



—AP Wirephoto

Young minds wrestle with gambits and other strategy as they compete in the

third annual Los Angeles Scholastic Open Chess Tournament. The meet drew about

200 youngsters, most of whom were between 6 and 11. Boy at right is only 4.

TOURNEY ENGROSSES 200

L.A. Children Discover Thrill Of Playing Chess

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Fathers anxiously whispered advice to their competing offspring. Mothers sat tensely in the stands.

Alternate cheers and groans rippled and a concessionaire hawked sandwiches and cold drinks. A huge clock ticked off the game time.

It may sound like schoolboy football, but it is tournament chess, elementary school style.

AGED 6 TO 11

The players, 200 boys and girls 6 to 11 years old, spent six hours yesterday hunched over chessboards in the third annual Los Angeles County Scholastic Open Chess Tournament.

They sipped chocolate milk and munched potato chips. But they were as intent, if not so physically active as gridiron stars, thoughtfully moving their knights and pawns.

The rules called for the youngsters to play each other without outside help. However, some parents could not resist giving their offspring advice.

FATHER LOSES

"My father wouldn't leave me alone," complained Bobby Hite, 8, of suburban Northridge. "He kept coming down from the bleachers and trying to give me advice. Finally I asked him to play."

The elder Hite went down to defeat in 14 moves.

Other players drew the crowd's attention as

they defeated challenger after challenger.

4-YEAR-OLD STARS

Standing out above his schoolage elders was 4-year-old Vladimir John Ondrasik III, son of a missile scientist.

Though not officially entered because of his age, Vladimir beat a 10-year-old girl, the girl's mother and two 8-year-olds.

"Vladimir enjoys chess immensely," said his father, Vladimir Jr. "He wants for me to come home at night so we can play. I taught him the game when he was 3."

MOSTLY NOVICES

Not all the tournament players were that advanced. Most began to play chess only a few months ago, usually from their parents or in school chess clubs.

"It appeals to all ages and types," said an official. "Look around. Most of the kids at the tournament are your boy-next-door types, not super brains. Chess is just a fun game."

However, chess is not likely to outpace baseball or football.

Nine-year-old Brad Miller of Van Nuys echoed the feelings of most of the boys: "Chess is a great game, but I like to get outside and run."

The girls?

"It's a nice game, but I like playing with my dolls, too," said Irene Atkins, 8, of Los Angeles.