History of the
Kansas Scholastic Chess Association

by Ralph E. Bowman
With Paul DeBarthe, Bob Larson and Kevin Nyberg as consultants
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Start of Kansas Scholastic Chess

The exact start of Kansas Scholastic Chess is unsure. There were teams in the Shawnee Mission district in the early 1960s. The first Kansas City Cup, a boarded-team tournament, was first held in February 1964 and Shawnee Mission East and Shawnee Mission North and several Missouri teams competed in that tournament. Both the Shawnee Mission East and Shawnee Mission North teams had been around for several years prior to that tournament.

The growth of Scholastic Chess in the Greater Kansas City area can be traced to Don Oswald, owner of the Chess House. He started as a teacher/Chess Coach at Westport High School in Kansas City, Missouri in the late 1950s and organized and ran the Scholastic and Adult Chess Tournaments in the Greater Kansas City area for many years. He stopped teaching and began working for the Kansas City Post Office sometime around 1970, but continued his involvement in Chess.

Kansas State Scholastic Chess Championship

The first Kansas State Scholastic Chess Championship was held in Salina in 1970. This was a four round tournament with a time control of 40 moves in one hour (40/1) and after that ten moves in ten minutes (10/10) which repeated until the game was completed. Because there were few Chess clocks and those that were available were so expensive, the time was usually kept on a clock on the wall.

There were several times that these first tournaments under the 40/1 and 10/10 time control were not over until close to midnight.

During the 1970s all of the players were high school players.

Pockets of Chess

By the early 1980s there were five "pockets" of Scholastic Chess in Kansas: East Central Kansas (i.e. Greater Kansas City area, but primarily the Shawnee Mission schools), Southeast Kansas (i.e. Chanute and Erie), South Central Kansas (i.e. Greater Wichita area), North Central Kansas (i.e. Salina area) and Southwest Kansas (i.e. Garden City area). Teams would play within their pocket and rarely venture outside of that area for a non-State Championship tournament. At that time a large non-State Championship tournament was about 30 players. During the early 1980s the State Championships always had at least 40 players, but not over 60.

Starting in the early 1980s five teams started traveling outside of their "pockets" to invitational Chess tournaments. These teams were Chanute HS

(coached by Robert "Bob" Larson), Erie HS (coached by Ralph Bowman), Garden City HS (coached by Kevin Nyberg), Newton HS (coached by Tony Soper) and Shawnee Mission East HS (coached by Paul DeBarthe).

Tournaments

The Swiss System of Pairings was first used in a Chess tournament in 1895 in Zurich, Switzerland. Under the Swiss System the players are first put in rating order. In the first round the top half would play the bottom half. For example, if there were 20 players then in the first round #1 would play #11, #2 would play #12 and so on providing they were not paired against a team mate. After the first round the top half plays the bottom half within each score group.

The Kansas Scholastic tournaments throughout the 1970s and early 1980s were usually four round tournaments using the Swiss System and rated by the United States Chess Federation (USCF). Because of no computer pairing programs yet being developed all tournaments were paired by hand using special cards designed for that purpose (pictured left) with one card per player. As a player signed up their rating was looked up in a USCF Rating Supplement. The cards would then be put in rating order and a "pairing number" assigned; so Pairing #6 on the sample card would have been the sixth highest rated player in the tournament. Then the cards were put next to each other on tables, according to USCF pairing guidelines, and someone would write down the "pairings" on a separate sheet of paper and that paper would be posted. Crayons were used to mark a color at the top of the card to designate which team the player represented.

The main problem with using the cards was in figuring the tiebreaks at the end of the tournament by hand. At the 1988 State Championship in Clay Center, KS three teams tied with 16 points out of a possible 20, plus there were ten players tied with 4 points out of a possible 5; it took six coaches over two hours to do all of the tiebreaks.

Beginning in the 1983-84 school year, the Kansas State Championships started consistently drawing from 60 to 80 players. More and more schools started bringing teams to tournaments. Beginning in the 1984-85 school year; regular invitational tournaments would usually have at least 40 players and the State Championships had 70-90 players. Therefore, the tournaments started having five rounds. The primary purpose of having five rounds was so more individual places in the tournament could be decided over the board and not by using tiebreaks. When the switch to five rounds was made, it was also decided to have the time control to be Game 30 with Sudden Death, because Chess

clocks were less expensive and more schools had them and also USCF had instituted Sudden Death rules about 1980.

