



CHESS NEWS

By **JOHN LARKINS**
Editor of Chess Voice

The Paul Masson Mountain Vineyard, which overlooks the Santa Clara valley from the hills above Saratoga, is the site of the Paul Masson American Class Championships, one of the world's largest outdoor chess tournaments. Every July for the past five years, about 700 players have gathered together there under trees and beach umbrellas for two days of playing chess, tasting wine, renewing acquaintances, and fighting the heat. It is the major chess event of the year in northern California, and the only one that combines fierce competition for large prizes with a picnic-like background atmosphere.

For those who have felt the loneliness of seeming to be the only chess player in their part of town, the spectacle of so many other players from every part of California (plus many from out of state who arrange summer vacation trips to allow them to play here) is a revitalizing experience. This open-air gathering of the tribe is a visual reminder of the wide-spread popularity of chess.

The Winners

U.S. Chess Champion Walter Browne of Berkeley won the Masson tournament in both 1975 and 1976. Indeed, some local players had wryly suggested that the tourney be renamed "The Browne Bowl." But this year the best grandmaster Browne could manage was \$33 and a tie for fifth place with masters Zaki Harari and John Blackstone. First place was split four ways among John Grefe, Larry Christiansen, James Tarjan and Dennis Fritzing. Each received \$937.50 for a score of 3½-1½.

The July 23-24 tourney attracted 720 participants seeking \$15,000 in prizes.

How Local Players Fared

Berkeley master Dennis Fritzing collected the biggest win of his career by sharing first place with an international master (former Berkeleyan John Grefe) and two grandmasters (Berkeley's Jim Tarjan and Los Angeleno Larry Christiansen).

Two Oakland players, Paul Enright and Craig Mar, tied for fifth place among the experts. Berkeley's Norman Symonds was one of seven tying for first in the A section. William Peper of Oakland tied for third place in the C's. Finally, Paul Hope and Mike Eubank, both of whom live in Fairfax but regularly attend the Berkeley Chess Club, were part of a six-way tie for third place in the E section.

USCF President and World Blindfold Champion George Koltanowski was on hand at the Masson tourney to organize a Vegas Fun Chess tournament and to arrange a series of simultaneous exhibitions for teenage chessmasters Paul and Jay Whitehead to help defray their travel expenses to two European tournaments. Simuls were given by both Whitehead brothers, Koltanowski, CalChess Chairman Peter Prochaska, Pamela Ford, Ken Fitzgerald, Steve Brandywine, Iraj Rahbar and others. At \$1 a board, plus several donations, about \$300 was added to the travel fund.

★ ★ ★ WHITEHEAD SIMUL IN BERKELEY

On July 29 the Berkeley Chess Club hosted a travel-fund simultaneous exhibition by Paul Whitehead. Whitehead won eight games, drew two and lost three. The proud winners were Richard Hansen (1750) of Pinole, Robert Shelton (1512) of Berkeley, and Gregg Shores (1456) of Berkeley. The draws went to Norman Wilson (1211) and Norman Link (unrated), both of Berkeley.

Additional travel-fund simuls, at \$4 a board, are scheduled for August 10 at the Mechanics' Institute Chess Club in San Francisco (Jay) and for August 19 (Jay at the Berkeley Chess Club and Paul at the San Jose Chess Club). Plans are also under way to have simuls in Palo Alto and Sunnyvale. Further details are available from Peter Prochaska (415) 673-6087.



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