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<https://www.acc.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/201680/d-m-airman-repeats-as-air-force-chess-champion/>

## D-M Airman repeats as Air Force chess champion

Published April 9, 2009

By Staff Sgt. Jake Richmond

355th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

**DAVIS-MONTHAN AIR FORCE BASE, Ariz. (ACCNS)** -- Tech. Sgt. Robert Keough from the 563rd Operations Support Squadron from Davis-Monthan won the 2009 Air Force Chess Tournament at Wright-Patterson AFB April 3 - his second consecutive victory at the service-wide competition and his fifth in the last eight years.

"It feels great," he said. "Last year, the competition was a lot closer, and I barely won. This year, I was able to enjoy a comfortable lead, probably thanks to increased studying, competition in local tournaments, and the D-M Chess Club."

Sixteen active-duty Air Force members from around the globe played in this year's tournament. Sergeant Keough wasn't the only D-M Airman to stand out - Tech. Sgt. Jason Mueller of the 42nd Electronic Combat Squadron here placed fifth. Both of them qualified to compete in the Department of Defense tournament, which will be held May 3-9 at Fort Benning, Ga. Six players from each military branch will vie for the DoD title.

With this most recent competition, Sergeant Keough and Sergeant Mueller added to their friendly rivalry, which dates back to 2004. That's when Sergeant Mueller participated in his first Air Force tournament, finishing in second place. His only loss was to Sergeant Keough.

Going into the 2009 tournament, Sergeant Mueller had the distinction of having the highest U.S. Chess Federation rating among all sixteen of the participants. That technically made him the favorite when he sat down across the chess board from Sergeant Keough in this year's matchup.

So, what happened?

"We had a good game," Sergeant Mueller said, "but he just beat me. I might be rated higher on paper, but we're dead-even from a practical standpoint. We always have good games."

The two actually met on a 1996 deployment, where Sergeant Keough piqued Sergeant Mueller's interest in military chess tournaments. It took several years before Sergeant Mueller could dedicate the time to serious competition, and he's only mildly satisfied with his fifth-place finish in this year's tournament.

"Considering I was a little rusty, I'd say I did okay," Sergeant Mueller said. "I did have the toughest draw, since I was the top seed, but I got lucky in a couple of games."

He said he intends to seriously prepare for the DoD tournament right around the corner. "I'll probably practice my opening strategies," Sergeant Mueller said. "That's what's most helpful for a lot of chess players - practicing your first 10 moves or so."

After the annual inter-service tournament, the DoD sends six servicemembers to the NATO Chess Championship, scheduled for June 15-19 in Hammelburg, Germany. The team typically comprises the top chess player from each branch of service, plus the next two best-rated players from any service. Sergeant Keough has participated in the NATO tournament three times.

One of the most experienced chess players in the Air Force, Sergeant Keough said he took a liking to the game as a young boy, recalling how he thought of it as just a more interesting and strategic version of a kids' board game. He soon realized he was genuinely good at it.

"While I was on my high school chess team, I was routinely beating adults," Sergeant Keough said. "So, I started competing in tournaments and winning them."

Still, despite his talents, he said he wouldn't be able to compete without support from his chain of command.

"I want to thank my supervisors, Maj. Jose Jimenez and Lt. Col. Christopher Prejean, for supporting me in this competition and giving me the time to prove myself," Sergeant Keough said. "I also get so much support from my wife Sarah."

Sergeant Mueller was also glad that he's able to take some time away from a busy career to participate in the tournaments this year.

"The competition almost becomes addictive," he said. "I'm always trying to improve my game, always trying to find the truth. It's like a puzzle. Some people get really stressed out during their matches, but for me it's a stress-reliever."

Both Sergeant Keough and Sergeant Mueller are members of the D-M Chess Club, which holds weekly gatherings every Tuesday at 5 p.m. To find out how to join, call the community center at 228-3717.

Source:

[https://www.army.mil/article/21156/air\\_force\\_wins\\_at\\_chess\\_tournament](https://www.army.mil/article/21156/air_force_wins_at_chess_tournament)

## Air Force wins at chess tournament

By Rachel L. Watkins May 15, 2009



PFC Pieta Garrett, 23, of Fort Polk, La., took the top individual spot Thursday during the four-day Inter-service Chess Tournament at the Kelley Hill Recreation Center. The tournament brought 20 service members of all branches to post for a seven-round Swiss-system tournament.

