CalChess Kids Checkmate Their Aussie Mates

By NM Michael Aigner

Most chess competitions occur over the board, face to face. Yet there is no reason to limit ourselves to physical interactions when it is possible to play chess in cyberspace. Of course, the internet offers the opportunity to meet and match wits against people from other countries and continents. The match against Australia was the first of hopefully more such events on the Internet Chess Club (www.chessclub.com).

The genesis for the Australia match came when local junior Alex Grossman and his parents visited Australia and competed in scholastic championships Down Under. Alex's father Mike thought it would be a great experience to meet again in cyberspace. Mike Grossman arranged for the contact between Alan Goldsmith from Ausnetchess and me. After ironing out the match details and recruiting players, the match was set to go on July 15 at 5:00pm San Francisco time.

Amazingly, almost everyone who signed up on both teams actually showed up as planned. Typically someone would forget or perhaps their internet was unavailable. Out of 28 Californians and 26 Australians (24 boards each plus alternates), all but three showed up--some over a half hour early--all eager to play. Only one player developed internet trouble during the three hour match. And despite some confusion at the start, most players found their correct opponent and started playing within 10 minutes of the scheduled time. That was a minor miracle in itself!

The match itself progressed smoothly. Local players played two games at a 45 5 time control (game in 45 minutes with 5 seconds added per move) against the same board number from Australia. The chess server automatically switched the colors between the first and second game. In fact, once all boards were underway, there was little for the two organizers to do but watch and tally results. Maybe the only disappointment was that some games finished way too fast; two U18 matches finished 2-0 within 30 minutes with each team having one goat.

The U12 year old match was quite lopsided in favor of CalChess. The local squad was led by Daniel Naroditsky (#1 in USA for age 10 and under) and Gregory Young (#6 in USA for age 11). Although the opponents put up a valient fight, they were outclassed and eventually lost. The final score was 20.0-4.0. The following Northern Californians won both of their games: Daniel Naroditsky, Gregory Young, Kyle Shin, Yian Liou, Jennifer Livschitz, Isaac Zhang, Alex Grossman, Andrew Chen and Ted Xiao,

In contrast, the U18 year old match was much closer. Australia's lineup featured Moulthon Ly, who had just obtained an IM norm at the recent World Open. CalChess countered with national masters Matthew Ho, Drake Wang and Daniel Schwarz. The U18 result was in doubt down to the end of the final two games. With CalChess clinging to a narrow 1.0 point lead, Drake Wang and Steven Liu both converted their endgames to provide for a more substantial margin of victory (13.5-10.5). Kudos to the perfect scores: Drake Wang, Daniel Schwarz, Mike Zhong, Matt Zavortink and Steven Liu.

The overall score ended up at 33.5 to 14.5 in favor of Northern California. Please visit the following website for complete results.

http://www.fpawn.com/CalChessvsAustralia.txt

I would like to thank my counterpart for Australia, Alan Goldsmith, for organizing the match from his end. Due to some logistical difficulties, he had to put together his team entire within two weeks. I also want to thank Mike Grossman for the inspiration and for getting the ball rolling.

Shin plays match in library