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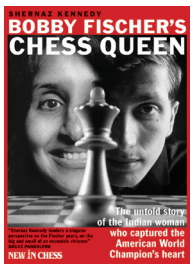
Dariusz Swiercz wins 2025 U.S. Open



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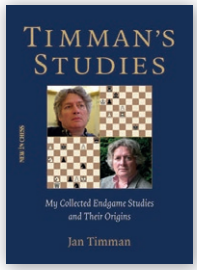


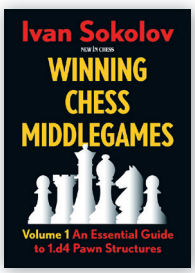
Bobby Fischer's Chess Queen
Shernaz Kennedy

When a young woman from India moves to America and reaches out to Bobby Fischer, it sparks a lifelong bond few ever knew existed. *Bobby Fischer's Chess Queen* is a true story of friendship, resilience, and the hidden heart of a genius. Discover the love that defied distance and fame.

Timman's Studies
Jan Timman

In *Timman's Studies*, Jan Timman presents 160 of his finest endgame compositions, revealing their origins and creative process. A unique glimpse into the mind of a grandmaster who found artistry and inspiration in endgame studies.



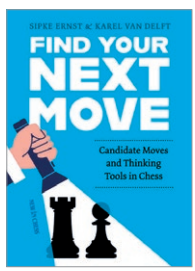


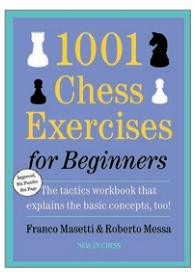
Winning Chess Middlegames – Revised Edition
Ivan Sokolov

Ever wondered why grandmasters take only seconds to see what's really going on in a chess position? It's all about structures, as Ivan Sokolov explains in this groundbreaking book. It addresses the often ignored but extremely important topic of pawn structures, divided into four main types: doubled pawns, isolated pawns, hanging pawns and pawn majorities.

Find Your Next Move
Sipke Ernst and Karel van Delft

The candidate move is perhaps the most elusive concept in chess theory. It seems straightforward and methodical enough: when considering a move, you make a list of 'candidates' in your mind, compare their merits, and make your choice. But how do you determine what a candidate move is, and how do you proceed from there?



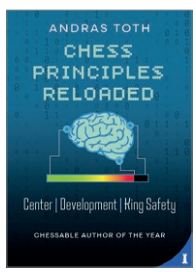


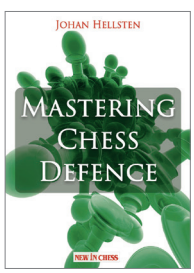
1001 Chess Exercises for Beginners
Franco Masetti & Roberto Messa

There are two types of books on tactics: those that introduce the concepts followed by some examples, and workbooks that contain numerous exercises. This tactics book does both: the authors explain the basic tactical ideas *and* provide an enormous amount of exercises for each different theme.

Chess Principles Reloaded
Andras Toth

IM Andras Toth's coaching experience has taught him that a common weakness among ambitious improvers, club players, and even seasoned experts is their failure to fully grasp some basic chess principles or their tendency to neglect them. This book will help make you more confident in your decision-making by reviving the most essential principles of the game.



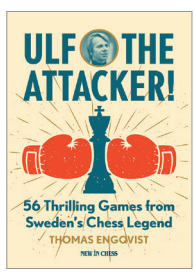


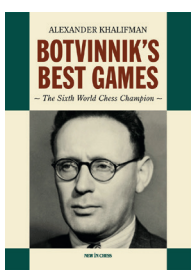
Mastering Chess Defence
Johan Hellsten

All chess players know that they need to study tactics, calculation, and openings, but when it comes to defense, far too many wait until they're under pressure. The truth is that more games are lost because of defensive mistakes than strategic ones. This book offers the training you need to be prepared and defend.

Ulf – The Attacker!
Thomas Enqvist

Swedish chess legend Ulf Andersson was a positional genius with a crystal clear style. The former world number 4 rarely lost a game and consistently scored victories from quiet positions. But he could also be a fierce attacker. This book offers 56 thrilling games, both entertaining and instructive.



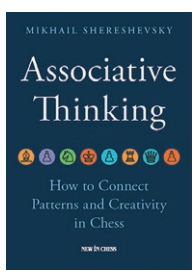


Botvinnik's Best Games
Alexander Khalifman

Mikhail Botvinnik is widely regarded as one of the greatest chess players ever. He was the World Champion from 1948 until 1963, with two short interruptions. For this modern biography, the Russian grandmaster Alexander Khalifman has selected and annotated more than fifty of Botvinnik's best games.

Associative Thinking
Mikhail Shereshevsky

One of the most respected chess trainers in the world introduces an important but little-explored topic: associative thinking. It is not about specific pawn structures, but about more abstract things. For example, what is the best interaction between knight and pawn?.



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ON THE **COVER**

David Llada documented faces and events at the 2025 U.S. Open, and we're proud to have his work in our pages. From his cover photo of a victorious Swiercz to his shot of Refilwe Pitso (right) deep in thought, Llada always reveals something about each person with his art.

PHOTOGRAPH BY **DAVID LLADA**

PHOTO: DAVID LLADA FOR US CHESS

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Visit *new.uschess.org/2026-world-amateur-team-us-team-east* for more details.

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CHESSLIFE
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PHOTOS: LLADA FOR US CHESS (PRYOR, MCMULLIN); CENTRELLI / CCC (LIANG); ADAMS / SLCC (FOISOR); COURTESY SUBJECT (NTIRLIS, SHLYAKHTENKO(

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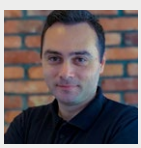
JOHN HARTMANN (Cover Story, Interview) is the editor of *Chess Life* and *Chess Life Kids*. He still hopes to drop a new podcast series for US Chess "when things slow down" this summer. In his "free time" he is learning to play the piano.



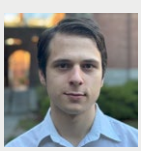
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WGM SABINA FOISOR (Cover Story) was born in Romania to a chess-playing family. In 2008 she moved to the United States to begin studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and immediately saw success. The 2017 U.S. Women's Champion, she has represented the United States at the Olympiad and World Team Championships. Visit her teaching site, *www.chessevolve.com*, and her Twitch stream, *www.twitch.tv/sabinafoisor*.



IM NIKOLAOS NTIRLIS (French Defense) is an ICCF IM and the author of multiple critically acclaimed opening books with Quality Chess. By day he serves as partnership manager at Databox. Follow him online at *x.com/nikolaosntirlis*.



IM ROBERT SHLYAKHTENKO (U.S. Masters) is in his third year of undergraduate work in mathematics and computer science at Brown University. He is the ninth-ranked junior on the January 2026 US Chess rating list. In his spare time he plays piano, and last April he performed Grieg's Piano Concerto in A Minor with the Brown University Orchestra.

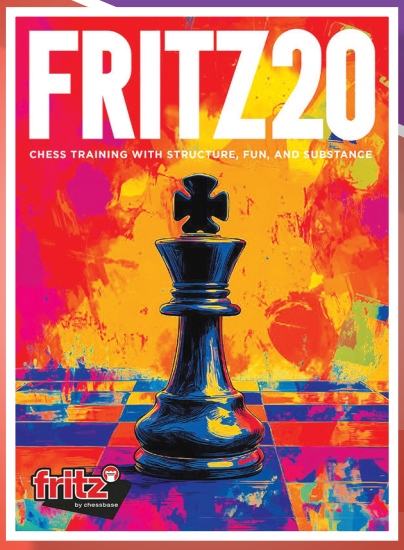
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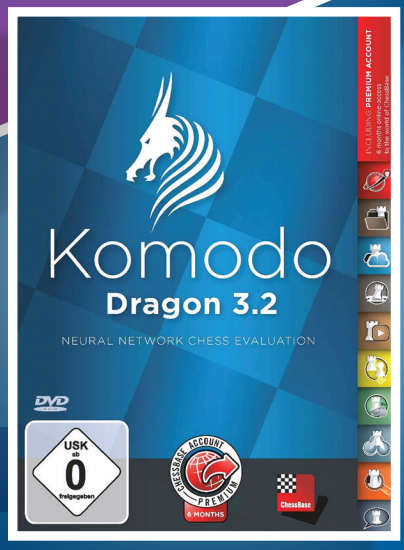
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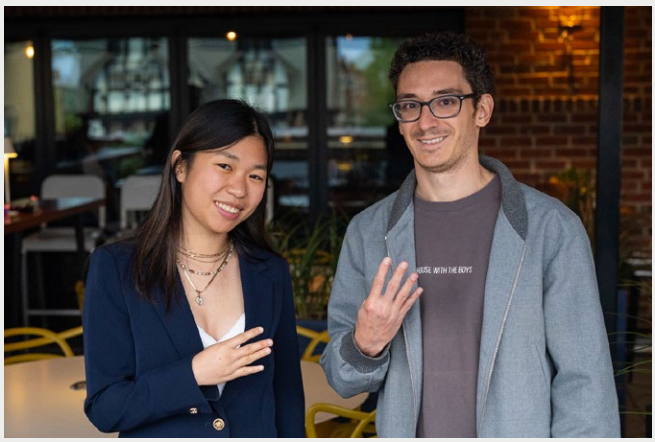
PHOTOS: COURTESY SLCC / OOTES (UMBRELLA, YIP / CARUANA), SLCC / CARMODY (PARAGUA)

LOOKING AHEAD TO MARCH

THE 2025 U.S. CHAMPIONSHIPS WERE THE FIRST EVENTS HELD at the freshly remodeled Saint Louis Chess Club, but not everything was new: both Fabiano Caruana and Carissa Yip repeated as champions! We'll catch you up on the key moments and games in the March issue.

Also in March: the National Invitationals, the Pan-Am Teams, and the final installment of Ntirlis on the French.







Send your letters to letters@uschess.org. *Letters are subject to editing for style, length, and content.*

My Pandemic Gambit

Or, why I'm terrible at chess and having the time of my life

BY **NATHAN SMITH**

LIKE MANY BAD IDEAS, MY interest in chess began during the pandemic. Somewhere between online ukulele lessons and my third existential crisis, I decided that what my life really needed was a hobby specifically designed to prove I wasn't as clever as I thought.

At first, it seemed harmless enough. I was 30, trapped in a one-bedroom apartment in Shenzhen that smelled faintly of hand sanitizer and despair, and chess felt — how do I put this? — productive.

I downloaded an app, expecting a few gentlemanly games with retirees and hobbyists. Instead, in my very first match, my opponent introduced me to Scholar's Mate, and before I could even process what had happened, the game was over, marked by a snarky "gg."

Still, there was something strangely addictive about it all — the precision, the logic, the way 32 little pieces could pull you back for just one more game. Chess became my intellectual treadmill: I wasn't getting anywhere, but I couldn't stop playing.

After a few months of this cheerful humiliation, I began to suspect I might need professional help. Not therapy — though that wouldn't have hurt — but an actual chess teacher. Someone who could explain why my pawns seemed magnetically drawn toward disaster, and how every "bold attack" I launched ended in a swift and merciless counterblow.



PHOTOS: COURTESY NATHAN SMITH

My Mentor in the Noble Art of Losing Slowly

I met my chess teacher, Pierce, who also lived in China, in the middle of a particularly long lockdown, when everyone was trying to reinvent themselves over Wi-Fi. A mutual friend introduced us (apparently, I'd been complaining too much about losing to children who probably still believed in Santa Claus). Pierce, my friend said, was a serious player who wanted to become a chess coach.

We met twice a week on WeChat, China's homegrown version of Facebook. Pierce would appear on my screen with a smile that seemed to say, *Don't worry, we'll fix you yet.*

His teaching style was calm and unhurried but never dull. He loved drawing on history; every lesson came with a story. One minute he was explaining a quiet positional move; the next, he was telling me about how a 19th-century grandmaster had used the same idea to humiliate a Prussian nobleman. I sometimes felt like I was getting two degrees at once: in chess and in European history.

What began as a diversion became a kind of lifeline. China was still in and out of lockdown, the world outside muffled and strange, but every Thursday afternoon I'd log on, and for an hour, the chaos narrowed into 64 little squares.

Pierce would analyze my latest disaster with an engineer's precision, and I'd nod along, secretly amazed that anyone could care so deeply about a bishop trapped behind its own pawns.

Me vs. the Wall (Wall Still Winning)

Not long after our lessons began to really click, Pierce passed away. To honor his memory, I pressed on by myself. I bought *How to Reassess Your Chess* by Jeremy Silman and spent long evenings underlining sentences I only half-understood. I subscribed to online courses, watched grandmasters narrate their thoughts in soothing monotones, and replayed games frame by frame, like a detective searching for clues.

And things finally started to make sense. I could spot forks and pins without having to pause and squint at the board. I could calculate distant opposition in pawn endings — a phrase that once sounded like orbital physics — and occasionally even saw a tactic before it saw me.

For the first time, the chaos of the board felt navigable, like learning a foreign language well enough to order dinner without accidentally proposing marriage.

But eventually, I hit a wall. A thick, immovable, granite wall. No matter how much I studied, I stayed stubbornly average. My *Chess.com* rating flatlined and my blunders remained loyal. Two years later, I'm still there — perpetually 1000, the statistical embodiment of "trying your best."

I've had plenty of obsessions before: photography, fishkeeping, writing. All of them started out feeling impossibly complex, full of strange jargon and invisible rules, but the deeper I went, the more sense they made. My photos got sharper; my fish stopped dying; my stories began to sound like they were written by a human instead of a malfunctioning thesaurus. In most hobbies, knowledge rewards you. You put in the hours, and the world opens up a little wider. Chess isn't like that. The learning curve only gets steeper.

Sometimes I think Pierce would've gotten a kick out of how little I've improved over the past two years.

Broadcasting Live from the Department of Clueless Analysis

By the time the 2023 World Championship rolled around, I had been playing long enough to know two things: one, that I was terrible, and two, that everyone else was terrifyingly good. Still, I tuned in faithfully, watching Ding Liren battle Ian Nepomniachtchi from my apartment in China like some hopelessly underqualified sports analyst.

The commentary was full of phrases that sounded meaningful but may as well have been from the Hogwarts spell book. "This could be a critical moment if Ding decides to transpose into a Catalan structure," one commentator said. I nodded sagely, as if this were a decision I, too, might one day face. In truth, Ding could have been about to play Uno for all I knew.

And then there was the drama — the infamous moment when Ding froze, staring at the clock as precious minutes drained away. The chat exploded. The commentators grew reverent. I sat forward, caught up in the tension, though I wasn't entirely sure why. Was this a tactical crisis? A psychological breakdown? Or was he just trying to remember whether he'd left the stove on?

Later in a different game came that miraculous pawn move — the one every analyst gasped over. I watched the tiny square light up on my screen, everyone online calling it "brilliant," and I believed them. I had no earthly idea why it was brilliant, but I felt it was.

Though this also led me to realize I had to face a hard truth: I was never going to be good at chess. Not bad, exactly — just permanently, stubbornly average. I hovered in that Elo no-man's-land where you know enough to see your mistakes but not enough to prevent them. It's like developing self-awareness in the middle of a slow-motion car crash.

For a while, I found this depressing. Improvement had always been my hobby. Surely chess would yield if I just studied hard enough. It didn't. My rating refused to budge, as if the algorithm itself had decided "No; this is who you are now."

Then one night, studying yet another humiliating postmortem of my own game, I had a revelation: If millions of overweight Americans can enjoy football without playing in the NFL, surely I can enjoy chess without ever breaking 1200. I found myself loving the game not because I understood it, but because it kept inviting me to try.

In Which I Accidentally Become a Local Hero

And this revelation turned out to be exactly what I needed — mostly because once you've accepted you're terrible, you become fearless. You start playing like a man who has discovered that dignity is optional, but enthusiasm is free.

That's how I ended up playing more over-the-board chess. When the pandemic ended in China (or at least when they finally let us out of our apartments), I took an online teaching job and started wandering the world. Chess became my portable social life.

Earlier this year, I played a magnificent game at a park in Bishkek. I hadn't meant to, of course. I'd just gone out for a walk and somehow wandered into what can only be described as the Central Asian equivalent of a Roman forum for chess players. The air smelled faintly of tea, cigarettes, and intellectual superiority.

These old Soviet republics bleed chess. You can feel it in the air, see it in the posture of old men bent over wooden boards like monks at prayer. Every park bench seems to double as a chess table. Even the pigeons, I swear, pause to analyze positions before landing. In Kyrgyzstan, chess isn't just a pastime; it's a civic duty, a small act of national continuity.

I sat down at a weathered table where a group of men were already deep in a game that looked like it had begun sometime during the Brezhnev era. They greeted me warmly, the way chess players in this part



of the world do when they spot fresh meat. One of them motioned for me to sit; another offered me a cigarette, and within minutes I found myself drafted into battle. I sat across from a man they introduced as Chynarbek. He was enormous, the kind of person who looks like he can win both a chess game and a bar fight at the same time.

I tried to explain that I was barely an intermediate player, but the men around us smiled and assured me not to worry. "Just play," one said. So I did. They gathered behind me, muttering in Russian, occasionally groaning when I made a particularly inspired mistake.

Chynarbek, meanwhile, played with serene inevitability, his pieces gliding across the board like precision machinery. Within 15 moves, I was in the kind of position that could only be described as "educational." Then, somehow, amid the wreckage, I saw it — a tiny beam of divine light shining through my otherwise clouded brain. A skewer of his queen and rook!

No one else seemed to notice. I checked it twice, then a third time, convinced it was a mirage. But it was real. My heart hammered as I lifted the bishop, made the move, and looked up. The murmuring stopped. Someone whispered. Then the men around the board erupted into delighted laughter and shouts of approval, as if I'd just reinvented the game. Chynarbek said something in angry Russian. The tone alone told me he was cursing with the kind of artistry that needed no translation.

For a few minutes in Bishkek, I wasn't a tourist, a teacher, or a mediocre player. I was the man who had seen the move.

The position turned completely. With generous hints from the men at my back, I fought on and somehow managed to win. It was absurd, glorious, and entirely beyond my actual ability.

How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Blunders

In *The Immortal Game,* David Shenk writes about Caliph al-Amin of the Abbasid Empire, who was playing chess in his palace in Baghdad in 813 C.E. while the city was under siege: rocks from catapults, flaming oil, arrows, battering rams, the whole apocalyptic buffet. And yet the caliph sat calmly at the board. When a messenger begged him to focus on "more urgent matters," he waved him off: "Patience, my friend. In a few moves, I shall give Kauthar checkmate."

That story always stuck with me. During the lockdowns in China, when I first discovered chess, the world outside swung wildly between panic and bureaucracy. Meanwhile, I sat in my tiny apartment wondering why every move I made seemed to betray me. If the caliph could keep playing while his empire collapsed, I figured I could probably survive blundering a rook without despair.

I've accepted that I'll never ascend the rating ladder. That's fine. There's a quiet joy in sitting down at the board, pushing pieces around, and pretending that whatever just happened was part of my plan all along. I don't need brilliance, just the occasional moment where I can squint at the board and think, "Huh; that almost looked intentional."

And on a hopeful note: At the time of writing, I am within sniffing distance of 1100. Maybe by the time I finish polishing this article, I'll finally break free of 1000-jail.

(Dear reader, I have not.)





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US Chess Names Fred Abousleman as Executive Director



US CHESS IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE SELECTION of Fred Abousleman as executive director. He was hired after an extensive nationwide search that saw 50 candidates interviewed by the US Chess Executive Board.

"The executive board is very excited to have Fred lead our operations team," said Kevin Pryor, president of the board. "His organizational and leadership skills will enable him to hit the ground running, but his experience with developing donor pipelines is what we believe is our next level to achieve as a 501(c)3 corporation."

