

Richardson, TX Weather
68°F, Mostly Cloudy

the Mercury

The Student Newspaper of UTD

UTD chess expands

By [Alex Ransom](#)

Published: Tuesday, September 8, 2009

Updated: Saturday, January 2, 2010 03:01

Emblazoned with a new logo, the UTD chess team began practicing for their new challenges Aug. 28, matched in friendly competitions with grandmasters facing off as well as new players.

The chess team recruited nine new players to replace those who graduated including four strong U.S. students, said Jim Stallings, chess program director.

Internationally, chess is more widely played than in America, which results in a more international UTD team.

The capital of Serbia, a small eastern European nation, has as many grandmasters as the entire United States, Stallings said. Grandmaster is the highest chess ranking possible from the World Chess Federation (FIDE).

Daniel Ludwig, statistics freshman and new recruit, has one of three requirements for achieving grandmaster status, Stallings said. Two of the other recruits are masters, which is the third highest ranking.

"To repeat (wins) is hard and to keep winning, you have to meld the team to performance," Stallings said. "We have to be cognizant of the fact that they have to study and do well in their exams."

Jacek Stopa, international political economy senior and international master, will balance 18 hours of class and two competitions this semester. He entered in about eight tournaments during the summer, tying for first in the U.S. Open Aug. 1-9 in Indianapolis.

"It's hard to keep your level (of skill up) when you have to take a lot of classes," Stopa said.

UTD's key rival, University of Maryland-Baltimore County (UMBC), is no longer the chess team's only major threat, Stallings said.

"This year it's more competitive than ever before. The team that Texas Tech announced on paper is great. It looks like it's stronger than our team," Stallings said.

Texas Tech University's third board is as strong as UTD's first board, which includes the chess team's four best players, Stallings said.

UT Brownsville has three grandmasters compared to UTD's two.

Both of UTD's grandmasters are alumni entering graduate school. Amon Simutowe, international political economy graduate, is returning after two and a half years away attaining grandmaster status. Alejandro Ramirez, arts and technology graduate student, remains team captain.

The chess team played their first competition this fall at the Southwest Open on Labor Day weekend. It included seven rounds over three days, whereas international competitions typically have one game per day.

"We send a lot of our new players to (the Southwest Open) so they get the experience of traveling off to a team event," Stallings said. "While it's not collegiate, it's usually a good chance to feel what it's like, particularly for international students."

For UTD students to experience the competition, the chess club organized the first intramural tournament for chess players set to begin at 9 p.m. Oct. 15 in the Galaxy Rooms, said chess club president Karina Vazirova, economics, policy, and political sciences junior. The chess team is barred from entering the tournament.

Registration for the event begins Sept. 28. The winner will receive Comet Cup points, as with other intramural competitions. Game play is limited to 10 minutes and four rounds, Vazirova said.

Chess team members also participate in intramural sports. Last year, the chess team surprised their competitors by winning second place in



Laura-Jane Cunningham

Jacek Stopa (left), international political economy senior and international master, plays a game of chess against Amon Simutowe (right), graduate student and grandmaster.

intramural soccer, said Yash Gogte, electrical engineering senior and chess team public relations officer.

Gogte said team members must complete 10 hours of community service each semester, such as tutoring Dallas area children in chess.

For more information about the intramural chess competition, contact Vazirova at VKarina@student.utdallas.edu.