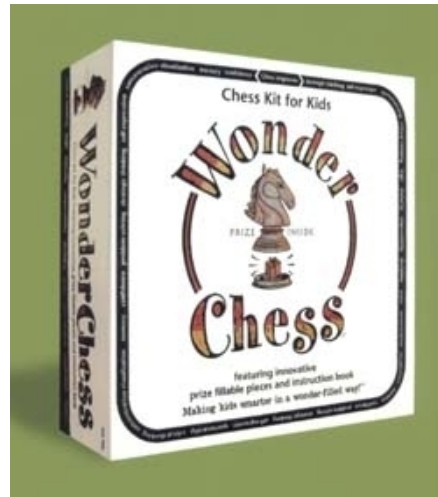


SWAGTIME DISCOVERIES!

Each month Swagtime highlights a product that is so seriously cool and fabulous we know it should be swag!

This month we are pleased to introduce you to...

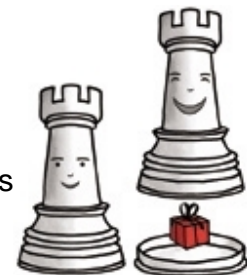


Swagtime spoke with WonderChess' creator, Michel Alvarez, to hear the WonderChess story and give you the scoop on this fantastic and fun educational tool.

Michel Alvarez created WonderChess to help what he calls "WonderKids" realize the intellectual and emotional benefits chess and other strategy games offer. With a unique and FUN twist to the game, WonderChess gets kids excited to play and in so doing helps them improve their critical thinking, memory, visualization, concentration, logic, sportsmanship, patience, discipline, poise and self-esteem. Not a bad consequence of playing a game now is it?

Swagtime: Tell us, what is so wonderful about "WonderChess"?

Michel Alvarez: The magic is our invention - "prize fillable game pieces!" Capture a piece, win a treat! Kids wonder what's inside each piece upon capture. It's Cracker Jacks meets Chess - Kids love it!



Swagtime: *Tell us about these "prize fillable game pieces". What can they be filled with?*

Michel: WonderChess comes with various motivational sticker prizes with words like "Great!" "Hooray!" etc...but the real beauty is that prizes are customizable to best meet the needs and values of a particular family.

For example, small candies are popular prizes: Mini-M&Ms, mints, jelly beans, Tic-Tacs. Coins are also common. In fact, one college professor taught her son the different values of coins with WonderChess. Some also write silly "actions" on the generic stickers we provide such as "10 Jumping Jacks", or "XOXO". If you capture a piece with that sticker you must do the action.

Swagtime: *My first introduction to chess was on a rainy day in the 4th grade when we stayed inside to play games and I was overwhelmed by chess, thus never learning it. What is it about WonderChess that engages children to play?*

Michel: WonderChess is a complete chess teaching kit - and it was actually designed for an adult caregiver and child to learn and play together. One of the most satisfying aspects is that Moms (who otherwise would never have had an interest in chess) have actually learned to play chess along with their child. A child that sees their parent learning too is a powerful experience.

In fact, my son would love to fill the pieces that I capture with prizes and was equally happy to see me win something too! That's the WonderChess experience and it pleases me greatly that parents from around the USA have written me expressing the same feelings I experienced with my son. One parent wrote me saying they saw a Mom and son playing WonderChess at their local bagel shop and they were so fascinated by what they witnessed that they ordered one themselves.

Swagtime: *Where did the inspiration for WonderChess come from?*

Michel: As they say necessity is the mother of invention, it came from a need to make slow, boring, complex (but highly beneficial) chess more exciting and immediately gratifying. I tried Standard chess sets and children's teaching books with my son and they just didn't have that spark - then the aha! idea came to me.

Swagtime: *Does your son Jean-Michel beat you now?*

Michel: Jean-Michel has actually beat me once...he's doing great - at 6 yrs old he beats his share of chess players. He



has other interests like Soccer - but I would say chess has benefitted him already - he does great at school - and excels in both math and reading.

Swagtime: *Do parents or other caregivers need to have any previous knowledge of chess in general?*

Michel: No prior chess experience is necessary!

Swagtime: *Tell us about some of the awards and accolades WonderChess has received? How does that make you feel?*

Michel: In the first three national award contests we participated in, we won - and we stopped there. There is nothing more satisfying than your first product and invention to be recognized this way. I was especially thrilled with our first award from Dr. Toy - she's one of the most respected and accomplished toy/game authorities in the world.

The 3 Awards are:

- Best Vacation Children's Products Award - 2005 Dr. Toy Awards
- Gold Award - 2005 National Parenting Publications Awards (NAPPA)
- Preferred Choice Award - 2005 Creative Child Magazine



Swagtime: *What is your background?*

Michel: I'm an ex IT and Medical Device company executive with an MBA who was crazy enough to jump into the Toy/Game industry :).

Swagtime: *What was the biggest challenge in launching this product?*

Michel: I actually went through a fairly exhaustive process of writing a business plan - and tried to figure out all of the reasons to NOT create the product, but the fact that I knew I had something magical kept me pushing forward. Writing and editing the "WonderChess Method" 10-lesson book that comes with WonderChess was probably the most challenging given all of the 3D graphics, the design, editing, etc...

Swagtime: *Do you have any advice for other parents with great educational ideas?*

Michel: Most toy/game inventors will say, "Go for it!" But I recommend you keep your day job! After all, creating the product is one thing, but marketing it is another story.

Swagtime: *Do you have any other language versions of WonderChess?*

Michel: Glad you asked. We do have the Spanish Edition fully translated - so now it's just a matter of priorities given the other new products we are introducing (like WonderLetters) that have larger market potential.

Swagtime: *WonderChess is a fabulous learning tool. Have you created any other wonderful educational products you can tell us about?*

Michel: We created WonderCheckers for last holiday season and sales have been steadily increasing since. We are now very excited about our literacy building "WonderLetters" which launches this month! WonderLetters is the first crossword game for kids that features jumbo-sized "prize-fillable" letters - our magic ingredient!. Plus we included letters from both the Spanish and English alphabet. Retailers have expressed strong interest over WonderLetters and we have plenty of pre-orders to fill already.

Swagtime: *What was your greatest piece of feedback or testimonial from a WonderChess user?*

Michel: It was an email from a Dad whose son Garret said, "WonderChess was the best game he has ever received!"

Swagtime: *Where can people buy WonderChess?*

Michel: Our website's "Where to Buy" section lists our local and national retailers. We also have an online store too! Swagtime readers also can get 20% off. Just enter "swagtime" as the coupon code at checkout. Click [here!](#)

Swagtime: *If you could see any celebrity parent playing WonderChess with their kids, who would you like to get WonderChess to?*

Michel: I'd love to send Angelina Jolie playing WonderChess with her 5 year-old son Maddox. In fact, I admire her accomplishments both on-screen and at UNICEF and would personally deliver a WonderChess if they would invite me over :)

Well Michel, next time we run into Brangelina we will get her info for you so you can stop by with all your Wonderful products. Thanks again for sharing WonderChess with us!