

# A Short History of the Washington State Championship

By John Donaldson

Despite a relatively small population and geographical isolation the state of Washington has a very distinguished chess history. We have produced a number of outstanding players, two-time World Championship Contender Yasser Seirawan being the most prominent. Our local chess journalism has been characterized by both longevity and liveliness. Northwest Chess and its predecessors the Northwest Chess Letter, the Washington Chess Letter, the Everett Chess Letter, and the Puget Sound Chess News account for almost 46 years of continuous coverage. Among the activities that have been hosted are the Karpov-Hjartarson Candidates Quarterfinals Match, the 1966 U.S. Open, the 1992 Washington Open, and simulms by the likes of Lasker (1924) and Capablanca (April 4-5, 1916).

Perhaps the key ingredient for the development of chess in this area has been the holding of an annual state championship. Such an event provides a sense of continuity for an organization. Anyone who has had an opportunity to see the current Washington State Championship perpetual trophy which goes back to the early 1950's will know what I mean. Names like Sheets, Ulvestad, Zemgalis, McCormick, Pupols, Braley, Franett, Seirawan, Donaldson, Tangborn, Salmon, and Orlov read like an honor roll of the players who have dominated chess in this state.

The Washington State Chess Championship has had a life of its own. For starters most states in this country don't produce their champion from a round-robin tournament. The usual method is to declare the highest scoring state resident in a big open tournament to be the titleholder. To this writer's knowledge Washington is the only state to have more or less continuously held a round-robin state championship the past 50 years!

Having played in six state championships this writer had more than an occasional acquaintanceship with the event but it was only one day, while browsing in a second hand bookstore on Capital Hill, that my interest in the history of the event was piqued. Looking through the chess book section I stumbled upon a small booklet on the 1935 Washington State Championship. This small booklet gave all the games of the event and a short history of the tournament. Further research at the John G. White Collection in Cleveland produced two other booklets on the 1937 and 1938 events. From these booklets, pioneering chess historian Jack Nourse and Dan Wade-the Grantland Rice of Northwest Chess journalism- the following information was gleaned.

From 1862, when Clarence "Pops" Bagley founded the first chess club down on Front street to 1931 is a murky period. The Puget Sound Chess News (Bremerton), the first chess journal in this state, didn't start until 1946, and Chess Review (1933) and Chess Life (1946) weren't published during this time. Hermann Helm's American Chess Bulletin, which was started after the Cambridge Springs tournament of 1904, is only able to offer a small amount of assistance. From what Nourse could deduce the names given from 1862-1931 represent players who were considered to be the best at the Seattle Chess Club during that particular time.

From 1932 onwards, with only a few exceptions, things are remarkably straightforward. In that year, through the largesse of the Hanford Company a perpetual trophy was donated for the Washington State Championship (Does any reader know what happened to it?). For the

next 60 years, with the exception of World War Two (1943-46), the state championship has been held.

The format for the tournament has not always been the way we know it today. Currently the event is held as an eight or ten player round-robin held over two or three weekends in February. As the reader will notice all sorts of things happened with the structure until the late 1960's. Several times in the late 1940's and early 1950's the event was held as a Swiss. In 1952 there were actually two state championships due to a change in the scheduling of the event. Shifted from February to October it led to the curious result of the winner of the October 1952 event being crowned state champion for the following year.

Some other variances from today's rules led to the participation of Canadians Duncan Suttles, Gerhard Neufahrt, and Colin Ackroyd who all qualified from finishing high in the Washington Open. Steven Christopher and Rusty Miller got in by being the most active players of the year.

The Washington State Championship has been held in a variety of locations in Western Washington (Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia, Centralia, Mercer Island, Redmond, Bellevue, and Everett) but appears to have never moved across the mountains. Likewise all the state champions have hailed from around the Puget Sound. The closest an Easterner has come was the late Ray Fasano, who hailed from Tonasket, who tied for first in 1976 and lost the playoff. Robert Edburg, originally from Tieton, was living in Seattle when he won in 1957.

