

PRESTATYN 2010

The North was represented by three schools in the Semi-Finals of the English Primary Schools Chess Championships this year held at Pontins, Prestatyn on 19-20 June. There were eight teams from RGS, three teams from NPS and one from St Teresa's. This article is about the RGS contingent, led by Roly Craig, Tony Spencer and Paul Bielby. The total RGS party to Prestatyn this year numbered 48 players, and there was almost the same number of supporters. None-the-less the real winners this year were the smallest and youngest team of six. The RGS Under-8 team (Keshav Krishnan, Arif Alam, Eashan Ragbir, Nathan Byatt, Max McLeod and Jonny Scott) had bravely entered the Under-9 Plate competition, but found themselves playing under-11s as well as under 9s! And they won every single match, not by very big margins, true, but it was enough for them to end up not merely as winners of the Under-9 plate, but equal on points with the Under-11 Plate winners too.

Keshav, Saturday's birthday boy and team captain, scored 4 wins out of 6 games. Arif found the going hard on board 2, but managed 2 wins from his games. But the real heroes of the team came in the middle order with Eashan drawing only the one game – 5½/6 – and Nathan managing 6 of the very best! Really excellent performances from those two. Jonny and Max each played 3 games to count on board 5 (they also each played 3 'reserve games' which did not count towards the team total). Each won 2 out of the three games to count giving a team total of 21½/30. Nearest rivals, St Wulstans and Dawpool, each had totals of 18½.

I had expected the RGS Under-9 'A' team (Anthony Lai, Manav Gupta, William Wilkinson, Joseph Dalton, Hamish Burnett and Cuthbert Craig) to qualify for the National Finals in Somerset in July, but they ran into some really tough opposition. In the end they failed by just a single point and finished 4th from the 24 teams in their tournament. The top four schools were; 1st Heathside 21; 2nd Nottingham High 20; 3rd Hallfield 19.5; 4th RGS 19 (The top 3 qualified for the final). Joseph and William both scored 5 points from the 6 games, but the others only managed half marks. The Under-9 'B' team finished 18th from the 24 teams; Chris Ferrier scored best with 3½/6.

I was very disappointed in the three RGS U-11 teams; the kids were disappointed too, coming 14th, 23rd and 16th from the 34 teams in their competition. Akhil Gupta, 5/6 for the 'A' team; Sukhdeep, Singh 4/6 for the 'B' team; Omkar Dixit, 5/6, and Daksh Sharma 4/6 for the 'C' team, had good scores. Akhil also shared 3rd prize in the annual Saturday evening 'Blitz' competition

Our 'B' team, largely girls, did well, finishing 4th from the 13 teams in the Under-11 Plate completion; Laurie Carver scored 2/6, Rosalind Fraser and Ellie Harris each 3/6, Laura Smith 3½/6 and Cameron Kirk (who isn't a girl) 4½/6 for this team. The 'A' team came in 11th – top scorers William Slater 4½ and William Green 4 – two more Under-8s in a U-11 competition.

It was a very happy weekend, the sun shone all the time, Mr Bielby got sunburned, everybody seemed to enjoy themselves. I am very grateful for all the support I had from the parents, from Mr Craig, from Dr Spencer who worked far harder than anybody else, the parents who managed the teams and most of all the kids, whose obvious enjoyment of the game, though exasperating at times, made the whole thing worthwhile.

Paul Bielby