. Champion, 2006 U.S. Open Championship, tied for first in the 2001 World Open

Bio: Yury Shulman achieved the Grandmaster title in 1995 and moved to the U.S. four years later to become one of the top American players. Shulman also uses chess for philanthropic causes. He founded the Yury Shulman International Chess School and consistently contributes to not-for-profit entities, schools and camps. He holds a bachelor's degree in computer science and an MBA. 2008 proved to be a great year for Shulman: In addition to winning his first U.S. Championship title, he was also part of the bronze medal Olympiad team in Dresden, Germany. This year, Shulman represented the U.S. at the World Team Championship in Bursa, Turkey and helped the team earn silver.

**GM Jaan Ehvest**

Status: Accepted
Residence: Baltimore, Maryland
Rating: 2673
Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2008 Pan American- Continental Championship, qualifying for the 2009 FIDE World Cup, tied for first in the "A2" section of the Aeroflot Open, 2003 World Open

Bio: Jaan Ehvest rose to chess fame quickly in the early 1980s, placing second in the 1981 World Junior Championship and first in the 1983 European Junior Championship. He became a Grandmaster in 1987 and two years later finished clear first in the 1989 Reggio Emilia. Ehvest won the Grand Prix title in 2006, the same year he switched federations from Estonia to America, making him eligible for the U.S. Championship for the first time.

**GM Alexander Shabalov**

Status: Accepted
Residence: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Rating: 2669
Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2007 U.S. Champion, 2003 U.S. Champion, 1997 U.S. Champion, 1993 US. Champion, T-1st 2003 World Open, 1st in Chicago and North American Opens

Bio: Alexander Shabalov realized chess would be his profession after winning the Latvian junior championship at the age of 11. He went on to win the Under-16 Championship of the Soviet Union in 1982. The four-time U.S. Champion is known for no-holds barred chess, and he thrives on wild moves.

2010 CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYERS *continued ...***GM Larry Christiansen**

Status: Accepted

Residence: Cambridge, Massachusetts

Rating: 2665

Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2009 U.S. Senior Champion, 2002 U.S. Champion, 1983 U.S. Champion, 1980 U.S. Champion, 2001 Canadian Open Chess Championship

Bio: Larry Christiansen was the first junior high school student to win the National High School Championship, taking the title in 1971. He went on to win three invitational U.S. Junior Championships and three U.S. Championships. He became a Grandmaster in 1977 at the age of 21, skipping over the usual step of becoming an International Master. Christiansen has won the prestigious Linares tournament twice. He has a thrilling chess style that is always fun for spectators.

When playing Larry, you're hereby advised to defend your h7 pawn at least five times. Larry Christiansen is an American master of attack. He even published two widely praised books on the subject of attacking chess, *Storming the Barricades* and *Rocking the Ramparts*.

**GM Alex Lenderman**

Status: Accepted

Residence: Brooklyn, NY

Rating: 2649

Title: Grandmaster-elect

Chess Highlights:

2009 USCF Grand Prix Winner, 2009 U.S. Open, 2009 Atlantic Open: First Place, 2008 USCF Grand Prix Winner, Gold Medal winner at the 2005 World Youth Chess Championship

Bio: Alex Lenderman first started playing chess with his grandfather when he was 9. From 2004-2007, he attended Edward R. Murrow high school in Brooklyn, NY, and was a member of the super-team that won four straight, national high-school titles. The journey of this high-school, chess dream team was documented in the 2007 book *The Kings of New York*, by Michael Weinreb.

Since that time, Alex has been a formidable force in the chess world and has solidified himself as a young rising star. In 2008, he managed to barely edge GM Sergey Kudrin to win the USCF's Grand Prix, and in 2009, he ran away with the competition. Lenderman has been playing an exciting brand of chess as of late and will be a formidable contender in this year's championship.

2010 CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYERS *continued ...***GM Gregory Kaidanov**

Status: Accepted
Residence: Lexington, Kentucky
Rating: 2643
Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2002 U.S. Masters winner, 2002 Chicago Open Winner, 1992 World Open Winner, 1992 U.S. Open Winner

Bio: Gregory Kaidanov's first major win came in a Moscow tournament in 1987, and he was awarded the Grandmaster title a year later. Kaidanov moved to the U.S. in 1991. He's racked up a number of tournament championships. Kaidanov was a member of the silver Olympiad team in Russia in 1998, won a silver board medal at the Calvia, Spain Olympiad in 2004 and was a member of the bronze medal Olympiad team in 2006. Kaidanov is one of America's premiere chess coaches. In 2008, he coached the U.S. team to a bronze medal finish at the Women's Olympiad.