Executive Board Vice President John Fernandez agrees: "Fred's career spans nonprofit leadership, public service, and national policy, and that perspective matters. Fred knows what good looks like, from governance and operations to building sustainable development pipelines. His leadership comes at an important moment for US Chess and will help us operate more effectively and advance our mission the governing body for chess in the United States."

Abousleman began work Jan. 14.

The 2026 Scholar Chess Player Awards

IF YOU ARE A CURRENT US CHESS member and a high school junior or senior, you are eligible to apply for one of the following awards:

- The 2026 National Scholar Chess Player Award (five $1,500 scholarships will be awarded);
- The 2026 Scholar Chess Player Ambassador Award for players rated under 2000 (one $1,500 scholarship will be awarded).

The scholarships are provided by the US Chess Trust, with a generous supporting contribution from the National Scholastic Chess Foundation, to recognize and encourage outstanding high school students who promote a positive image of chess. Award winners will be announced at *www.uschesstrust.org*, and will receive their awards in person at the 2026 National High School (K-12) Championships, in Chicago.

The US Chess Trust is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization supporting its vision that one day, every American, from schoolkid to senior citizen, will have the opportunity to learn chess and enjoy its many mental and social benefits.

To be considered for these awards, you must show that you have met the following criteria:

- You have played in at least 25 regular-rated US Chess or FIDE games between Jan. 1, 2025, and Dec. 31, 2025. Games with a time control less than G/30,d0 do not count toward the 25-game requirement.
- You have shown outstanding achievement in academics and chess.
- You have completed at least one year of chess-related and other community service since you started the ninth grade.
- You have provided an essay (of 500 words or less) as explained below.
- For the Scholar Chess Player Ambassador: You have shown outstanding community service and leadership by being an exemplary ambassador of the game of chess.

Previous recipients of these awards are not eligible.

Applications should be submitted using the online form available at *new.uschess.org/news/2026-scholar-chess-player-awards*. Documents (.docx, .pdf, and other usual extensions) can be uploaded to your application via this form.

Your completed application must include the following:

- The application form via the online form, which is available at *new.uschess.org/news/2026-scholar-chess-player-awards*;
- Your high school transcripts with all courses and grades;
- Your SAT or ACT scores;
- Evidence, listed in the form or uploaded separately, that you played at least

PHOTO: ABOUSLEMAN / ARAGON PHOTOS

25 US Chess or FIDE qualifying rated games held between Jan. 1, 2025, and Dec. 31, 2025;

- A list and brief description of your best chess and academic accomplishments;
- Examples of your chess-related and other community service since the ninth grade or later;
- A letter of recommendation from a teacher at a current or former school you have attended in ninth, 10th, 11th, or 12th grade;
- A letter of recommendation from a chess coach or tournament director;
- A letter of support from someone other than a parent or guardian, bearing witness to the nature, duration, and impact of your chess-related community service. We also encourage you to submit newspaper articles or web-based stories as evidence.
- Your essay of no more than 500 words, uploaded in the application form, describing how being recognized as a Scholar Chess Player would help you continue contributing to the greater US Chess community over the next five years. Your essay should follow standard MLA formatting.
- A recent color photograph of yourself, either a headshot or full-length. You agree to allow this photograph to be used for publication purposes.

The deadline for applying is **March 1, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Pacific time**. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed by the selection committee.

2026 All-America Team Announced

The United States Chess Federation is pleased to announce the 2026 All-America Chess Team. Team members will receive team jackets and plaques by mail, and members attending the K-12 Grade Championships in Spokane last December (seen below) were honored in person.

The All-America Chess Team was created in 1987 to honor the very best players ages 18 and under. Selection to the team, one of the highest national honors attainable by a young chessplayer, is on the basis of age, rating, and chess activity during that year, similar to the selection process of all-conference sports teams. This year's candidates were selected based on their age as of Jan. 1, 2025, and their peak post-tournament rating from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025. Since this award is a "post-season" selection, the minimum rating limits in each age group are reviewed annually by US Chess staff and the US Chess Scholastic Council.

US Chess wishes to congratulate each of the 64 members of this year's All-America Chess Team for receiving this outstanding award!



Left to right: Milo Su, Grayson Xiang, Sriransh Katta, Aayansh Samanta

PHOTO: HIEDI BULKLEY FOR US CHESS

Footnote Fame

How obscure amateurs earned posts in chess posterity.

BY **GM ANDY SOLTIS**

CORRESPONDENCE CHESS postcards sent by a movie icon more than 80 years ago are turning up at big-ticket auctions and selling for thousands of dollars.

Details of the cross-country game played by Humphrey Bogart remain fuzzy — including how it ended up at the start of his most acclaimed movie.

But it is an example of a happy accident that Bogart's opponent, an obscure, average player from Brooklyn, became a footnote in chess history.

Bogart loved to spend free time with chess. Somehow he connected with postal player Irving Kovner, whose brother worked for Bogart's movie studio, Warner Brothers.

Their game began in January 1942, when Kovner mailed **1. e4** from his Coney Island neighborhood. Bogart, in between Warner assignments, replied **1. ... e6** from Hollywood.

By the time he was cast as a cynical nightclub owner in *Casablanca*, chess had been written into and out of that movie's preliminary scripts.

But when filming began in May it was back in the script — in fact, in Bogart's first scene.

The camera shows him in his packed club, studying a chess position on a board. It just happened to be from the opening of his game with Kovner, **2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bg5 Be7 5. e5 Nfd7 6. h4 c5 7. Bxe7 Qxe7 8. Nb5.**

(see diagram top of next column)

Bogart hardly looks up from the board as a sleazy crook (played by Peter Lorre) hints at his latest scheme. But a sharp-eyed chessplayer can see why the position really mattered to him.

Kovner's last move threatened both 9. Nc7+ and 9. Nd6+. Belatedly, Bogart realized 6. ... Bxg5 had been necessary.



POSITION AFTER 8. Nb5

"My 6 move a bad one. Think should have been BxB. Now I'm in a jam," he scrawled, with his reply to Kovner, **8. ... 0-0.**

Today that one-cent postcard is valuable. Signed "H. Bogart," it fetched $5,625 when sold at the celebrated Bonham's auction house in 2024.

Few of the other "Dear Irving" cards have surfaced. But there are enough to indicate the game continued **9. Nc7 cxd4 10. Nxa8 Qb4+ 11. c3? dxc3 12. bxc3 Qxc3+ 13. Ke2 Qxe5+ 14. Kd2 Nc6 15. Ne2 d4 16. Nc1 Nc5 17. Nd3 Nxd3 18. Bxd3.**



Bogart's card with **18. ... Rd8** was auctioned for $4,100 last year. Unfortunately, that's the last clue to what happened in the game. In high demand after *Casablanca*, Bogart became busy with movies and WWII benefit tours.

And what about Kovner? We know little: He had a better-than-average postal rating and was about 50 at the time of the game. Bogart was 42, but called him "kid," as Bogart repeatedly called Ingrid Bergman's character in *Casablanca*. Nevertheless, Kovner belongs in a pantheon of amateurs who have a minor but memorable place in chess history. Another was a 19th-century Londoner who didn't even seem to like chess.

William Greenwood Walker was described by a contemporary as a "very moderate" player who "cared little to play." But he earned his place in posterity because he had a hero.

Walker was devoted to the play of Alexander McDonnell. An Irish surgeon's son, McDonnell was one of the world's very best players nearly 200 years ago. Walker loved to sit next to him during a game and write down his moves.

When McDonnell challenged a French rival to what turned out to be high-profile matches stretching over five months, Walker wrote down all 3,700 moves, including the most memorable.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT ACCEPTED (D20)

Louis Charles Mahe De La Bourdonnais
Alexander McDonnell
Fourth Match, London, 1834

1. d4 d5 2. c4 dxc4 3. e4 e5 4. d5 f5 5. Nc3 Nf6 6. Bxc4 Bc5 7. Nf3 Qe7 8. Bg5 Bxf2+ 9. Kf1

Better was 9. Kxf2! Qc5+ 10. Ke1 Qxc4 11. Nxe5!.

9. ... Bb6 10. Qe2 f4 11. Rd1 Bg4 12. d6 cxd6 13. Nd5

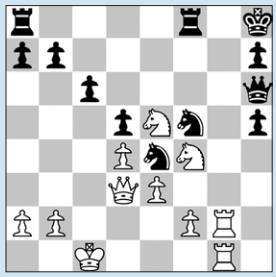
(see diagram top of next column)

Critics then — and computers today — suspect 13. ... Qf8 is best. But McDonnell's choice was acclaimed as one of the greatest

QUIZ FOR FEBRUARY

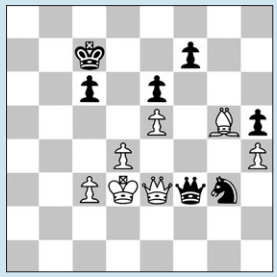
THERE HAVE BEEN MANY prodigies in chess and in music. There have also been a few youngsters who were considered talented in both spheres: Francois-Andre Philidor in the 18th century and Mark Taimanov in the 20th. Because of his youthful proficiency at the piano Taimanov was given an opportunity to excel at chess, with Mikhail Botvinnik as his teacher. On the 100th anniversary of his birth, this month's quiz features six positions from early in his career. Your task in each diagram is to find the fastest winning line of play. This will usually mean the forced win of a decisive amount of material, such as a rook or minor piece. For solutions, see page 63.

PROBLEM 1
Mark Taimanov
Rapphi Persitz



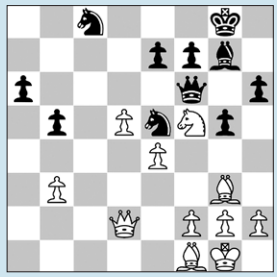
WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 2
Mikhail Tal
Mark Taimanov



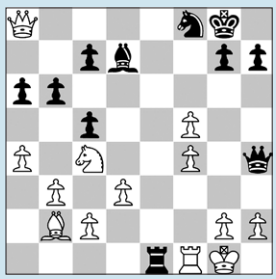
BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 3
Mark Taimanov
Lajos Portisch



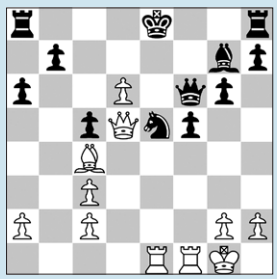
WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 4
Mark Taimanov
Jozsef Pogats



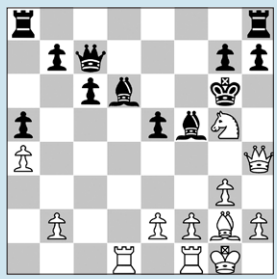
WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 5
Mark Taimanov
Abram Model

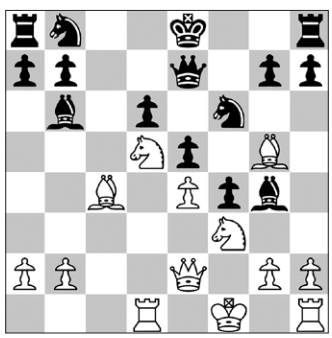


WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 6
Mark Taimanov
Thorbjorn Gravseth



WHITE TO MOVE



POSITION AFTER 13. Nd5

moves ever played. One reason is there was little recorded chess history to compare it with.

13. ... Nxd5!!? 14. Bxe7 Ne3+ 15. Ke1? Kxe7 16. Qd3 Rd8 17. Rd2 Nc6 18. b3 Ba5 19. a3 Rac8 20. Rg1 b5 21. Bxb5 Bxf3 22. gxf3 Nd4 23. Bc4? Nxf3+ 24. Kf2 Nxd2 25. Rxg7+ Kf6 26. Rf7+ Kg6 27. Rb7 Ndxc4 28. bxc4 Rxc4 29. Qb1 Bb6 30. Kf3 Rc3! 31. Qa2 Nc4 32. Kg4 Rg8! 33. Rxb6 axb6 34. Kh4 Kf6 35. Qe2 Rg6 36. Qh5 Ne3!, White resigned.

Why does Walker matter? Because before him, preserving the moves of master games was rare. The world's best player in the previous century, Francois-Andre Philidor, played thousands of games. But only about 50, from his final years, have survived.

In contrast, virtually all of the serious games of Paul Morphy, played after La Bourdonnais – McDonnell, are available to us today. The tradition of recording important games may have begun with Walker.

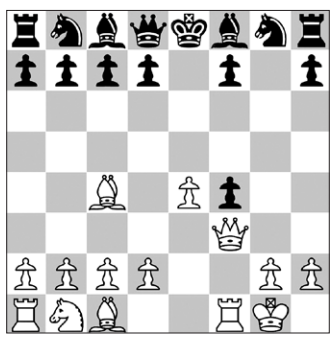
Many other amateurs have earned a footnote in chess history because, for example, they lost a much-published game or found an improvement in a grandmaster game. But few became immortal as accidentally as a 17th-century Naples amateur named d'Alessandro.

We know almost nothing about him, except that he once *watched* a game that began **1. e4 e5 2. f4 exf4 3. Nf3 g5 4. Bc4 g4.**

The book move then was 5. Ne5. But d'Alessandro saw a master, Geronimo Cascio, try **5. 0-0!? gxf3 6. Qxf3.**

(see diagram top of next column)

Cascio apparently won the game after **6. ... Qe7 7. Qxf4 Nh6 8. Qxc7 Nc6 9. Nc3 Qd6 10. Nd5.** D'Alessandro, who was reputedly a weak player, reported what he saw to an Italian master, Alessandro Salvio.



POSITION AFTER 6. Qxf3

Salvio wrote about 5. 0-0 in an influential 1634 book. It eventually became famous most famous in brilliancies of world champions Wilhelm Steinitz and Adolf Anderssen, and others.

But by then, credit for the sacrifice was lost in translation. It could have been attributed solely to Giulio Cesare Polerio, who had analyzed it. Or it might be named after Salvio or even Cascio.

Instead, it is best known as the brainchild of spectator d'Alessandro. His given name was either Mutio or Muzio, we're not certain.

In any case, we know the most legendary of opening sacrifices as the Muzio Gambit.

Walk Before You Run

Just because you castled on one side, that doesn't mean your king has to stay there.

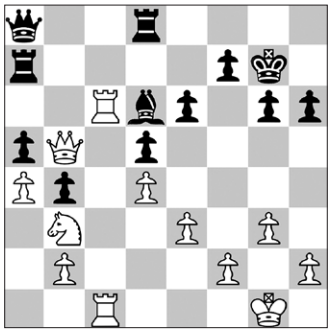
BY **IM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN**

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO attack our opponent's king when both kings are castled on the same side. We can attack with pieces; if the center is closed or if we have good control of the center, we can attack with pawns, although we might be risking the safety of our own king.

While "uncastling" is not an option, castling on one side doesn't always have to be our king's destiny. In some situations, while preparing an attack with pawns it is safer for our king to journey to the other side of the board. In this column we will look at two classic examples of king marches in preparation of an attack, both played by former World Champion Tigran Petrosian.

CLEARING OUT

GM Tigran Petrosian
GM Wolfgang Unzicker
Hamburg, 1960



WHITE TO MOVE

White has a strong grip on the queenside. He is controlling the only open file and Black has no way of fighting for it. There is also the big pawn weakness on a5, which White is attacking with the knight and the queen. White clearly has the more active queen, as the black queen on a8 is reduced to defending the a5-pawn. White also has the better minor piece — Black's bishop is limited by the white pawns on the kingside and the black pawns on the queenside.

So far, Black is holding everything together, and White has no breakthrough. There are no entry squares on the c-file and Black only has one weakness: the a5-pawn, which he is able to defend. In order to make progress, White has to create more problems for his opponent. Petrosian switches gears and starts playing on the kingside. Since the queenside is so secure, first he marches his king to safety.

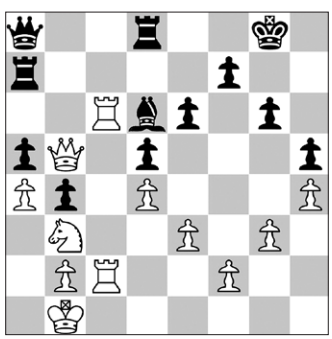
29. Kf1

The beginning of the king's journey to the queenside.

29. ... Kf8 30. h4 h5 31. R1c2

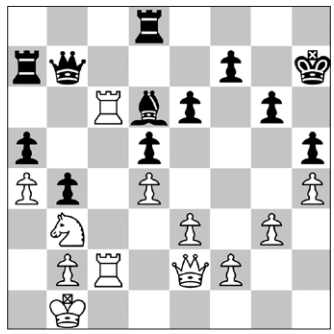
The order of the last three moves wasn't so relevant; he could have as easily started with 29. h4 instead. Because White is maintaining control of the position, Black has nothing better to do than shuffle with the king.

31. ... Kg7 32. Ke1 Kg8 33. Kd1 Kh7 34. Kc1 Kg8 35. Kb1



The march is complete. The king is now safe and sound on the queenside, and White can start shifting his attention to the kingside.

35. ... Kh7 36. Qe2 Qb7



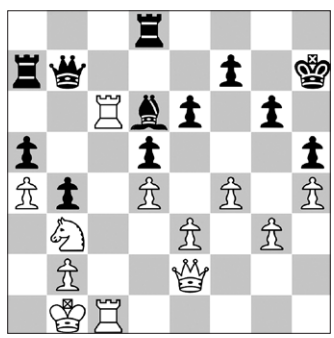
37. Rc1

A preparatory move. Petrosian wants the rook ready to swing to the kingside before playing g3-g4, but actually White can already play 37. g4; after 37. ... hxg4 38. Qxg4 Qe7 39. f4 the path of the rook is opened via the second rank.

37. ... Kg7 38. Qb5 Qa8

The queen exchange would be catastrophic for Black: After 38. ... Qxb5 39. axb5 a4 40. Nc5 the b-pawn is ready to march down the board and Black has no counterplay.

39. f4 Kh7 40. Qe2 Qb7



41. g4
Finally, Petrosian moves to break on the kingside.

41. … hxg4 42. Qxg4 Qe7 43. h5
White is going to force open the g- and h-files. There is really nothing Black can do to resist here, and the king cannot find safety anywhere on the board. By comparison, the white king is enjoying complete peace on the queenside.

43. … Qf6 44. Ka2
Black threatened … Qf6-f5+, forcing the trade of queens.

44. … Kg7 45. hxg6 Qxg6 46. Qh4 Be7 47. Qf2
With both files open, it's only a matter of time until Black's position completely collapses.

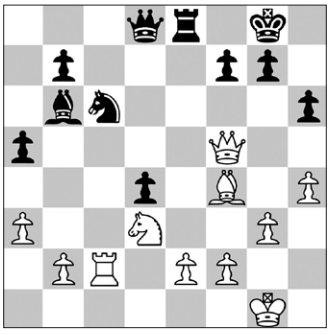
47. … Kf8 48. Nd2 Rb7 49. Nb3 Ra7 50. Qh2 Bf6 51. Rc8 Rad7 52. Nc5 b3+ 53. Kxb3 Rd6 54. f5
Also attacking the rook on d6.

54. … Rb6+ 55. Ka2, Black resigned.
The queen is under attack, and when it moves, 56. Nd7+ picking up the rook comes next.

Petrosian's game 16 years later against IM Jack Peters follows a similar pattern.

BUT CAN YOU DO IT AGAIN?