The question of which event was the strongest is a difficult one to answer. By average USCF rating the 1988 championship, at a little over 2280 is tops, but that doesn't reflect the fact that most Washington players were about 100 USCF points underrated until the ending of Northwest Ratings in the mid-1980's. The 1990 West Seattle International featured a USCF rating well over 2300 but included several Canadian players.

The following list was made as comprehensive as possible, both to serve as a record of these events and to hopefully encourage and facilitate further research. I would be very glad to hear from readers who might be able to shed any light, particularly on the events held from 1941 to 1943.

**1862-75** Clarence Bagley

**1875-90** A. W. Piper

**1890-90** Griffith Davies

**1895-1915** Earle Jenner

**1915-1925** William Dickey

**1926** Otto Case

**1927** Arvid Johnson

**1928-29** V. C. Klug

**1930** J. L. Sheets

**1931** Sheets (2)

**1932** 1. Sheets (3) 4; 2. Crain 3.5; 3. Ulvestad 3; 4. McCullough 2.5; 5. Schmidt 1.5 6. Dightman .5

**1933** 1. Sheets (4) 8; 2. Crain 7; 3. Bever 5.5; 4. Ulvestad 5; =5-7. Schmidt, Hewitt and Dightman 4.5; =8-10. Brewster, Dunkle, and Lee 2. This event was held in Seattle and Tacoma from September 10-23 and was referred to as the second Washington State Championship according to Chess Review from 1933 (R. A. Dightman correspondent).

**1934** 1.Olaf Ulvestad 8.5; 2.Sheets 8; 3.Crain 6.5; 4.Bever 4.5; =5-7. Dunkle, Ishida, Tracy 4; 8.Hewitt 2.5; 9.Schmidt 2; 10.Prokop 1

**1935** 1.James Hurt 6;=2-3.Ulvestad and Sheets 5.5; 4.Enochson 4; 5.Schmidt 3.5; =6-7.Dightman and Ishida 1.5 and 8.Bever .5

**1936** 1.Sheets 6 (5); 2.Hurt 5; 3.Enochson 4.5; =4-5.Ishida and Schmidt 4; 6.Thayer 3.5; 7.Mcale 1; 8.Brewster 0

**1937** 1.Hurt 7 (2);2.Ishida 6;=3-4.Sheets and Enochson 5.5; 5.Dightman 4.5; 6.J.Nourse 3.5; 7.Walker 2; 8.Sullivan 1.5; 9.S.Nourse .5

**1938** 1.Hurt 7.5 (3); =2-3.Ishida and Sheets 6.5; 4.Enochson 4.5; 5.Walloch 3.5; 6.Rubinstein 1.5 Double-R.R.

**1939** 1.J.Iugh Enochsen 8-2; 2.Ishida 7; 3.Lapiken 5.5; 4.Bourne-Smith 5; 5. Walker 4.5; 6.Sheets 0 ( Sheets was ill during the event and had to forfeit four games. It's not clear which games these were.

**1940** 1.Sheets (6)

**1941** 1.Hurt (4)

**1942** 1.Sheets (7)

**1943-46** Championship Interrupted by World War II.

**1947** =1-2.Sheets (8) and Joachim 4.5-1.5 (Sheets won the playoff match 2-1) 3.Tweeddale 3.5 4.Taro 3; =5.Wade and Brandstom 2 7.Hebert 1.5 (September 5-26. One game Friday night and two on Sunday each week. Held in Everett.)

**1948** 1.Charles Joachim 5.5-.5; 2.J.Nourse 5; 3-6. Boliman, Allen, Neale, and Wander 4; =7-8. Crain and Husby 3.5; =9-11. Davidson, Allyn, and Stork 3; =12-13. Taro and Nippell 2.5 14-17. Amsden, Bever, Mulford, and Bushnell 2; 18.Case 1.5; 19.Butler 1; (Butler forfeited the last two rounds) Run as a 6 round Swiss. Held December 4-5 at the S.C.C. at the Assembly Hotel.

