

2025-2026



SC SCHOLASTIC CHESS SEASON

**Palmetto Scholastic
Chess League**

**2026 State
Championship**

**Building a Winning
Club at Your School**



Palmetto Scholastic Chess League III, March 1, 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4

A Message from the Columbia Chess Club

Growing scholastic chess
in the Midlands

5

2025-2026 Scholastic Chess Schedule

Calendar of upcoming
events for the '25-'26
school year.

6

The Palmetto Scholastic Chess League

An introduction to the
premier scholastic chess
league.

9

First Tournament Primer

Everything you need to
know before attending
your first scholastic chess
tournament

14

The 2026 S.C. Scholastic Chess Championship

All the details on the
official scholastic chess
championship for South
Carolina.



2025 Palmetto Scholastic Chess League

Columbia Chess Club
President

James Brandmair

Columbia Chess Club Owner

Brandon Jordan

Tournament Directors

James Brandmair

Nicholas Ciriello

Paul Copeland

Daniel Covalt

Brandon Jordan

Sean Miller

Ian Neack

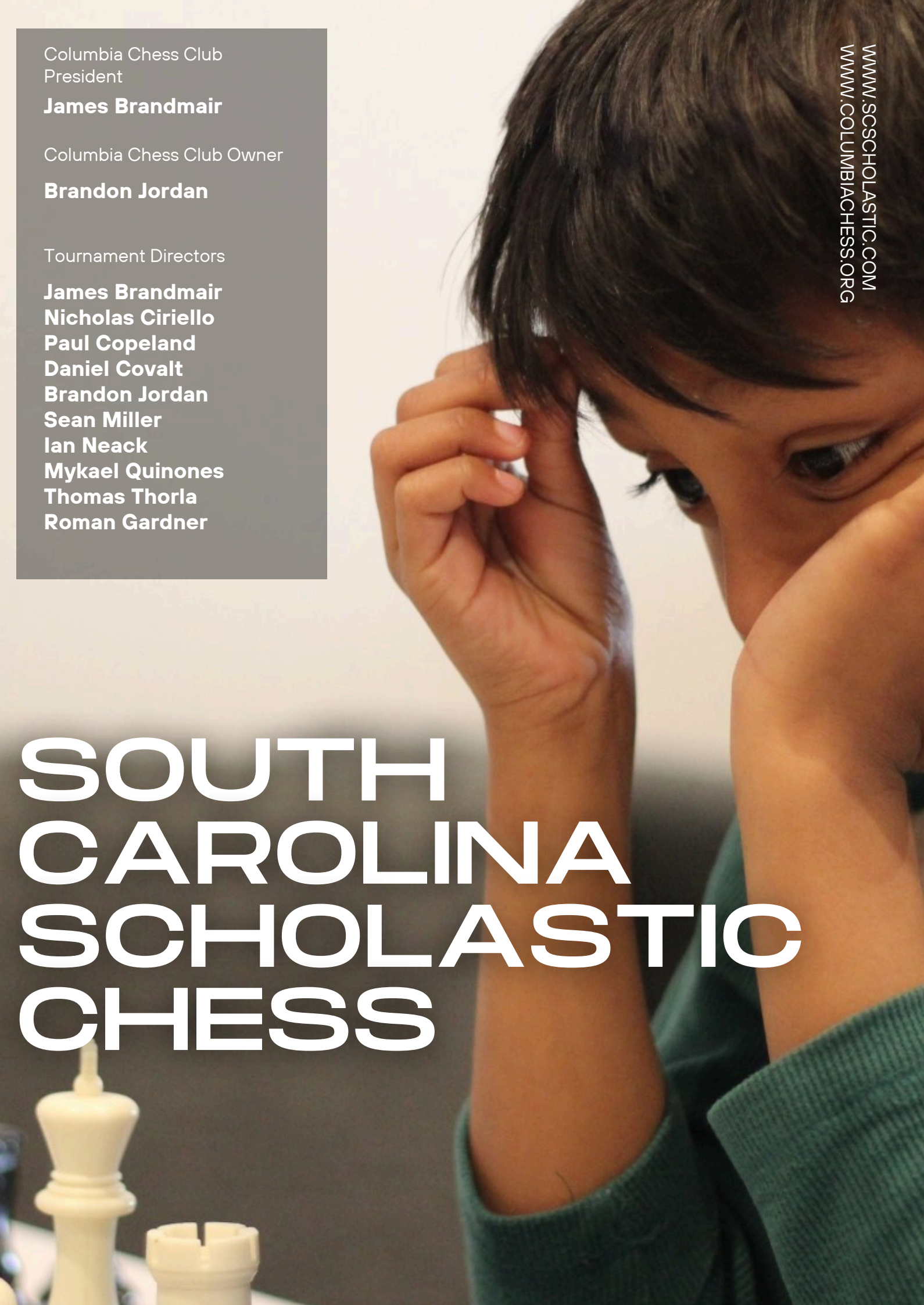
Mykael Quinones

Thomas Thorla

Roman Gardner

WWW.SCSCHOLASTIC.COM
WWW.COLUMBIACHESS.ORG

SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOLASTIC CHESS



FROM THE COLUMBIA CHESS CLUB



Theodore Strom, Youngest Participant PSCL I
with Brandon Jordan, Owner

The Columbia Chess Club is a group of dedicated volunteers with a mission to grow chess in South Carolina and to make our state nationally-prominent in scholastic chess.


Our Organizational Efforts

In January of 2025 we launched the Palmetto Scholastic Chess League (PSCL), a regular tournament series recognizing both team and individual awards with over 180 participants in the Spring semester alone. PSCL continues in the 2025-2026 school year, with three tournaments per semester. The capstone event of the PSCL is the S.C. Scholastic Chess Championship, which we are hosting in 2026 for the third consecutive year. Held since 1988, the Scholastic Championship determines State Champion High School, Middle School, and Elementary School Teams, the respective Individual Champion titles, as well as the State Girl's Champion. Now held at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center, the Scholastic Championship is regularly the largest chess tournament held in South Carolina, welcoming scholastic players of all levels of experience.