GM Tigran Petrosian
IM Jack Peters
Lone Pine (2), 03.08.1976



WHITE TO MOVE

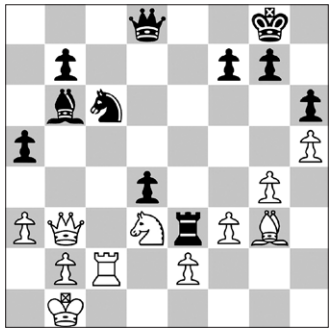
30. Kf1
Just as in the previous example, Petrosian could have chosen a different move order. Fixing the pawn structure on the kingside first with 30. h5 would have been just as good.

30. … Re6 31. Qb5
Tying down the bishop on b6, as the b7-pawn will come under attack.

31. … Na7 32. Qb3 Nc6 33. h5 Ne7 34. Ke1
The king march begins.

34. … Nd5 35. Qb5 Nf6 36. Kd1 Nd5 37. Be5 Ne7 38. g4
Making room for the bishop on g3.

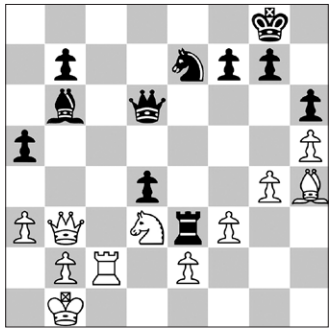
38. … Nc6 39. Bg3 Na7 40. Qb3 Nc6 41. Kc1 Re4 42. f3 Re3 43. Kb1



The king has arrived on the queenside.

So why is this position so bad for Black? The main issue is that Black doesn't have any real play here. White has the plan of playing g4-g5 at some point, creating some real threats against the king, while Black has no active counterplay or ways to stop it. The bishop is stuck on b6; the queen is tied down to defending the bishop; the knight doesn't have any good outposts; the rook can be easily kicked away from e3, and although there are no direct threats against the king yet, the f7-pawn is under attack. But the upcoming pawn break is even more worrisome.

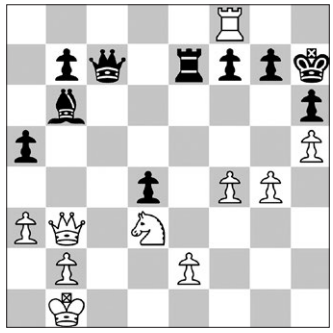
43. … Ne7 44. Bh4 Qd6



45. Bxe7
An interesting decision. Trading the bishop for the knight is a direct approach, and as in the last example, White's knight is the better minor piece than Black's bishop. The bishop is limited by its own pawns, while the knight has more potential to join the game.

45. … Rxe7
Of course not 45. … Qxe7?? 46. Qxb6.

46. Rc8+ Kh7 47. Rf8 Qc7 48. f4



Like in the last example, a pawn break is coming next and the black king will be under attack, unlike its counterpart which has found safety on the other side of the board.

48. … Bc5
Black collapses immediately.

49. Qd5 Re5
The desperado doesn't work, but neither does 49. … Bb6 50. Qf5+ g6 51. Qf6 with checkmate to follow.

50. Rxf7, Black resigned.
After 50. … Rxd5 51. Rxc7 b6 52. Kc2 he's going to find himself in a losing endgame. White is up a pawn, has a rook on the seventh rank cutting off the black king, and the threat of g4-g5 is still there. White can keep improving the position by simply bringing in the king and winning another pawn on c5. If the bishop moves, White will win the pawn on b6.

Of course one must have good control of the position to ensure that the king walk is safe. In both of the games, Petrosian had strong control of the position, which ensured his king's safe passage to the other side of the board. We saw how quickly his opponent's position collapsed once the white king completed the walk and White launched an attack on the kingside.

Next month, we'll look at king walks that get the king out of danger before the opponent's attack even starts.

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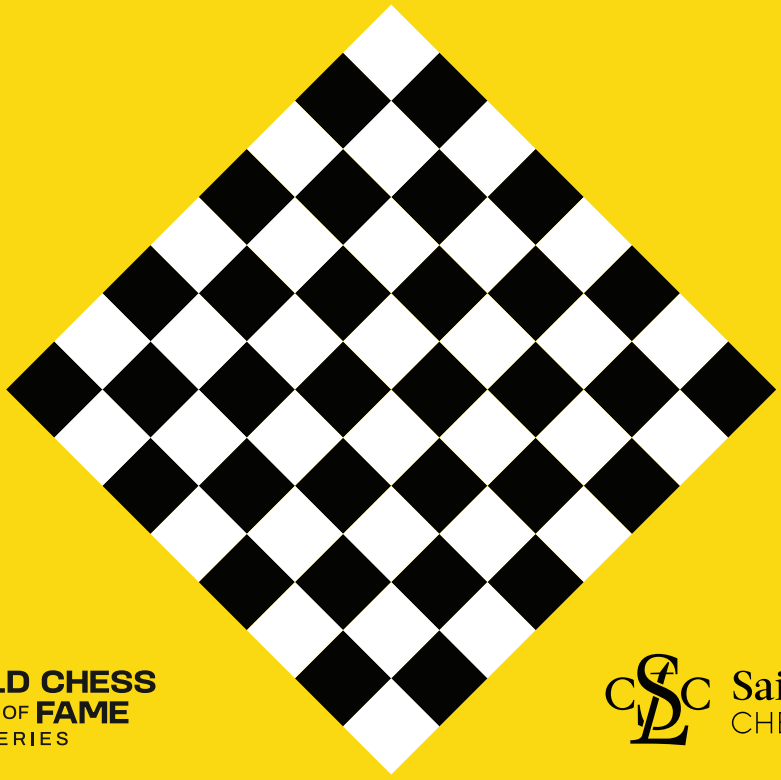
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The Slippery Steinitz

The trials and tribulations of the French Defense, Part II

BY **ICCF IM NIKOLAOS NTIRLIS**

THE CLASSICAL FRENCH (**1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6**) has always has a reputation as a passive but reliable defense. It doesn't offer the thrills of the Winawer, but as it happens with defenses where Black keeps a solid structure, it may require White to take some risks to try to break it. And risks by White mean good chances for Black! After all, if White takes no risks, Black gets an easy draw. For players who don't object to this way of thinking, the Classical is a good choice.

With recent twists and turns in Winawer theory, as we discussed last month, the Classical Variation — and the Steinitz Variation (**4. e5**) in particular — has also seen its ups and downs. In this article I will trace some of the key innovations and ideas that Steinitz players have struggled with, along with the answers they settled on.



ICCF IM Nikolaos Ntirlis

Before we begin, a word about **4. Bg5**, which has been the main line for decades and produced some incredible games. Here's one every French player knows:

FRENCH DEFENSE, CLASSICAL VARIATION (C14)

Siegbert Tarrasch
Richard Teichmann
San Sebastian (14), 1912

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bg5 Be7 5. e5 Nfd7 6. Bxe7 Qxe7 7. Qd2 0-0 8. f4 c5 9. Nf3 Nc6 10. g3 a6 11. Bg2 b5 12. 0-0 cxd4 13. Nxd4 Nxd4 14. Qxd4 Qc5 15. Qxc5 Nxc5 16. Ne2 Bd7 17. Nd4 Rac8 18. Kf2 Rc7 19. Ke3 Re8 20. Rf2 Nb7 21. Bf1 Na5 22. b3 h6 23. Bd3 Nc6 24. Nxc6 Bxc6 25. Kd4 Bd7 26. g4 Bc8 27. h4 g6 28. Rh1 Kg7 29. h5 Rh8 30. Rfh2 Bd7 31. g5 hxg5 32. fxg5 Rxh5 33. Rxh5 gxh5 34. Rxh5 Kf8 35. Rh8+ Ke7 36. g6 fxg6 37. Bxg6 b4 38. Rh7+ Kd8 39. Bd3 Rc3 40. Rh8+ Ke7, and Black resigned.

Tarrasch – Teichmann is one of the classics you see in all the books on the French. I think it's an excellent example of why generations of French players have found the Classical Variation unappealing. You misplay the opening, perhaps taking a bit more caution than necessary, and suddenly you're in this kind of situation, defending an awkward endgame where White has all the fun. It takes a very specific character to be OK with this, just like it takes a very specific type to risk being mated in 20 moves in the Najdorf. Part of deciding on black openings is deciding which of these scenarios you are more ready to endure!

But fortunately for Black, an old idea from Alekhine has recently been rediscovered and sapped 4. Bg5's bite: **4. ... h6! 5. Bxf6** (there's no other option, as *5. Bh4* allows Black to take a pawn with *5. ... g5*) **5. ... Qxf6** and here taking the offered pawn has to be critical: **6. exd5** and play continues **6. ... Bb4! 7. Bc4** (*7. Bb5+* was seen in Capablanca – Alekhine, St Petersburg 1914, but modern engines confirm that Black is fine after *7. ... Bd7* and an imaginative pawn sac that even Alekhine likely couldn't have imagined!) **7. ... exd5 8. Bxd5 0-0.** Practice shows that Black gets excellent compensation here with ... Rf8-d8 coming next. Some players have switched to 6. a3, but Black is doing well in modern practice with 6. ... Qd8! 7. Nf3 c6 as in Praggnanandhaa – Carlsen, Meltwater Tour Final 2022.

With 4. Bg5 seemingly solved (at least for now), I want to concentrate on the Steinitz Variation, which is seen after **4. e5 Nfd7 5. f4.** This remains the main line in top-level play, although White has been experimenting with the move order starting with 5. Nce2, which we'll see later.

Theoretical discussions really start after **5. ... c5 6. Nf3 Nc6 7. Be3**. There have historically been three or four main lines here for Black, and lately one has given White fits in the search for even a trace of an advantage. We'll briefly check them all.

FRENCH DEFENSE, STEINITZ VARIATION (C11)

GM Evgeny Alekseev (2698)
GM Vasily Yemelin (2558)
St Petersburg blitz (10), 12.22.2013

PHOTO: COURTESY SUBJECT

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5 Nfd7 5. f4 c5 6. Nf3 Nc6 7. Be3 cxd4 8. Nxd4 Bc5 9. Qd2 0-0 10. 0-0-0 a6



I wrote *Playing the French* with GM Jacob Aagaard right around the time this game was played. Jacob did at least 50% of the work in our first book, on the Tarrasch Defense, including the analysis and actual writing. But in the French book he mainly gave direction, testing all the lines on his own and helping shape the final draft into a book.

Jacob made it clear in the introduction that most of the analytical work was mine. This wasn't meant to honor me — he mainly wanted to avoid responsibility if our lines ended up failing the test of time! Fortunately it appears that our lines held up well, and I am still very proud of that work.

We chose to recommend the Classical against 3. Nc3, and, looking at the games and books of the time, almost everyone recommended this position. Both Jacob and I were skeptical here, as we thought White had a ready-made kingside attack.

11. Nb3!
Even today this line appears to give White better chances.

11. ... Bb4 12. Bd3 b5
Now for the key idea:

13. Rhf1!! Bb7
The alternative 13. ... Nb6 14. Nd4! Na5 15. Qf2 (as in Lendero – Dzenis, ICCF 2019) is considered dead in correspondence chess. White won all the games in my database from this position.

14. Rf3!
An idea of GM Joe Gallagher, played 10 years before this game.

14. ... g6
In the stem game (Gallagher – Brynell, Gaudsal 2001) Black tried 14. ... Rc8 15. Rh3 f5 and now 16. g4! would have been terrific for White.

15. Rh3



White has a monstrous attack. If you check the rest of the game with an engine, you'll see that while White doesn't always play entirely accurately, they always have the most fun and the better prospects. It's no wonder that this line has been abandoned by theory, even if deep engine analysis might prove that the position after 11. Nb3 is tenable.

15. ... a5 16. Kb1 a4 17. Nd4 a3 18. Nxc6 Bxc6 19. Bd4 axb2 20. f5 f6 21. Qh6 Rf7 22. fxg6 Rg7 23. exf6 Nxf6 24. Rf1 Bxc3 25. Bxc3 d4 26. Bb4 e5 27. Rxf6 Qxf6 28. gxh7+ Kf7 29. Qxf6+ Kxf6 30. Rh6+ Kg5 31. Rxc6, Black resigned.

FRENCH DEFENSE, STEINITZ VARIATION (C11)

GM Hans Niemann (2818)
GM Levon Aronian (2814)
U.S. Championship (6), St. Louis, 10.17.2024

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5 Nfd7 5. f4 c5 6. Nf3 Nc6 7. Be3 a6!?
This was our suggestion in *Playing the French*, and it soon became the main line.

8. Qd2 b5



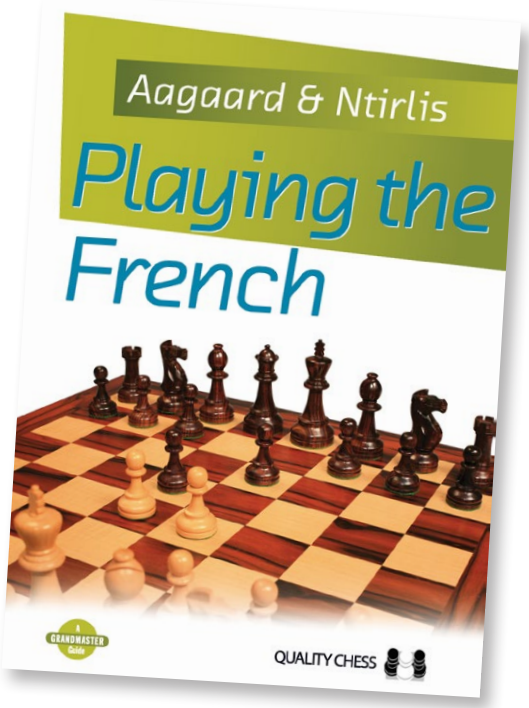
9. h4!?
There are a few ways to challenge Black's scheme and this is one of them. It's also supported by modern engines. Back in the days of *Playing the French*, we were hoping that Black could play ... Bc8-b7 and start exchanging in the center in the middle with at worst a minimal disadvantage.

9. ... Bb7
9. ... Qa5 10. h5 h6 11. Rh3!? seems better for White, as in Gunduz – Isgandarova, Cesme Open 2025.

10. Qf2 cxd4 11. Nxd4 Nxd4 12. Bxd4 Qc7



We have known that these positions are a bit worse for Black since the days of Tarrasch. For me it's a kind of philosophical problem to find the correct words to describe these positions. For example: When commenting on similar positions in his *My Great Predecessors* series, Kasparov would write something along the lines of "Black castles, plays ... f7-f6, and is OK." But what does "OK" mean? Is Black worse but able to draw with accurate play? Are they objectively equal?



Should we call a position equal if best play will lead to equality, or we should factor in considerations like practical chances, ease of play, probabilities of making a mistake and so on?

Perhaps I only think about this ambiguity when I don't want to deal with the fact that my position is worse, or that I'm not entirely confident defending it. This is how most French players feel in these positions today: Even if they know they'll draw with best play, they don't feel entirely comfortable in the process.

13. Bd3 Bc5 14. Ne2 f6 15. 0-0!?
The engines claim that White remains a bit better after 15. Qe3 or 15. Qg3.

15. ... 0-0 16. Qe3 fxe5 17. fxe5 Rxf1+ 18. Rxf1 Bxd4 19. Nxd4 Qxe5 20. Qxe5 Nxe5 21. Re1
It might be worth considering 21. Nxe6!? Re8 (*21. ... Nxd3?!* is worse) 22. Bf5 with a slight edge for White.

21. ... Nc4 22. Bxc4 dxc4 23. Rxe6 c3 24. b4 Rd8 25. Nb3 Bd5 26. Re3 Bxb3 27. axb3 Rd4 28. Rxc3 Rxb4 29. Rc8+ Kf7 30. Rc7+ Kf8 31. Rc8+ Ke7 32. Rc7+ Kf8 33. Rc8+ Ke7 34. Rc7+ Kf8, draw.
A well-played game that shows that Black's prospects are not that bright in practical play after 7. ... a6. If you want to draw the game, it's better to force an equal position than to try and draw from a slightly worse position.


GM Levon Aronian

FRENCH DEFENSE, STEINITZ VARIATION (C11)

GM Alireza Firouzja (2744)
GM Levon Aronian (2729)
SuperUnited Blitz (5), Zagreb, 07.13.2024

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5 Nfd7 5. f4 c5 6. Nf3 Nc6 7. Be3 Be7



This became the main line in the years after *Playing the French* was published. Black stays flexible and holds off potentially weakening the dark squares with ... a7-a6. After all, the move ... b7-b6 could be appropriate later. Maybe castling and ... f7-f6 should be played first. Who knows? The advantage of 7. ... Be7 is that it is useful in almost all circumstances.

This line did well for some years after it became fashionable. But eventually White found a nice little retort to challenge it, and this game is a recent example of how powerful it can be.

8. a3!?
Why is this move needed? After the normal 8. Qd2 0-0 White has a few options, but Black's flexible play has limited what is good. After 9. dxc5 (note that *9. 0-0-0?* hands the initiative to Black after *9. ... c4*, while *9. h4?! f6* already gives counterplay) 9. ... Bxc5 we see that if ... a7-a6 had been played this weakening of the queenside would give White better endgame prospects, but now Black has more options. Here's one example: 10. 0-0-0 Qb6 11. Nd4 Bxd4 12. Bxd4 Qxd4 13. Qxd4 Nxd4 14. Rxd4 Nc5 15. h4 a5, and Black is doing fine here after tests in top-level correspondence play.

8. ... a6
But here if Black plays like above, they can run into a bit of trouble: 8. ... 0-0 9. dxc5 Bxc5 10. Bxc5 Nxc5 11. b4 Nd7 12. Bd3 f6 13. 0-0 fxe5 14. Bxh7+!, as in Fogarasi – Horvath, Hungary 2014.

9. dxc5 Bxc5 10. Bxc5 Nxc5 11. b4 Nd7 12. Bd3



This is White's idea and it does look annoying. The engines give almost a +0.50 advantage, and it's hard to argue with them!

12. ... Qb6 13. Qd2 0-0 14. Qf2
I think 14. 0-0-0! (as in Enin – Campani, ICCF 2020) is even stronger.

14. ... Qxf2+ 15. Kxf2 f6 16. exf6 Nxf6 17. Rhe1
With a small but certain advantage for White.

17. ... Ng4+ 18. Kg3 Nf6 19. Kh4 Bd7 20. Rad1 Ne8 21. Kg3 Nf6 22. Kf2 Ng4+ 23. Kg1 Rxf4 24. h3 Rxf3 25. gxf3 Nge5 26. Kg2 Rf8 27. Rf1 Nd4 28. Bxh7+ Kxh7 29. Rxd4 Rc8 30. Re1 Ng6 31. Ne4 Rxc2+ 32. Kg3 Ne7 33. Ng5+ Kg6 34. Rg4 Nf5+ 35. Kf4 Kf6 36. Nh7+ Kf7 37. Ke5 d4 38. Ng5+ Ke7 39. Ne4 b6 40. Ng3 d3 41. Nxf5+ exf5 42. Rxg7+ Kd8 43. Rd1 Bb5 44. Kxf5 Ra2 45. Ke5 Rxa3 46. Kd6 Ke8 47. Re7+ Kf8 48. Rc1, Black resigned.

As we can see, this little 8. a3 move is annoying, and it makes 7. ... Be7 less attractive than it used to be. Black had to work out a new path forward, and fortunately for French players everywhere, one was found!

FRENCH DEFENSE, STEINITZ VARIATION (C11)

GM Alexander Grischuk (2792)
GM Simen Agdestein (2628)
Norway Chess (5), Stavanger, 06.08.2014

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5 Nfd7 5. f4 c5 6. Nf3 Nc6 7. Be3 cxd4 8. Nxd4 Qb6

PHOTO: COURTESY SLCC / LENNART OOTES

GM Simen Agdestein was the local hero at the Norway Chess tournament in 2014. As the "weak player" everyone felt obliged to beat him, but the former Norwegian striker showed he could play defense too, with a new idea in the Steinitz that he used to hold the line against some of the best players in the world.