**1949** 1.Robert Stork 5-0; 2.Holmes 4; =3-5. Allyn, Finnegan, and Seiter 3.5; 6-8. Shephard, Neale, Velias 3; 9-12. Hebert, Bussy, Ceretelli, and Allyn 2.5; =13-16. Davidson, Muller, A.Murray, Husby 2; 17. Gilson 1.5 =18-19.H. Yocom and Miller 1; 20. C. Yocom 0. Held December 3 and 4 at the Seattle Chess Club.

**1950** No Tournament.

**1951** 1.Charles Ballantine 9.5; =2-3. Patterson and Enz 9; 4. Stork 7.5; 5.Weaver 7; 6.Joachim 5.5; 7.R.Allen 4.5; 8.Hebert 4; 9.Muller 3.5; 10.Amidon 3; 11. Yocom 2.5; 12. K.Mulford 1. (The WCL of February 1951 notes that Kenneth Mulford was forced to withdraw early because of the flu and that he forfeited the remainder of his games. It doesn't specify which. Allen forfeited games to Hebert and Amidon. Held February 10-11 and 17-18 at the Seattle Chess Club.

**1952** =1.Ulvestad (2) and A. Murray 6.5 (Ulvestad won the one game playoff for the title); =3-4. Wade and Ballantine 5; 5.Manney 4.5; 6.Amidon 3.5; 7.Sheets 2.5; 8.Shephard 1.5; 9.Hebert 1 ( The 10th player in the event, Patterson, withdrew in a dispute over the tournament directing after beating Sheets and Manney and drawing with Murray. His score was not counted for the tournament standings). February 16-17 and 23-24 at the Seattle Chess Club (Assembly Hotel - 9th and Madison).

**1953** 1.Elmars Zemgalis 9; 2.Sheets 6.5; 3.Manney 6; 4.Ballantine 5; =5-6.Wade and Vellias 4.5; =7-8.Mulford and Joachim 3.5; 9.J. Nourse 2.5; 10. Warner 0. Played October 25-26 and November 1-2 of 1952 at the Seattle Chess Club.

**1954** 1.Sheets (9) 7.5; 2.Pupols 6; 3.Joachim 4.5; =4-7. Wade, Warner, Manney, and Rosburg 4; 8.Vellias 1.5; 9.DeWitt .5 ( Interestingly enough Sheets only draw was against Dewitt in the last round! The latter, who was scoreless up until this point, narrowly missed winning.

Sheets won a trophy while second place Viktors Pupols, playing in his first Washington State Championship, received \$10. This event was held November 14-15 and 21-22 of 1953 at the Seattle Chess Club.

**1955** 1.William Bills 4.5; 2.Ulvestad 3; =3-5. Vellias, Pupols, and Edberg 2; 6. Warner 1.5 (This event was played October 16-17 and 23-24, 1954, at the Seattle Chess Club. Preliminary sections were held and a young Jim McCormick barely missed making it to the final.)

**1956** 1.Ulvestad 3.5 (3); =2-3. Pupols and Edburg 3; 4. Warner 2.5; 5.Bills 2; 6.Vellias 1. (This event was held October 29-30, 1955, at the Seattle Chess Club)

**1957** 1.Robert Edberg 4; =2-3. Pupols and Wade 3.5; 4.Makens 2; =5-6. eaver and Elmes 1. December 8-9, 1956 at the Seattle Chess Club.

**1958** 1.Viesturs Seglins 5.5-.5; 2.Pupols 4.5; 3.Conner 2; 4.Knapp 0 February 8-9 at the Seattle Chess Club.

**1959** 1.Zemgalis 6 (2) 2.McCormick 3.5; 3.Sieglins 3; =4-5.Wade and A. Murray 2.5; 6.Kendall 2; 7.Diedrich 1.5. February 21-23 at the Seattle Chess Club.

