



18th Susan Polgar Foundation National Open for Girls & Boys



Friday-Saturday, November 24-25th, 2023

Hyatt Regency Bellevue: 900 Bellevue Way NE, Bellevue, WA 98004

SPFNO 2023

By SPFNO Organizers | November 25, 2023

Bellevue, WA – The 18th Annual Susan Polgar Foundation National Open for Girls and Boys was held at the Hyatt Regency Bellevue on Thanksgiving weekend, November 24-25, 2023. Scholastic chess players in grades K-12 participated from throughout North America, from states including Washington, Idaho, British Columbia, Montana, Texas, and Missouri! The 2-day chess festival was co-hosted by the Susan Polgar Foundation and the Washington Chess Federation. Webster University head coach Grandmaster Liem Le and Penny Chess Club Founder Women's International Master Penny Pham were the guests of honor, travelling all the way from St. Louis and British Columbia, respectively, especially for this event! The organizing team of WCF President Josh Sinanan (Chief Organizer), Jacob Mayer (Chief Tournament Director), Ben Radin (Registration and Pairings Director), and Eddie Chang (Events Manager) oversaw the proceedings and orchestrated the 2-day chess festival. An all-star team of dedicated volunteers, judges, and tournament directors included Lane Van Weerdhuizen, Adam Porth, Liang Shi, IM Long Le, David Hirschowitz, Walter Guity, Max Schmidt-Warnecke, Angela Chen, Melina Li, Chouchan Airapetian, Ojas Kandhare, Face Painter Gabby Carrillo, Magician Rich Waters, and many others. Amazing photographs and video footage were taken throughout the event by Meiling Cheng. A total of 408 players competed across eleven sections separated by grade level and rating: K-1 U800, 2-3 U800, K-3 Open, 4-6 U900, 4-6 Open, 7-12 Open, K-5 Girls, K-5 Open, K-8 Open, K-12 Girls, and K-12 Open.

Along with the 1-day Scholastic and 2-day Championship sections, several side events enhanced the immersive weekend chess experience. Friday's busy slate of events included a Parents and Coaches Seminar, Face Painting, a Magic Show, the Susan Polgar Book Sale, SPFNO Girls Workshop, SPFNO Puzzle Solving Competition, and SPFNO Blitz Championship. Sunday offered several engaging events featuring GM Liem Le, including the GM Liem Le Lecture + Q&A, GM Liem Le Simul, and All-Comers Blitz with GM Liem Le, WIM Penny Pham, and IM Long Le.

The organizers were blown away for the second year in a row by the amazing 408-player turnout, up from 401 in 2022! The organizers hope to continue the trend and attract even more players next year, with a prospective venue in the Bellevue area already in the works! The 2-day Championship sections, which feature both Open and Girls divisions, typically attract the strongest local players given the prestige of the event. With the co-located WA Class Championships happening on the same weekend and offering FIDE-rated sections for Class B and above, many of the top players had to make the difficult choice of which tournament to play in, typically opting to play in both events when they are held at different times. Despite some

attrition due to the WA Class, several strong players still turned out for the SPFNO 2-day Championship sections, including Edward Li, Ted Shi, William Summerfield, Odbayar Yondon, Albert Eksarevskiy, Kai Pisan, Michael Lin, Shashank Seela, Arjun Yadav, Evan Cen, Stanley Deng, Sarang Sankrithi, Imai Maharaja, Zoe Xu, and Guru H.R. Avula. Top seeds in the Girls sections included Lily Deng, Iris Zhang, Emma Li, Selina Cheng, and Miranda Meng. On the line in both the Open K-12 and Girls K-12 Championship sections were scholarships to Webster University, each valued at over \$50,000!

Special congratulations to the following 2023 SPFNO winners:

K-1 U800: 1st Place - **Vivaan Sankrithi** (5/5!!)

2-3 U800: 1st Place - **Jayden Wu** (5/5!!)

K-3 Open: 1st Place - **Jonathan Lan** (5/5!!)

4-6 U900: =1st/2nd Place - **Damien Davies + Rishab Mitra** (5/5!! - Co-Champions)

4-6 Open: =1st/2nd Place - **Avery Kwan-Uchiyama + Kanav Shah** (4.5/5! - Co-Champions)

7-12 Open: =1st/2nd Place - **Vivaan Gupta + Deepak Rao** (4.5/5! - Co-Champions)

K-5 Girls: 1st Place - **Miranda Meng** (5/5!!)