9. Qd2

As it seems that Black can force a draw after 9. Qd2, I took a look at this variation for my recent book *Reimagining 1. e4*. There I recommended 9. a3, which seems to give at least some practical chances for White. But the Black players needn't lose sleep — with best play Black has fully equal chances.

9. ... Qxb2 10. Rb1 Qa3 11. Bb5 Nxd4 12. Bxd4 a6



This was Agdestein's preparation. Perhaps we should call it the French Berlin Wall! Tons of high-level human and correspondence games were played in this variation after Norway Chess, and the verdict was (and is) that Black is fine.

13. Bxd7+

I was always particularly annoyed that White could bail out with 13. Rb3 Qe7 14. Ba4 Qd8 (else Rb3-b6!) 15. Bb6 Qh4+ 16. Bf2 and a repetition. Unfortunately, these situations exist in all openings.

13. ... Bxd7 14. Rb3 Qe7 15. Rxb7



This is the modern crossroads.

15. ... Qd8

Previously Agdestein tried 15. ... Qh4+ 16. Bf2 (*16. Qf2* was Karjakin-Agdestein, Norway Chess 2014; today, Black usually plays *16. ... Qxf2+ 17. Kxf2 Be7* followed by ... Be7-d8 and ... Bd7-c6 next with equality) 16. ... Qd8 17. Bb6 Qc8 18. Rc7 Qd8 19. Qd4 Ba3! with equality and an eventual draw in Caruana – Agdestein, European Cup 2013.

Players are also still testing 15. ... Rc8, with the idea of ... Qe7-d8 and ... Bf8-c5, along with a potential ... Rc8-c4, to follow.

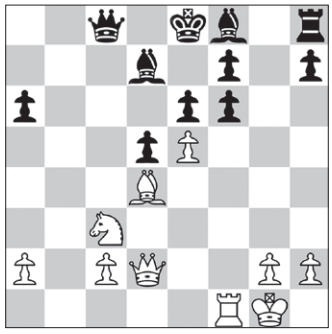
16. 0-0 Rb8?!

While this worked in this game, today the move is considered risky. 16. ... Qc8! 17. Rfb1 Bc5 18. f5 Bb5 is the main line in correspondence play; Black has proven to be extremely solid.

17. Rxb8 Qxb8 18. f5

With 18. Rb1! Qc7 19. Qe3 and f4-f5 coming soon White can generate an attack. Black usually survives in modern correspondence play, but it might be tough over the board.

18. ... Qc8! 19. f6 gxf6!



Black has sufficient counterplay to hold against an elite opponent.

20. Rxf6 h5 21. Rf3 Qc4 22. h3 Be7 23. a3 Bxa3 24. Ne4 dxe4 25. Rxa3 Rg8 26. Rb3 Qc7 27. Rc3 e3 28. Bxe3 Qxe5 29. Rd3 Qb5 30. Rb3 Qc6 31. Rb8+ Bc8 32. c4 Qxc4 33. Rb4 Qc6 34. Rd4 f6 35. Kh1 Kf7 36. Rd6 Qb5 37. Kh2 h4 38. Bf4 Qf5 39. Rc6 Kg6 40. Rc7 e5 41. Be3 Be6 42. Qb4 Rg7 43. Rxg7+ Kxg7 44. Qb7+ Bf7 45. Qxa6 Qe4 46. Qe2 f5 47. Qf3 Qxf3 48. gxf3 Kg6 49. f4 exf4, draw.

Agdestein's line exploded in popularity after this game. White couldn't break it, but even better, there were plenty of chances for White to overextend. This made it an excellent practical weapon to play for a win, as noted by Rustam Kasimdzhanov in his ChessBase course.

After this back-and-forth lasted over 10 years, we saw a new trend in the Steinitz emerge at the 2024 World Championship.

FRENCH DEFENSE, STEINITZ VARIATION (C11)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)
GM Ding Liren (2728)
World Championship (13) Singapore, 12.11.2024

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5 Nfd7 5. Nce2!?

It might not seem like much, but I guess the +0.10 the engines give at depth is enough for top players to investigate new ideas in this line.

5. ... c5 6. c3 Nc6 7. a3





GM Gukesh Dommaraju

PHOTO: ERIC ROSEN

7. … Be7
Later, Black players started playing 7. … cxd4 8. cxd4 f6 and this seems to solve their problems. For example: 9. exf6 Nxf6 10. Nf3 Bd6 11. g3 0-0 12. Bg2 Qa5+ 13. Bd2 Qb6 14. Bf4 Bxf4 15. Nxf4 Qxb2 16. 0-0 Ne4! and the game Moussard – Bacrot, French Championship 2025, was drawn. Bacrot played very accurately, but perhaps White can claim that the position is more likely to misplayed by Black rather than White.

8. Be3
This is the concept that Team Gukesh had in mind. Omitting f2-f4 is smart; it gives White extra options, as Gukesh shows with his next move.

8. … Nb6 9. Nf4 cxd4 10. cxd4 Nc4 11. Bxc4 dxc4 12. Nge2
12. Qg4! gives real chances for an advantage.

12. … b5 13. 0-0 0-0 14. Nc3 Rb8 15. Nh5!



Gukesh generated a nice initiative but later inaccuracies allowed his opponent to hold the draw.

15. … f5 16. exf6 *e.p.* Bxf6 17. Qf3 Qe8 18. Nxf6+ Rxf6 19. Qe2 Qg6 20. f3 Rf8 21. Rad1 Ne7 22. Bf4 Rb6 23. Bc7 Rb7 24. Bd6 Re8 25. Bxe7 Rexe7 26. Qe5 a6 27. d5 exd5 28. Qxd5+ Qe6 29. Qc5 Re8 30. Rde1 Qf7 31. Ne4 Rf8 32. Nd6 Rc7 33. Qe5 Qf6 34. Qd5+ Kh8 35. Re5 Re7 36. Rfe1 Rxe5 37. Rxe5 h6 38. Qc5 Bd7 39. Ne4 Qf4 40. Re7 Bf5 41. Qd4 Rg8 42. h3 Qc1+ 43. Kf2 Bxe4 44. Rxe4 c3 45. bxc3 Qxa3 46. Kg3 Qb3 47. Re7 a5 48. Rb7 Qc4 49. Qe5 Qc6 50. Qxb5 Qxc3 51. Ra7 Qe1+ 52. Kh2 Qb4 53. Qxb4 axb4 54. Rb7 Ra8 55. Rxb4 Ra2 56. Kg3 Kh7 57. Rb5 Kg6 58. f4 Kf6 59. Kf3 Rc2 60. g3 Rc3+ 61. Kg4 Ra3 62. h4 Rc3 63. Rb6+ Kf7 64. f5 h5+ 65. Kf4 Rc4+ 66. Kf3 Rc3+ 67. Kf4 Rc4+ 68. Kf3 Rc3+, draw.

Where do things stand right now? For that, we turn to a game from the recent U.S. Women's Championship!

FRENCH DEFENSE, STEINITZ VARIATION (C11)

IM Carissa Yip (2532)
FM Rose Atwell (2414)
U.S. Women's Ch (9), St. Louis, 10.22.2025

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5 Nfd7



IM Carissa Yip

5. Nce2!? c5 6. c3 Nc6 7. h4!



State of the art! Caruana used this brilliant concept to defeat Erigaisi; since then White players are exploding their electric bills to check all the details and build their files.

7. … Be7
The stem game Caruana – Erigaisi, Norway Chess 2025, went 7. … f6 8. Nf4! cxd4 9. Nxe6 Qb6 10. Qb3! dxc3 11. bxc3 Qa5 12. exf6 Nxf6 13. Nxf8 Rxf8 14. Bb5 and White used his pair of bishops to score a beautiful win. I think Black should still be OK with accurate play, but not many players have chosen to repeat this defense.

8. a3 b5
Other moves are worse: 8. … 0-0? 9. Nf4 a6 10. b4 cxd4 11. cxd4 Nb6 12. Nf3 f6 13. Bd3 fxe5 14. Bxh7+! (Kondou – Haralabido, Greek Teams 2025) shows the danger Black faces if they play natural-looking moves, while 8. … Qa5 9. Be3 cxd4 10. b4 Qc7 11. cxd4 Nb6 12. Nf4 was also terrible for Black in Perez Marimon – Martinez Reyes, Irun Open 2025.

9. Nf3 b4 10. axb4 cxd4 11. Nexd4 Ncxe5 12. Nxe5 Nxe5 13. Bf4 Ng6 14. Nc6 Qb6 15. Nxe7 Nxe7 16. Be3 Qb7 17. Qa4+ Bd7 18. Qa6
Without doing anything flashy, White already has a practically winning position.

18. … Qc7 19. Bc5 Nc8 20. Be2 f6 21. 0-0 Kf7 22. Ra5 e5 23. Rfa1 Bc6 24. Be3 Ne7 25. Qd3 e4 26. Qd4 Nf5 27. Qc5 Rhc8 28. Rxa7 Rxa7 29. Rxa7 Bb7 30. Ba6 Nxe3 31. Qxc7+ Rxc7 32. fxe3, Black resigned.
The Classical certainly remains one of Black's most solid defenses in modern chess, but current trends in the Steinitz favor the white side. The ball is in Black's court!

This concludes our look at 3. Nc3. Next time, we'll look at other third moves, which are not currently as theoretically challenging for Black.

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EXTRA TIME

GM Awonder Liang wins the U.S. Masters in a playoff.

BY **IM ROBERT SHLYAKHTENKO**



THE U.S. MASTERS CHAMPIonship might be the strongest annual Swiss in the U.S. Held last Thanksgiving weekend under the auspices of the Charlotte Chess Center for the fifth year in a row, this year's edition featured 38 grandmasters in a field of 251 players.

It isn't easy to run a tournament of this caliber successfully, and yet the Charlotte Chess Center rises to the occasion every year. Part of the secret is that the organizers — Dr. Walter High and FM Peter Giannatos — have a detailed understanding of the players' needs and always make them the top priority. One small but important touch, for example, was the idea of posting pairings online at a predetermined time before each round, which allowed the participants to structure their pre-game preparation instead having to make panicked guesses as to when pairings would be released.

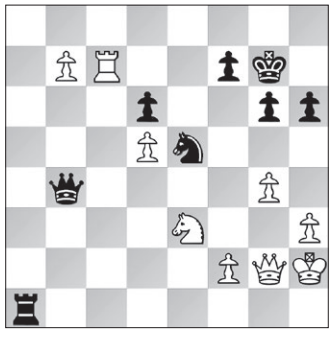
The schedule itself was well-designed, with an ample break between rounds; the games always started on time, and the (inevitable) disputes were dealt with quickly and efficiently. The arbiters were excellent, enforcing the rules when needed but never distracting the players. These may all seem like minor details, but together they contributed to making a great event.

The $25,000 guaranteed prize fund didn't hurt, of course, and secured the participation of three players rated over 2600 FIDE: GMs Awonder Liang, Jeffrey Xiong, and GM Alexander Donchenko (the latter coming straight from a breakout performance at the World Cup). Fierce competition for first place was all but guaranteed.

However, Liang started shakily: In Round 2, FM Bryan Lin had positional control. Awonder escaped in his opponent's time pressure, and in fact forced Lin to come up with a saving shot of his own.

SAVE AND A BEAUTY

FM Bryan Enming Lin (2450)
GM Awonder Liang (2769)
U.S. Masters (2), Charlotte, 11.27.2025



WHITE TO MOVE

Lin had built up a near-winning advantage earlier in the game, but his precise play

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came at the cost of a severe time disadvantage. At this point in the game, Liang has fought back to reach a position in which White is the one who must be careful: His king is weak and the b7-pawn is firmly under control. Bryan had only 39 seconds to make a crucial decision: how to stop the threat of 62. ... Qf4+? He spent 35 of those seconds to find a fantastic defense.

62. Nc4!!
Passive defense is not enough: 62. Qg3? Qe1 63. Qg2 Rb1! and Black reaches an ideal setup. White has no counterplay; with accurate moves, Black will be able to force White's rook off of the seventh rank and win the b7-pawn. After that, the win will be a matter of technique, in view of White's passive pieces and weak king.

62. ... Nxc4 63. Qe4!
The big point: Black has no good way to prevent Rc7xf7+ with a perpetual. 63. Rxc4?! Qxb7 is of course a draw objectively, but it is still unpleasant to play in time pressure.

63. ... Qb2 64. Rxf7+ Kxf7 65. Qe6+ Kf8 66. b8=Q+ Qxb8 67. Qf6+ Kg8
Not 67. ... Ke8? 68. Qh8+!.

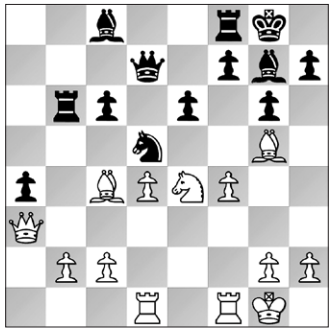
68. Qxg6+ Kf8 69. Qf6+ Kg8 70. Qg6+ Kf8 71. Qf6+, draw.
The way White activated all his passive pieces in just two moves makes a strong impression.

This unintentional Swiss Gambit eventually worked in Awonder's favor, as he avoided playing GM opponents until Round 6. In the intervening few games against significantly lower-rated players, Liang avoided mainline openings, instead aiming for equal positions that were easier for him to play. This strategy worked perfectly: Awonder won three games in a row, often after building up a large time advantage in the opening and early middlegame.

But while Liang worked his way back toward the top, Xiong took the early lead. His fourth-round game against Canadian GM Razvan Preotu is definitely one for the puzzle books:

BRILLIANCY

GM Jeffery Xiong (2721)
GM Razvan Preotu (2600)
U.S. Masters (4), Charlotte, 11.28.2025



BLACK TO MOVE

Black stands slightly worse and tries to solve his problems tactically, but misses a key point.

23. ... Rb4? 24. Bxd5
24. Nc5!? should also win, but the variations are messier.

24. ... Rxd4 25. Bh6!!
Beautiful geometry: White threatens Ne4-f6+.

25. ... Qd8
25. ... Rxd5 26. Nf6+ is White's main point. Meanwhile, 25. ... Qa7 is met by 26. Nf6+! Kh8 27. Bxg7+ Kxg7 28. Qe3 and White wins, and 25. ... f5 loses in multiple ways the cleanest being 26. Bxe6+! Qxe6 27. Bxg7.

26. Bxg7 Rxd1 27. Bxf8 Rxf1+ 28. Kxf1 exd5 29. Be7! Qb6 30. Nf6+
White emerges a full piece up; he won shortly.

30. ... Kg7 31. Bf8+ Kh8 32. Bc5 Ba6+ 33. Kf2 Qb5 34. Qe3, Black resigned.

Like Xiong, Donchenko won his first four games. But both followed with fifth-round draws against GM opponents, allowing 2568-rated GM Andrew Hong to overtake them with a perfect score.

Andrew is a third-year student at Brown University but still finds the time to play actively. He showed excellent tactical form, a good example being this Round 4 win against experienced GM Sergey Erenburg:

RUY LOPEZ, DEFERRED EXCHANGE VARIATION (C85)

GM Sergey Erenburg (2515)
GM Andrew Hong (2647)
U.S. Masters (4), Charlotte, 11.28.2025

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. 0-0 Be7 6. Bxc6
The Deferred Exchange Variation. White



loses a tempo in comparison to the immediate 4. Bxc6 but prevents Black from obtaining the best setups against the pure Exchange Variation.

6. … dxc6 7. d3 Nd7 8. Nbd2 0-0 9. Nc4 f6 10. Nh4 Nc5 11. Nf5 Ne6 12. Kh1 Rf7!?
A flexible move. Black prepares … Be7-f8 maintaining his bishop and overprotects the g7-square. In the future, the rook can be activated on the d-file (in combination with the plan of … c6-c5-c4).

13. g3?!
A risky decision. White will pay the price later for creating light-square weaknesses after having already traded off his light-squared bishop. It's probably better to enter the opposite-colored-bishops middlegame after 13. Nxe7+, though Black's position is extremely solid here as well.

13. … Nd4
13. … Bf8! was consistent and best. After the logical 14. f4, the following lines show the risks incurred by White's weakening of the light squares: 14. … g6 15. Nfe3 exf4 16. gxf4 b5! 17. Na5 f5! (striking the weak color complex) 18. Nxc6 (*18. exf5 Nd4! 19. fxg6 hxg6* also gives Black strong compensation) 18. … Qe8 19. Ne5 Bb7! 20. Nxf7 Qxf7 and Black has fantastic compensation for the Exchange, as White's light-square weaknesses and king safety issues persist.

14. Nxe7+ Qxe7 15. c3 Nb5!?



Keeping the c8-h3 diagonal open for the bishop. Black's plan is simple: Complete development and attack on the light squares with … f6-f5.

16. Be3
16. Ne3!? is more solid, fighting against Black's plan.

16. … Bh3 17. Re1 Qe6 18. Qe2 f5 19. f3
A solidifying move. White can hope to use his more flexible pawn structure in the long term, but this is very difficult to do with Black's light-squared bishop on the board, and Hong is able to demonstrate the dynamic potential of Black's position.

19. … Nd6 20. Nd2
White must avoid the trade of knights.

20. … Rd8
20. … Qg6! is stronger, so that after 21. exf5 Bxf5 the d3-pawn hangs.

21. a3
White would get significant counterplay against the e5-pawn after 21. exf5! Bxf5 22. g4 Bg6 23. Bf2; it seems that both sides underestimated this possibility during the next few moves. This structure is typical for the Deferred Exchange (though the fact that White has played g2-g3-g4 and c2-c3 certainly hurts him); for a recent example, see Keymer – Vidit in the 2025 Grand Swiss.

21. … b6 22. Rad1 c5 23. exf5
The correct decision — White had no useful improving moves left.

23. … Bxf5 24. Bf2?
But this is a mistake, and the first serious one of the game. White allows the trade of the d- and e-pawns, which gives Black's pieces much more scope for activity. Again, 24. g4 Bg6 25. Bf2 was better.

24. … Qg6 25. Qxe5 Bxd3 26. Qd5 Bc2
The far-from-obvious 26. … Kf8! was stronger, freeing the f7-rook — note that on 27. Re6? there still follows 27. … Rf5!. It was also possible to play 26. … h6!? with the idea of … Kg8-h7. After 27. Re6 Qf5 28. Re5 Black can decline the repetition with 28. … Qf6!, intending 29. Re6? Ne4!.

27. Re6?
Visually appealing, but tactically flawed. 27. Rc1! held everything together: Surprisingly, there is no way for Black to exploit the skewer possibility on the d-file.

27. … c6?
Black is still much better after this move, but there was a direct win with 27. … Nb7! 28. Qa2 (*28. Qe5 Qf5* and Black wins) 28. … Bxd1 29. Rxg6 Rxd2! 30. Re6 Bxf3+. It's possible that Hong saw up to here and rejected it because after 31. Kg1 Black is threatened with mate in one and only has a rook and a knight for the queen. However, after 31. … Nd6!, it turns out that White is helpless against the threat of 32. … . Bd5; his pieces simply do not coordinate well enough.

28. Qa2 Bxd1 29. Rxg6 hxg6
Black stands much better: White's queen is clearly weaker than the two rooks, and White's other pieces are similarly inferior to their counterparts.

30. Kg2?



The last mistake. There was still a chance to put up some resistance with 30. Kg1!.

30. … Ne4!
Showcasing Black's light-square superiority in its clearest form. The defenses around White's king collapse.

