CHESS PLAYERS CAPTURE TEAM TROPHIES & CLASS TITLES

The current reigning Florida High School Chess Team Champions secured new honors at the National Grades Chess Championship in Dallas, Texas. After seven rounds of steep competition, University School students Danny Sepler, Steven Buzgon and Brent Stone captured the 5th place trophy for 12th grade students; and Jordan Greissman, Drew Stone and Nathan Barnavon took home the 4th place trophy for 10th grade students. In addition, Steven Buzgon, Jordan Greissman, Drew Stone, Vladimir Zeltsman (6th) and Benjamin Barron (3rd) received special recognition for finishing in the top three of their respective individual ratings class.

The students’ new achievements add to the nearly 30 years of national recognition enjoyed by the USchool chess team. In fact, chess coach Bill Cornwall has instructed many of our students since kindergarten. He recalls one such kindergartener who regularly beat 5th-grade students and by age 18 became the U.S. Junior Open Champion. He also remembers Danny Sepler, USchool’s current highest-rated member, when he was just starting out at the Lower School.

“One of the terrific things about chess is that it cuts across all grades,” Cornwall said. “Well-trained elementary school children may be better at chess than some of their upper-grade-level counterparts.”

“[Students] love capturing each other’s men and checkmating their opponents’ kings,” Cornwall added. “They can only be successful at doing that, though, if they learn to plan and think ahead.” The benefits of learning chess include strengthening thinking and decision-making skills and developing strategic planning abilities.