

San Diego Chess Club Hosts Record-Breaking 2026 SCCF Inter-Club State Championship

By Irina Nizmutdinova



In the photo above: Rayansh Maheshwari (San Diego Chess Club Team B) is shaking hands with SCCF President, NM Alaa Moussa (Temecula Chess Club Team A) at the start of the round 2 of 2026 SCCF Inter-Club State Championship. Photo Credit: Shailesh Maheshwari

The San Diego Chess Club (SDCC) was buzzing with competitive team energy on Sunday, February 22, 2026, as it played host to the SCCF Inter-Club State Championship. Heavy interest from across Southern California sparked a massive turnout, as teams converged from all over the region. It was a rare and vital opportunity to connect our many distinct chess communities in one large, friendly event.

In a stunning display of regional growth, 32 teams—comprising 133 players—filled the hall. This turnout represents a historic milestone, making the event two and a half times larger than the inaugural 2025 SCCF Inter-Club Championship. To ensure the event appealed to players of all ratings, the field was split into two balanced sections (Open and U1800), with an equal number of 16 teams in both the Championship and Reserve divisions.



In the photo above: San Diego Chess Club Team B: Pear Xu, Elkaei Rivera, Navid Bajoghli and Rayansh Maheshwari. Photo credit; Maria Ordanza

The Grinding Format and Community Spirit

The championship utilized a traditional 4-on-4 team format, with boards ordered by strength so that each team's top-rated player faced off on Board 1. The time control was a demanding G/60;d5, making for a whole-day event. Teams began checking in as early as 9:30 AM, with the final rounds stretching into the late evening.

However, it wasn't all intense calculation. Between the rounds, the teams took a collective pizza break—a chance to step away from the clocks, socialize, and meet players from every corner of Southern California. This camaraderie turned the tournament into more than just a competition; it was a celebration of a shared passion for the game.



In the photo above: IM Julian Colville (ICEA Chess Team A) vs CM Hayden Karkainen (Santa Barbara and Ventura Chess Clubs). Photo Credit: Shailesh Maheshwari

Championship Section: A Hometown Victory

The Championship (Open) section brought together 16 teams for a demanding battle of strategy. San Diego Chess Club Team A and ICEA Chess Team A each finished with 3.5/4 match points and 12 game points. After drawing their head-to-head encounter in round three, the San Diego team narrowly claimed first place on tie-breaks, successfully defending their 2025 title on home ground.



In the photo above: George Huang (Simply Chess Team) vs Sarthak Gattani (San Diego Chess Club Team A). Photo credit; Chuck Ensey.

The ICEA lineup - IM Julian Colville, NM Felix Guo, Sabarish Kailasam, and Chloe Zamojski—delivered an outstanding performance, falling just short of first place. Meanwhile, Simply Chess, led by CM Ararat Bagdasarian alongside CM Glenn Zhang, Howard Wang, and George Huang, showed great resilience to secure third place.

The winning SDCC team - FM Benjamin Tang, NM Ephraim Rosenstock, NM Arseniy Kryazhev, and NM Sarthak Gattani - demonstrated impressive consistency throughout the event to emerge victorious against strong competition.



In the photo above: Paschal Gay (Temecula Chess Club Team B) vs Alec O'Neil (Alondra Park Reserve Team). Photo credit; Maria Ordanza

Reserve Section: Strength in Numbers

In the Reserve (U1800) section, Beyond Chess dominated the field to take the top spot with 3.5/4 match points. Their balanced roster - Kayden Gao, Jaden Chen, Jason Ju, and Anqing Wang - proved too much for the opposition, and they proudly received the team trophy to take back home. They were followed in the honors by the National City Noypitz Pretenders (Jounie Angcao, Hector Ginete, Ildefonso Mamaradlo, and Alejandrino Baluran) in 2nd and Chess Palace Team B (Ike Miller, Prayag Dave, Stanley Wei, and Christopher Lanning) in 3rd, with both teams scoring 3/4 match points.

The success of the weekend was a testament to the hard work of the organizers and the various team leads who coordinated travel and rosters. It was a true gathering of the Southern California chess family.



In the photo above: San Diego Chess Club Team A's NM Ephraim Rosenstock and NM Arseniy Kryazhev hold their team's 1st-place Championship trophy, awarded by the SCCF.