The Air Force captured the team title, and the top six players - service members from the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines - will represent the United States in the NATO Chess Championship, scheduled for June 15-19 in Hammelburg, Germany.

The NATO team is comprised of two Army and two Air Force players and one sailor and Marine.

"There were a lot of tough players in the (interservice) tournament," said Garrett, a first-time competitor in the tournament who has been playing chess since elementary school. "I had to play perfect and not lose any games. I was excited I was able to do that. It feels good to win the first year I'm in the tournament and I hope I can keep it up."

Garrett won six rounds and had one draw in the third round. The win wasn't easy, he said.

"I was exhausted after the sixth round," Garrett said. "It was tough - I had to think for an hour straight. I was trying to think 10 or 15 moves down the road and I couldn't find the win. I thought another hour. And I had to come up with a completely different plan."

Marine Master Gunnery Sgt. James Adkins, Camp Lejeune, N.C., who earned a spot on the NATO team, said he looks at the chessboard as a battlefield.

"You have to be able to maneuver your pieces to the right place, not placing them in a line of fire," Adkins said. "You have to come up with a plan that is going to beat your opponent's plan and each move you make must be planned - there are no random moves in the game of chess."

It could have been anyone's win, said third-place winner SPC Jose Silva, who is stationed at Fort Lewis, Wash.

"You might be winning a whole four hours and you make one mistake and all of your work is undone," he said.

The Air Force finished with 26 points, while the Army scored 22. The Navy took third with 15.5 points while the Marines totaled 6.5.

The competitors closed the event with a round-robin blitz tournament Friday. Pieta took first, Silva took second and Tech. Sgt. Jason Mueller of Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., wound up third.

The NATO team consists of Pieta; Silva; Adkins; Mueller; Air Force Tech. Sgt. Nathaniel Ola, who's stationed at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.; and Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Benjamin Barquin of the USS Ronald Reagan.

#### Interservice Chess Tournament results

##### Individual:

First place - PFC Pieta Garrett - six wins, one draw

Second place - Tech. Sgt. Jason Mueller - five wins, two draws

Third place - SPC Jose Silva - four wins, three draws

##### Team standings:

First place - Air Force - 26

Second place - Army - 22

Third place - Navy - 15.5

Fourth place - Marine Corps - 6.5

##### Blitz tournament:

First place: PFC Pieta Garrett

Second place: SPC Jose Silva

Third place: Tech. Sgt. Jason Mueller

Source:

<https://www.vandenberg.spaceforce.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/340289/vandenberg-airman-to-compete-in-nato-chess-championship/>

# Vandenberg Airman to compete in NATO Chess Championship

By Staff Sgt. Benjamin Rojek, 30th Space Wing Public Affairs / Published June 09, 2009

**VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, Calif.** -- A Vandenberg Airman will tap his inner Bobby Fischer when he represents the United States at the NATO Chess Championship in Hammelberg, German, June 15-20.

After placing in Air Force Space Command-, Air Force- and interservice-level chess tournaments, Tech. Sgt. Nate Ola, who works at the 614th Air and Space Operations Center here, will join five other servicemembers from the U.S. Army, Navy and Marine Corps in the competition.

"This year is my third time representing our country," said Sergeant Ola, who was selected for the NATO tournament in Denmark in 2003 and Turkey in 2007. "It feels great. Now, I can say that I can actually play."

U.S. team members will face off against military chess players from NATO ally countries such as Turkey, the Netherlands, Italy, the U.K. and Slovenia. Sergeant Ola will compete in both regular and blitz tournaments; a blitz match has a time limit of five minutes.

In order to checkmate his competitors, the toughest of which he said is Germany, Sergeant Ola practices one hour a day with five to ten blitz matches or lightning matches (which last one minute). That dedication has paid off as the Anchorage, Alaska, native has won or placed high in military chess tournaments since he first started competing in 2003.

For more information on the NATO Chess Championship, go to [www.natochess.com](http://www.natochess.com).