Our Efforts to Develop School Clubs

Through our Kids' Night event held every Tuesday evening, we are on pace to add 150 youth members of the U.S. Chess Federation in 2025. We also donate our time and chess equipment to help start school chess clubs in the Midlands area, including H.E. Corley, River Springs, and the state-champion River Bluff High School chess team, among others. We maintain a roster of coaches that provide 1-on-1 lessons as well as free coaching before our weekly meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Through these efforts, the number of rated scholastic players in the Midlands has **doubled** over the '24-'25 school year. Knowing chess's value to developing sportsmanship, critical thinking skills, and school pride, we want to offer our support to your school's involvement in scholastic chess!



Brandon Jordan, Owner

2025–2026 SCHOLASTIC CHESS SCHEDULE

'25-'26 PALMETTO SCHOLASTIC CHESS LEAGUE

- **SEPT. '25 PALMETTO SCHOLASTIC CHESS LEAGUE**

September 20, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Columbia Chess Club, 6169 St. Andrews Rd., Columbia, SC 29212

- **NOV. '25 PALMETTO SCHOLASTIC CHESS LEAGUE**

November 1, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Columbia Chess Club, 6169 St. Andrews Rd., Columbia, SC 29212

- **DEC. '25 PALMETTO SCHOLASTIC CHESS LEAGUE**

December 6, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Columbia Chess Club, 6169 St. Andrews Rd., Columbia, SC 29212

- **JAN. '26 PALMETTO SCHOLASTIC CHESS LEAGUE**

January 10, 2026, 10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Columbia Chess Club, 6169 St. Andrews Rd., Columbia, SC 29212

- **FEB. '26 PALMETTO SCHOLASTIC CHESS LEAGUE**

February 7, 2026, 10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Columbia Chess Club, 6169 St. Andrews Rd., Columbia, SC 29212

- **MAR. '26 PALMETTO SCHOLASTIC CHESS LEAGUE**

March 7, 2026, 10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Columbia Chess Club, 6169 St. Andrews Rd., Columbia, SC 29212



[www.columbiachess.org/
palmetto-scholastic-chess](http://www.columbiachess.org/palmetto-scholastic-chess)



2026 CHAMPIONSHIP CYCLE

- **2026 SC SCHOLASTIC CHAMPIONSHIP**

March 21, 2026, 10:00 a.m. – 5:40 p.m.

Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center

1101 Lincoln Street, Columbia, SC 29201

- **2026 SC STATE FINALS**

By invitation based on top-8 finish in Scholastic Championship.

April 4, 2026, 9:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Columbia Chess Club, 6169 St. Andrews Rd., Columbia, SC 29212

- **2026 SC GIRLS CHAMPIONSHIP**

April 11, 2026, 10:00 a.m. – 5:40 p.m.

Columbia Chess Club, 6169 St. Andrews Rd., Columbia, SC 29212



www.scscholastic.com





2025 Palmetto Scholastic Chess League

THE PALMETTO SCHOLASTIC CHESS LEAGUE

The Columbia Chess Club organizes the Palmetto Scholastic Chess League (PSCL) as a regular monthly tournament series to encourage the organization of scholastic chess clubs and to promote scholastic chess throughout the state! Separate sections for High School, Middle School, and Elementary School provides balanced competition and encourages players to form teams representing their school to win awards.

CONVENIENTLY SCHEDULED, EASY TO ENTER

PSCL events occur once a month on a Saturday. Games start at 10:00 a.m. and finish before lunch.

The games are officially rated by US Chess, meaning that all players will be nationally ranked after playing. If you are already a US Chess member, it's only \$20 to enter. For those playing their first US Chess tournament, registration is \$25, which includes a US Chess membership that the Columbia Chess Club will create for you! (A youth membership itself costs \$24 from US Chess).

FIRST-CLASS FACILITIES

The Columbia Chess Club is located at 6169 St Andrews Road, Columbia, SC and is the vision of passionate chess players who wanted to create , , ,

. . . the perfect atmosphere to play chess. Wood pieces, specially-designed chess tables, a well-appointed spectator lounge with concessions, and state-of-the-art technology displaying real-time results and video of the top boards make the Columbia Chess Club the place to play chess.

TOURNAMENT DETAILS

Registration is online only and limited to the first 74 players to register. The entry for first-time tournament players is \$25, which includes a US Chess membership that the club will create using the email provided at registration. A \$20 entry fee

covers players with prior US Chess memberships.

FORMAT

PSCL is a 4-Round Swiss tournament, meaning that players play all four rounds and are not eliminated, and players with the same record are generally paired each round. Each player will play with a 10 minute starting time and will get an additional 5 seconds with each move. (G/10;+5). This will affect the player's US Chess "Quick" rating. PSCL has three sections: High School (9-12), Middle School (6-8), Elementary School (K-5), with prizes awarded separately for each section. The Columbia Chess Club provides all equipment.



2025 Palmetto Scholastic Chess League



2025 Palmetto Scholastic Chess League



2025 Palmetto Scholastic Chess League

TEAM TROPHIES

Trophies are awarded to first and second place teams in each of High School, Middle School, and Elementary School sections. The top three players from each school have their points combined to form a team score, and the school with the highest team score wins. Results will be reported to school administration. Homeschooling students may register with the school for which they are zoned.



2025 Palmetto Scholastic Chess League

INDIVIDUAL TROPHIES

The top five players from each of the High School, Middle School, and Elementary School sections receive individual trophies. In the event of a tie for first, a blitz playoff is played between the players tied to determine first place. US Chess tiebreaks are used otherwise.



2025 Palmetto Scholastic Chess League

PSCL TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

Round 1: 10:00 a.m.

Round 2: 10:35 a.m.

Round 3: 11:10 a.m.

Round 4: 11:45 a.m.

Awards: 12:15 p.m.

Can't make every round? We can give players one 1/2 point bye for any round if they let us know in the registration comments or before the tournament starts.