In August 1988 Ralph Bowman was given a copy of the first Chess pairing program called "PairPlus", which was written by Jo Eglen of Terra Haute, IN (she was the mother of a scholastic Chess player and a professional computer programmer). Ralph taught other Kansas TDs how to use the program so that during the 1988-89 school year Kansas Scholastic tournaments began being run by computer using "PairPlus". Kansas became the first state to use computer pairings for all scholastic tournaments.

During the summer of 1993 the KSCA decided to switch from "PairPlus" to "WinTD" because it was better at doing tiebreaks for teams and had more types of printouts available. At this time the decision was made to stop having tournaments rated through USCF. The results of tournaments had to be mailed into USCF and by the time the rating results were returned through the mail, about four to six weeks later, the ratings were no longer accurate because the players had usually played in two or three tournaments before the new ratings were received and USCF began requiring paid memberships of scholastic players. WinTD had a feature to rate a tournament, so KSCA tournaments stopped being USCF rated and became rated by KSCA.

For the 1993-94 school year the decision was made to go to six rounds to have more tournament champions decided over the board instead of through tiebreaks.

KSHSAA

The increased growth of Chess was beginning to come to the attention of some school administrators who were members of the Kansas State High School Activities Association. In the mid-1980s KSHSAA was bringing into its fold most new activities in the state. However, in a meeting with the Assistant Director of KSHSAA in 1986, their interest in Chess was not yet peaked because there were not enough teams to have a State Championship under their format of just 6A schools, just 5A schools, etc. like other KSHSAA activities. If KSHSAA would have taken over Chess at that time under KSHSAA rules no teams would be allowed to attend National Scholastic tournaments and no players Grades K through 8th would be allowed to compete in tournaments held in the same building on the same day as high school tournaments.

In 1996 the coaches voted to make another presentation to KSHSAA for them to incorporate Chess, but with the provision of allowing KSCA to be the governing body and grandfathering in our abilities to have K-8 students compete and the ability for Kansas teams to be allowed to compete in National Scholastic Tournaments. Ralph Bowman made that presentation to the KSHSAA Board, but the KSHSAA Board was not willing to accept the two stipulations and again said they had no interest in considering Chess at that time because there were not enough schools involved.

In 2004 the coaches this time wanted another inquiry made. C.J. Armenta and Ralph Bowman met with the Assistant Director of KSHSAA and were told that because of a lack of financial resources KSHSAA was not interested in pursuing adding activities at that time.

Beginning of the KSCA

In 1987 Kevin Nyberg, who was then serving as USCF Regional Vice-President, representing Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska, was finding a trend across the country of unscrupulous people taking control of Scholastic Chess Tournaments for the sole purpose of making money for themselves.

The growth of Kansas Scholastic Chess was becoming so rapid that during the 1987-88 school year the coaches felt the need to start an organization to protect their tournaments from unscrupulous people. Based on conversations at various tournaments during the year, Ralph Bowman wrote a constitution and it was approved at the State Championship in March 1988. The first officers were Kevin Nyberg – president, Ralph Bowman – executive vice president, Bob Larson – vice president, Paul DeBarthe – secretary and Tony Soper – treasurer.

Those officers continued in those positions until March 1990. After that Paul DeBarthe and Bob Larson each served terms as president, while Tony Soper remained Treasurer until his resignation in 1995 and Ralph Bowman remained executive vice president until his resignation in 2006.

USCF has the requirement in its By-laws that the official USCF State Affiliate is to be responsible for the State Scholastic Championship. There were few people in the Kansas Chess Association (KCA), which is the official USCF State Affiliate, who were even aware that there was Scholastic Chess in Kansas, much less wanted to be responsible for a Scholastic Championship. At the annual meeting of the KCA in July, 1989 an agreement was struck between the KCA and the KSCA that the KSCA would be granted the authority by the KCA to be the official organization in Kansas to be responsible for Scholastic Chess. Both the KCA and KSCA constitutions were changed to reflect this agreement. Under that agreement one person would serve as the official liaison between the two organizations. Ralph Bowman served in that capacity from 1989 until 2007 and then C.J. Armenta began holding that position until this date.