**GM Robert Hess**

Status: Accepted
Residence: New York
Rating: 2641
Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2009 World Team Championship: Silver, 2009 U.S. Championship: T-2nd, 2008 Foxwoods Open: T-1st, 2006 U.S. Junior Championship, 2002 Pan-American Youth Championship in Argentina, won 2009 National High School Championship with a perfect score

Bio: Grandmaster Robert Hess is one of a handful of promising young stars on the U.S. chess scene. Hess was awarded the International Master title in 2007. He achieved his first norm for the Grandmaster title in Foxwoods 2008 and earned the final two in quick succession at the SPICE Spring Invitational and Foxwoods 2009.

Robert swept the 2009 High School Championship in Nashville, where he also led his high school, Stuyvesant, to a team victory. After being awarded a wild card berth to the 2009 U.S. Championship, Robert, originally seeded 17 out of 24 players, put on a remarkable performance to fall just short of the championship with a second-place finish. His 6.5/9 performance at last year's U.S. Championship came against opponents with an average FIDE rating of 2625.

2010 CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYERS continued ...**GM Melikset Khachiyan**

Status: Accepted
Residence: Glendale, California
Rating: 2629
Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: Frank K. Berry 2007 U.S. Championship, tied for first in the 2006 American Open, 1997 World Team Championship: Bronze (Armenia)

Bio: Melikset Khachiyan began playing chess at the age of 8, won the Baku Junior Championship two years later and became a Soviet Candidate Master two years after that. He began coaching early in his career and has brought up three Junior World Champions. In 2001, he immigrated to the U.S., where he participated in the National Open in Las Vegas. He earned his Grandmaster title in 2006.

**GM Ray Robson**

Status: Accepted
Birthplace: Largo, Florida
Rating: 2623
Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2009 World Team Championship: Silver, 2009 U.S. Junior Champion, 2008 Miami Open, National Champion, elementary division, 2005 Super Nationals, tied for first in 2005 and 2006 Pan American Youth Championships

Bio: Ray Robson learned chess at age 3 and has earned seven national scholastic titles since. For winning the Super Nationals in 2005, he will receive a full scholarship to the University of Texas at Dallas. Robson finished in the top 10 at the World Youth Championship from 2004 to 2007. He defeated his first Grandmaster in 2006, the same year he earned the USCF National Master title.

**GM Joel Benjamin**

Status: Accepted
Residence: New Jersey
Rating: 2621
Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2000 U.S. Championship, 1997 U.S. Championship, 1987 U.S. Championship

Bio: Joel Benjamin became a national master at the age of 13, breaking Bobby Fischer's record for youngest-ever master. A three-time U.S. Junior Champion, he became a Grandmaster in 1986. Benjamin also goes into the U.S. Championship history books for playing in a record 22 consecutive championships. His most-famous gig was helping the Deep Blue IBM Computer team defeat Garry Kasparov in 1997, a win that was later featured in the documentary "Game Over."

2010 CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYERS *continued ...***GM Ben Finegold**

Status: Accepted

Residence: Saint Louis, MO

Rating: 2616

Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2009 SPICE Cup, 2007 U.S. Open, 2005 Chicago Spring Invitational, 2002 World Open, 1994 U.S. Open, 1989 U.S. Junior Closed Championship

Bio: In January, Ben Finegold took on a full-time position as the resident GM at the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis. He has been ranked as high as 2662, at which point he was neck and neck with GM Larry Christiansen for the distinction of being the highest rated American born chess player in the country. For many years, Ben Finegold was missing the two most vital letters in a pro chess player's career, "G" and "M", giving him the double-edged honor of the "strongest IM in America." That all changed in 2009. Just after his 40th birthday, Ben earned his final GM norm at the SPICE Cup in Lubbock, Texas.