31. Nxe4 Bxf3+ 32. Kh3 Bxe4 33. b4 Rd5 34. g4 g5!
Tightening the noose around the king.

35. Qe2 Re7 36. Qxa6 Rd3+ 37. Bg3 Re6 38. Qc4 Rd5 39. Bc7 b5 40. Qa2 Rd3+ 41. Bg3 c4, White resigned.
Mate is unstoppable.

Starting in the fifth round, the leaders started facing each other and consequently played more solidly. The main question shifted to who would surrender the most half-points. Xiong elected to take a half-point bye in Round 6 and suffered immediately; a seventh-round draw against the surging IM Sai Krishna did not help matters. Liang drew Donchenko in Round 6 and Hong in Round 7, creating a sort of circular firing squad at the top.

Clarity came through only at the start of the final round: Hong led the field by a half-point. Xiong, taking the white pieces against Andrew, would need a victory; Liang was in a must-win position against Italian GM Francesco Sonis. Donchenko, after an eighth-round draw against Krishna, was out of contention.

Xiong got nothing out of the opening against Hong and was forced to take serious risks in order to maintain winning chances. This quickly backfired, and Xiong ended up down an Exchange with no compensation.

However, with victory in the game — and first place in the tournament — so close, Andrew let the advantage slip and allowed Xiong to draw by the skin of his teeth.

Meanwhile, Liang did his part, securing a smooth win in a Giuoco Piano after Sonis' aggressive play went awry. As a result, Hong and Liang tied for first, already guaranteeing them a healthy $5,250 each. The US Masters trophy (and $500 bonus prize) would be decided by a blitz playoff.

A quiet draw in the first game perhaps provoked Liang into playing a more questionable setup — the Hippo — in Game 2, and for a time it looked like Hong, a well-known blitz specialist, would take the title. But with clocks running low and nerves running high, the spectators witnessed a dramatic turnaround:

FOR THE TITLE

GM Andrew Hong (2647)
GM Awonder Liang (2769)
U.S. Masters Playoff, Charlotte, 12.01.2025



WHITE TO MOVE

35. Rd5?
Missing a chance to finish the game immediately: 35. Re1! Ne6 (or *35. ... Qf7 36. Qxg7+ Qxg7 37. Bxg7 Kxg7 38. Re7+*) 36. f5 Qg5 37. Qxg5 Nxg5 38. Bxg7 Kxg7 39. Re7+ Kf6 40. Rxc7 is easily winning for White.

35. ... h4!
Forcing a queen trade on Black's own terms.

36. Qxg7+ Qxg7 37. Bxg7 Kxg7
Normally, this kind of endgame would greatly favor the side with the rook, but White's queenside pawn structure gives Black good saving chances.

38. Kf2?!
A typical "blitz move," but it allows Black's knight to occupy the outpost on c5. 38. Rh5! was better, and if 38. ... Ng6, White can strike on the other side of the board with 39. c5!.

38. ... Ne6 39. Ke3 Nc5 40. Rg5+
Or 40. Rh5 Nxb3 41. Rxh4 Bd7.

40. ... Kf6?
A blunder; now White is winning once more. Black could have saved the h4-pawn with 40. ... Kh6!.

41. Rh5 Bb7
We can see why Black's king is so poorly placed on f6 after 41. ... Nxb3 42. Rxh4 Bd7 43. Rh7!.

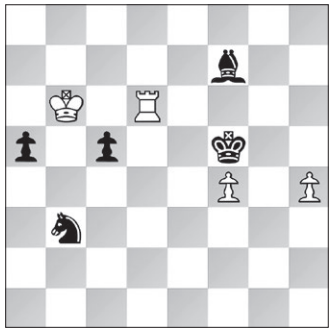
42. Rxh4 Bxg2 43. Rh7 c6 44. Rh8?
White loses valuable time and lets the win slip: 44. h4! Nxb3 45. h5 Nc5 46. Rc7 and the h-pawn is too strong.

44. ... Nxb3 45. Rb8 Nc5 46. Rxb6
Again, 46. h4! was called for — the passed pawn is White's only asset in this endgame.

46. ... Nxa4 47. Ra6 Nb2 48. Kd4 Nxc4!
Andrew must have missed this in the time scramble — Black keeps both his queenside pawns. Nevertheless, the position is still drawn.

49. Ra7 Bd5 50. h4 Kg6 51. Kc5 Nd2 52. Kb6
White had a better setup with 52. Kd6!. If 52. ... Nb3 53. Ke5! White's king both stops Black's pawns and prepares the advance of his own.

52. ... Nb3 53. Ra8 c5 54. Rd8 Bf7 55. Rd6+ Kf5



56. Kb5?
The decisive mistake. White had to use the h-pawn as a distraction: 56. h5! Bxh5 57. Rd5+ Kg6 58. Rxc5 with a draw.

56. ... c4 57. Rd8?
57. Rd7 puts up more resistance, but 57. ... Be6! 58. Rc7 Kxf4 still wins for Black.

57. ... c3 58. Rc8 c2 59. Rxc2 Nd4+ 60. Kxa5 Nxc2
Awonder had no issues with the bishop and knight checkmate and eventually won.

This win added to an already-long list of impressive accomplishments by the 22-year-old Liang, who recently finished his undergraduate degree at the notoriously rigorous University of Chicago. He's chosen to devote himself almost fully to chess, so we can expect even greater things to come in the near future.

Norm-seekers were happy to see that the field had enough foreign players to qualify as a Super Swiss, meaning that participants could compete for norms regardless of how many foreigners they faced. This helped four players earn norms: Evan Sammons and FMs Seth Homa, Avi Kaplan, and Evan Sammons gained IM norms, while Maryna Starosta garnered a WIM norm.



GM Jeffery Xiong



GM Andrew Hong

In the final round, Kaplan's task was perhaps most difficult — he had to win on demand against GM David Brodsky. This is no easy feat under any circumstances, but he managed to do so in style:

ENGLISH OPENING (A12)

FM Avi Harrison Kaplan (2417)
GM David Brodsky (2597)
U.S. Masters (9), Charlotte, 11.30.2025

1. Nf3 d5 2. b3 Bf5 3. Bb2 e6 4. d3 h6 5. Nbd2 Nf6 6. g3 Be7 7. Bg2 0-0 8. 0-0 Bh7 9. c4 c6 10. a3 a5 11. Qc2 Na6 12. Bc3 Qb6 13. Qb2 Rfd8 14. Rac1 Ne8 15. d4 Nac7 16. Ne5 Qa6



White has made a decent opening choice for a must-win game: This middlegame is characterized by maneuvering play with many pieces on the board, so there are many chances for Black to go wrong. However, Avi's next move should have put him in trouble.

17. Ndf3?!
White's knights fight for the same square. It would have been more natural to prevent ... a5-a4 with 17. a4, perhaps followed by c4-c5. Also possible was 17. Rfe1, defending the e2-pawn (after c4-c5 it would have been hanging) and preparing e2-e4 in some cases.



FM Avi Harrison Kaplan

17. ... a4! 18. bxa4
18. c5!? may be stronger, but after 18. ... axb3 19. Qxb3 f6 Black is for choice.

18. ... dxc4?
This allows White to complicate the game. After 18. ... f6! 19. Nd3 (the piece sacrifice *19. cxd5!?* is met most simply by *19. ... Nxd5 20. Nd3 Bxd3 21. exd3 Qxa4* and Black easily consolidates his advantage) 19. ... dxc4 20. Nc5 Bxc5 21. dxc5 Qxa4 Black is firmly in the driver's seat.

19. Nxc4!
All of a sudden, the position sharpens significantly.

19. ... Nd5
White's point is 19. ... Qxc4? 20. Bb4!.

20. Ba5!? Rdb8 21. Nfe5!
Kaplan continues to play the most aggressive moves. This turned out to be an excellent practical decision: Black's defensive task is not simple.

21. ... b5!?
Brodsky is a very principled player; true to his style, he reacts in the most combative way. A more timid player would have chosen 21. ... Nd6, aiming for simplifications. After 22. Bb6 Nxc4 23. Nxc4 Qxa4 24. Bc5 b6 25. Bxe7 Nxe7 Black has nothing to fear, but there is little justification to play for a win.

22. Ne3
Of course, White did not just blunder a piece: There is a fork coming on c6.

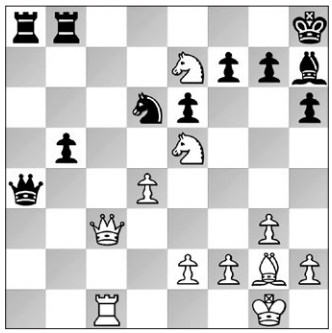
22. ... Qxa5
After 22. ... bxa4!? 23. Bb4 Bxb4 24. Rxc6 Qa5 25. Nxd5 exd5 26. axb4 Rxb4 27. Qa3 only White can be better, thanks to his more active pieces. The blockaded a-pawn does not have much relevance; note that 27. ... Rb3? loses to 28. Qe7!.

23. Nxc6 Qxa4 24. Nxd5 Bxa3 25. Nde7+ Kh8
An alternative idea was 25. ... Kf8!?, trying to trap White's knight. Logical play could continue 26. Qc3! Rb7 (not *26. ... Bxc1? 27. Qc5!*) 27. Ra1 Ra6 28. Rfc1!? Rxe7 29. Nxe7 Kxe7 30. Qc8 b4! 31. Bc6 Rxc6 32. Rxc6 Qa7 with a totally unclear position.

26. Qc3 Bxc1
From a practical point of view, it was worth considering 26. ... Bxe7!? 27. Nxe7 b4 28. Qd2 (*28. Qb2 Qa2!*) 28. ... b3! 29. Bxa8 Qxa8 where the pressure is suddenly on White; Black's bishop and strong b3-pawn are worth more than the Exchange.

27. Ne5
Again the sharpest choice! White is temporarily down a rook, but Black will be forced to give back all the material.

27. ... Nd6 28. Rxc1



28. ... f6
Black has to return the Exchange. For example, 28. ... Ra6? fails to 29. Qc8+!! Rxc8 30. Nxf7+ Nxf7 31. Rxc8+ Bg8 32. Rxg8+ Kh7 33. Be4+.

29. Bxa8 Qxa8 30. N5c6
Continuing to set Black difficult problems.

30. ... Rf8?
At last, Black errs: 30. ... Rb7!? 31. Ra1 (or *31. Qc5 Nc4*) 31. ... Qe8 32. Qc5 Nf5 would hold everything together. It was also possible to play for activity with 30. ... Re8 31. Ra1 b4! 32. Nxb4 (or *32. Qb2 Qb7 33. Ra7 Qb5*) 32. ... Qe4.

31. Ra1! Qe8 32. Qc5 Nf5 33. Ra7!
The key difference compared with the 30. ... Rb7 line: White's rook is able to invade on the seventh rank.

33. ... Rf7 34. Rc7!
The difference in piece activity proves decisive.

34. ... Nxe7 35. Nxe7 Bg8 36. Ng6+ Kh7 37. Rc8 Qd7 38. Nf8+ Rxf8 39. Qxf8 Bf7 40. Qc5, Black resigned.

After a three-month absence from serious tournament play (due to my academic studies and a lack of strong nearby events), I decided to check whether I still remembered

how the pieces moved and participated as an also-ran. After sitting down at the board for my first-round game, it didn't take long to realize that I was completely incapable of calculating more than two moves ahead with any guarantee of precision. Surprisingly, my opponents were largely understanding of my troubles and often refused to punish my tactical blunders.

After an upset win in Round 4 against Vietnamese GM Tuan Minh Le and more-or-less solid play afterwards, I found myself within reach of a GM norm in the last round — assuming I could defeat the strong Indian grandmaster Harsha Bharathakoti as White. The game was quite entertaining, so I hope the readers will permit me one digression:

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE (E45)

IM Robert Shlyakhtenko (2551)
GM Harsha Bharathakoti (2624)
U.S. Masters (9), Charlotte, 11.30.2025

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 b6
According to the database, my opponent only had only played 4. ... 0-0 before, so this was unexpected.

5. Nge2 Ba6 6. Ng3 Bxc3+ 7. bxc3 d5
This is considered a very solid line for Black. Usually, White tries to exert some small positional pressure from a position with a minimal advantage. My choice in the game is the only way to get a sharper position.

8. Ba3!? dxc4
My opponent tries to surprise me with a rare move. The usual continuation is 8. ... Bxc4 9. Bxc4 dxc4 10. e4 with mutual chances. The endgame after 10. Qa4+ Qd7 11. Qxc4 Qc6 is equal.

9. Be2
9. e4 gives Black the additional option of 9. ... c5!?.

9. ... Qd7 10. e4 Nc6 11. Qc2 0-0-0



12. Nf1!
A novelty I had prepared some years back. 12. 0-0 allows 12. ... h5! with good counterplay, as in Portisch – Fischer, Siegen 1970.

12. ... Rhe8?!
Played after more than a half-hour's thought. Objectively, this move is incorrect, but it's a great practical try.

After 12. ... Na5 13. Ne3 Kb8 14. 0-0 White has a strong center and an easy-to-play position. Black is fine, but needs to be precise. While my opponent was thinking, I spent some time calculating 12. ... e5 and came to the (correct) conclusion that it does not fully work: 13. d5 Nd4?! (after *13. ... Na5!? 14. Ne3 c5* White will not win the pawn back but gets a strong initiative with f2-f4) 14. cxd4 exd4 15. Bxc4 Bxc4 16. Qxc4 Nxe4 17. Qxd4 c5 18. Qd3 Qf5 19. Qc2 Qxd5 20. Ne3 Qd2+ 21. Qxd2 Rxd2 22. Rf1 Rhd8 23. Bc1 R2d3 24. Ke2 and White consolidates.

13. Ne3!
The principled choice. White has to allow the sacrifice because 13. Nd2? is no good: 13. ... e5 14. d5 Na5 followed by ... c7-c6.

13. ... e5 14. d5 Nd4!
The point of Black's play. There is a refutation, but it is extremely subtle.

15. cxd4 exd4 16. Nxc4 Rxe4 17. 0-0?
There was a refutation of Black's concept with 17. 0-0-0!! Rxe2! 18. Qxe2 Qa4 19. Rxd4 Bxc4 20. Be7! (*20. Qxc4!? Qxa3+ 21. Kb1* is also good) 20. ... Bxe2 21. Rxa4 Rxd5 22. Bxf6 gxf6 23. Re1! with good winning chances. But not 23. Rxa7? Rf5! 24. f3 Rg5 with counterplay.

17. ... Rxe2 18. Qxe2 Qa4!
The idea of the combination. With simultaneous threats to c4 and a3, Black wins back most of the material.

19. Rfc1!
The right rook. White would lose after 19. Rac1?! Qxa3 20. Qe5? Qc5! 21. Ne3 Qd6 and the rook on f1 is hanging.

19. ... Qxa3 20. Qe5! Bxc4
Now 20. ... Qc5 21. Ne3! works. Note that Black cannot even consider the queen sacrifice 21. ... dxe3? because of 22. Qf5+!.

21. Rxc4 Qd6 22. Qf5+!
The right positional decision. White needs to keep all the heavy pieces on the board. That way, once Black begins to push his queenside pawns, it will be easier to attack his king. After 22. Qxd4? Qxd5 White cannot avoid the trade of queens and is immediately worse.

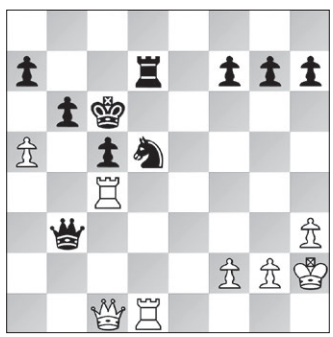
22. ... Qd7 23. Qc2! d3 24. Qxd3 Qxd5 25. Qc2 c5 26. Re1
White is uncoordinated and needs a few moves to stabilize the position. Once that's done, though, the plan is to put pressure on Black's king by constantly changing the angle of attack. Admittedly, Black's position is quite solid, and the correct result of the game should probably be a draw.

26. ... Rd7 27. h3 Kb7 28. a4 Qd3 29. Qc1 Nd5!?
The computer recommends the radical 29. ... a5!? to safeguard Black's king.

30. Rd1 Qb3!
I underestimated this move. White's pieces are tied down.

31. a5 Kc6
Now Black threatens 32. ... . Nc3. I decided to eliminate this threat, and walked straight into another one.

32. Kh2?





IM Robert Shlyakhtenko

A terrible mistake; I realized that this was a blunder as soon as I played it. The better try was 32. Rd2!, but Black is able to force the trade of a pair of rooks, which greatly eases his defense: 32. … Nb4! 33. Rxd7 Kxd7 34. axb6 axb6 and Black should hold.

32. … Ne3!
In an instant, the balance has shifted and White is the one fighting for a draw.

33. Rxc5+?!
I think that, from a practical point of view, it was better to capture on d7, especially as my opponent was in time pressure.

For example, 33. Rxd7! Qxc4 34. Qxc4 Nxc4 35. Rxf7 and now:

a) 35. … Nxa5 36. Rxg7 c4 37. f4 and Black cannot continue advancing the c-pawn because of Rg7-g3. After 37. … b5 38. f5 Nb7 39. f6 Nd6 40. Rxa7 c3 41. f7 Nxf7 42. Rxf7 c2 43. Rf8! Kc7 44. Rf1 b4 45. Rf4 b3 46. Rb4 c1=Q 47. Rxb3 I have a fortress.

b) The move that worried me during the game was 35. … b5. 36. Rxa7 b4 37. a6 Kb6! (I saw during the game that Black actually loses after *37. … b3? 38. Rb7 Nb6 39. Rb8!*) 38. Ra8 Na5 39. a7 Nc6 and now 40. Rb8+! Kxa7 41. Rb5! c4 42. Rc5 b3 43. Rxc6 b2 44. Rxc4 b1=Q 45. Rc7+ again allows White to reach a fortress.

But, perhaps due to my earlier blunder, I did not trust my calculations and went for a move that seemed safer.

33. … bxc5 34. Rxd7 Kxd7 35. Qxc5 Qb8+!
My opponent finds the best chance. I expected 35. … Nd5 36. Qxa7+ Ke6 37. Qa6+ Kf5 38. Qa7 Nf4 39. a6 Qd5 40. Qb7 and was even feeling optimistic about my chances, given my opponent's lack of time.

36. g3 Nf1+ 37. Kg1?!
Fearing ghosts. White should not allow Black to transition into a pure queen ending with … Nf1xg3. After 37. Kg2! Nd2 (*37. … Nxg3 38. fxg3* is easily holdable despite being down a pawn) 38. Qd5+ Qd6 39. Qxf7+ Kc6 40. Qxa7 Qd5+ 41. Kg1 the coordination between the queen and knight looks impressive, but Black has no seriously threatening ideas.



Hong made him prove it, but Liang's knight and bishop won out.

37. … Nxg3 38. Qd4+?
38. Qd5+! was correct. I was afraid of 38. … Ke8, where White quickly runs out of checks, but I missed the brilliant 39. Kg2!!, trapping Black's knight.

38. … Kc8?
It's a win after 38. … Ke6! 39. Qc4+ Kf6 40. Qh4+ g5 41. Qh6+ Kf5 42. Qxh7+ Ke6.

39. Qg4+!
A typical pendulum idea. White is again within reach of a draw.

39. … f5 40. Qc4+ Qc7 41. Qe6+ Qd7 42. Qg8+ Kb7 43. fxg3 g6 44. Qb3+ Ka6 45. Qc3 Kb5 46. Kh2!
The correct plan; White needs to hide his king from checks. The position is drawn, but with only about a minute of time remaining, the defensive task proved too difficult for me.

