

The Cavalier Daily

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

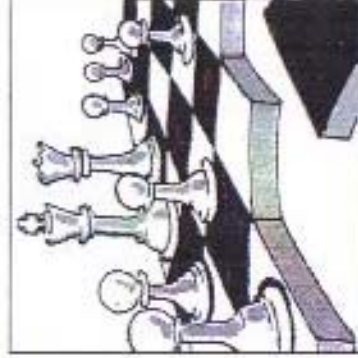
TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2007

Giving the chess team a fair chance

Nick Kinney
Guest Viewpoint

Members of the University of Virginia chess team spent part of their Christmas breaks competing at the Pan-American Chess Championship, held December 27-30. The dedicated members of this under-rated chess team played against school's such as Harvard, Yale, and Toronto in games lasting up to six hours each. In the end, the University chess team finished 24th in the nation, including two teams from Canada and one from Peru.

The team even managed to score points against every team they played, which is a real accomplishment considering the caliber of competition. And what kind of accomplishment is a 24th place finish at nationals? Dead last.



Matthew Godfrey | Cavalier Daily

The University was the only school at nationals unable to field a four-person team. Not having a fourth player meant having to forfeit points every round – a significant disadvantage. The format of team competition is the four players on one team play the four players on the opposing team; you add up your wins and draws, and the team with the most points wins. However, the University's inability to field four players was not due to the absence of interest or ability in chess at this school. "We have some of the best players in the state," says team member Carl Barth. "And team member Mamasi Panchi was one of the only female representatives in the entire competition, so we obviously have interest and ability."

The team's inability to perform well nationally was due to the lack of funding provided by the University. In fact, the chess team was initially approved for over \$1000 to compete in the Pan-American competition, but the University cut the club's funding to \$451 just days before the tournament as part of budget cuts made to all CIO budgets. That \$451 was just enough to field a team of three. It's not that the team didn't have a chance, it wasn't given one. Weeks before the tournament myself and treasurer Toumelles initiated the process of having an advance check written for \$750 to cover the team's entry fees. The check was never written.

I was planning on driving back to school over winter break to pick up the check, however when I called, I was informed that our club only had \$451. Apparently the appropriations committee can approve all the funding they want without guaranteeing a single dollar. I was not aware of this when I applied for funding, and to me it seems completely unacceptable, especially when members of

*UT Dallas,
 pg. 2 →*

the University are taking time out of their Christmas break to represent the University nationally. Many of the directors at the national tournament even expressed their disappointment that we could not field a full team.

The team could not even stay at the hotel where the tournament was held. Due to the lack of funding, team members had to travel home or stay at nearby friends' houses and travel to the tournament site each round for four days.

Surprisingly the Harvard chess team had the exact same difficulties as our team. Their team was not given a single cent to attend the national chess tournament; each member paid several hundred dollars to represent a school that could have easily funded them. It is unfortunate that big schools like the University and Harvard choose not to fund their chess teams, while school such as University of Baltimore, Maryland and University of Texas. Dallas not only fund their teams, but offer chess scholarships to strong players. With the money to field a team the University could have produced a very strong finish.

Nick Kinney is the president of the U.Va. Chess Club.
