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THE 1954 CALIFORNIA STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

by M. O. Meyer

Herman Steiner, international master and former United States Champion, retained the State Championship by scoring  $7\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$  in the tournament which was completed in San Francisco on November 28th. The score is identical with that by which he won the 1953 event, although he lost a game last year whereas this year he won 6 and drew 3. One of the three draws was with Dmitri Poliakoff, who had defeated the Champion the previous year. The other two were obtained by Ray Martin, former California State Champion, and by Jim Schmitt, who recently won second prize in the 1954 California State Open Championship tournament held at Santa Barbara.

The final results were as follows:

1.	Herman Steiner	$7\frac{1}{2}$	-	$1\frac{1}{2}$
2-3.	Eugene Levin	$6\frac{1}{2}$	-	$2\frac{1}{2}$
2-3.	Dmitri Poliakoff	$6\frac{1}{2}$	-	$2\frac{1}{2}$
4.	Irving Rivise	$5\frac{1}{2}$	-	$3\frac{1}{2}$
5.	Ray Martin	5	-	4
6.	Jim Schmitt	$4\frac{1}{2}$	-	$4\frac{1}{2}$
7.	William Addison	4	-	5
8-9.	Robert Cross	2	-	7
8-9.	Milton Meyer	2	-	7
10.	Sven Almgren	$1\frac{1}{2}$	-	$7\frac{1}{2}$

Eugene Levin, winner of the 1953 State Open Championship tournament held at San Jose, lost to Steiner and Rivise and drew with Poliakoff, who also drew with Steiner and Addison and lost to Martin. Rivise and Martin each lost only two games, but three draws by the former and four by the latter served to ruin their chances for a higher prize.

As defending State Champion and as winner of the 1953 State "Open" championship respectively, Steiner and Levin were seeded to the 1954 State Championship Tournament. The other four southern California players, the three northern California finalists, and the central California representative qualified by means of preliminary tournaments. How the seeding will be handled next year is a problem which the California State Chess Federation should settle in ample time because Steiner now holds both titles.

The writer was willing to bet that he would not lose more than 9 games in the tournament, but he could find no takers. In any event, he was lucky enough to lose only 6, while winning one and drawing two. The lone win was at the expense of Schmitt, the draws were against Martin and Cross. Perhaps the representative of the Central California Chess League will be criticized for not having compiled a more impressive score, but for that he offers no excuses. He did his best, but in the majority of games it was not good enough and he found himself outplayed.

It was by far the strongest tournament in which I have participated, and the experience of playing 9 games in 6 days was gruelling, to say the least. On Friday, November 26, for example, I played two games the first of which commenced at 1:00 p.m. and the second of which was adjourned shortly after 2 a.m. Saturday morning. Both ended in draws, although the latter was not completed until after play had been resumed at 10:30 a.m. Sunday, November 28.