

Moses Lake, Ephrata youth make their moves

10-year-old girl wins tournament

By CAMERON PROBERT
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EPHRATA — An audience of parents and players stood quietly watching 10-year-old Sara Naess play 12-year-old Michael Novitskiy for \$1,000.

The two children defeated five opponents on Saturday to make it to the final round in the Waypoint Foundation Scholastic Chess Tournament. They were two of the 76



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Nicolas Petersen and Sara Naess play in the Waypoint Foundation Scholastic Chess Tournament. *Columbia Basin Herald, Feb 7, 2011*

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children, who came to Parkway Elementary School in Ephrata to play in the tournament.

In the five years Roger and Troy Pugh have organized the tournament, it was the second-highest participation they've had.

"We've had it as low as 40, so it's a good turnout," Roger said. "I grew up with four boys in the family and we played chess in tournaments growing up. One of my brothers passed away 10 years ago in a car accident, so five years ago we started this in memory of him."

To mark the 10th anniversary of Ryan Pugh's death, the brothers decided to double the prize for winning the tournament. Also all of the participants received money.

"We feel that chess is a game that teaches people to be responsible, make them think ahead a few moves," Roger said. "If they could learn to make decisions like that in life, we're more than happy to pay them to learn to be good citizens."

Roger said children look forward to the event, asking about it when he sees them during the year.

"There are a lot of repeats, but there's also a lot of new kids here this year," he said. "We've definitely found it's not an age thing. Our returning champion is a seventh-



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Children, above, play in the Waypoint Foundation Scholastic Chess Tournament. Sara Naess, below, smiles after winning the tournament.

grader. He's an eighth-grader this year. He's our second seventh-grader to win, so it's not uncommon for the younger kids to do it."

The returning champion, Novitskiy played Naess in the final round. The game ended with Naess winning, putting Novitskiy in checkmate after roughly a half-hour of playing.

Naess moved with her family from Norway during the fall, and didn't know about the prize money.

Eirik Naess' girls both played in the tournament. After moving to Moses Lake in the fall, they were looking for a chess tournament. Sara started playing about four years ago after coming home from school.

"She said, 'Dad, I have started playing chess at our



school,' and I thought, 'Well it will last maybe two, three weeks.' Now we're here four years later," he said.

Sara plays the game because she enjoys winning,

her father translated.

"She likes it because there are so many boys and she likes beating them," Eirik said. "They think a girl is easy to beat and then when she beats them, she likes it."