**1960** 1.James McCormick 5; 2.Pupols 4; 3.Franett 2.5; 4.A.Murray 2; 5.Grannis 1.5; 6. Seglins 0 (Seglins lost to McCormick and Pupols then forfeited against the other three players due to ill health) Held February 20-21 at the Seattle Chess Club

**1961** =1-2.Viktors Pupols and Arthur Wang 4-1; (Pupols won the twelve player Swiss by half a Solkoff point to take the title. Not happy winning in this way he challenged Wang to a match which he won 3.5-1.5.); =3-5. McCormick, Braley, and Schultz 3; =6-8. Franett, Kendall, and Seglins 2.5; 9.Lundh 2; 10. Brandahl 1.5; =11-12. A. Murray and Joachim 1 (Held Feb. 18-19 at the North Seattle Chess Club.)

**1962** 1.Seglins 3.5 (2); 2.Pupols 3; 3.Franett 2.5; =4-6. Brandahl, Van Arsdale, and Kenney 2. Held February 11-12 and 18-19 in West Seattle at Max Mage's home (2437 55th St Sw) E.F. was \$10 with \$5 refunded for completion of the event. 40/2 followed by 20/1. The prize fund was 2/3 for first plus possession of the Edburg trophy and 1/3 for second.

**1963** 1.Gerald Ronning 6; 2.McCormick 4.5; 3.Suttles 4; 4.Seglins 3.5; 5-6. Neufahrt and Harmon 3; 7.Parsons 2.5; 8.Nedell 1.5. First prize for this event was \$20 with \$10 for second. At Max Mage's home from February 22-24.

**1964** 1.Ronning (2) (Pupols won the 4-player double r.r. 1.Pupols 4.5; =2-3. McCormick and Aykroyd 3; 4.Clark 1.5 but Ronning, the defending state Champion, who missed the event because of receiving an invitation with the wrong dates on it, was allowed to play a match and beat Viktors 2.5-1.5. The tournament was held Feb. 21-23 at the Seattle Chess Club.

**1965** 1.McCormick 5 (2); 2.Schoene 4.5; =3-5. Pupols, Kiplinger, and Harmon 3.5; 6.Meierding 1; 7.Farkas 0. February 20-22 at the S.C.C. (158 Thomas Street)

**1966** 1.McCormick 6 (3); 2.Pupols 5; 3.Pullen 4; 4.Dunn 3; 5.Sonier 2; 6.Lundin 1; 7.Rasmussen 0. February 19-21 at the Seattle Chess Club.

**1967** 1.McCormick 3.5 (4); 2.Pullen 2.5; 3. Holzinger 2; 4. Williams 1.5; 5. T.Nelson .5.

**1968** =1-2. McCormick (5) and Holzinger 6 (McCormick won the one game playoff); =3-4. Corwin and Herbers 4; 5.T.Nelson 3; 6-7.Eggertsen and Sonier 2.5 8.Miller 0. February 17-18 at the Seattle Chess Club.

**1969** =1-2. McCormick (6) and Pullen 6 (McCormick won a one game playoff); 3.Pupols 5.5; 4.Herbers 3.5 5.Holmquist 2.5 6.M.Murray

2.5; 7.Thurston 2; 8.Christopher 0 . February 15-16 and 21-22 at the S.C.C. (3424 Fremont North).

**1970** 1.Michael Franett 5; 2.Pupols 4.5; 3.McCormick 4; =4-5.Pullen and O'Gorman 3.5; 6.M.Murray 3; 7.Walker 2.5; 8.Clark 2 (SCC at Bush Hotel. 1st \$50, 2nd \$30, 3rd \$15, 4th \$10. The event was held Feb. 7-8 and 14-15.

**1971** 1.John Braley 7; 2.Pupols 5; 3.Franett 4; 4.Walker 3.5 5.Pullen 3; 6.Krauss 2.5; 7.Ruotsalainen 2; 8.M.Murray 1 (February 13-14 and 20-21 in Seattle)

**1972** 1. Franett 6 (2); =2-3. Pupols and McCormick 5; 4. Walker 4.5; 5.M.Murray 3.5; 6.Herbers 2; 7.Rowan 2; 8.Eggertsen 0 . February 19-21 at the S.C.C. (Bush Hotel) \$180 in prizes.

