



19th Susan Polgar Foundation National Open for Girls & Boys



Saturday-Sunday, October 26-27, 2024

Hilton Bellevue: 300 112th Ave SE, Bellevue, WA 98004

SPFNO 2024

By SPFNO Organizers | October 27, 2024

Bellevue, WA – The 19th Annual Susan Polgar Foundation National Open for Girls and Boys was held at the Hilton Bellevue on the weekend of October 26-27, 2024. Scholastic chess players in grades K-12 participated from throughout the west coast, from states including Washington, Oregon, British Columbia, and California. A total of 488 players, a SPFNO record, competed across eleven sections parsed by grade level and rating: K-1 U700, 2-3 U700, 4-6 U700, K-3 Open, 4-6 Open, 7-12 Open, K-5 Girls, K-5 Open, K-8 Open, K-12 Girls, and K-12 Open. The 2-day chess festival was co-hosted by the Susan Polgar Foundation (SPF) and the Washington Chess Federation (WCF). SPF Founder Grandmaster Susan Polgar and SPF co-Founder Paul Truong were the guests of honor, having just recently returned from the recent FIDE Chess Olympiad in Budapest! The fantastic team of WCF President Josh Sinanan (Chief Organizer), Jacob Mayer (Chief Tournament Director), Ben Radin (Registration and Pairings Director), and Eddie Chang (Events Manager) organized the event and coordinate the weekend's busy slate of activities. The amazing group of dedicated volunteers, judges, and tournament directors included Norm May, Adam Porth, Ani Barua, Rekha Sagar, Valentin Razmov, Stani Vlasheva, Kai Pisan, Siva Sankrithi, Peter Zou, Haiyong Wang, Millie Runion, Daniel Shubin, David Hirschowitz, Walter Guity, Max Schmidt-Warnecke, Chouchan Airapetian, Angela Agaian, Detective Denise "Cookie" Bouldin, Larry Greenawalt, Gelareh Golanbar, Alex Byelashov, Sridhar Seshadri, Face Painter Gabby Carrillo, and many others. Amazing photographs and video footage were taken throughout the weekend by Meiling Cheng. During the opening announcements, players and their parents were treated to a visit by 9th District Congressman Adam Smith, who offered a few words of praise and encouragement to the packed room of young chess players.

Along with the 1-day Scholastic and 2-day Championship sections, several fun side events enhanced the immersive weekend chess experience. Saturday's busy schedule of events included a Parents and Coaches Seminar, Face Painting, SPFNO Girls Workshop, the Susan Polgar Book Sale & Signing, FM Megan Lee game analysis, All-comers blitz with FM Megan Lee, the SPFNO Puzzle Solving Competition, and the SPFNO Blitz Championship. Sunday featured the 19-player Susan Polgar Simul as well as the final three rounds of the high-stakes 2-day Championship sections!

This year's 488-player attendance shattered all previous records for the SPFNO, which previously had peaked in the mid 400's when the event was held in Lexington, KY. The addition of longer, FIDE-rated games in the 2-day K-12 Championship sections no doubt contributed to the stronger attendance, up 80 players from last year. The organizers hope to

continue the trend and are aiming for 500+ 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-only sections, typically attract the strongest local players given the prestige of the event. This year's 2-day K-12 Open featured a star-studded lineup of several of the Northwest's strong players, including FM Stephen Willy, NM Nikash Vemparala, NM Advaith Vijayakumar, NM Ted Wang, NM Ryan Min, Gordon Xu, Alan Peng, and Vihaan Jammalamadaka. Top seeds in the K-12 Girls section included Bonnie He, Ella Guo, Emel Bayrambeyli, Selina Cheng, and Lily Deng. 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 2024 SPFNO winners:

K-1 U700: 1st Place – **Ziyu Qu** (5/5!!)

2-3 U700: =1st/2nd Place – **Satvik Verma + Andy Sang** (4.5/5! – Co-Champions)

4-6 U700: =1st/2nd Place – **Michael Wernsing + Mithran Anbuselvam** (5/5!! - Co-Champions)

K-3 Open: 1st Place – **Avyaan Roy Chowdhury** (5/5!!)

4-6 Open: 1st Place – **Avery Kwan-Uchiyama** (5/5!!)

7-12 Open: 1st Place – **Alexander Lebedinsky** (5/5!!)

