

The Cadet Chess Club

Wins

The Armed Forces Championship for the

Third Time!



By COL Bryan Goda '82, Chess Club OIC



Superintendent LTG Hagenbeck presents the individual trophy to CDT David Jacobs '08.

FOR THE THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR, the Cadet Chess Club has defeated the other service academies to claim the Commander in Chief Trophy. In the 2006 competition, West Point and the Air Force Academy were tied at 15–15 after two days and four rounds of play. In the final two rounds, the Army cadets ran away to win easily with 24–18. The Naval Academy placed a distant third. The top USMA players for 2006 were: CDTs Michael Wathen '07, David Jacobs '08, Bovey Zhu '08, Steven Whitham '09, Eugene Sung '10, and Stephan Wathen '10.

Before coming to West Point, Jacobs was a Florida State High School Champion. This year, he repeated for the third time as the Armed Forces individual cham-

panion, besting a field of over 60 players each year. He is the only cadet from any service academy to hold this title in the tournament's 47-year history. With his



three-year record of 14 wins, no losses, and two draws, he is one of the best chess players of his era and continues the fine tradition of champions of the past.

Formed in 1924 when there were only six extracurricular clubs, the Cadet Chess Club is one of the oldest cadet activities at West Point. Through 1945, the cadets competed

WEST POINT CHESS CHAMPIONS

Virgil Kimm 1924–27

Paul Roy 1928

John Dudley 1929

Harry Cooper 1930–31

John Matheson 1932–33

Maxwell Kallman 1934–36

Larry Fuller 1937–40

Richard Tindall 1941

John Kennedy 1942

Charles Czapar 1944

George Campbell 1943

Niles Soik 1945



Superintendent LTG Hagenbeck (center) joins COL Goda, Chess Club OIC (far left), and Dean BG Finnegan (far right) in celebrating another chess team victory.

in a fierce annual intramural tournament to win the Corps championship and have their names engraved on a sterling silver trophy as a permanent record of victory. Winning the tournament and silver cup entitled a cadet to one of the most treasured biographical entries of the time in the annual *Howitzer*.

Now, all the champions named on this trophy are deceased, and, unfortunately, the trophy disappeared for 60 years until the tarnished cup was purchased for \$20 at a yard sale in Fayetteville, NC, and put on eBay. When I learned about the cup, my first impression was that the trophy could not be genuine. After researching the list of names in the *Howitzer*, however, all of the individuals listed on the eBay trophy were indeed Corps Chess Champions, and this trophy was a real piece of history that I thought should be returned to the Military Academy. Through the generosity of LTC (Ret.) David McClellan, the trophy was purchased and donated back to the club. McClellan had been the Chess Club OIC when I was the Chess Club cadet in charge in 1982. Today, he also is an integral part of the Ring Recovery Program. The trophy now rests proudly in the Dean's display case on the first floor of Taylor Hall.

Another interesting piece of chess club history is a Jacques chess set used by COL (Ret.) Duncan Sinclair '35 when he was a cadet. He then donated it to the club through the Association of Graduates. According to records, he stated in his will that he wanted a cadet to use this set in tournaments. A photo from the 1930s shows cadets playing

with the set. Although this set is over 70 years old, it still looks like new.

A Jacques chess set is one of the finest sets made, and several individuals have offered to buy it after realizing what the cadets use during competitions. This priceless set and silver trophy inspire the cadets of today to continue the winning tradition of the West Point Chess Club.

THE 1932–33 CHAMPION,

John Matheson, had a distinguished military career, serving on the faculty of the Department of Mathematics and rising to the rank of colonel. After his retirement, he petitioned Senator Hubert Humphrey for resources to start an Armed Forces Chess Tournament in 1967 to promote chess through a friendly military services competition. In 2004, tournament promoters began inviting the service academies to send teams to compete in a Commander in Chief trophy competition in conjunction with the Armed Forces Chess Tournament. In addition to service academy teams, the tournament includes a military service competition and an individual player championship.

More information is available from the United States Chess Federation website at: http://beta.uschess.org/frontend/news_7_150.php.



The USMA Jacques chess set being used in the 1930s.



Matheson '33.