46. … a6 47. h4 Qd6 48. Kh3 Qd5 49. Kh2 Qd6 50. Kh3 f4 51. Qb3+ Kxa5 52. Qc3+ Kb6 53. Qb3+ Kc5 54. Qc3+ Kd5 55. Qf3+ Ke6 56. gxf4 a5 57. h5 gxh5 58. Qe2+?!
I'm not sure why I didn't just play 58. Qxh5! immediately.

58. … Kf6 59. Qxh5?
White will lose the f4-pawn by force now. 59. Qb5!? still holds on.

59. … Qd3+ 60. Kh2?
I saw 60. Kh4 Qf5 61. Qh6+? Kf7, when White is unable to prevent a trade of queens, but in time pressure I missed 61. Qf3!, probably because this square was under Black's control on the previous move. Black is winning here, but he would have to find 61. … h5! 62. Qc6+ Qe6 63. Qc3+ Kg6 64. Kg3 Qg4+ 65. Kf2 Qxf4+ and the rest is a matter of patience. So instead I played the game move "by elimination," although it loses immediately as the f4-pawn falls with check.

60. … Qc2+ 61. Kh1 Qe4+ 62. Kh2 Qxf4+ 63. Kh1 Qe4+, White resigned.
Black forces the queen trade after 64. Kg1 Qg6+ or 64. Kh2 Qe5+. It really didn't take much prodding for me to blunder the house!

Returning to my point at the beginning of this article, I propose that a well-organized tournament now be defined as an event in which not even the most creative chessplayer can find excuses for their losses beyond their own poor play. Try as hard, I could find no fault but my own — these Charlotte tournaments really are well-organized!

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Last-Round Drama

GM Dariusz Swiercz comes back to take the U.S. Open title.

BY **JOHN HARTMANN** AND **RICK MASSIMO**
ANNOTATIONS BY **WGM SABINA FOISOR**

IT WASN'T QUITE A FULL-blown Swiss Gambit, but it was dramatic nevertheless.

After two draws seemed to take him out of the running, GM Dariusz Swiercz stormed back to win the 125th U.S. Open, held last July 28-Aug. 3 in Middleton, Wisconsin. With wins in the final two rounds, including a top-board battle with Wisconsin's own GM Joshua Friedel, Swiercz took clear first with 8/9, netting him $9,545 and a seat at the 2025 U.S. Championship in St. Louis.

This was the fifth time the Open had been held in Wisconsin, and the third time since 2013 it took place in Middleton, a suburb of Madison. Turnout was relatively strong at 513 players, roughly matching the 2013 head count and a significant improvement over 2018, when 383 players had to share hotels and facilities with a CrossFit national championship.

The 125th edition of the Open saw the introduction of compressed schedules to better fit modern patterns of living. The traditional nine-day schedule, with one evening round per day, was replaced with a seven-day schedule with two double-round days. The six-day was whittled down to five days, with three games on day two, while the four-day remained much the same as in previous years. As is tradition, all schedules merged after Round 6 for the final three rounds.

Arbitrage

Choice of schedule is always a matter of speculation for the top players. Which one provides the clearest path through the first six games? Are the slow time controls and the chance to reenter (if necessary) really worth the extra hotel nights?

Left: Scenes from Middleton, including former ED Ranae Bartlett with a friend and Mike Nietman in traditional Wisconsin attire.

ALL PHOTOS: DAVID LLADA FOR US CHESS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

This year the seven- and four-day schedules won out, with 236 players in the seven-day, 137 in the five-day, and 152 in the four-day. (This includes re-entries, if you're wondering about the math.) Perhaps more interesting was the concentration of titled players in the seven- and four-day sections, and the presence of just one IM (along with five masters) in the five-day. That IM — Sam Schmakel — was the sole player to emerge from the five-day with a perfect 6/6 after defeating Trevor Magness in round six.

Two GMs made it out of the seven-day unscathed. Varuzhan Akobian travelled to Middleton from St. Louis, where he coaches the Saint Louis University chess team along with assistant coach Swiercz. He defeated GM Mikhail Antipov, the coach for the University of Texas at Dallas team, to get to 6/6. Antipov was one of 12 players at 5/6 after the seven-day wrapped; only one, GM Harsha Bharathakoti, finished at 5½.

FRENCH DEFENSE, EXCHANGE VARIATION (C01)

GM Mikhail Antipov (2671)
GM Varuzhan Akobian (2599)
125th U.S. Open (6), Middleton, 07.31.2025

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. exd5 exd5 5. Bd3 Nc6 6. a3 Ba5 7. Be3 Nge7 8. Qh5 g6 9. Qh6 Bf5 10. Qg7 Rg8 11. Qxh7 Bxd3 12. cxd3 Qd7 13. b4 Bb6 14. Nf3 Qf5 15. Kd2 0-0-0 16. Qh3 Qxh3 17. gxh3 Nf5 18. Ne2 Rde8 19. Raf1 Rh8 20. b5 Ba5+ 21. Kc2 Nxe3+ 22. fxe3 Rxe3 23. Nf4 Ne7 24. Ne5



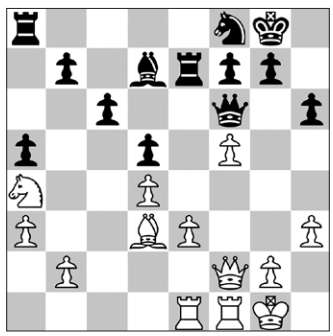
24. ... Nf5 25. Kb1 Nxd4 26. Nxf7 Rhe8 27. a4 a6 28. b6 Bxb6 29. Nxd5 R3e6 30. Nf6 R8e7 31. Ng5 Re5 32. Ng8 Re8 33. Nf6 R8e7 34. Ng8 Re8 35. Nf6 Rf8 36. Nge4 Nf5 37. Rf4 Rd8 38. Rg4 Ne7 39. Rd1 Bd4 40. Rc1 Re6, White resigned.

GM Friedel didn't have to travel as far to get to the Open. The native (and current) Wisconsinite took down 2025 Grand Prix winner GM Jianchao Zhou in a nice attacking game to stay perfect through six rounds.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED, EXCHANGE VARIATION (D35)

GM Joshua Friedel (2638)
GM Jianchao Zhou (2661)
125th U.S. Open (6), Middleton, 07.31.2025

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 d5 4. cxd5 exd5 5. Bg5 c6 6. e3 h6 7. Bh4 Bd6 8. Bd3 0-0 9. Nge2 Re8 10. h3 a5 11. Qc2 Na6 12. a3 Nc7 13. 0-0 Ne6 14. Rae1 Bd7 15. f4 Be7 16. Ng3 Nf8 17. Na4 N6h7 18. Bxe7 Rxe7 19. Nh5 Re8 20. f5 Qg5 21. Qe2 Nf6 22. Nxf6+ Qxf6 23. Qf2 Re7



24. Nc3 g6 25. e4 gxf5 26. e5 Qg5 27. Re3 f4 28. Qxf4 Qxf4 29. Rxf4 Ne6 30. Rh4 Ree8 31. Bf5 Kf8 32. Rxh6 a4 33. Ne2 Ke7 34. Bxe6 Bxe6 35. Nf4 Bf5 36. g4 Be4 37. Nh5 Rh8 38. Rxh8 Rxh8 39. Nf6 Ke6 40. Rc3 Ra8 41. h4, Black resigned.

Perfection in the four-day proved unattainable, but three players — GM Victor Matvi-


GM Mikhail Antipov


GM Jianchao Zhou


GM Varuzhan Akobian sweats his fifth move against Friedel

ishen, IM Sebastian Kostolansky, and Swiercz — emerged with 5½. They were followed by a slew of their titled peers, including GMs Daniel Naroditsky and Tanguy Ringoir at 5/6, followed by GMs Praveen Balakrishnan, Alex Fishbein, and Andrew Hong at 4½.

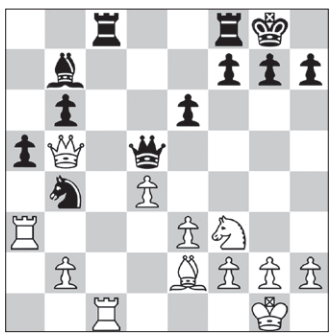
The Merge

So when the schedules combined, just three players — Akobian, Friedel, and Schmakel — were at 6/6 coming into Round 7. Swiercz, Matviishen, Kostolansky, and Bharathakoti trailed by a half-point at 5½. Akobian took White against Friedel on Board 1, and after Akobian erred in the early middlegame, Friedel ground him down to move to 7/7.

BOGO-INDIAN DEFENSE (E11)

GM Varuzhan Akobian (2599)
GM Joshua Friedel (2638)
125th U.S. Open (7), Middleton, 08.01.2025

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 Bb4+ 4. Bd2 c5 5. e3 0-0 6. Bxb4 cxb4 7. a3 bxa3 8. Rxa3 Nc6 9. Nc3 b6 10. Be2 d5 11. cxd5 Nxd5 12. 0-0 Bb7 13. Nxd5 Qxd5 14. Qa4 a5 15. Rc1 Nb4 16. Qb5 Rac8



Black is slightly more comfortable with his strong b7-bishop and b4-knight. Things should stay balanced with correct play, but now Var begins to drift.

17. Rac3?!

A natural move, but it allows the black queen to get active.

It's a bit counterintuitive to give up the c-file, but 17. Rxc8 first had to be the right idea. After 17. ... Rxc8 18. Rc3 ensures the exchange of both pairs of rooks, which benefits White, and Black doesn't have the opportunity to activate the queen because the back rank is weak. I think things peter out to a draw after 18. ... Qxb5 19. Rxc8+ Bxc8 20. Bxb5.

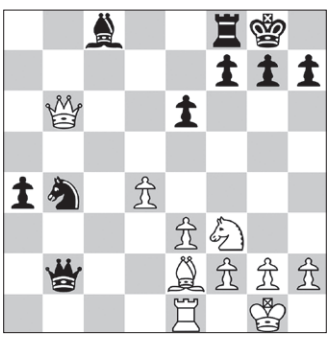
17. … Qa2!
Black grabs the opportunity to attack White's weaknesses.

18. Rxc8 Bxc8 19. Qxb6?
I (Sabina Foisor) livestreamed this tournament at the US Chess Twitch channel (*twitch.tv/uschess*) and spent a lot of time trying to find a good defense for White in this position. It's true that no material is lost but the menacing a-pawn will be difficult to deal with. That's the target that White needs to neutralize first. So when the engine suggested 19. Re1 I was puzzled, but nothing seemed to work besides this move. What's the idea?

It turns out the only way to save the game is to bring the bishop to block the a-pawn via Be2-d1-a4! After 19. … Qxb2 20. Bd1 Bb7 White can afford to capture the pawn with 21. Qxb6 Bxf3 (if *21. … Nd3 22. Qxb2 Nxb2 23. Be2 a4 24. Ne5* followed by Re1-a1 and White should be fine) 22. gxf3 Qd2 23. Rf1 Nd5. Black maintains an advantage, but the bishop should be strong enough to hold.

19. … Qxb2! 20. Re1
One move too late!

20. … a4!



Despite Var's best efforts, it was impossible to stop the a-pawn without giving up a piece. Josh was able to eventually convert the full point.

21. Ne5 a3 22. Bc4 a2 23. Bxa2 Qc3 24. Rb1 Nxa2 25. h4 Qc2 26. Qb3 Qxb3 27. Rxb3 Nc1 28. Ra3 Bb7 29. Ra7 Bd5 30. f3 f6 31. Nd7 Rd8 32. Nb6 h5 33. Kf2 Rb8 34. Na4 Ra8 35. Rxa8+ Bxa8 36. Nc5 Bd5 37. e4 Bc4 38. Ke3 Nb3 39. Na4 Kf7 40. Nc3 Na5 41. Kf2 Nc6 42. Ke3 Ke7 43. Nd1 Bf1 44. Kf2 Ba6 45. Ke3 Nb4 46. Kd2 Nd3 47. Ne3 Nf4 48. Ke1 g6 49. Kd2 Kd6 50. Ke1 Bb5 51. Kd2 Ne2 52. d5 e5 53. Ke1 Nd4 54. Kd2 f5, White resigned.

After this game, Friedel was at the top of the table with a perfect 7/7. Swiercz and Schmakel drew a long game on Board 2, leaving Schmakel in sole second place at 6½ and Swiercz a point behind Friedel along with 15 others at 6. One of those was GM Daniel Naroditsky, playing in his final classical tournament, who won this nice game over Kostolansky to put himself back into contention.

QUEEN'S PAWN GAME (A05)
GM Daniel Naroditsky (2703)
IM Sebastian Kostolansky (2513)
125th U.S. Open (7), Middleton, 08.01.2025

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 e6 4. b3 c5 5. Bb2 Nc6 6. Nbd2 cxd4 7. exd4 g6 8. Bb5 Bg7 9. Bxc6+ bxc6 10. Ne5 Qc7 11. Ba3 Nd7 12. Nxd7 Bxd7 13. Bc5 f6 14. 0-0 Kf7 15. c4 Rhe8 16. b4 a5 17. bxa5 Rxa5 18. a4 e5 19. Qb3 Rb8 20. Qa3 Rba8 21. Rfb1 Qc8 22. Qb3 Bh6



23. cxd5!?
Naroditsky was never one to shy from complexity!

23. … Bxd2 24. dxc6+ Be6 25. Qb7+ Kg8 26. Qe7
How should Black play in this complex position?

26. … Rxa4??
Grabbing material does not pay off. Now Danya takes advantage of Black's weak king and makes use of the monstrous c-pawn!

Correct was 26. … Qe8! 27. Qxf6 Qf7 28. Qh4 (not *28. Qxe5? Bf4 29. Qe1 Bd5* when the piece outweighs the pawns) 28. … g5 29. Qh6 exd4 30. Bxd4 Qg6 31. Qxg6+ hxg6 32. c7 Bf4 with an unclear and imbalanced position.

27. Rxa4! Rxa4 28. h4! Bd5 29. c7
Now it's just a matter of time.

29. … Ra8 30. dxe5 Bf4 31. Bd6 Qb7 32. Qd8+ Kf7 33. Qxf6+ Kg8 34. Qd8+ Kf7 35. e6+ Kg7 36. Bf8+, Black resigned.

One and Two

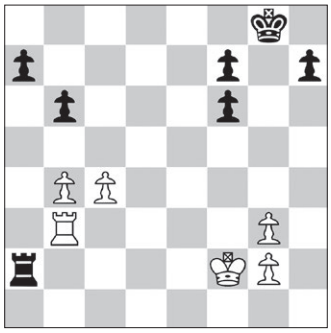
Friedel and Schmakel faced off in Round 8. With a chance to virtually wrap up the title, the GM wobbled. Still, Schmakel couldn't find the knockout.

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE, FISCHER VARIATION (E43)
GM Joshua Friedel (2638)
IM Sam Schmakel (2449)
125th U.S. Open (8), Middleton, 08.02.2025

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 b6 5. Bd3 Bb7 6. Nf3 0-0 7. 0-0 c5 8. Na4 cxd4 9. exd4 Re8 10. a3 Bf8 11. b4 d6 12. Re1 Nbd7 13. Bb2 e5 14. dxe5 dxe5 15. Nxe5 Qc7 16. Nxd7 Rxe1+ 17. Qxe1 Qxd7 18. Bc2 Qg4 19. f3 Bxf3 20. Qg3 Qxg3 21. hxg3 Bc6 22. Bxf6 gxf6 23. Rd1 Re8 24. Nc3 Re3 25. Rd3 Re1+ 26. Kf2 Ra1 27. Ba4


Kostolansky determines his move against Naroditsky

Bxa4 28. Nxa4 Bxb4 29. axb4 Rxa4 30. Rb3 Ra2+



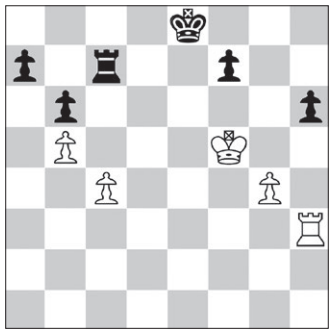
31. Ke3!
The active approach — bringing the king to support the eventual passed c-pawn — is the right one!

31. ... Rxg2 32. Ke4
This still holds, but I like the more forcing 32. Kd4!. After 32. ... Rd2+ 33. Kc3 Rf2 34. Kd4 Rd2+ 35. Kc3 Rd7 36. c5 bxc5 37. bxc5 Kf8 38. Kc4 White should have sufficient activity to hold the draw.

32. ... Rd2 33. Ra3 Rb2 34. b5 Re2+ 35. Kf5 Re7 36. Kxf6 Kf8 37. g4 h6 38. Rd3


GM Joshua Friedel

Re6+ 39. Kf5 Ke8 40. Ra3 Re7 41. Rh3 Rc7



In this position Friedel slips, but Schmakel fails to punish the error.

42. Re3+?
42. Rxh6 simplifies to a draw after 42. ... Rxc4 43. Rh8+ Ke7 44. Ra8 Rc5+ 45. Kf4 Rxb5 46. Rxa7+.

42. ... Kd7 43. Rd3+ Ke7 44. Rd4 Rc5+ 45. Kf4 Ke6?
One path to victory was 45. ... f6!, making it harder for White to activate his rook. Once Black creates the passed f-pawn, he can push White's king back and press for a win. It won't be easy after (for example) 46. Re4+ Kd6 47. Rd4+ Ke6 48. Re4+ Re5 49. Rd4 h5 50. gxh5 Rxh5, but Black will use the f-pawn as bait to infiltrate with the king and nab the c-pawn.

46. Re4+ Kf6 47. Rd4 Kg6 48. Rd6+!
Now that the rook is on the sixth rank, the draw should be in hand.

48. ... f6 49. Rc6 Kg7 50. Ke4 Re5+ 51. Kf4 Kg6 52. Rc7 Rc5 53. Rc6 Kg7 54. Ke4 Re5+ 55. Kf4 Kf7 56. Rc7+ Re7 57. Rc8 Kg6 58. Rg8+ Rg7 59. Rc8 Rd7 60. Rg8+ Kf7 61. Rc8 Ke6 62. Rc6+ Rd6
Black tries his luck in a pawn endgame, but the resulting queen and pawn endgame is no more promising.

63. Rxd6+ Kxd6 64. Kf5 Kc5 65. Kxf6 Kxc4 66. Kg6 Kxb5 67. Kxh6 a5 68. g5 a4 69. g6 a3 70. g7 a2 71. g8=Q a1=Q 72. Qd5+ Kb4 73. Qd6+ Kb5, draw.

Swiercz outplayed Nathaniel Moor (who upset Naroditsky in Round 3) to move to a half-point off the lead at 7, along with Schmakel, Ringoir (who defeated IM Ron Burnett), IM Oleksii Bilych (who beat Antipov), and Bharathakoti (who overcame Oscar Williams).

QUEEN'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E15)

Nathaniel Moor (2261)
GM Dariusz Swiercz (2640)
125th U.S. Open (8), Middleton, 08.02.2025

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 b6 4. g3 Bb4+ 5. Bd2 Be7 6. Bg2 c6 7. 0-0 0-0 8. b3 d5 9. Bc3 Ne4 10. Bb2 Nd7 11. Nfd2 f5 12. Nxe4 fxe4 13. Ba3 Nf6 14. Qc1 Bxa3 15. Nxa3 Qe7 16. cxd5 cxd5 17. Nc2 a5 18. Qd2 Ba6 19. Ne3 Rac8 20. Rac1 h5 21. Bh3 g5 22. Rfe1 Kf7 23. f3 Qb4 24. Qxb4 axb4

(see diagram top of next column)

25. Kf2?!
Now Swiercz takes advantage of his opponent's misplaced pieces and takes control of the game. 25. Nc2 would keep things complicated; after 25. ... g4 26. fxg4 Nxg4 27. Bxg4 hxg4 28. e3 things are pretty equal.