SUPERLATIVES



2025 Palmetto Scholastic Chess League

At PSCL, special awards are given to:

- Biggest Upset
- Top Female Performance
- Youngest Participant
- Best First Tournament

FIRST TOURNAMENT PRIMER

YOUR FIRST SCHOLASTIC EVENT WITH THE COLUMBIA CHESS CLUB

The Columbia Chess Club organizes monthly Palmetto Scholastic Chess League tournaments as well as regular Tuesday Kid's Night events. Here's what to expect before, during, and after the tournament.

BEFORE YOUR FIRST SCHOLASTIC TOURNAMENT

Getting a US Chess Membership

A youth US Chess membership is required for players in K-12 to participate in rated events. A 1-year youth membership from US Chess costs \$24. However, the Columbia Chess Club provides easy ways for youth players to obtain memberships for the first time.



2025 Columbia Chess Club Kid's Night



US CHESS RATED EVENT

All Columbia Chess Club events are official rated events of the US Chess Federation, requiring a national membership. There are three easy ways to get a US Chess membership:

- **A first-timer registering for a Palmetto Scholastic Chess League event gets a US Chess membership included with their registration.**
- **The Club's Tuesday Kid's Night has an "Unrated" tournament-- the winner of which receives a free US Chess membership.**
- **Purchase yourself directly from www.uschess.org**

DURING YOUR FIRST SCHOLASTIC TOURNAMENT

Step 1: Pairings Go Up

When it's time for the first round, pairings will be posted in multiple locations: first on a television in the lobby area (as shown in the photo on right) and second on paper pairings in the tournament hall. The white player will be listed first and the black player second, and the pairings will specify your board number.

Step 2: Go to Your Board

Now that you know your board number from reading the pairings, go sit at your board at the color you have been assigned. The boards are conveniently marked with board numbers (as shown in the 2nd photo on right). Greet your opponent and wait for an announcement to start your clocks. Ordinarily your clock has already been set by a tournament director, but if it does not show the correct starting time, a tournament director can assist you.

Step 3: Play Your Game

When the announcement is given, you will shake hands with your opponent and start your clock. Each time a move is made, the players should hit the clock. A tournament game differs from a casual game you might play with friends or family insofar as: a clock is used and the "touch move" rule is followed.

- If your opponent's clock runs out, you win. If your clock runs out, you lose.
- If you intentionally touch a piece, you have to move it if you can. If you intentionally touch your opponent's piece you have to take it if you can.



BOARD	WHITE	RESULT	BLACK
101	FM KELVIN SANCHEZ (2) 2302		MATT DALTHORP (2) 2302
102	MATTHEW ROGERS (2) 1932		TANAY SANGHANI 2006 (1.5)
103	CHRISTOPHER SELBY (2) 1849		JACOB STOLL 2074 (2)
104	NM PATRICK SCIACCA (2) 2006		GENE NIX 1840 (2)
105	TAMAGHNA ROY (2) 1757		ROGER JOHNSON 1918 (2)
106	NICHOLAS CIRIELLO (2) 1884		NIKOLAI WEBB 1779 (1.5)
107	ROBERT LANIGAN (1.5) 1843		DANIEL SHEAF 1837 (1.5)
108	ADAM SCHOONYELD (2) 1677		LONDON MEADOWS 1874 (1)

A typical pairing screen at the Columbia Chess Club.



A board in the Columbia Chess Club tournament hall, with board marker.



2025 Columbia Chess Club Kid's Night

DURING YOUR FIRST SCHOLASTIC TOURNAMENT (CONTINUED)

A win will earn you one "point" in the tournament. A loss will earn you zero points. A draw will mean that each player gets 1/2 of a point. The winners of the tournament will be decided based on who has accumulated the most points. Points are also used to pair players from round to round, and you should typically be matched against someone with the same score (i.e. if you are undefeated, you would likely face someone undefeated, or if you are winless, you will likely face someone who is also winless).