Ben Finegold is also somewhat understated; in contrast to many confident grandmasters who strut around with their heads in the clouds, Ben is funny, friendly, and apt to make self-effacing jokes. His description of his style is characteristically modest: "I play simple moves and try not to blunder or get in time trouble." He won first place at the 2006 U.S. Championship blogging contest, and now he has a blog of his own (Ben's Blog: Musings of a Grandmaster) where he posts anecdotes, games and crosstables from his tournaments.

**GM Alex Yermolinsky**

Status: Accepted

Residence: Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Rating: 2589

Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2009 U.S. Open: T-1st, 1999 U.S. Open Champion, 1996 U.S. Champion, 1993 U.S. Champion

Bio: Born in the Soviet Union, Alex Yermolinsky, also known as "Yermo" immigrated to the United States in 1990 after a brief stint in Italy. He earned his Grandmaster stripes playing second board for the American team in 1992. For a while, his main US gig was as a chemist, a job he was trained for in the Soviet Union.

2010 CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYERS continued ...



GM Sergey Kudrin

Status: Accepted
Residence: Stamford, Connecticut
Rating: 2581
Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2009 U.S. Open T-1st, U.S. Open Champion 2007

Bio: Sergey Kudrin has been a dominant force on the U.S. Chess scene for decades. His tie for first place at this year's U.S. Open earned him a bid to play in the U.S. Championship, and Kudrin plans to make the most of the opportunity.

Sergey became a Grandmaster in 1984. He has participated in the 2005 Chess World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia, the 1999 Las Vegas FIDE World Championship and the 2004 FIDE World Championship in Tripoli, Libya.



GM Jesse Kraai

Status: Accepted
Residence: GM House, Bay Area, Calif.
Rating: 2560
Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2009 U.S. Open T-1st, Winner Denker High School Tournament of Champions 1998 and 1999

Bio: Jesse Kraai won the New Mexico State title in 1999, and then went on a run winning the state title five years in a row from 2003-2007. He earned his Grandmaster title in 2007.

Jesse won the Denker High School Tournament of Champions in 1998 and 1999. He currently lives in the GM House in East Bay located near San Francisco, Calif. The GM House initially consisted of Kraai, GM Josh Friedel, GM Vinay Bhat and IM David Pruess, but in a recent article posted to Chess Life Online, Jesse said he and Friedel were looking for a few vacancies to fill.



IM Levon Altounian

Status: Accepted
Residence: Tucson, Arizona
Rating: 2534
Title: International Master

Chess Highlights:
2001 North American Open, 1993 Armenian Junior Championship

Bio: Levon was introduced to chess by his grandfather, who was a good chess player himself, at age of 10. Chess very quickly turned from a recreational interest into a passion for Levon and he joined the Tigran Petrosian Chess School. After performing well in numerous chess competitions and showing good chess ability, he was accepted by a coach who himself grew up with chess legend and World Champion Garry Kasparov.

2010 CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYERS continued ...



GM Dmitry Gurevich

Status: Accepted

Residence: Chicago

Rating: 2519

Title: Grandmaster

Chess Highlights: 2009 U.S. Open: T-1st, 1996 U.S. Masters Chicago, 1981 World Open, New Paltz, NY: T-1st

Bio: Dmitry Gurevich was born in Moscow, USSR, in 1956. He first learned to play chess when he was just 6. In 1980, he emigrated to the U.S. and began playing chess in New York. While there, he earned all three GM norms from '82-'83.

Dmitry earned a bid to the 2010 U.S. Championship because of his first-place finish at the 2009 U.S. Open in Indianapolis where he tied with five other players. He also took first place at the U.S. Open in 1988 and 1994.

WILD CARD FOUR



GM Vinay Bhat

Chess Highlights: 2009 SPICE Cup equal first, 2008 Samford Fellow, 2007 U.S. Chess League MVP, 2001-2002 California High School State Champion, 1998-1999 California High School State Champion, 1992 California Primary School State Champion, Author “Whiz Kids Teach Chess”

Synopsis: Vinay Bhat learned chess at six and a half years old and achieved the then-current record of youngest national master at ten years, six months old. Having represented the United States nine times at different World Youth competitions, including five top-five results, Bhat brings International experience to the U.S. Championship. He blazed through the rankings and earned his International Master title in 2000. After a relatively inactive period, during which he earned a degree in Statistics and Political Economy from U.C. Berkeley, GM Bhat returned to the chess world; he received the Samford Fellowship at the age of 24, which allowed him to leave his position at Cornerstone Research to return to chess full-time. Bhat earned his Grandmaster title in 2008 and is perched atop his highest-ever published FIDE rating of 2549.



