

## Chess team wins first place in league

By Erin Evans

In only its first year of competing against other schools, the Rocky River Chess Club has won the equivalent of a conference championship. The team went nearly undefeated throughout the season in the Greater Cleveland Scholastic Chess League.

The league, which was founded by Michael Joelson, consists of Benedictine, Rhodes, Cuyahoga Heights, Max Hayes, St. Ignatius, Mayfield, Beachwood, Martin Luther King, and Rocky River High Schools.

RRHS stood third in the league until the club defeated the conference leader, Benedictine, and received a forfeit from another team as their last match, winning the championship.

"I was not surprised [that we won the championship], because the moment our school defeated Benedictine, the school

[RRHS] was on its way to the championship," said senior Allen Fong.

Chess Club Adviser Mr. John Saade agreed.

"The chess team was extremely elated! They were very proud of themselves," said Saade.

Chess matches consist of the top five players from each team. The success of each individual determines the winner of the match; the school with the highest number of individual takes home the trophy.

This year's chess club leaders included Courtney Kronen, Paul Nemeth, Andrew Fong, Brandon Boyle, Drew Eilberg, Allen Fong, and Will Cline.

The players put forth high levels of commitment and dedication to the club in order to achieve their goals and successes.

"[The team] finds great enjoyment in playing and

practicing. How many school sports are there that can claim their participants *enjoy practice*?" said Saade.

Practices are held after school on Tuesday's until around 5:00 p.m. Each day, the team learns new techniques that will enable them to conquer their opponent in a match.

Many members have developed the high level of skill associated with chess and use it to their advantage.

Their confidence, which remains high throughout a match, is what many attribute to their success.

"I see my opponent as equal, if not better, so I don't underestimate his or her ability. Training and playing a lot of games helped me develop a better playing strategy. What helped me the most was knowing how to take advantage of any sort of lead I had, either by pieces or position," said sophomore Will



Chess Club members Andrew Fong and Will Cline pose with the first place trophy they won at the Greater Cleveland Scholastic Chess League. *Photo Courtesy of Will Cline*

Cline.

Cline's success was only part of the great achievements of the team.

The championship trophy was the first of its kind in RRHS history. It may now set

the standards for future competition of the Chess Club.

Cline agrees, "I hope that we enter more tournaments next year and win, of course. I'm going to work on my game and improve my skill."