



## **New MACA Program a Revolution in Scholastic Chess**

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Coaches and organizers of the great game of sixty-four squares have long understood the immense value of introducing learners at a young age and engraining chess into their daily practice. However, the ideal of having our best and brightest youth able to properly commit to the sport has been hindered by a conspiracy of sociopolitical obstacles indigenous to our modern time. Namely, there is a desire by the parents of these learners for their children to be “well-rounded” and to have a diversity of pursuits, in addition, of course, to a steadfast adherence to their studies.

But a new program by the Massachusetts Chess Association, spearheaded by the organization’s prolific president, has a chance to shake things up. Now, children will no longer have to be distracted from chess for the sake of diversifying their talents.

That program, of course, is the new Massachusetts Scholastic Chess Boxing League. Followers of the sport, which originated in Europe in the early aughts, will recognize that its demands of both mental and physical endurance make it a perfect fit for youngsters who don’t intend to pigeonhole themselves as being “nerds” or “jocks.” It is the perfectly balanced sport, tailor-made for the demands of today’s sophisticated youth.

For those not familiar with it, chess boxing alternates three minute rounds of chess (G/9) with three minute rounds of boxing, with victory possible in the normal

methods in either facet. Threefold repetition on the chessboard results in a draw, but would lead to a technical knockout in the ring. Perhaps a bit too speedy for what adult tournament players are used to, the eighteen-minute time limit offers a splendid, beginner-friendly fit for children who may still need to ease in to focusing on a single task for an extended period of time.

Of course, it seems inevitable that some naysayers will be wary of the new program due to so-called “safety concerns.” And while it is true that repetitive head trauma from boxing *has* been linked to some adverse long-term effects, it’s also true that chess has been linked to some positive ones. In unison, we can conclude, the two sports should create a harmony that will not ultimately tamper with the health of the mind in one way or the other.

Now, should special considerations be made for the youngest chess boxers? Of course. And it is MACA’s diligent awareness of that fact that has led the organization to create several new weight classes in anticipation of the program launch: ultrabantamweight (81-90 lb.), hyperflyweight (66 – 80 lb.) and superminimumweight (<66 lb.). With these special divisions, the MSCBL can offer a welcoming environment for competitors of all shapes and sizes.

While no launch date for league competition has yet been set – inexplicably, schools have been rather unenthusiastic about hosting tournaments – the face of the future of scholastic chess is unmistakable. There can be no more rich or rewarding experience than simultaneous mental and physical competition against one’s peers, and we at MACA are proud to offer it.