

University School Chess Teams Make History

University School chess teams qualified for the state's closed chess championship in all five competition sections: K-1 Open, K-3 Open, K-5 Open, K-8 Open and K-12 Open. According to Elizabeth Tejada, President of the Florida Scholastic Chess League, University School is the first Florida school to benchmark such an accomplishment.

"At the awards ceremony, when it became apparent that we were qualifying every team and every individual, the players, parents and coaches were all blown away," said University School Head Chess Coach Bill Cornwall. "It was rather amazing and surreal."

Attending parents watched as each member of University School's 26-person squad was called onstage during the trophy presentation. More than 60 teams comprising 421 chess players competed in the South Florida Scholastic Championship, which serves as a qualification tournament for the Florida Scholastic Chess Championship. Only the top five teams in each of the five major grade-level sections are invited to compete in the state tournament to be held in Tampa in April.

University School team members by qualifying section:

K-1 Open: Aidan Kathein (kindergarten), Henry Vela (grade 1), Allyn Martus (grade 1), Ryan Borzillo (grade 1), Ella Gohari (grade 1).

K-3 Open: Elliot Hull (grade 2), Daniel Kathein (grade 2), Ethan Popper (grade 2), Madison Davis (grade 3), Luke Kreysar (grade 3), Dominic Stephens (grade 3).

K-5 Open: Benjamin Barron (grade 4), Ella Marshall (grade 4), Robert Zeltsman (grade 4), Sophia Borzillo (grade 5), J.R. Rindler (grade 5).

K-8 Open: Nicolas Barron (grade 6), Stewart Hughes (grade 6), J.R. Principe (grade 6), Sebastian Rabassa (grade 6), Vladimir Zeltsman (grade 7), Cory Riegelhaupt, (grade 8).

K-12 Open: Nathan Barnavon (grade 11), Jordan Greissman (grade 11), Drew Stone (grade 11), Tyler Faina (grade 12).

"Since chess is a skill-oriented, rather than age-related activity; it's great to have an interactive group that includes all grade levels," Cornwall added. "They all love chess and practice with each other to improve their abilities. The Lower School children line up at club meetings to test themselves against the Upper School players."

In addition to the state-qualifying honor, Cory Riegelhaupt, grade 8, captured first place in the top division of speed-chess, a pre-event competition.