Photo credit; Maria Ordanza



*In the photo above: Beyond Chess Chess Team's: Kayden Gao and Jaden Chen hold their team's 1st-place Reserve trophy, awarded by the SCCF.
Photo Credit: Alaa Moussa*

2026 SCCF INTER-CLUB ROSTER OF PARTICIPANTS

Championship (Open) Section

- San Diego Chess Club Team A: FM Benjamin Tang, NM Sarthak Gattani, NM Arseniy Kryazhev, NM Ephraim Rosenstock
- ICEA Chess Team A: IM Julian Colville, Felix Guo, Sabarish Kailasam, Chloe Zamojski
- Simply Chess: CM Glenn Zhang, George Huang, Howard Wang, CM Ararat Bagdasarian
- Chess Palace Team A: NM Minh Nguyen, Gabriel Sam, Jake Nemeth, Oliver Hsiao
- San Diego Chess Club Team B: Francis Ordanza, CM Ruhan Vichare, Sai Krishna, Anthony Mokhov
- Temecula Chess Club Team A: Marius Lucan, NM Alaa-Addin Moussa, CM Avinaya Subedi, Dave Gomboc
- Santa Barbara & Ventura Chess Clubs: CM Hayden Karkainen, Ethan Deshaies, Santho Srinivasan, Arjun Ograin
- San Diego Chess Club Team C: Elkaei Rivera, Navid Bajoghli, Pear Xu, Rayansh Maheshwari
- San Gabriel Valley Chess Club Team A: Ashley Lin, Kaiwen Yu, Jacob Murray, Manu Prasad
- Tustin Brewing Company Chess Club: Steven Miller, Stephen Echeverria, Peter Holzer, Joseph E. Warhula, Cody Oldham
- La Palma Chess Club: Ethan Long, George Shahin, Arcie Pragale, Randall Hough
- Alondra Park Elite: Tony Chen, Allen Futterer, Ethan Li, Taja Delijani
- Day And Knight Chess Club Team A: Kyle Chase Barry, Nestor Garcia, Ashwin Karthik, Edwin Ruiz
- Chess Palace Team C: Rommel Revilla, Reynaldo Del Pilar, Restituto Linga, Richard Wong
- North County Chess Club Team A: Jack Manata, Andrew Norman, Alfredo De Leon, Shaun Sweitzer
- ICEA Chess Team D: Siddharth Kaushik, Advit Venkatesh, Sahishnu Gopi, Sean Jura

Reserve (U1800) Section

- Beyond Chess: Kayden Gao, Jaden Chen, Jason Ju, Anqing Wang
- National City Noypitz Pretenders: Jounie Angcao, Hector Ginete, Ildfonso Mamaradlo, Alejandrino Baluran, Jerry
- Chess Palace Team B: Ike Miller, Prayag Dave, Stanley Wei, Christopher Fred Lanning
- Northridge Chess Club: Patrick Harrigan, Amin Zoghiami, Aryan Ali, Hovsep Osikian
- ICEA Chess Team B: Oskar Tianming Hu, Logan Gawon Kim, Matthew Hajo Choe, Youngjun Choi
- San Gabriel Valley Chess Club Team B: Albert Bao, Ryder Margalit, Alejandro Lopez, Tiffany Chen
- Highland Park Chess Club: Nika Goshteliani, Eric Carlson, Phillip Warther, Aron Rivin
- Day And Knight Chess Club Team C: Lance Sterling Fernandez, Matthew Tanabe, Xander Del Bosque, Nicholas Estrella
- ICEA Chess Team C: Michael Zhang, Aarav Acharya, Robins Rutherford, Daniel Song
- Temecula Chess Club Team B: Paschal Gay, Mark Mateo, Rod Cleveland, Evan Lomioan
- North County Chess Club Team B: Emon Bayrooti, David Grischuk, Pejman Sagart, Shea Paris
- Sun Lakes Chess Group: Charles Mullen, Luke Thomas, Steven Kassman, Walter Winfield, Robert Oesterlein
- San Diego Chess Club Team D: Ashwath Pradeep, Max Xu, Shailesh Maheshwari, Andy Galligan
- Alondra Park Reserve: Yan Chen, Kaitlyn Otey, Apollo Capinpin, Alec O
- Day And Knight Chess Club Team B: Kavicharan Padmanaban, Arokiaxavi Jesuraj, Tamiliniyan Padmanaban, Aarush Nathan
- Coachella Chess Club: Ray Wong, Steven Mariscal, Liam Linn, Ethan Linn