**1973** 1. Franett 5.5 (3); =2-3. Walker and McCormick 5; 4.Murray 4; 5.Collyer 3.5; =6-7. Blackwood and Dean 2; 8.Gentala 1. February 3-4, 9-11; 1.\$85 =2-3. \$40 each. Held in the furniture department at Northgate.

**1974** 1. Pupols 5 (2); =2-3. Walker and Pafnutieff 4.5; 4.Blackwood 4; =5-6. Dean and Stefurak 3; 7. Spiegel 2.5; 8. Warner 1.5 . held Feb. 2-3, 9-10; at the American Chess Center on Aurora .

**1975** 1.Johnny Walker 5.5; 2.Dean 5; 3.Seirawan 4; =4-5. Spiegel and Pafnutieff 3.5; 6.Donaldson 2.5; =7-8. Holmquist and Pupols 2 . held Feb. 1-2, 8-9 at the Red Cross Center in South Seattle. 1st \$100, 2nd \$70, 3rd \$40, and 4th \$20.

**1976** 1-3.Yasser Seirawan, Ray Fasano, and Viktors Pupols 5 ( Yasser won the playoff - 1.Seirawan 3-1; 2.Pupols 2.5; 3.Fasano .5 ) 4.Stefurak 4; 5.Dean 3; 6.Pafnutieff 2.5; 7.Schill 2; 8.Fomin 1.5 . Held Feb. 7-8, 14-15, at the Center Park Community Center.

**1977** 1. Seirawan 6 (2); 2.Pupols 5.5; 3.Donaldson 4.5; 4.Kaupilla 4; 5.Stefurak 3; 6.Tangborn 2.5; 7.MacFarland 2; 8.Fasano .5 (forfeit losses to Kaupilla and MacFarland) Held Feb. 6-7 (Tia's Mexicano at the Windsor Hotel) Feb.13-14 at the U.S. Army Recruiting Station in downtown Seattle.

**1978** =1-2. Pupols (3) and Eric Tangborn 5 (playoff match was 2-2) 3.Donaldson 4; 4-5.Spiegel and McCormick 3.5; 6.Salmon 3; =7-8. McGeary and Schill 2 . Feb. 4-5, 11-12 at the U of W

**1979** 1.John Donaldson 5; 2.Schill 4.5; 3-4.Pupols and Spiegel 4; 5.Casey 3.5; 6.Salmon 3; =7-8. McCormick (forfeit losses to Spiegel and Rupel) and Rupel 2.

**1980** 1.Donaldson 6.5 (2); 2.McCormick 6; =3-4.Vest and Rowan 4; 5. Franett 3.5; 6.Eggers 3; 7.Lopez 1 (forfeit loss to Eggers for health reasons) 8.Schill 0 (lost to Donaldson in round one then withdrew because of illness).

**1981** 1.McCormick 5.5 (7); 2.Salmon 5; 3.Donaldson 4.5; 4.McGeary 3.5; =5-6.Franett and Dubisch 3; 7.Rowan 2.5; 8.Schoffstoll 1 .

**1982** =1.Bill McGeary and Neil Salmon 5 (no match); 3.Schoffstoll Played at the Tacoma Chess club [4.Braley 5.Harmon 6-7.Dubisch + Spiegel 8.Ferguson. This information may not be accurate. Scores are needed.

**1983** 1.Braley (2) 6; 2.Salmon 5.5; =3-6. Dubisch, Goetze, Harmon, and Pupols 3; 7.McGeary 2.5; 8.Schwarman 2 .

**1984** 1.Bobby Ferguson 5.5 (\$200); 2-3.Tompkins and Braley 4.5; 4.Salmon 4; =5-6. Pullen and Goetze 3; 7.Rupel 2; 8.Edwards 1.5 January 28-29 and February 4-5 at the Lake Hills Public Library in Bellevue

**1985** =1-2. Jeremy Silman and Kent Pullen 4.5 (nomatch); 3.Edwards 4; 4.Ferguson 3; 5.Dubisch 2; =6-7. Barnes and Rupel 1.5 8.Tompkins .5 (.5 vs. Ferguson and 0 vs. Rupel then dropped out. His results didn't

count for official scoring) .

