

# Shaker Heights High's chess squad finishes as best in state

**SHAKER HTS.** — The Shaker Heights High School chess team captured first place at the Ohio High School Chess Championships.

The event took place in Richfield. The Red Raiders were led by co-captains Jiawei He and Zane Eisen.

The championship event offers both individual and team awards. For a title one point is given for each win, a half point for a draw, with each participant playing six games.

The team score is determined by adding the best four individual scores from each school.

Going into the sixth and final round, Shaker had a slim lead over Solon High School, but it was not going to be easy as Shaker's highest ranked player Jiawei He was up against last year's national high school champion Michael Vilenchuk from Columbus Academy. Jiawei eventually had to concede.

Solon's top four players scored three and one-half points, which meant Shaker needed to win all remaining games to take the title. Despite wins by Zane Eisen and Rohit Kumar, things did not look good as junior Nick Haubrich trudged on in a lost position, three pawns down against his senior opponent from Rocky River High School.

However, Nick remained calm, and caught his opponent off guard, swooping in for a back-rank checkmate that sealed the title.

The chess team has achieved outstanding results during the past four years, with two first place and two second-place finishes. Shaker Middle School has been excellent as well, winning the state title in 2010.

Students at the high school and middle school in Shaker Heights receive professional chess instruction from Shaker resident and chess expert Mike Reeves, who is provided by Progress with Chess, a non-profit organization

founded by former Ohio champion and longtime Cleveland Heights resident Mike Joelson.

"We were hired by the board of education in 2004 when parents from successful after-school chess programs that we developed in the Shaker elementary schools approached the administration with the desire to revive the upper school chess club, which had been dormant for several years," Joelson said. "The first year or two we averaged only about five students for the weekly chess club meetings. We now average 15-25 students for each of the two-hour sessions."

Joelson credits Reeves with the popularity of the club.

"(Reeves) strives to offer an enjoyable chess experience for students of all abilities and levels of commitment," Joelson said. "The chess programs in Shaker have been successful because the parents and administrators value what chess can provide: improved critical thinking and decision-making skills."



The Shaker Heights High chess team with Coach Mike Reeves (left) includes (from second left) Rohit Kumar, Nick Haubrich, Jiawei He, Zane Eisen and Leo Izen. (Photo supplied by Mike Joelson)