The KSCA and their mutual agreement with the KCA worked so well that other states began to use the KSCA Constitution and By-laws as a model for organizing Scholastic Chess in their states. By 2000 six states were using the Kansas Model and by 2010 there were thirteen states following Kansas' direction.

Sponsoring National Tournaments

During the summer of 1988 the officers of the KSCA along with two representatives of Missouri Scholastic Chess (Gary Dias of North Kansas City and Ed Bauer of St. Louis) worked together to present a bid to USCF to hold the 1990 National High School Chess Championships in Kansas City, Missouri at the

Park Place Hotel and Marketplace Convention Center. That location was chosen because no place could be found in Kansas at that time with the space and affordable accommodations nearby. That tournament had 901 players and was the largest National High School Tournament held to that date. The co-organizers for that event were Ralph Bowman and Paul DeBarthe. This was also the very first National Chess Tournament to have the pairings done by computer (i.e. "PairPlus").

In 1999 members of the KSCA formed a 501(c)3 organization called the "Kansas City Regional Chess Council" and submitted and won the bid to host the 2001 SuperNationals II "Battle of the Minds" at Bartle Hall in Kansas City, Missouri. 4,311 players from 44 states attended that event making it the largest chess tournament ever held in the world with all of the players playing in one room and that record still exists today. The co-organizers were Ralph Bowman and Paul DeBarthe. This organization was disbanded in 2004.

Grand Championship Traveling Trophy

In the early 1980s there started being schools with Chess teams that were smaller than 6A or 5A that were traveling to tournaments. Therefore this trophy was established in an attempt to keep a record of the teams that finished in first place overall at the State Championship and their top four players, regardless of school classification (6A, 5A, etc). When a school wins the trophy they take it back to their school for one year and add their information to the plates at the bottom of this large trophy. The tradition started that when a team won the trophy three years in a row then they got to retire the trophy and a new one was purchased to replace it. The new trophy would still have all of the previous information on it.

A list of the Grand Champions is below and those in bold are those teams that have retired the trophy. While the names of the coaches are not on the trophy, they have been added below.

1981 – Shawnee Mission East HS (Paul DeBarthe, coach)
    J. Lank, W. Rhee, R. Seitz, J. Poisner, J Tinberg

1982 – Shawnee Mission East HS (Paul DeBarthe, coach)
    J. Lank, W. Rhee, R. Seitz, J. Poisner, J Tinberg

1983 – Shawnee Mission East HS (Paul DeBarthe, coach)
    J. Lank, W. Rhee, R. Seitz, J. Poisner, J Tinberg

1984 – Shawnee Mission East HS (Paul DeBarthe, coach)
    J. Lank, W. Rhee, R. Seitz, J. Poisner, J Tinberg

1985 – Garden City (Kevin Nyberg, coach)
    D. Davis, T. Ebaugh, S. Davis, B. Martinez

1986 – Washburn Rural HS (Mike Swartz, Coach)
    J. Gonzales, R. Glick, G. Click, O. Tuomola

1987 – Newton HS (Tony Soper, coach)

M. Neufield, J. Soper, D. Fengeman, M. Schrag

1988 – Chanute HS (Bob Larson, coach)
X. Keough, J. Sevedge, C. Hurlburt, R. Vreeland

1989 – Shawnee Mission West HS (Ted Glenn, coach)
D. Rowland, T. Hartman, A. Harris, G. Fisher

1990 – Shawnee Mission West HS (Ted Glenn, coach)
T. Hartman, G. Fisher, T. Steiner, A. Richter

1991 – Erie HS (Ralph Bowman, coach)
C. Bowman, N. Clevenger, J. Hensley, D. Clevenger

1992 – Erie HS (Ralph Bowman, coach)
D. Clevenger, C. Dague, J, Hensley, G. Glover

1993 – Shawnee Mission East HS (Paul DeBarthe, coach)
C. Porter, S. Alport, K. Talmazan, D. Osman