**1986** =1. Matt Edwards and Braley (3) 4.5; 3.Ferguson 4; =4-5.Rupel and Pupols 3.5; =6-7. McGeary and Salmon 3; 8.Pullen 2. Held January 25-26 and February 1-2 at the Seattle Chess Club.

**1987** 1.Ferguson 5; (2) =2-4. Salmon, Braley, and Pupols 4.5; =5-6 Weinstock and Edwards 3; 7 Jones 2.5; 8 Barnes 1. Held Feb. 7-8, 14-15 at the Ravenna Bryant Senior Center.

**1988** 1.Edwards 5 (2) \$250; 2.Assem 4.5 (\$150); 3.Ferguson 3 (\$100); =4-5. Braley and Salmon 3.5; =6-7. Harmon and Pupols 3; 8.Roper 1.5 . At Rusty Miller's bookstore in West Seattle.

**1989** 1.Pupols (4) 7.5; 2.Tomkins 6; 3.Eggers 5.5; 4.Weinstock 5 =5-6.Edwards and Harmon 4.5; 7.Tobin 3.5; 8-9. Franett and Braley 3; 10.Graves 2.5 . In Olympia at Randy Dean's brokerage office.

**1990** 1.Salmon 5.5 (2) 2.Weinstock 4.5; 3.Edwards 3.5; =4-7. Tobin, Dubisch, Braley, and Tomkins (his score includes forfeit losses to Salmon, Braley, and Dubisch) 3; 8. Graves 2.5 . In Redmond, Washington at Microsoft.

**1991** 1.Salmon 5.5 (3); 2.Jimenez 4.5; 3.Edwards 4; 4.Franett 3.5; =5-6.Graves and Weinstock 3; 7.Pupols 2.5; 8.Braley 2 .

**1992** 1.Georgi Orlov 8; =2-3. Edwards and Jimenez 5; 4-7. Franett, Salmon, Russell, and Barnes 4.5; 8. Pupols 4; 9.Graves 3.5; 10. Schoffstoll 1.5 (Schoffstoll forfeited his last round game against Pupols) February 8-9 and 15-17 at the Seattle Chess Club 1st-\$300, 2nd-\$200, 3rd-\$100

Here are a few interesting statistics from the **Wa. State Championships**:

#### Multiple Winners:

9 times - Sheets; 7 times - McCormick; 4 times - Hart and Pupols ;3 times Braley, Franett, Salmon, and Ulvestad; 2 times - Donaldson, Edwards, Ferguson, Roming, Seglins, Seirawan, and Zemgalis.

#### Most Events:

Viktors Pupols 28; J. Leonard Sheets 17

#### Best Career Percentage:

Elmars Zemgalis 15-0 ( 1953, 1959)!

#### Perfect Scores:

Stork 5-0 (Swiss) 1950

Zemgalis 9-0 1953, 6-0 1959

McCormick 5-0 1960, 6-0 1966

Braley 7-0 1971

On a closing note here is a game from the last player to win the event with a perfect score. In the following game from round one John Braley used his time in a rather novel fashion: For his seventh move he spent one hour and after move 15 he had only 12 minutes for his last 25 moves!

#### **NM John Braley - NM George Krauss**

#### **Goring Gambit Declined**

#### **Washington State Championship 1971**

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.c3 dxc3 5.Bc4 e2 6.Qc2 Bb4+ 7.Nc3 d6 8.Bg5 f6 9.Bh4 Nb6 10.O-O Bxc3 11.Qxc3 Qc7 12.Bd5 Bd7 13.Qb3 g5 14.Bg3 g4 15.Nh4 O-O-O 16.Rac1 Rxc8 17.Qc3 Nf7 18.Rxc6 Bxc6 19.Nf5 Qf8 20.Qxa7 Nd8 21.Rc1 h5 22.b4 h4 23.Bf4 Rh5 24.b5 Bxd5 25.Bxd6 Qf7 26.Qa8+ Kd7 27.Rxc7+ Kc6 28.Qc8+ 1-0