K-5 Girls: =1st/2nd Place – **Darya Byelashova + Elina Khudyev** (4/5! – Co-Champions)

K-5 Open: 1st Place – **Bright Weng** (5/5!!)

K-8 Open: =1st/2nd Place – **Yash Syal + Viraj Dhawan** (4/5! - Co-Champions)

K-12 Girls: 1st Place – **Emel Bayrambeyli** (5/5!!): **Webster University Scholarship Winner!**

K-12 Open: 1st Place – **Stephen Willy** (5/5!!): **Webster University Scholarship Winner!**

SPFNO Team Awards

	K-3 Top Teams:	Score
1	Somerset Elementary	13.5
2	Open Window School	13.5
3	Samantha Smith Elementary	13
4	Medina Elementary	13

	4-6 Top Teams:	Score
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1	Samantha Smith Elementary	16
2	Detective Cookie Chess Club	13
3	Tyee Middle School	12
4	Medina Elementary	11.5

	7-12 Top Team:	Score
1	Evergreen Middle School	8

Parents and Coaches Seminar:

The first side event to kick off the weekend's action-packed schedule was the Parents and Coaches Seminar, which took place in the Redmond Room on Saturday, October 26 from 9:30-10:30am. The 1-hour seminar, which was led by Susan Polgar, provided an opportunity for parents and coaches to learn how to effectively guide children on their chess journey. The informal atmosphere was conducive for parents and coaches to ask questions and hear tips from Grandmaster Susan Polgar, who is herself a chess parent and former coach of the successful Webster University Chess Team.

Gabby Smiley Face Painting:

To enhance the joyous ambience of the event and provide entertainment 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 on the Hilton foyer from 11am-3pm performing her fantastically colorful and brilliant face painting designs, much to the delight and satisfaction of kids and adults alike! Gabby's dedication and detailed craftsmanship, which she performed non-stop for 4 hours, is simply remarkable. Many happy players could be seen showing off their on-fleek masterpieces, which graced their faces, arms, and occasionally legs! As is typical when Gabby is around, the line for a complimentary face paint was never-ending!

SPFNO Girls Workshop:

The SPFNO Girls Workshop was held on Saturday from 11:30am-12:30pm in the Redmond Room. Special guests FM Megan Lee, WFM Chouchan Airapetian, and Rekha Sagar hosted the special 1-hour workshop that focused on empowering girls through chess. Those attending the workshop enjoyed the interactive presentation and engaging discussion designed to support and grow chess for women and girls on a local, national, and global scale. Despite the workshop being intended mostly for a female audience, several chess dads could also be seen taking part, seeking advice from the panel of experts on the best ways to help their chess-playing daughters continue to grow and thrive.

Susan Polgar Book Sale & Signing:

The Susan Polgar Book Signing occurred on Saturday from 1:30-2:30pm in the Redmond Room. GM Susan Polgar, who has authored several books throughout her playing and teaching careers, was on site to sign autographs and take pictures. 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, Breaking Through, and A World Champion's Guide to Chess. Those who purchased three books or more received a complimentary copy of the newly released bestseller May the Best Player Win, by Kyla Zhao. The book sale and signing were immensely successful, and we eagerly await the release of Susan Polgar's newest book, Rebel Queen, set to be released in March of 2025!

Megan Lee Game Analysis & All Comers Blitz:

On Saturday afternoon from 2:30-4:30pm, players and parents were treated to a special appearance by two-time Washington State Chess Champion and newly minted FM Megan Lee, who conducted game review and analysis from 2:30-3:30pm followed by All Comers Blitz from 3:30-4:30pm in the Redmond Room! Several ambitious students of the game, who were eager to pick up practical tips and valuable strategies from Washington State's strongest active female player, had their games reviewed and analyzed by FM Megan Lee, fresh back from St. Louis, where she was playing in the 2024 US Women's Championship. After a short break, a few courageous players had a chance to challenge Megan Lee to a thrilling game of 5-minute speed chess! Megan is an avid speed chess player who also enjoys bughouse. Despite playing as black in most games and facing several tough opponents, Megan emerged unscathed and remained undefeated throughout the afternoon!