25. ... Ke7 26. Bg2?
White had to accept a slight disadvantage with 26. Rxc8 Rxc8 27. Rd1 Rc3 28. Rd2 Kd6.


Swiercz (L) and Moor (R) study the board



POSITION AFTER 24. ... axb4

26. ... exf3 27. exf3
Now Swiercz uses tactics to drop the knight on the c3-outpost.

27. ... Ne4+! 28. Kg1 Rxc1 29. Rxc1 Nc3! 30. Kf2
With the f-pawn weakened, Black regroups and wins it. The c3-knight prevents any counterplay for White, and the grandmaster squeezes out the full point.

30. ... Bd3 31. a4 Kd6 32. Bf1 Be4 33. Bg2 Bxf3 34. Bxf3 g4 35. Nc2 Ne4+ 36. Ke1 gxf3 37. Ne3 Ra8 38. Nd1 b5 39. Nb2 bxa4 40. Nxa4 h4 41. g4 h3 42. Kf1 Nd2+ 43. Kf2 Nxb3 44. Rb1 Nxd4 45. Rxb4 Nc6 46. Rf4 Ke5 47. Kg3 Nd4 48. Nb6 Ne2+ 49. Kf2 Kxf4 50. Nxa8 Nc3, White resigned.

Agony, Ecstasy

This set up a dramatic final-round pairing between Swiercz at 7 and Friedel at 7½. A Friedel win would give him clear first place, while a draw would give at least a share of first depending on tiebreaks and other results. Swiercz had to win and hope that the remaining 7-point pairings (Schmakel – Ringoir on Board 2 and Bilych – Bharathakoti on Board 3) would end drawn.

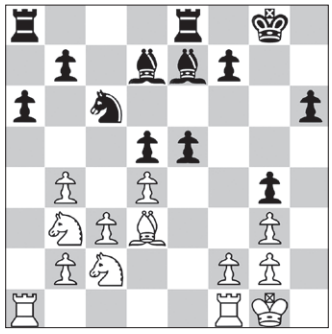
All it took was one false step for Friedel to land in a worse position; from there, Swiercz would not be denied. With draws on Boards 2 and 3, he won his first U.S. Open title and earned his fifth appearance in the U.S. Championship.

LONDON SYSTEM (D02)
GM Dariusz Swiercz (2640)
GM Joshua Friedel (2638)
125th U.S. Open (9), Middleton, 08.03.2025

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. Bf4
The London is an interesting opening choice in a must-win situation!

3. ... d5 4. e3 c5 5. Nbd2 Nc6 6. c3 Qb6 7. Qb3 Be7
Black has tried 7. ... c4 on a number of occasions with a relatively good score. One recent example, Eljanov – Sarana, *Chess.com* 2024, went 8. Qc2 Nh5 9. Bg5 h6 10. Bh4 g5 11. Bg3 g4 12. Ng1 Be7 13. Ne2 Nxg3 14. hxg3 Bg5 15. Nf4 Bd7 16. Be2 f5 17. b3 cxb3 18. axb3 a5 19. Qb2 Kf7 20. c4 Nb4 21. Nb1 Bxf4 22. gxf4 h5 23. g3 dxc4 24. 0-0 cxb3 25. Qxb3 h4 26. Nc3 hxg3 27. fxg3 Bc6 28. d5 Qxe3+ 29. Rf2 Nxd5, White resigned.

8. Be2 0-0 9. 0-0 Bd7 10. Bg5 cxd4 11. exd4 Rfe8 12. Bd3 h6 13. Bh4 Qxb3 14. axb3 g5 15. Bg3 Nh5 16. b4 g4 17. Ne1 a6 18. Nb3 Nxg3 19. hxg3 e5 20. Nc2



It's been smooth sailing for both players thus far, but now Friedel makes a significant strategic error.

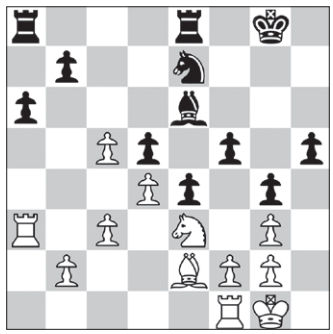
20. ... e4?
20. ... exd4 had to be played even if it entails the creation of a weak IQP. The bishop pair will help Black maintain equality: 21. Ncxd4 Nxd4 22. Nxd4 and now 22. ... Bf6! is important, keeping the option of trading off the dark-squared bishop for the knight. It is true that Black has a bad light-squared bishop, but without many pawn weaknesses and with potentially active rooks, Black shouldn't worry much after 23. Bf5 Rad8 24. Bxd7 Rxd7 25. Rfd1 Re4.

21. Be2 Be6 22. Nc5 Bxc5
White is way ahead after 22. ... Bc8? 23. Ne3.

23. bxc5 h5 24. Ne3
24. f3 is also possible, but keeping the center locked and focusing on the weak b-pawn allows a slow positional grind.

24. ... f5?
It might have been better to play 24. ... Ne7, but after 25. Ra3 Bd7 26. Rb3 Bc6 27. f3 exf3 28. gxf3 Nf5 29. Nxf5 Rxe2 30. fxg4 hxg4 31. Rf4 I still like White's chances.

25. Ra3 Ne7



26. Rfa1
More precise is 26. Rb3 Rab8 27. Rb6 Nc8 and now 28. Rxe6!? Rxe6 29. c4!.

26. ... Rf8?!
It's hard to pinpoint exactly where Black lost the game, but here, with White lining up an attack on the b7-pawn, it's time to



Swiercz versus Friedel, Round 9

start looking for a fortress. I'm not sure one can be found.

Another idea is 26. … Rad8 when White turns the screw with 27. Rb3 Rd7 28. Rb6 Kf7 (*28. … Nc8 29. Rxe6!? Rxe6 30. c4*) 29. Bd1. Black is passive — look at those rooks! — but White still has to win the game.

27. Rb3 Rab8 28. Rb6 Kf7 29. Ra3 Nc8 30. Rb4 Ne7 31. Rab3 b5 32. cxb6 *e.p.* Nc6 33. Ra4 a5 34. b7 Rfe8 35. Rb6 Nd8 36. Ba6 Re7 37. Rxa5 Rd7 38. Rc5, Black resigned.

Ten players finished in a tie for second place at 7½: Friedel, Schmakel, Bilych, Akobian, Naroditsky, Ringoir, Kostolansky, Zhou, Balakrishnan, and Bharathakoti.



GM Daniel Naroditsky

Out of Nowhere

It wouldn't be a U.S. Open without some upstarts, so mention should be made of Moor, who finished with 7, and 1968-rated Michael Moore, of Oregon, who flew under the radar for most of the tournament but entered the last round only a point off the lead thanks to this draw with GM Akobian:

DUTCH DEFENSE (A84)

Michael Moore (1968)
GM Varuzhan Akobian (2599)
125th U.S. Open (8), Middleton, 08.02.2025

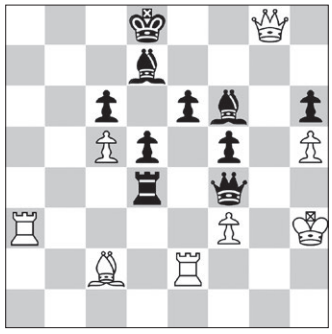
1. d4 e6 2. c4 f5 3. a3 Nf6 4. Nc3 d5 5. Bf4 c6 6. e3 Be7 7. Nf3 0-0 8. Rc1 Nh5 9. c5 Nd7 10. Bd3 Nxf4 11. exf4 Nf6 12. 0-0 Ne4 13. b4 Bd7 14. Ne5 Be8 15. f3 Nf6 16. Qe2 Kh8 17. Rce1 Nd7 18. Nxd7 Bxd7 19. Bc2 Bf6 20. Qd2 b6 21. Na4 h6 22. Qc3 Re8 23. Rf2 Qc7 24. g3 Rab8 25. Nb2 bxc5 26. bxc5 Rb5 27. Nd3 Qa5 28. Nb4 Reb8 29. Kg2 Kh7 30. Rd2 Kg8 31. Ree2 Kf7 32. Qe3





Michael Moore surveys the board against Akobian

32. … Rxb4!? 33. axb4 Rxb4 34. h4 g6 35. Rd1 Qb5 36. h5 gxh5 37. g4 Qb8 38. gxh5 a5 39. Kh3 a4 40. Rd3 a3 41. Qg1 Ke7 42. Qg6 Qxf4 43. Rxa3 Rxd4 44. Qh7+ Kd8 45. Qg8+



45. … Be8?

Var was in a must-win situation given the standings and sacrificed the Exchange to pressure his opponent. Objectively Black had to bail out and allow repetition with 45. … Ke7 46. Qh7+ Kd8 47. Qg8+, but instead he gambled and quite nearly paid the price.

46. Ra8+!

Winning a piece!

The cold-blooded 46. Qxe6!! leads to mate per the engine, but who would play this against a GM with the clock ticking? Still, the win is clear after 46. … Qh4+ 47. Kg2 Rg4+ 48. fxg4 Qxg4+ 49. Rg3 and Black can only postpone the inevitable.

46. … Kc7 47. Ra7+?

An error that Moore will likely rue forever — it's not often you get a chance to beat a grandmaster. But a draw is a nice consolation prize.

The way to go was 47. Rxe8! Qxf3+ (or *47. … Qh4+ 48. Kg2*) 48. Qg3+ Qxg3+ 49. Kxg3 and White wins.

47. … Kb8

White decides he's had enough and heads for the draw.

48. Qxe8+ Kxa7 49. Qd7+ Kb8 50. Qe8+ Kb7 51. Qf7+ Kb8 52. Qe8+ Kb7 53. Qf7+ Kb8 54. Qe8+ Kb7 55. Qf7+ Kb8 56. Qe8+ Kb7 57. Qf7+ Kb8 58. Qe8+, draw.

Danya

As FM Mike Klein reported in our December issue, Naroditsky played the U.S. Open in an effort to qualify for the U.S. Championship. He came very close — in fact, he appears to

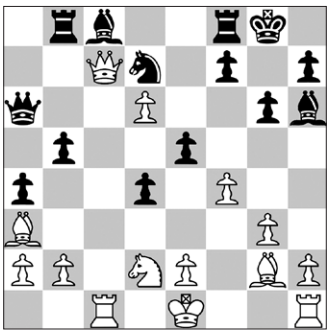
have had the best tiebreaks in the 7½ score group — but a Round 8 draw with IM Roman Pyrih scuttled his chances.

Naroditsky's Round 9 victory over GM Srivatshav Rahul Peddy was his final rated game at classical time controls.

QUEEN'S PAWN GAME (A40)

GM Srivatshav Rahul Peddy (2545)
GM Daniel Naroditsky (2703)
125th U.S. Open (9), Middleton, 08.03.2025

1. d4 g6 2. c4 Bg7 3. Nf3 c5 4. g3 cxd4 5. Nxd4 d5 6. Bg2 Qb6 7. Nb5 a6 8. N5c3 d4 9. Nd5 Qd8 10. Qb3 Nd7 11. Bf4 e5 12. Bd2 Ngf6 13. Bb4 Nxd5 14. cxd5 a5 15. Ba3 a4 16. Qc4 Qa5+ 17. Nd2 Bf8 18. d6 b5 19. Qc6 Bh6 20. f4 Rb8 21. Qc7 Qa6 22. Rc1 0-0



23. Rc6? Qa8 24. 0-0 b4 25. Bxb4 Rxb4 26. Rb6 Qa5 27. Rb7 Qxc7 28. Rxc7 exf4 29. Nc4 Ba6 30. Na5 Nf6 31. Bf3 Rxb2 32. d7 d3 33. exd3 fxg3 34. hxg3 Be3+ 35. Kh1 Bb6 36. Rc6 Nxd7 37. Nc4 Bxc4, White resigned.

The U.S. Open returns to Grand Rapids, Mich., for its 126th edition. Play begins Aug. 3 and runs through Aug. 9. Visit *uschess.org* for more details in the coming months.

2025 U.S. OPEN AT A GLANCE

JULY 28-AUG. 3, 2025 | MIDDLETON, WISCONSIN

1st: GM Dariusz Swiercz (also qualifies for U.S. Championship), 8/9. **2nd-11th:** GMs Daniel Naroditsky, Jianchao Zhou, Joshua Friedel, Tanguy Ringoir, Harsha Bharathakoti, Varuzhan Akobian, Praveen Balakrishan, IMs Sam Schmakel, Oleksii Bolych, Sebastian Kostlansky, 7½. 513 players.

CLASS PRIZES

Master: Nathaniel Philip Moor, FM Avi Kaplan, Julian Proleiko, IM Ronald Burnett, 7/9. **Expert:** Aidan Baker, Ethan Kozower, 7. **Class A:** Michael Moore, Hayul Lim, Kai Lan, Ashvath Krishnan, 6½. **Class B:** Adam Johnson, Andrew Zhen, 6. **Class C:** David Mertz, Abhi Majumdar, Bennett McCullough, Ravi Shrivastava, 5. **Class D:** An Boettcher, 5. **Class E:** Tanush Varshney, Kaiheng Yang, 5. **Unrated:** Bradley Toft, 3½.

MIXED DOUBLES

1st-2nd: Santhosh Ayyappan + Anushka Ayyappan (also 1st Brother & Sister); WIM Alexey Root + Andrew Schley, 11½. **1st U1800:** Megan Chen + Ryan Miller, 10½. **Father & Daughter:** Kiana Hajiarbabi + Mohammadreza Hajiarbabi, 9. **Mother & Son:** Carla Naylor + Jonathan Naylor, 8½. **Husband & Wife:** Adam Johnson + Lauren Johnson, 8.

For more information and results, visit *new.uschess.org/us-open-2025*

Class Acts

Some of the class-prize winners at the U.S. Open show off — and annotate — their best games.

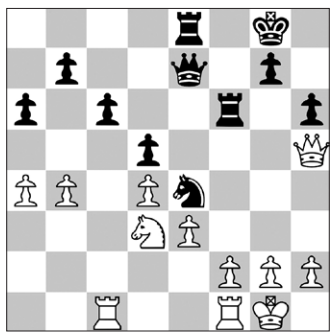
THE U.S. OPEN IS A ONE-section tournament, but class prizes are still offered, giving class players a chance to compete against the best and still come home a winner. And as we'll see, tremendous upsets are always possible.

Ethan Kozower tied for the Under 2200 prize, thanks in large part to this slow, steady, positional win over a master in the last round:

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED, EXCHANGE VARIATION (D35)

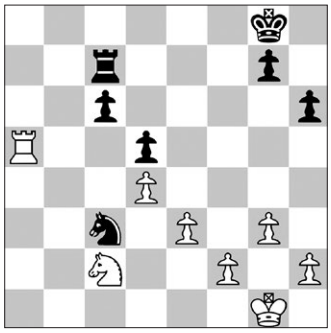
Ethan Kozower (2178)
Deepak Aaron (2382)
125th U.S. Open (9), Middleton, 08.03.2025

1. c4 e6 2. Nc3 d5 3. d4 Nf6 4. cxd5 exd5 5. Bg5 Bb4 6. e3 h6 7. Bxf6 Qxf6 8. Qb3 Qd6 9. a3 Bxc3+ 10. Qxc3 Bf5 11. Rc1 c6 12. Ne2 0-0 13. Ng3 Bh7 14. Bd3 f5 15. Qc2 Qe6 16. Ne2 Nd7 17. Nf4 Qd6 18. 0-0 Rae8 19. b4 a6 20. a4 Nf6 21. Bxf5 Bxf5 22. Qxf5 Ne4 23. Qg6 Qd7 24. Nd3 Rf6 25. Qh5 Qe7



26. b5 Ref8 27. bxc6 bxc6 28. Qe2 Qa3 29. Ra1 Qc3 30. Rac1 Qa5 31. Qc2 Nd2 32. Rfd1 Nc4 33. Rf1 Qc7 34. Nb2 Nb6 35. Qc5 Qb7 36. Rb1 Nd7 37. Qc2 Qc8 38. Nd3 Qe8 39. Rb7 R8f7 40. Rc7 Qe4 41. Nb4 Qxc2 42. Nxc2 Nb6 43. Rxf7 Rxf7 44. g3 a5 45. Ra1 Rc7 46. Rb1 Nxa4 47. Ra1 Nc3 48. Rxa5

(see diagram next page)



POSITION AFTER 48. Rxa5

48. ... Ne4 49. Nb4 Kh7 50. Ra2 g5 51. f3 Nd6 52. Ra6 Nc4 53. Rxc6 Rxc6 54. Nxc6 Nxe3 55. g4 Kg7 56. Nb4 Kf7 57. Kf2 Nd1+ 58. Ke2 Nc3+ 59. Kd3 Nb5 60. Nxd5 Nd6 61. Ne3 Kf6 62. Nf5 Nxf5 63. gxf5 Kxf5 64. d5 Ke5 65. Kc4 Kd6 66. Kd4 h5 67. h3, Black resigned.

Ashvath Krishnan came into the event rated 1902, but his 6½/9 gave him a share of the Under 2000 prize, with an upset of Kozower as his highlight:

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B20)

Ashvath Krishnan (1902)
Ethan Kozower (2178)
125th U.S. Open (6), Middleton, 07.31.2025
Annotations by Ashvath Krishnan

1. e4 c5 2. b3 d6 3. Bb2 Nc6 4. Bb5 Bd7 5. f4 Nf6 6. d3 e6 7. Nf3 a6 8. Bxc6 Bxc6 9. 0-0 Be7 10. Nbd2 b5 11. Qe1
With the idea of going to g3 or h4.

11. ... 0-0 12. e5 dxe5 13. Nxe5
Gaining a tempo by attacking the c6-bishop.

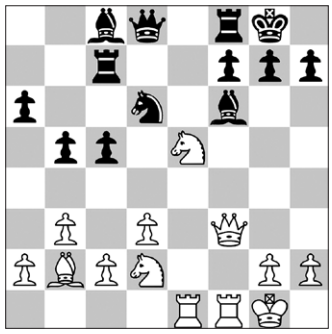
13. ... Bb7 14. Qg3 Rc8 15. Rae1 Ne8 16. Qg4?!
An inaccuracy. It's probably best to build up with 16. Re2.

16. ... Nf6
Black missed the opportunity to gain a slight advantage with 16. ... Qa5, creating a double attack on the knight on d2 and the pawn on a2.

17. Qg3 Ne8 18. Qg4
Checking to see whether Black will repeat.

18. ... Bf6
Black again missed 18. ... . Qa5.

19. f5 exf5 20. Rxf5 Rc7 21. Rff1 Bc8 22. Qf3 Nd6??
A blunder.



23. Nc6
Attacking the queen and the f6-bishop at the same time.

23. ... Qd7
Black has to save the queen.

24. Bxf6
If Black takes on f6, the kingside would open up.

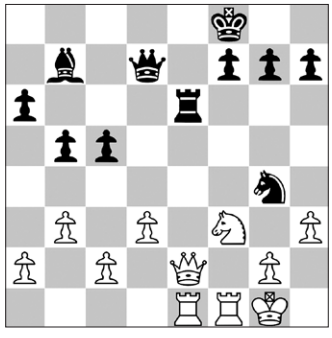
24. ... Rxc6
24. ... gxf6 loses immediately to 25. Ne7+.

25. Qg3?
White missed the immediate win with 25. Re7! Qd8 26. Qxc6 gxf6 27. Re3.

25. ... Ne8?
A mistake that allows White to win the Exchange, but it's still bad for Black after 25. ... g6 26. Qf4 (though not *26. Qh4? Nf5*).

26. Be7 Rg6 27. Qf2 Bb7 28. Nf3
Shielding g2.

28. ... Nf6 29. Bxf8 Ng4 30. Qe2 Kxf8 31. h3 Re6?



