

Yalow Tigers Defend Title at 2019 NYS Scholastic Chess Championships

Against all odds, 28 Yalow Tigers did it, recapturing 1st place in the K-6 Under-600 section of the NYS Scholastic Chess Championships in Saratoga over the March 9-10 weekend. Six two-hour matches over two days, with our Tigers clawing their way to victory.

The weekend began inauspiciously. After the first-round results were announced at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, the Tigers were in 15th place among 26 teams—20 from the 5 boroughs of NYC, including Buckley, Columbia Grammar, Trinity, NEST+M, and Success Academy Hudson Yards. After round 2, the Tigers moved into a two-way tie for 12th place! By the end of the day, 7:30 p.m., the Tigers stood in 9th place as parents and students escaped the convention hall for dinner and sleep.

Sunday morning: Daylight Savings Time set in along with a 9:00 a.m. start time. Coaches were pumped, and so were our Tigers. At 11:30 a.m. round 4 ended with Yalow in a 4-way tie for 4th place; that's better than 9th place, but two long rounds to get to first place. What do *you* think? '69 Mets perhaps? (I'm from Chicago, a born Cubs fan; anything can happen in baseball or chess.)

2:00 p.m. results: Yalow Tigers 17 points and 1st place; Buckley School 16.5 points, 2nd place.

It's not over until it's over...

The 6th and final round began at 3:00 p.m., where the top players from each of the 26 schools are paired: 5-0 players against 5-0 players, 4-1 players, etc., regardless of team rankings in the tournament up to that point: my best gladiator against your best gladiator for the kingdom. Mental sword play among 7- to 12-year olds. Kids telling their parents before the round that they don't know anything about chess or the pressures of play (e.g., *please* back off, Mom/Dad, "I'll handle this.") Life in microcosm.

When the bloodletting ended and victors were announced at 6:00 p.m., Yalow's Tigers were pronounced co-champions with the Buckley School—tied with 18.5 points!

Yalow's kindergarten/1st-grade team had a similar trajectory in the K-1 Under-400 section, ending the first round in 12th place out of 16 schools, the second round in 15th place, but catapulting to a 6th place finish after the final 6th round. Notable was the fact that 1st grader Keyla Acevedo competed with Yalow's 4th graders in the K-6 Under-1000 section.

Congratulations to our Tigers—16 girls and 12 boys, their Grandmaster coaches Krush and Gelashvili, and coach Nichols for bringing them this far, along with coaches Jeffrey and Garcia, who helped analyze the 168 Tiger games played.