

Checkers king crowned

By SUSAN FITZGERALD
Collegian Staff Writer

A tense silence pervaded the smoke-filled room where 18 men, positioned around a long table, sat and concentrated.

Checkers was the name of the game.

This past weekend, the annual championship of the Pennsylvania State Checkers Association, Inc. was held at the University, as it has been every year since 1966.

Official referee for the tournament, John Parry of East Stroudsburg, said that the tournament is held in

memory of the late Dan Frank of State College.

Parry said that Frank, a well-known checkers player who died in 1966, provided in his will for a fund to establish the annual state checkers tournament in State College.

The prize money, \$1,010, comes from the fund.

The participants in the tournament, who came from various parts of Pennsylvania, rarely moved their eyes from the boards. The clicking of plastic discs was interrupted by only an occasional mumble.

"In the tournament it's all work," said Bob Hill of Greensburg. "You get all tensed up just playing the game."

Hill, who plays checkers every lunch hour, said that he took up the game seriously four years ago.

"Everyone knows how to push checkers," Edmund Umberger, professor of math at the University said. "But it's really very scientific."

Umberger, an avid checkers player who observed the competition, said that he has close to 80 books on checkers.

Gene Jodon of Monroeville, youth director for both Pennsylvania and the National Checkers Association, is initiating a program to promote checkers throughout the United States and Great Britain.

Free tournaments are being set up across the country, for children under 17 years of age, he said.

"A lot of people laugh at checkers, until they get started," Jodon said. "Then they see the mystery in the game and they get interested."

While Jodon takes the game of checkers seriously, he also manages to keep it fun. Jodon, a checker exhibitor, carries a business card that reads: "Have Board—Will Draw."

When asked how long he had been playing checkers, Jodon just laughed and said: "Too long."



Checkermates

Concentration builds as the checkers fly. Several men study their checkerboards as they vie for \$1,010 in prize money and the title, Checkers Champion of Pennsylvania. The state checkers tournament is an annual event at State College.

Photos by Julie Cipolla



Kirk Lehman of East Waterford considers his next move. At 83 "plus", he was the oldest player in the tournament.

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