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photo courtesy of UTD Chess Team

While preparing for the April Final Four of Chess, team members Ryan Milisits (center) and Sam Copeland (right) took time to teach Prestonwood Elementary School students chess tips Feb. 24.

Chess team honored, preps for Final Four

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UTD chess continues to keep its opposition in check following the team's victory against tournament-favorite University of Maryland-Baltimore County (UMBC) at the Pan American Intercollegiate Chess Tournament in late December.

Two UTD teams participated in the 2005 U.S. Amateur Team Chess Championship Feb. 19-21 in Parsippany, N.J. Among the record 286 teams that participated, UTD-Orange won second place in the U.S. team category, while UTD-White won top college team.

From March 4-12, four players traveled to Serbia and Montenegro to participate in the Sozina 2005 nine-round international tournament. Junior computer science major Magesh Panchanathan's performance at the tournament earned him the title of grandmaster.

Meanwhile, freshman social sciences major and FIDE Master Daniel Fernandez played in a tournament in Brazil to make the transition to International Master.

Due to all of these successes, especially the victory at the Pan American tournament, State Rep. Fred Hill (R-Richardson) honored the chess team with a bill of commendation March 2.

"This has been one of the more interesting developments for the team," said Jim Stallings, associate director for chess. "The team actually traveled to Austin to hear Rep. Hill read the bill."

The next challenge for the team is the Final Four tournament April 2-3 in Lindborg, Kan. The field includes Stanford, the University of Miami-Dade County and UMBC.

Panchanathan; junior business major Dmitry Schneider; senior business major Peter Vavrak; electrical engineering graduate student Andrei Zaremba; and sophomore finance major Amon Simutowe and undeclared senior Michal Kujovic will represent UTD in the Final Four tournament.

"I think the Final Four will be a big challenge," Simutowe said. "UMBC will try to heal their wounds from the PanAm tournament."

Chess Director Tim Redman said he anticipates a very close competition.

"The tournament will certainly be down to the wire," Redman said. "UMBC actually has a higher-rated team."

With all of the success the team has experienced, though, expectations are high.

"I expect UTD to win the Final Four tournament," Milovanovic said.