



Polk Scholastic Chess PRESS NOTE: March 22, 2017

The **Polk Scholastic Chess Championship Tournament** for season 2016-17 was conducted at Bartow Civic Center on March 11, 2017. This year, we had more than **580 students** compete at our tournaments, from over 40 schools. These young players from various ethnicities and backgrounds demonstrated fantastic chess skills, team spirit and love of the game. Our Chief Guest for this grand finale **Ms. Trish Pfeiffer, Mayor, City of Bartow** congratulated all the players and encouraged the players to do their best next year.



“We conclude our 2016-17 Scholastic Chess Season with a special note of thanks to the wonderful teachers and coaches from Polk County schools who have implanted the seeds of good character, ethics and academic progress”, said **Mr. Malay Shah, President**. To recognize such extraordinary contribution by the coaches, Polk Scholastic Chess awards the “Richard Lewis Lifetime Achievement Award” every year. This year, the Richard Lewis Lifetime Achievement award was given to coach **Ms. Melissa Atkinson (Bethune Academy)**.

The Championship Tournament Top Winners:

GUPPY CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS:

1. DAVID SCHAAK (Bethune Academy)
2. NICHOLAS HARRISON (McKeel Academy Central)
3. DOMINICK HARRIS (Lincoln Avenue Academy)



PRIMARY CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS:

1. AJAY SONI (All Saints Academy)
2. DEV PATEL (Lincoln Avenue Academy)
3. ETHAN RODRIGUEZ (Bethune Academy)



ELEMENTARY CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS:

1. PRANAV GUNJALA (Lincoln Avenue Academy)
2. ABRAHAM MEDINA (Brigham Academy)
3. JAKOB DIAZ (Brigham Academy)



MIDDLE CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS:

1. NIRIHAM SHAH (Union Academy)
2. BILLY ODOM (Crystal Lake Middle)
3. JERIMIAH DECKER (Crystal Lake Middle)



SENIORS CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS:

1. SHULAGRA SHAH (Bartow IB)
2. NANDAN PATEL (Bartow IB)
3. PIERCE MEYER (Independent Player)



Trophies were awarded to top players in each grade, top improved players, best teams of the season and for participation in the tournament. Student volunteers were recognized for their help in the various activities at the tournament – we believe in .

POLK SCHOLASTIC CHESS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP: We recognize two graduating seniors with **scholarships** towards their continuing education each year. These students need to have an extended length of participation with Polk Scholastic Chess, win our essay contest and must have made active contributions to their school and community. The two winners this year were **Nandan Patel** (first place) and **Alexander Palmer** (Second Place).



We were glad to have **Ms. Simone Gable**, last year's **Polk Scholastic Chess Scholarship Winner**, share her thoughts with us. Here is what she had to say: *"Since starting school at Florida State University in Tallahassee, a multitude of opportunities have opened up for my future. I am a zoology major pursuing a Bachelor of Science and eventually a PhD in herpetology. I am in the Honors Program here at FSU and live in the Honors dormitory on campus. I applied and was accepted into the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and have been working in the Travis Marine Biology Lab as an assistant, while also running my own project. My project is based on feeding behavior in a species of saltwater fish called Sailfin Molly.*

I am also doing a Directed Individual Study (DIS) in the Rokyta Snake Venom Lab where various venomous snake species are housed, such as Timber Rattlesnakes, Hognose Snakes, and Pit Vipers. This lab studies the genetics of snake venom and compares them between variables like puberty and subspecies.

I cannot thank the chess community enough for awarding me this scholarship to help with my tuition, I miss everyone on the chess board and hope to visit soon!"

Polk Scholastic Chess (PSC) is a *non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization* dedicated for the past **29 years** to encouraging academic growth through the game of chess. PSC organizes chess tournaments for all Polk County public schools and is supported by the Polk County School Board. Every year, around 600 kids participate in the tournaments from the entire Polk County, Pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade. All the board members are non-salaried volunteers. Official website with more details about the activities and tournament format: <http://www.polkscholasticchess.com>.