

## **MacArthur, Ameritech host state chess tourney**

**Daily Herald (Arlington Heights, IL)**

**March 4, 1996 | Daday, Eileen O.**

With a total of 729 competitors - and some 345 chess boards set up for as far as the eye could see - the largest Illinois Grade School State Chess Championship was held this weekend in Hoffman Estates.

It took nearly half of the square footage of the Ameritech Center in Hoffman Estates to hold the tournament. MacArthur Junior High School and the village of Hoffman Estates played host to the championship.

And when it was all over, the chess club from Franklin Elementary School in Park Ridge won the team award in both the primary and elementary divisions, while Bloomington Junior High School won the junior high team award.

Runners up included the students from Avery Cooney Elementary School in Downers Grove, which finished second in the primary division, and the MacArthur Junior High Generals, which finished second in the junior high division.

Individual state champions include Andrew Hubbard, a student at Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in Glen Ellyn; and Matthew Leali and Barney Getz, both students at Father Sweeney School in Peoria.

The tournament featured seven rounds of chess of up to two hours long for the junior high players before narrowing down the divisions to the eventual team and individual winners.

It also constituted the largest event ever held within the Ameritech complex not related to Ameritech, said Doug Jones, property manager for Ameritech.

Still, Bobby Fisher was nowhere to be found. But his teacher - and his influence - were present.

Thanks to their state-of-the-art communications technology at Ameritech, the company set up a two-way live interactive video conference with Bobby Fisher's world renown teacher, Bruce Pandolfini, who answered questions from the young Illinois competitors from a studio in New York.

"Hoffman Estates is the defending state champion in the elementary division. We felt like we wanted to help represent the hometown team," said Ameritech spokesman Penny Lacy.

The young players on hand, such as Carl Thomas of Hoffman Estates and Trey Koziol of Hinsdale all had seen the movie, "Searching for Bobby Fisher," several times.

"Bobby Fisher is the greatest chess player ever," said Thomas. "He practiced a lot and played in really hard tournaments."

The tournament was sanctioned by the United States Chess Federation and allowed players to move up in their rankings by beating a higher ranked player.

The MacArthur Generals have been studying chess moves and practicing the game after school since September in preparation for the state tournament.

Steve McCulley, a parent volunteer from Hoffman Estates who ran the tournament, became involved with the game after his son Matthew, a sixth-grader, took it up. He likened the game and its intricate moves to learning to read music.

"It encourages children to use their minds; it's similar to music and the arts in developing that side of the brain," said McCulley. "It also strengthens their concentration, patience and math skills."