

CHECK

MATE

The Chess Club focused on improving their skills.

“I’ve learned how to think and plan ahead of my competition.”

AARON GOLD '25



AT AN AFTER SCHOOL PRACTICE, sophomore **Joaquin Moggio**, freshman **Thomas Vesval** and junior **Jack Xenos** focus on their games and keep a strong mentality. Weekly, players developed new passions and love for the game. “I play chess because it entertains me and it is very fun to play,” Moggio said. *Photos by Sophia Kingston*



Aaron Gold studied the chess board and moved the pawn with 12 seconds left on the clock in an attempt to block his opponent, during a team practice on Oct. 9. Gold’s opponent couldn’t escape the move and lost. This was just one of the team’s intense after school practice sessions as they prepared for their under 1900 USCF National Competition in April.

“What’s interesting about the game is that you do the same things over and over again, to a point where it becomes effortless and you don’t have to really think about every single move,” Gold said.

The Chess team’s principle focus was to sharpen their skills, having moved up to a more difficult section because of new players, who had better ratings. They

were previously ranked u1600 where they won nationals. Now, the team played strategically in order to remain together to clinch the win. Due to the more difficult division, they gathered every Monday after school to practice and improve.

“Moving up the ranks affects how I play because I have to assess the strengths and weaknesses of my opponents. In stronger opponents I cannot just wait for a mistake, I have to be the person who initiates the attack. Practicing allows me to develop attacking skills which makes it so that I can handle stronger opponents,” junior Neelesh Pandey said.

Each player in the club felt part of a team, and stuck together to help each other out.

“We are a very accepting environment, as long as you have an interest in chess and are willing to learn and get better then you will get to play and have a chance at nationals,” Gold said.

Although the games were played individually, players worked as a team in order to achieve the points. According to sponsor Randall Smith, chess was more than a leisure club, and could be compared to competitive clubs such as debate. Members of the team played numerous matches, and built friendships.

“My favorite part about chess is the connections I am able to build with others who play,” freshman Thomas Vesval said.

STORY | ANNA CRUZ

STRATEGIZING, junior **Aaron Gold** makes his next play. With 12 seconds remaining, Aaron needed to remain focused and attentive. “When I play chess I feel either very prepared or very confused,” Gold said. *Photo by Sophia Kingston*