1994 – Shawnee Mission East HS (Paul DeBarthe, coach)
S. Alport, D. Stiffleman, D. Osman, G. Coit

1995 – Chanute HS (Bob Larson, coach)
J. Myers, M. Bright, E. Bruner, C. Mefford

1996 – Shawnee Mission East HS (Paul DeBarthe, coach)
G. Coit, H. DeBarthe, R. Parthasarthy, D. Coit

1997 – Shawnee Mission East HS (Paul DeBarthe, coach)
R. Parthasarthy, B. Morgan, J. Fanning, N. Blount

1998 – Shawnee Mission East HS (Paul DeBarthe, coach)
D. Coit, R. Parthasarthy, P. Bayless, N. Blount

1999 – Shawnee Mission East HS (Paul DeBarthe, coach)
P. Bayless, B. Routman, J. Coit, N. Walters

2000 – Blue Valley North HS (Ray Dixon, coach)
W. Levine, C.J. Edelman, L. Khayet, A. Smolinsky

2001 – Blue Valley North HS (Ray Dixon, coach)
M. Levine, C.J. Edelman, E. Erb, B. Marberg

2002 – Blue Valley North HS (Ray Dixon, coach)
C. J. Edelman, C. Smolinsky, L. Khayet, E. Marberg

2003 – Northeast Magnet HS (Troy Criss, coach)
S. Adra, D, Tran, R. Weaver, J. Lam

2004 – Southwest Junior HS (Steve Robinson)
A. Datta, D. Datta, E. Rodriguez, D. Greenberg

2005 – Erie HS (Ralph Bowman, coach)
S. Sexton, B. Coover, B. Buscher, R. Norwood

2006 – Southwest Junior HS (Steve Robinson, coach)

T. Reams, T. Clark, P. Lesslie, K. Stenseng

2007 – Southwest Junior HS (Bob Holliman, coach)
T. Clark, A. Still, T. Reams, K. Stenseng

2008 – Free State HS (Bob Holliman, coach)
T. Clark, T. Reams, P. Lesslie, S. Stenseng

2009 – Purdy Chess Team (David Purdy, father & coach)
(This team was homeschooled)
B. Purdy, N. Purdy, G. Purdy, E. Purdy

2010 – Purdy Chess Team (David Purdy, father & coach)
N. Purdy, G. Purdy, H. Purdy, E. Purdy

2011 – Purdy Chess Team (David Purdy, father & coach)
G. Purdy, H. Purdy, E. Purdy, P. Purdy

2012 – Blue Valley HS (Rich Gill, coach)
R. Xing, A. Newport, M. Thompson, J. Ho

2013 – Free State HS (Brad Simon, coach)
V. Malladi, J. Miller, A. Simon, A. Elliott

2014 – Erie HS (David Semrad, coach)
M. Semrad, P. Semrad, W. Semrad, C. Hines

2015 – Erie HS (David Semrad, coach)
W. Semrad, P. Semrad, K, Milner, T. Wolken

2016 – Lawrence High School (Andy Bricker, coach)
J. Ely, K. Hajiarbabi, S. Hajiarbabi, J. Smokowski

Some interesting facts:
- Shawnee Mission East also has the distinction of finishing the highest in the Championship Division of the National High School Championship of any Kansas school with a 5th place finish and numerous other top ten finishes.
- The Kansas school holding the record for the longest consecutive years of hosting a Scholastic Chess Tournament is Chanute High School. Their first tournament was in 1980 and they have continued every year up to this date.
- The design for the state medals with a chessboard centered in an outline of Kansas was created by Bob Larson and a medal designer over the phone for the State Championship at Washington High School in Kansas City, Kansas in 1992.

Short History of Chess

Chaturanga, an ancient game from India, is the predecessor of Chess. Written records of this game date back to slightly before 500 A.D. The pieces at that time all had different names, different moves and different appearance from current pieces.

By 1600 the game had spread throughout Asia and Europe. By this time the name had changed to Chess with the names of the pieces, the movement of the pieces and the design of the pieces, as we now know them.

Since 1600 there have been only three changes to the game: 1) castling, 2) the Pawns ability to move one or two moves on it's first move and 3) En Passant (to have a defense against the Pawn's two move first move.)