GM Alex Stripunsky

Chess Highlights: 2010 Philadelphia Open equal first, 2009 National Chess Congress equal first, 2008 Continental Open first, 2007 World Open equal first, 2004 U.S. Championship equal first, 2002 World Open 6th

Synopsis: Alexander Stripunsky, 39, missed out on qualifying by rating for the 2010 U.S. Championship by a single rating point. In a similar fashion, his hopes were dashed in 2009, missing out by just one spot. It seemed his fate was cursed until receiving, and accepting, a wildcard invitation to play this year.

Stripunsky has an excellent record in U.S. Championships, having competed in five. In 2006 he had a strong run, tying for 3rd place. He gained respect as one of America’s elite Grandmasters in the 2005 U.S. Championship, where he won a beautiful last round game against Alexander Goldin, tying for first. His fabulous tournament came to an end when he lost to Hikaru Nakamura in the playoff match.

Stripunsky is disciplined when it comes to his chess career; he runs regularly and works hard at the board. He also appreciates the aesthetic power of chess, “The more you play, the more beauty you are able to see.”

A mainstay in American chess, Stripunsky will compete in his sixth U.S. Championship this year.

WILD CARD FOUR *continued ...***IM Sam Shankland**

Chess Highlights: 2009 Champion of State Champions, 2009 Philadelphia International third, 2008 World Under 18 co-champion, 2008 Calchess State Champion

Synopsis: 18-year-old Sam Shankland is the top rated player Under age 21 who was not already invited to play in the U.S. Championship. He won a gold medal for the USA at the 2008 World Youth Championship in Vietnam and is just one performance norm away from his Grandmaster title. The incoming Brandeis freshman called the U.S. Championship “his dream tournament for the year” and his wildcard invitation spotlights yet another promising young player. Shankland’s chess prowess catapulted in just over a year to earn him the title of International Master. Sam also qualified to play in the 2009 U.S. Championship after winning the final match of the Tournament of State Champions.

**IM Irina Krush**

Chess Highlights: 2009 National Chess Congress equal second through fourth, 2009 Canadian Open second, 2007 U.S. Women’s Champion, 1998 U.S. Women’s Champion, 1998 Pan-American Youth Champion

Synopsis: Samford Fellow, International Master and Woman Grandmaster Irina Krush is a renowned team player and frequent face at top-level American events. She led the 2008 bronze medal Olympic team in Dresden and was part of the 2004 silver medal Olympic team in Mallorca. Irina, 26, hails from Brooklyn, NY, where she manages the New York Knights U.S. Chess League team. Krush is also a two-time U.S. Women’s Champion and will be the only woman in this year’s U.S. Championship. She seeks to earn her third U.S. Women’s Champion title in the 2010 U.S. Women’s Championship, set for Saint Louis from July 9-19.

Vinay Bhat image courtesy Betsy Walls. All other player images courtesy Betsy Dynako.

FAMOUS PEOPLE WHO PLAYED CHESS

Chess isn't just for scholars... some very famous people loved chess, too!

Leaders & Politicians:

John Adams
James Monroe
Thomas Jefferson
Ben Franklin
General Robert E. Lee
Abraham Lincoln
Grover Cleveland
Theodore Roosevelt
Queen Victoria
William H. Taft
Woodrow Wilson
Bill Clinton
Henry Kissinger
Spiro Agnew
Fidel Castro
Anatole Lenin
Winston Churchill
Napoleon Bonaparte

Show Business:

Humphrey Bogart
Charlie Chaplin
John Wayne
Marlon Brando
Katherine Hepburn
Marilyn Monroe
Madonna
Woody Allen
Henry Fonda
John Lennon & Yoko Ono
Willie Nelson
Woody Harrelson
Frank Sinatra
Bill Cosby
Ben Affleck
Bono [U2]
Bob Dylan
Barbra Streisand
Bjorn Ulvaeus
[ABBA]
Sting
Lauren Bacall
Dave Barry
Will Smith
Jessica Simpson

Others:

Albert Einstein
Billy Graham

Sports:

Larry Bird
Dominic Hasek
Lennox Lewis
Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
Evander Holyfield
Anna Kournikova
Barry Sanders

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