

SENIOR COMMITTEE REPORT

MICHAEL MULFORD, CHAIR

Forty-four senior state champions squared off in the sixth annual John T. Irwin Tournament of Senior State Champions. GM Jesse Kraai and IM Nikoloz Managadze shared top honors with a 5/6 score. GMs John Fedorowicz, Enrico Sevillano, and IM Ronald Burnett shared third-fifth place. GM Kraai became the second winner of both a Denker and an Irwin, after GM Alex Fishbein. Javier Torres won the special prize for top player over 70 (there was only one player over 75, so the threshold was lowered). In addition to the competitive award, certificates were awarded to seven players who competed in their fifth Irwin! Michael Carey, Wilson Gibbins, Ronald Burnett, J. Timothy Sage, Kevin French, Enrico Sevillano, and Richard Hobbs achieved that milestone. Needless to say, no one has ever done this in the Denker or Barber, and probably not in the Haring!

The Senior Committee has always made every effort to ensure each of the 52 states has an Irwin representative, although we have never exceeded 44. This year, we seemed destined to smash that record, but Mother Nature intervened. Two players were unable to reach Grand Rapids because of severe thunderstorms (another made it a round late). So, the record remains at 44 — for now. Three states that have not held a qualifying event during the Irwin era (Maine, Mississippi, and Pennsylvania) added a Senior Open for 2024. This is an exciting trend.

The 2023 U.S. Senior Open, held in the Chicago area for the third straight year, drew 79 players. GM Jesse Kraai had the best tiebreaks among the six players with a 5/6 score. GM Nikola Mitkov, Peter Gilruth, GM Alexander Fishbein, FM Doug Eckert, and Steven Szpisjak are co-champions. The same organizers will run the 2024 U.S. Senior Open, which will be a two-section event. It is exciting to note that the event operates THREE women's prizes in each section. Even better, the top woman in the Open section will be seeded into the 2025 U.S. Senior Women's Championship!

With GM Kraai winning both the U.S. Senior Open and the Irwin, this created a dilemma since both events seed their champion to the U.S. Senior Championship. GM Kraai is very strong, but I don't think he wants to give a simul each round! A careful reading of the rules did not identify a single answer as to how the seeds should be handled. They did show that only a co-champion could receive a seed and that only players with a FIDE flag of USA could qualify for the U.S. Senior Championship. This eliminated IM Managadze, GM Mitkov, and Gilruth. Thus, GM Kraai was clearly the only possible seed from the Irwin.

When this writer inquired, I found it had not been resolved and the Senior Committee was asked to make a recommendation for a rule change which would resolve any situation where the same person wins both seeded events. We have submitted such a proposal for future years. For the 2023 events, however, the second spot will use the rating list to fill the spot in the next U.S. Senior Championship.

The first U.S. Senior Women's Championship was held as a 12-player, five round Swiss. WGM Anjelina Belakovskaia scored 4½ points, ½ point ahead of WFM Olga Sagalchik. The Senior Committee is delighted this event was held, and looks forward to 2024 when we expect the event will be held as a round robin with the same structure as the U.S. Senior Championship. It deserves no less.