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Young Ballarat chess player celebrates winning championship



Rochelle Kirkham

Latest News



A 10-year-old Ballarat chess player has defeated some of Victoria's highest rated competitors, winning the reserve section of the Victorian Country Chess Championship at the weekend and placing third overall.



 YOUNG TALENT: 10-year-old star chess player Paul Dao will continue improving his game.
Picture: Adam Trafford

Paul Dao has been playing chess for six years and competed against adult players, many who have played their entire lives, to win the championship.

When asked how he managed to take out the title, Paul would say it was 'luck', but Victorian Rural Chess League president Kevin Perrin said Paul was highly skilled for his age.

"Some people never win a championship in their lifetime...at his age, he will have his name on the main championship trophy before too long."

“At this age being that good, he could get titles like the international master.”

Kevin Perrin, Victorian Rural Chess League president

Paul said he won his second game by 'a lot' because his opponent blundered.

"I felt good and nervous. I was proud of myself," Paul said.

Twenty nine people participated in the chess competition in Geelong at the weekend, with eight of those players travelling from Ballarat.

Paul has been part of Ballarat Chess Club's junior program since he moved to the city with his family from Newcastle in July last year.

Paul said he practised against people in the club and online, playing about three games of chess a week.

It is the first time he has been a part of a chess club other than ones at his school.

He is a part of the chess club at Pleasant Street Primary School and has friends who also play.

He also sometimes plays with his sister Anna who is six-years-old and also a member of the Ballarat Chess Club junior program.



Mr Perrin said Paul had a lot of 'natural talent' and generally young players did not improve so quickly.

"He will have to work hard to beat the best players," he said.

"But at this age being that good, he could get titles like the international master. Certainly his game has to get to another level, but with his age and talent, it is possible for him to go to higher levels.

"Two weeks ago he beat our current Ballarat club champion in 23 moves. That is amazing.

"He is like a sponge for information. He will walk around and see what is happening with other games while his opponent makes a move."

Each player has a 90 minute time limit in a game of competition chess, with chess clocks counting time for each person separately.

Some games can go for four hours but most last for about one hour.

"Usually the one who makes the first mistake is the one to lose," Mr Perrin said.

Pauls' father Minh Dao said he was proud of his son and thanked the Ballarat Chess Club for supporting him.

Paul also attended an elite training group on the Gold Coast this year with 28 children from across Australia who completed intense sessions with grandmasters.

The World Chess Championship for 2021 is currently underway.

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