

# Berkeley's Lazy Chess Champ

A 17 year old Berkeley teenager who is "too lazy to practice and too lazy to read chess books" is the new U.S. high school chess champion.

Soft spoken Craig Barnes, a senior in computer programming, credits an aggressive, attacking approach for his win over 340 opponents in New York earlier this month.

"I play aggressively but not overly aggressively," he explains. "I don't make weakening points if I can't see it all the way to the end."

## Simultaneous Match

He used this strategy recently to defeat 25 opponents simultaneously in an exhibition at Berkeley High School.

And he was one of four winners against Yugoslavian Grand Master Svetozar Gligorich, last year in the latter's 31-board simultaneous exhibition during a Bay Area visit.

His interest in the ancient game "just happened."

The slightly built youth recalls, "I didn't have anything to do at lunchtime, and there was a club that played chess in the cafeteria."

## At Presidio

That was nearly four years and 75 tournaments ago when he was a seventh grader at Presidio Junior High School in The City.

The second eldest of four children, Craig lives with his family at 1717 Francisco St. His father, Richard, is TW chief, passenger reservation services, in San Francisco. Nobody else in the family plays chess seriously.

When his family moved to Berkeley in 1969, Craig played a team match against another school, and his partner introduced him to the idea of tournament competition.

He entered the East Bay championship for 11, 12, and 13 year olds and won. Then he entered the Northern California championship for the same age group and won again.

## Hooked

Next, he joined the Oakland Chess Club and was hooked.

"I'm not really addicted to it. But it's my main hobby, my main interest," he says.

He has competed in the three major competitions held each year — the National, American and United States open tournaments — and has done well against



Craig Barnes still isn't "really addicted to it"

—Examiner photo by Seymour Snaer

top players of the game.

Last year, after the first four rounds of the Canadian Open, he was within one-half point of Boris Spassky, the world champion from Russia.

Craig seldom plays chess any more except in competition, which takes up two to three weekends a month.

"I can't concentrate that much during informal games," he said.

But in tournaments, he is fascinated by the middle game where he says "most of the combinations and fighting come in; it's the part of the game that's least analyzed. Most of my games are usually decided fairly early with no more than 30 moves in most cases."

## National Open

Last month, he won the top expert prize in the National Open, placing sixth in the competition. All in all, he has won a total \$1233 and 18 trophies.

"I should be a national master within a year," he says confidently.

Craig is officially rated 2192 points and needs only eight more to be a master.

"I'm very close. One game would do it, but I haven't been doing as well in local tournaments as I have in national ones. I lose points that way. But it shouldn't be too long."