Step 4: Record Your Result

When you are done with your game, you and your opponent should record the result on the paper pairings that are up in the pairing hall. You write a "1" next to the player who won, a "0" next to the player who lost, and in the event of a draw, you write a "1/2" or "0.5" next to both players, as shown in the photo example. You are done with your first round and are free until the next scheduled round. If you lost, you are not eliminated, and you should play all the rounds! In fact, it is typical that the winner of a tournament will not have a perfect score, so hang in there and enjoy the ride.



Results sheets posted in the Columbia Chess Club tournament hall.

AFTER YOUR FIRST TOURNAMENT

Step 1: Wait to see if you or your team won an award!

If you finished with a score that is good enough to place, we will distribute trophies at the end of the event. The Columbia Chess Club also often has special prizes for new players, so even if you did not win the tournament you may receive recognition for your performance.

Step 2: Check for your new rating!

The Columbia Chess Club prides itself on submitting its tournaments to the USCF quickly, and ordinarily ratings will be updated the night of the tournament. Simply search your name in the US Chess database the evening after the tournament concludes.



2024 SC Scholastic Chess Championship, Russell House, University of South Carolina



AFTER YOUR FIRST TOURNAMENT (CONTINUED)

Step 2: Check for your new rating, and the Columbia Chess Club Newsletter!

The Columbia Chess Club prides itself on submitting its tournaments to the USCF quickly, and ordinarily ratings will be updated the night of the tournament. Simply search your name in the US Chess database the evening after the tournament concludes. If this is your first tournament, congratulations on your new rating! The Columbia Chess Club also sends out a weekly newsletter acknowledging our recent winners, as well as informing about upcoming events. You can now count yourself among the esteemed field of tournament chess players!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Do I need to bring anything?

We've got you covered. The Columbia Chess Club provides all of its own equipment including chess sets and clocks. We even have snacks for sale at our concessions kiosk.

Q: When should I arrive?

That is up to you, but there is no requirement to arrive early. When the first round is scheduled to start, you will be paired and your clock will start whether or not you are present, so even running a couple of minutes late is not a catastrophe. For those who prefer to arrive early, tournament directors are generally on site an hour before the start of the first round and can answer any questions you might have.

Q: I can't stay for the whole tournament, what should I do?

During registration you can request a bye for any round you are unable to attend. A bye counts as a half-point toward standings. You can miss as many rounds as you wish, but additional rounds missed beyond the first bye will be counted as zero points. Byes do not affect your rating. Your rating is only affected when a game is actually played.

Q: What if people aren't very nice?

To quote Ellie, one of our 7-year-old members: "Don't worry about that - the people are nice."

Q: Is my kid too young to participate in a chess tournament?

Scholastic events cater to kids! In fact, the Columbia Chess Club has some regular members as early as four or five years old. If your child understands the rules and is able to play quietly, they fit right in to a tournament setting regardless of their strength or experience. Chess is a great developmental tool for kids, and we are very supportive of the next generation of chess players and excited about youth participation.



"[T]he people are nice" - Ellie

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

Q: I can't stay for the whole tournament, what should I do?

Notation—writing down your moves—is required only during longer time controls (more than 30 minutes per player). Because the Scholastics tournaments typically use shorter time controls, notation is not required. Some major scholastic events, such as the SC Scholastic Championship may require notation.

Q: What should I do if my opponent is breaking the rules?

If you feel like your opponent is refusing to follow the rules, you should pause the clock and raise your hand for a tournament director. We'll get things back on track.



2025 Palmetto Scholastic Chess League



2025 Palmetto Scholastic Chess League

Q: Are spectators allowed?

Yes. We ask that spectators keep a comfortable distance from the players and not communicate in any way with the players. Also, the tournament has windows into the playing hall, and we broadcast the positions of the top boards to screens in the lobby, so we've tried to make it as easy on spectators as possible.

Q: If I tied with someone else, who gets the trophy?