K-5 Open: =1st/2nd Place - **Zoe Xu + Larry Yang** (4.5/5! - Co-Champions)

K-8 Open: =1st/2nd Place - **Shashank Seela + Arjun Yadav** (4.5/5! - Co-Champions)

K-12 Girls: 1st Place - **Selina Cheng** (5/5!!), Top-finishing High School player- **Iris Zhang** (3/5!): **Webster University Scholarship Winner!**

K-12 Open: =1st/2nd Place - **Ted Shi + William Summerfield** (4.5/5!), Top-finishing High School player- **Aiden Leong** (4/5!): **Webster University Scholarship Winner!**

Parents and Coaches Seminar:

The Parents and Coaches Seminar kicked off the weekend's action-packed side event schedule. Like most of the other side events, it took place in the aptly named Kasparov Room on Friday, November 24, from 10:30-11:30am. The 1-hour seminar was led by WIM Penny Pham, founder and head coach of the Vancouver, B.C. based Penny Chess Club and Seattle-based chess coach and WCF President NM Josh Sinanan. Parents and coaches relished the opportunity to pick Penny and Josh's brains to learn how to effectively guide children on their chess journey. Participants were actively engaged and asked well-thought-out questions of the two experienced chess professionals.

Gabby Smiley Face Painting:

To enhance the festive atmosphere of the event and provide entertainment for parents and kids alike during the marathon day of intense chess competition, several fun side activities were scheduled simultaneously throughout the day. Face painter extraordinaire Gabby Carrillo was on-site from 11am-3pm performing her fantastically colorful and brilliant face painting designs much to the satisfaction and enjoyment of kids and adults alike! Gabby's dedication and fine craftsmanship for hours on end was particularly impressive, as she painted faces, arms, and legs for all interested parties for just over four hours without any break! The limit of one face paint per person was blatantly ignored by one young man who requested the Spiderman theme on his face, arms, and neck! As is typical when Gabby is around, the line for complimentary face paints never seems to shrink over the course of the afternoon.

Magician Rich Waters:

On Friday during the lunch hour from 11:30am-1:30pm, kids and adults gathered on the Hyatt Regency Foyer to witness a tricky and exciting exhibition! Local Magician Rich Waters performed close-up magic tricks and balloon twisting, much to the enjoyment of the mesmerized audience. Just like a fine wine, Rich's tricks seem to get better with age, and he's thought up several new and Avant-garde ruses to confuse even the keenest observers, youthful skeptics, and aspiring myth busters!

Susan Polgar Book Sale:

The Susan Polgar Book Sale took place on the busy Black Friday shopping day, November 24, from 1-2pm in the Kasparov Room. On sale were several books written by GM Susan Polgar, who has authored several high-quality books throughout both her playing and teaching careers. A variety of books written by Susan Polgar and well suited for all levels of players were available for purchase: Learn Chess the Right Way, Vols. 1-5 and A World Champion's Guide to Chess. The book sale was a huge success, with over eight boxes of books disappearing off the shelves when all was said and done!

SPFNO Girls Workshop:

The SPFNO Girls Workshop was held on Friday from 2-3pm in the Kasparov Room immediately following the book sale. Special guests WIM Penny Pham and WFM Chouchan Airapetian hosted the special 1-hour workshop that focused on empowering girls through chess. Those attending the workshop enjoyed the interactive presentation and learned how Penny overcame obstacles to obtain success at the chess board, founded the Penny Chess Club, and become the highest rated woman in Canada!

SPFNO Puzzle Solving Competition:

A total of 31 brave contestants were given a maximum of 30 minutes to solve 20 checkmate puzzles. There were two mates in 1, six mates in 2, five mates in 3, four mates in 4, and three mates in 5. Solutions were written on paper and evaluation was based on accuracy, completeness, and speed. A star-studded cast of titled players graded the puzzles and compiled the final results: GM Liem Le, IM Long Le, WIM Penny Pham, and NM Josh Sinanan. Congratulations to the winners!

Last Name	First Name	Rating	Score	Time (min.sec)	Prize
Merriman	Dann	1674	20	15.35	1st 1000+
Cheng	Edward	1841	20	15.45	2nd 1000+
Reddy Saddi	Neevan	1724	20	19.20	3rd 1000+
Keane	Brendan	1184	20	29.30	4th 1000+
Yondon	Odbayar	1762	19	15.30	5th 1000+

Last Name	First Name	Rating	Score	Time (min.sec)	Prize
Confer	Braden	941	13	Max	1st U1000
Kakarlapudi	Sreeram M.	898	11	26.56	2nd U1000
Roorbach	Narin	621	10	Max	3rd U1000
Kakarlapudi	Jairam I.	648	8	Max	4th U1000
Latuskiewicz	Matthew	733	7	Max	5th U1000

SPNFO Blitz Championship:

The 2023 SPNFO Blitz Championship attracted 27 players and took place on Friday, November 24 at 6:30pm in the Botez Room. The 8-round Single Swiss in two sections, K-5 and 6-12, was directed by Chief TD Jacob Mayer, ICA President Adam Porth, and Ben Radin. The games were US Chess Blitz Rated with a time control of game in 5 minutes with no delay. In the K-5 section, Aarit Shah, a 5th grader from Mark Twain Elementary School in Kirkland, emerged victorious with an impressive 6.8/8 score! Other top finishers included Odbayar Yondon & Dann Merriman (6.0, =2nd/3rd Place), Rafael Palathingal & Moses Li (5.5, =4th/5th). In the 6-12 section, Lakeside sophomore sensation Owen Xuan swept the field with a perfect 8 points from 8 games! Second place was awarded to Lakeside freshman stud Albert Eksarevskiy with 7 points. Blackwell Elementary 6th grader Arjun Yadav finished in 3rd place with 6 points. Fellow 6th grade phenom Selina Cheng from Detective Cookie's Chess Club in Seattle captured 4th place honors with 5 points. Odle Middle School 6th grader Sanjay Urali rounded out the trophy winners with 4.5 points, good enough for clear 5th place. Congratulations to the winners!

GM Liem Le Lecture + Q&A:

On Saturday morning from 10:30-11:30am, players, spectators, and parents were treated to a special presentation by our honored guest and current world number 18 GM Liem Le! Liem went in depth on his teaching philosophy and recommended training tips for up-and-coming players. Fresh off his strong performance at the St. Louis Rapid and Blitz, Liem showed a few of his own games that were key to his development as a player, including a clutch win against Shakhriyar Mamedyarov to secure his final grandmaster norm! You can watch an excerpt from his lecture here on the WCF YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/2QYJjSarNsQ>.

GM Liem Le Simul:

The Grandmaster Liem Le Simul took place on Saturday afternoon from 1-4pm in the aptly named Kasparov Room, which was the site for most of the SPFNO side events. A total of 17 courageous chess players of all ages and ratings from unrated to Class A took their seats with the black pieces against special guest and world number 18, Super GM Liem Le. For most of the contestants, it was their first time ever playing against a Grandmaster! After two and a half hours of play, all games were finished, with only one player managing to draw against the grandmaster! Special congratulations to Andra Marinescu (1477), on scoring a draw against GM Liem Le after spectacularly sacrificing her queen in an offbeat line of the French Tarrasch! Andra was even winning at one point in the game but allowed her illustrious opponent to escape with a draw by perpetual check following a double knight sacrifice! Congratulations to the fearless chess warriors who took part!

All-comers Blitz with GM Liem Le, WIM Penny Pham, and IM Long Le:

On Saturday evening from 5-7pm, players and spectators had a chance to challenge GM Liem Le, WIM Penny Pham, and IM Long Le (Penny's husband and Liem's older brother) to thrilling games of 5-minute Blitz Chess! Though there were several strong contenders and speed chess wizards lined up to play the titled trio, our illustrious guests remained undefeated throughout the evening. One young man managed to draw his game with IM Le by reaching a drawn king and pawn endgame, albeit with the help of one or two friendly "takebacks" earlier in the game. While Penny and Long alternated colors, GM Liem Le, a former World Blitz Champion, preferred to play white in all his games, usually employing the London System or Torre Attack to deadly effect. Unlike the simul, which is a one-versus-many format, the all-comers blitz battles offered a unique opportunity to play against these titled players one on one and experience just how strong they truly are!

Congratulations to all players and chess families who contributed to this year's SPFNO. We look forward to continuing to grow this evening in the coming years!

About SPFNO

The prestigious annual Susan Polgar National Open Championship for Girls and Boys (SPFNO) was created in 2006 and is sponsored by the Susan Polgar Foundation (SPF) to give more opportunities to young chess players. The event rotates throughout the United States and will be co-hosted by the Susan Polgar Foundation and Washington Chess Federation from 2020-2024. For more information, please visit: <https://www.spfno.com/>.

About Susan Polgar Foundation

The Susan Polgar Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization supported by charitable donations. The Foundation was established by GM Susan Polgar – Hall of Famer, the Winner of 4 Women's World Chess Championships, 12 Olympic Medals (5 Gold, 4 Silver, 3 Bronze), and the first woman in history to break the gender barrier in chess. Since the foundation was started in 2002, many tournaments have blossomed and become the benchmark events for young girls and boys throughout North America.

Contact

To learn more about this event, please contact:

Josh Sinanan, Chief Organizer
washingtonchessfederation@gmail.com