

# Boy's got the moves of a grandmaster

**Southlake:** Coaches call 5-year-old state champ a future chess king

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When Jonathan Chiang sits down to a game of chess, the 5-year-old wears Batman tennis shoes and displays superherolike powers.

Last month, the Carroll Elementary kindergartner blew away the competition with a 6-0 win at the state kindergarten chess championship in Plano.

Jonathan's coaches and competitors say he's on the road to becoming a chess grandmaster.

For now, though, Jonathan is busy practicing and playing every day of the week. On Tuesdays, you'll find him at Johnson Elementary for chess night with the Carroll ISD Chess Club in Southlake. About 150 students attend the weekly practice.

Between moves at a recent practice, Jonathan's eyes dart around, his shoes slip off, and he fidgets like mad.

"That's all kids his age," said Robert Rausch, coach of the chess club. "They'll be like bouncing off the chair. Then they look at the board for 10 seconds and make the best move."

Jonathan's youth and inexperience may be among his assets.

"He's not afraid," said Peter

Vavrak, an international master at the University of Texas at Dallas. "Jonathan doesn't care. He just plays the game. He's too young to know fear."

Jonathan began playing chess when he was 4. His parents started him off slowly with chess night and private lessons once a week.

At first, "Jonathan would be very happy to take every piece off the board and capture all of them," said his mother, Christine Chiang.

Once he started to win at tournaments, the Chiangs moved his focus to more complex playing that included tactics and patterns. Now Jonathan's routine is like a well-oiled machine. His nights are a mix of playing online, attending private lessons and watching les-

sons on video.

Jonathan and his sister, Sarah, who placed seventh in the state in the third-grade section, play about 10 tournaments per month. Tournaments can last several hours, and Jonathan said he needs a nap between matches.

Jonathan said he prefers blitz games — short, speedy über-matches where players hit buzzers and make moves quickly. During a recent blitz with Mr. Vavrak, Jonathan's eyes surveyed the board. After a minute or two, Jonathan gave up and extended his hand for a friendly shake.

"You made me think in the beginning," Mr. Vavrak said. "He was playing the first 15 moves like a grandmaster."

DallasNews.com

The Dallas Morning News