SPFNO Puzzle Solving Competition:

A total of 29 brave contestants were given a maximum of 30 minutes to solve 20 checkmate puzzles. An original set of challenging puzzles, which included four mates in 1, four mates in 2, six mates in 3, four mates in 4, and two mates in 5, was personally designed by GM Susan Polgar herself especially for this competition. Contestants wrote their solutions on paper and were evaluated based on accuracy, completeness, and speed. An especially talented group of puzzle-solvers competed in this year's edition, with 6 players earning a perfect score! Especially impressive performances were achieved by Zachary Chua (1345) and Lucas Yao (1589), both of whom scored a perfect 20 points and demonstrated amazing tactical calculation and vision for their ratings. Congratulations to the winners!

Last Name	First Name	Rating	Score	Time (min.sec)	Prize
Vemparala	Nikash	2244	20	7.43	1st 1000+
Willy	Stephen	2308	20	9.22	2nd 1000+
Yondon	Odbayar	1791	20	14.50	3rd 1000+
Palathingal	Rafael	1962	20	17.18	4th 1000+

Chua	Zachary	1345	20	19.08	5th 1000+
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Last Name	First Name	Rating	Score	Time (min.sec)	Prize
Xu	Augus	753	11	30.00	1st U1000
Madsen	Levi	505	9	30.00	2nd U1000
Pingale	Sharanya	669	9	30.00	3rd U1000
Walton	Cara	517	8	30.00	4th U1000
Razmov	Siana	852	8	30.00	5th U1000

SPNFO Blitz Championship:

The 2024 SPFNO Blitz Championship attracted 42 players and took place on Saturday at 6:30pm in the Bellevue Grand Ballroom. The 8-round Single Swiss in two sections, K-5 and 6-12, was directed by Idaho Chess Association President Adam Porth and Chess Mates Foundation President Ben Radin. The games were US Chess Blitz Rated with a time control of game in 5 minutes with no delay or increment. In the K-5 section, Rafael Palathingal, a 5th grader from Kokanee Elementary School in Woodinville, emerged victorious with an impressive 7/8 score! Other top finishers included Imai Maharaja (6.5, 2nd Place), and Siddharth Bhaskaran, Sambuddha Sekhar Das, & Vihaan Pai (5.0, =3rd-5th). In the 6-12 section, Overlake High School powerhouse NM Nikash Vemparala topped the field with seven points from eight games, recovering well after a first-round loss and winning his last seven games in a row! Second place was awarded to NM Ted Wang, a fifth grader from St. Thomas Elementary School in Medina, who scored six points. Stoller Middle School 8th grader Karthik Bimod finished in 3rd place with 5.5 points. A quintuplet of up-and-comers shared =4th/5th Place honors a half-point back: NM Stephen Willy of Sammamish, Harishkumar Karthikeyan of Redmond, Varun Iyengar of Portland, Albert Eksarevskiy of Redmond, and Gavin Shi of Seattle. Congratulations to the winners!

GM Susan Polgar Simul:

The Susan Polgar Simul took place on Sunday afternoon from 1-3:20pm in Salon C of the Bellevue Grand Ballroom. A mix of 19 intrepid scholastic and adult chess players took their seats with the black pieces against GM Susan Polgar. For most of the contestants, it was their first time playing against a Grandmaster! After only 2 hours and 20 minutes of play, all games had finished in favor of Susan Polgar, a clean sweep! Although, no wins or draws were achieved this time, the last man standing was young **Julian Chen** (1119) of Bellevue, who managed to outlast several much more experienced adults! Congratulations to the 19 fearless players who took part:

Final Score: GM Susan Polgar 19 - Simul Players 0

Duration: 2hr, 20min

Name	Rating	Result
Cedric Davies	1655	1-0
Allan Joseph Ong	1613	1-0
William Dann	1583	1-0
Paul Fredette	1350	1-0
Oliver Wakeman	1235	1-0
Troy Chabot	1162	1-0
Aaron Hsiao	1151	1-0
Julian Chen	1119	1-0
Adrina Berjis	1017	1-0
Addison Dahlke	968	1-0
Damien Davies	827	1-0
Millie Runion	636	1-0
Maxwell Xiong	605	1-0
Lucas Shing	540	1-0
Theo Lew	186	1-0
Tianxiang Chen	unr.	1-0
Ankush Goyal	unr.	1-0
Hsien-kai Hsiao	unr.	1-0
David Lew	unr.	1-0

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

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 has been co-hosted by the Susan Polgar Foundation and Washington Chess Federation since 2020. 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:

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