

## North Carolina's 5th Annual All Girls Open April 18th, 2009



The Girls Chess Initiative, Inc. held a tournament just for girls and teens under 19 yesterday at the Hampton Inn in Matthews (just outside of Charlotte). On this beautiful Saturday, girls played a four-round Swiss sys and between rounds spent time outside getting their faces painted, their nails done, and enjoying free snacks and free game analysis.



Imani Ethridge (aka Imani-mani-monster) listens angelically to NCCA President Victor Beaman's analysis of her game.

Serious coaches met with their students between rounds, and I wasn't allowed to take photos inside once the girls began ("to ensure a quiet atmosphere for the participants"), but the tone outside the playing hall was certainly more like a festival. Prizes were all-inclusive: each girl received a trophy (although the top 4 trophies were huge and ranged in size according to position) and a pirate-themed bandana and bracelet.



The parents sat on chaise lounges and soaked up the spring sun. Everyone had a great time!

There were two sections in this annual event: Championship and Future Contenders (u600) and the winner of the Championship section earned an invitation and partial travel expenses reimbursed to play in the Polgar National Invitational for Girls in Lubbock, Texas!! I don't know of other states which hold this event to choose their state representative...? (Yay NC!)



Emily Dehority (left) vs Patricia Beekman

There was a tie for first place: Indira Puri, now rated 1537, and Nicole Spencer, 1157. A playoff held at a future date will determine the Polgar Representative. Nicole Hlebak finished in clear first, undefeated, in the under 600 section (which she can't play in next year because her rating jumped to 700!). Congratulations! Complete results at <http://www.uschess.org/msa/XtblMain.php?200904185251-12880978>



Holding a girls-only event can be controversial: for example, why overtly separate the sexes, and then, NOT hold a boys-only event? Does this somehow indicate that girls are weaker or unable to face male competition? My answer to this is that based on experiential evidence (I'm sure there is statistical evidence to support this as well), girls learn better, and, more critically, feel more *comfortable* in an all-girl environment when learning and competing, and that offering a girls workshop or tournament *prepares* them to re-enter the co-ed chess world, with their skills improved, their confidence and self-esteem raised, and their interest in the game increased.



I am extremely appreciative of Girls Initiative's dedicated work in organizing this event for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row! (The NCCA hosted the event for the first two years.) Participation has steadily, if minimally, increased from less than ten to thirty-six. One family traveled three hours outside of Charlotte just for the tournament! And of course, now that I'm in town, it will become tremendously popular as I introduce it to my students! 😊

Girls Chess Initiative and 9Queens are currently working together to develop Girls Chess Summer Camps and future events. Stay tuned!



Cristiana Sauer considers her opening waiting for the second round to begin.



Kydriana Carter (left) vs Praga Ranganathan.

*Article written by Jessica E. Martin, VP of Scholastic Chess in NC and Director of NC Programs with 9Queens.  
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