Unless another method of tie-breaking is specified (such as a blitz game playoff), the US Chess Rules specify a series of formulas that can determine how to split a tie. Generally, they relate to how the tied players' opponents fared in the tournament (someone who played stronger opponents will win the tiebreak over someone who played weaker opponents, based on how those opponents performed during the tournament).

If you have any questions please email us at info@columbiachess.org



2025 Scholastic Championship, High School Section



THE 2026 S.C. SCHOLASTIC CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

MARCH 21, 2026

COLUMBIA METROPOLITAN CONVENTION CENTER

The South Carolina Scholastic Championship has been held annually since 1988 and is sanctioned by the South Carolina Chess Association as the official state qualifier to U.S. Chess Federation's national High School, Middle School, Elementary School, and Girls invitational championships.

The Scholastic Championship determines State Champion High School, Middle School, and Elementary School Teams, Individual Champion titles, as well as the State Girl's Champion. The Scholastic Championship is regularly the largest chess tournament held in South Carolina, welcoming scholastic players of all levels of experience.

DATE & LOCATION

As in 2025, the State Championship will be organized by the Columbia Chess Club and held in March at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.

March 21, 2026

Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center

1101 Lincoln St

Columbia, SC 29201





2025 High School Champion, River Bluff High School



2025 High School Championship



2025 Middle School Championship

REGISTRATION DETAILS

The South Carolina Scholastic Championship is open to residents of the state or students attending school in the state. Registration is online only, and costs \$45 if registered by March 14, 2026, \$55 thereafter. Registration closes 8:30 a.m. on March 21, 2026.



2025 High School Individual Finalists

The top eight players will earn a spot in the State Finals hosted at the Columbia Chess Club on April 4, 2026. The Columbia Chess Club provides all equipment. There is also no need to check-in on site: players not reporting to their first-round game will be withdrawn from the tournament. If you have any issues with your registration, you can contact the Columbia Chess Club at info@columbiachess.org.



2025 K-3 Championship

SECTIONS

- High School (9th-12th grade)
- Middle School (6th-8th grade)
- Elementary School (K-5th grade)
- Primary (K-3rd grade). Note: Primary K-3 is for newer players; ambitious youngsters should play in K-5 for the Elementary School title. Organizers may require highly competitive players to play in K-5 section at their discretion.

FORMAT & PRIZES

Saturday, March 21, 2026. 5-Round Swiss G/30;d5.

- Top 8 in High, Middle, and Elementary sections invited to State Finals on April 4, 2026.
- Top 8 in Primary (K-3) section awarded trophies.
- Top 3 Schools in each of High, Middle, and Elementary sections awarded team trophies based on the best 4 player scores.

OFFICIAL US CHESS RATED EVENT

Active US Chess memberships are required. Memberships can be purchased/renewed directly with US Chess on their website (click "Join" in the menu). Youth memberships are currently \$24/yr. New players please note that, in addition to obtaining a US Chess ID, you must also pay the US Chess membership fee to be an active USCF member.



Jason Marshal, 2025 Middle School Champion

The Scholastic Championship

STATE FINALS

The top eight players in each of the High School, Middle School, and Elementary School sections of the State Championship are invited to the State Finals on Saturday, April 4, 2026 at the Columbia Chess Club. The State Finals are a 3-Round Swiss, G/75;+5. All players are awarded trophies based on finish in their section, and the title of State Champion goes to the winner in each section. The first tiebreak based in the State Finals is the player's score in March 21, 2026 State Championship Tournament.

The the first place finisher in each section at the State Finals is awarded an invitation and a stipend to compete as the South Carolina representative to the following national tournaments hosted at the US Open Championship during August 3-9, 2026 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. (\$5000 Scholarship Top Prizes): Denker National Tournament of High School State Champions; Barber National Tournament of Middle School State Champions; Rockefeller National Tournament of Elementary School State Champions.



Dutch Fork Middle School, 2025 Middle School Champions



2025 State Chess Finals



2025 Scholastic Championship, parents and family watch games between rounds

**6169 ST.
ANDREWS ROAD,
COLUMBIA SC
29212**

**COLUMBIA
CHESS
CLUB**