A mistake which leads to a very nice tactic for White.

32. Qxe6!! fxe6
White is also winning after 32. ... Qxe6 33. Rxe6 fxe6 34. hxg4.

33. Ne5+
Double check, and Black loses the queen.

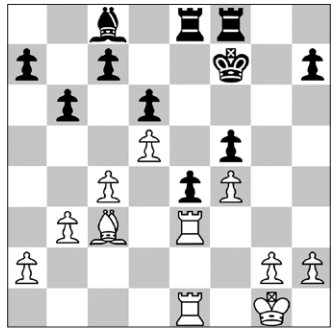
33. ... Ke8 34. Nxd7 Nh6 35. Nxc5, Black resigned.

Adam Johnson shared the Under 1800 prize with 6/9 and won a mixed doubles prize with his wife, Lauren. Here he takes out an expert with a combination of an alert tactic and patient technique:

THREE KNIGHTS' GAME (C42)

Adam Johnson (1759)
Sivavishnu Srinivasan (2026)
125th U.S. Open (6), Middleton, 07.31.2025

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. Nxe5 0-0 5. Nd3 Bxc3 6. dxc3 Nxe4 7. Nf4 d6 8. Be2 Nf6 9. c4 Nbd7 10. 0-0 Ne5 11. b3 b6 12. Bb2 Bb7 13. Nd5 Nxd5 14. cxd5 f5 15. f4 Nd7 16. Bf3 Nf6 17. Qd4 Qd7 18. Rfe1 Rae8 19. Qd3 Qf7 20. c4 Bc8 21. Bc3 Ne4 22. Bxe4 fxe4 23. Qd4 Qf6 24. Qxf6 gxf6 25. Re3 Kf7 26. Rae1 f5



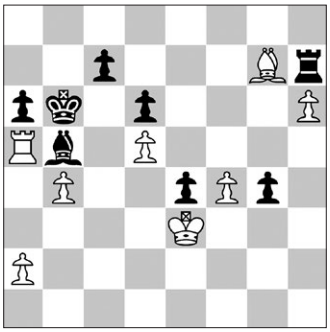
27. Rh3 Re7
27. ... Kg6 or 27. ... Kg8 each run into mate after 28. Rg3+.

28. Rxh7+ Ke8 29. Rxe7+ Kxe7 30. Re3 Ba6 31. h4 Rf7 32. h5 Rh7 33. Rh3 b5 34. cxb5 Bxb5 35. h6 Be8 36. Bg7 Bf7 37. Rc3 Kd7 38. Rc6 Kc8 39. Ra6 Kb7 40. Ra5 Be8 41. Kf2 Kb6 42. b4 a6 43. Ke3 Bb5 44. g4 fxg4

(see diagram top of next column)

45. Rxb5+ Kxb5 46. f5 Kc4 47. f6 g3 48. f7 g2 49. Kf2 e3+ 50. Kxg2 e2 51. Kf2, Black resigned.

David Mertz scored 5/9 to share the Under 1600 prize, and says, "I swindled a win in a lost position against a significantly higher-rated opponent. I offered a queen trade



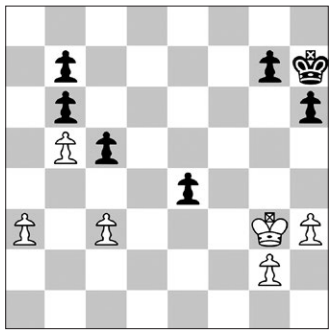
POSITION AFTER 44. ... fxg4

on Move 45 to go into a pawn endgame down a pawn, and he took the bait. I then used *zugzwang* multiple times to force his king back so I could infiltrate with my own king."

GIUOCO PIANO (C50)

David Mertz (1538)
Inbhavenkat Rajan (1973)
125th U.S. Open (3), Middleton, 07.31.2025

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. d3 Nf6 5. Bg5 h6 6. Bh4 d6 7. h3 Be6 8. Bxe6 fxe6 9. Nc3 0-0 10. Na4 Bb6 11. Nxb6 axb6 12. 0-0 Qe8 13. a3 Qg6 14. Qd2 Nxe4 15. dxe4 Rxf3 16. Bg3 Rf7 17. Rae1 Raf8 18. Re3 Nb8 19. Qc3 Qg5 20. Qc4 Qe7 21. b4 Rc8 22. Rd1 Nd7 23. Red3 Rff8 24. Kh2 Nf6 25. Bh4 Qf7 26. Bxf6 Qxf6 27. Rf3 Qe7 28. Rxf8+ Rxf8 29. f3 c6 30. Qc3 Qc7 31. Kh1 d5 32. exd5 Rd8 33. d6 Rxd6 34. Rxd6 Qxd6 35. Qc4 Qd5 36. Qc3 e4 37. fxe4 Qxe4 38. Qb3 Qd5 39. Qe3 c5 40. b5 e5 41. c3 Kh7 42. Kh2 e4 43. Qf4 Qe6 44. Qe3 Qe5+ 45. Qg3 Qxg3+ 46. Kxg3



46. ... g5 47. Kf2 Kg6??
Black is a pawn up, but 47. ... g4 is actually the only move that draws. One line could go 48. hxg4 Kg6 49. Ke3 Kg5.

48. g4 Kf6 49. Ke3 Ke5 50. c4 Kd6 51. Kxe4 Ke6 52. a4 Kd7 53. Kf5 Kd6 54. Kf6 Kd7 55. Kg6 Kd6 56. Kxh6 Ke5 57. Kxg5 Kd4 58. Kf5 Kxc4 59. g5 Kb4 60. g6 Kxa4 61. g7 Kxb5 62. g8=Q c4 63. Ke4 Kb4 64. Kd4 b5 65. Qc8 b6 66. h4 Ka3 67. Kc3 b4+ 68. Kxc4 b5+ 69. Kxb5 b3 70. Qa6+ Kb2 71. Kb4 Kc2 72. Qc4+ Kb2 73. Qxb3+ Ka1 74. Qe3 Ka2 75. Qd2+ Kb1 76. Kb3 Ka1 77. Qb2 mate.

Bennett McCullough also tied for the Under 1600 prize, and he sends in a sharp attack:

BENONI DEFENSE, SCHMID VARIATION (A43)

SW Chang (1747)
Bennett McCullough (1482)
125th U.S. Open (7), Middleton, 08.01.2025
Annotations by Bennett McCullough

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nc3 c5 3. d5 e6 4. e4 d6 5. Bf4 Be7
The engine doesn't really like this move, but I felt the pawn sac on d6 would give Black decent compensation. I thought I could quickly castle with pressure down the f-file, and he must defend the e4-pawn if he wants to remain a pawn up.

6. Bb5+ Bd7 7. dxe6 fxe6 8. Bxd6 Bxb5 9. Bxe7 Qxe7 10. Nxb5 0-0 11. Nc3?
Holding onto e4 this way is a mistake, as I can quickly develop with tempo. The engine suggests letting go of the pawn with 11. Qd6 Qf7 12. Nh3.

11. ... Nc6 12. Nf3 Rad8 13. Qc1 Nd4 14. 0-0
14. Nxd4 cxd4 drops e4.

14. ... Nxf3+ 15. gxf3 Nh5 16. Qe3 Rf6 17. e5 Rf5 18. Ne2 Rdf8 19. Ng3 Rxf3 20. Qe2 Qh4 21. Nxh5 Qxh5 22. Rae1 R8f4 23. Qd2 Qg5+
An inaccuracy. Black should keep the f-pawn blocked with 23. ... Rg4+! followed by ... Rg4-h4.


Ashvath Krishnan

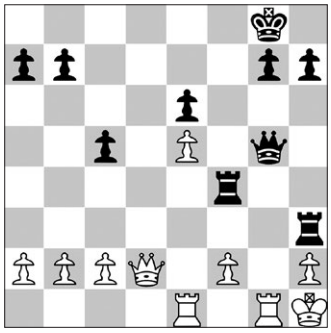


Adam and Lauren Johnson


David Mertz

PHOTOS: COURTESY SUBJECTS

24. Kh1 Rh3 25. Rg1



25. f3 is best, defending h2; White's still in the game after 25. … Rxh2+ 26. Qxh2 Rh4 27. Rf2.

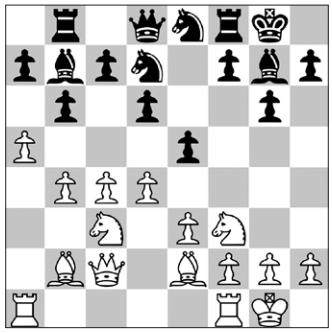
25. … Rxh2+ 26. Kxh2 Rh4 mate.

It seems remarkable that 5/9 was only good for a share of the Under 1200 prize, but Tanush Varshney handled a material imbalance like a much higher-rated player:

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E61)

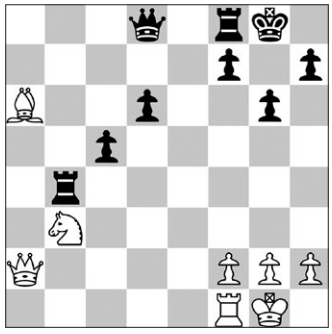
Sabrina Hoja (1829)
Tanush Varshney (1152)
125th U.S. Open (8), Middleton, 08.02.2025

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nf3 Bg7 4. e3 0-0 5. Be2 d6 6. Nc3 Nbd7 7. 0-0 e5 8. Qc2 Ne8 9. b4 b6 10. Bb2 Bb7 11. a4 Rb8 12. a5



POSITION AFTER 12. a5

12. … Bxf3 13. Bxf3 exd4 14. exd4 Bxd4 15. Nb5 Bxb2 16. Qxb2 a6 17. Nd4 Ne5 18. Bd5 bxa5 19. Rxa5 c5 20. Nb3 Rxb4 21. Rxa6 Nxc4 22. Qa2 Nc7 23. Bxc4 Nxa6 24. Bxa6



24. … Qb6 25. Nxc5 dxc5 26. Bc4 Qb7 27. h3 Rb8 28. Kh2 Qc7+ 29. g3 Qb7 30. Bd5 Rb2 31. Qc4 Qd7 32. Qe4 Re8 33. Qg2 Ree2 34. Kg1 Red2 35. Bf3 c4 36. Bg4 Qd5 37. Bf3 Qd4 38. Bg4 c3 39. Be6 fxe6 40. Qc6 Rxf2 41. Qxe6+ Rf7+ 42. Kh1 Qd7 43. Rxf7 Qxe6, White resigned.

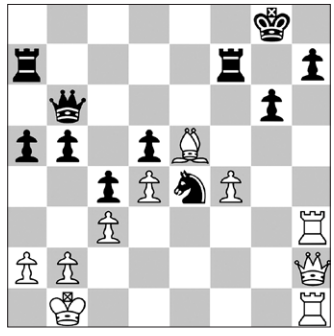
The U.S. Open is famous for upsets, and the title of Upset King appears to fall to Mateo Fischer (858) for his victory over 1902-rated James Brunkard.

Fischer says he played on his middle school team but didn't play at all in high school or college. Instead, one of his activities was "snagging baseballs (mostly in batting practice) at baseball games," he says — more than 950 baseballs between 2010 and 2018. He picked up the game again in 2021, playing online during *The Queen's Gambit* craze, but dropped it again until joining a chess team based in his running club. When one of the members suggested they all go to the U.S. Open, Fischer "succumbed to peer pressure" and played in what he believes was his first tournament with a time control slower than G/60. "I found out I could actually hold my own in this time format," he says.

TORRE ATTACK (A48)

Mateo Fischer (858)
James Brunkard (1902)
125th U.S. Open (6), Middleton, 07.31.2025

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 g6 3. Bg5 Ne4 4. Bf4 d6 5. Nbd2 Bf5 6. Nxe4 Bxe4 7. e3 Bg7 8. Bd3 Bxd3 9. Qxd3 0-0 10. 0-0-0 Nd7 11. h4 c5 12. c3 Qa5 13. Kb1 b5 14. Rc1 c4 15. Qc2 Nf6 16. g4 Nxg4 17. h5 e5 18. Bg3 exd4 19. exd4 d5 20. hxg6 fxg6 21. Ng5 Nf6 22. Ne6 Rf7 23. Rh3 Qb6 24. Nxg7 Rxg7 25. Be5 Rf7 26. f4 Ne4 27. Qh2 a5 28. Rh1 Raa7



29. f5 g5 30. Rh6 Qb7 31. Rg6+ Kf8 32. Qh6+ Ke8 33. Rg8+ Kd7 34. Qe6 mate.

Want to relive the 2025 U.S. Open with blow-by-blow analysis from WGM Sabina Foisor? Visit the US Chess YouTube channel!





PHOTO: COURTESY SUBJECTS

MAKE YOUR MOVE

BY **FM CARSTEN HANSEN**

THIS MONTH'S PUZZLES ARE TAKEN FROM GAMES PLAYED at the World Cup in Goa, India, last November. Some of the puzzles may seem difficult, but that's the intention. Take your time, and don't get discouraged if you fail to find the right moves right away.

The puzzles start off easy and gradually become more difficult. It is worth noting that "easy" is a relative term. If you are new to the game, the easy ones can also represent a challenge.

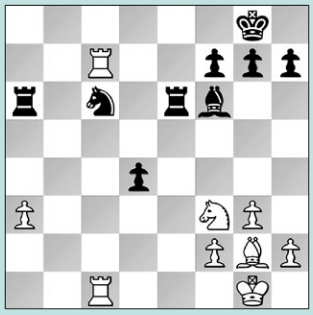
Try first to solve the puzzle before reading the text at the bottom of the page. If you're unsuccessful, play through the solution, but return to the puzzle in one or two weeks to see whether you can now solve it. That way, you gradually expand your tactical vision and you'll be more likely to spot tactics in your own games. Whatever you do, do not use an engine to solve the puzzles; you will only cheat yourself out of improving your game. Solutions are on page 63.

TACTIC 1.



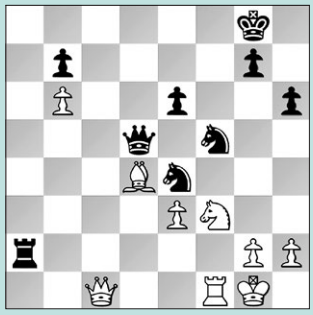
WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 2.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 3.



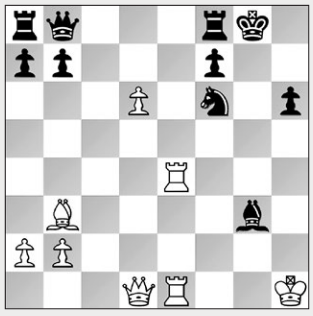
BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 4.



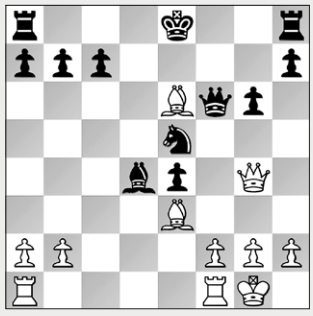
WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 5.



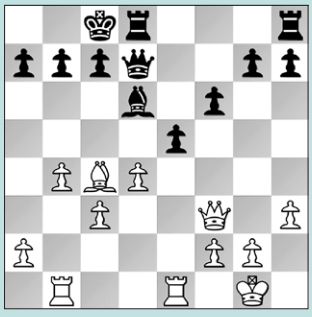
WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 6.



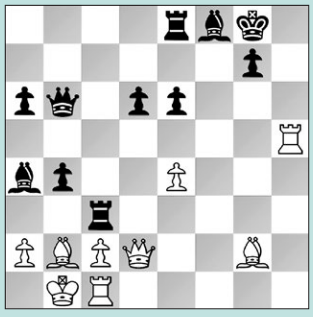
WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 7.



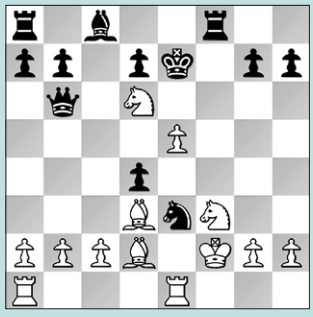
WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 8.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 9.



WHITE TO MOVE

Position 1: OVERBURDENED PROTECTOR
Position 2: BACK-RANK CASHING
Position 3: KINGSIDE ISSUES
Position 4: DEFENSIVE DISORGANIZATION
Position 5: DRAFTY SITUATION
Position 6: BRILLIANT COORDINATION
Position 7: FRONTAL ATTACK
Position 8: SMALL STEP, GREAT EFFECT
Position 9: MORE FIRE!

Emperor of the Endgame

An interview with Vardan Poghosyan

BY **JOHN HARTMANN**

Ask a chessplayer to pick today's important endgame theorist, and chances are they'll say Mark Dvoretsky, whose eponymous *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual* has become one of the most recommended (if less often fully read) books among today's elite.

Some will prefer Karsten Müller, with *Fundamental Chess Endings* (co-written with Frank Lamprecht) and *How to Play Chess Endgames* (with Wolfgang Pajeken) often recommended to serious students. Müller is also one of the current team behind the latest *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual*, now in a heavily updated sixth edition.

Old heads will argue that Averbakh's five-volume *Comprehensive Chess Endings* is still the best teaching series. Rook ending aficionados might reach for Smyslov and Levenfish's *Rook Endings*, but only the descriptive version — the algebraic one is full of typos. And you'll still find those who recall Reuben Fine's *Basic Chess Endings* with more than a bit of nostalgia.

But endgame theory does not stop moving, and with today's technology corrections are made and discoveries found all the time. The most interesting work in endgame theory today might be coming from an untitled Armenian who spends his free time posting to message boards and whom both Dvoretsky and Müller have regularly cited.

I first encountered Vardan Poghosyan in the *Chesspub.com* endgame forums almost 15 years ago, where he, along with a handful of others, has been publishing scrupulously detailed analyses. His discoveries in a number of key positions have rewritten chunks of rook endgame theory, and in recent months he has turned his attention to correcting analyses by Gelfand and Shereshevsky.

I asked Poghosyan to tell us a little about himself and his chess origin story. He also takes us inside his chess laboratory to look at two of his key discoveries as well as a recent endgame composition based on his studies.

JH: Could you tell *Chess Life* readers a bit about yourself?

VP: I was born in 1965 in the village of Verin Artashat, about 40 kilometers (about 25 miles) from Yerevan. I learned chess at age 9 from my father, who at 94 still enjoys the game. Chess literature was hard to obtain in Soviet Armenia, so my first real source of instruction was *Chess Armenia* magazine. In 1976 I earned the fourth category norm through its solving competition, and a year later the third category norm through a correspondence school run by Viktor Henkin in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. After joining the Yerevan Chess School, I achieved the first category norm in 1980.

Chess fascinated me, but I was equally drawn to history and international politics. In the ninth grade I decided to focus on preparing for the elite Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). After considerable effort I was admitted and graduated with distinction in 1991, though I chose not to become a diplomat.

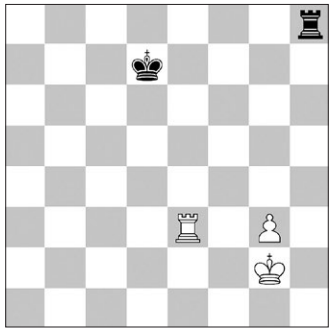
Following the Soviet Union's collapse, I pursued a second degree at the University of Bonn, studying political science and public law. I returned to Armenia in 1999 and worked for 20 years as team leader of the GIZ Legal Program, contributing to numerous legislative projects. I was also one of the principal authors of Armenia's fully revised 2015 Constitution.

How did you become interested in endgame theory?

My renewed interest began when my three sons started playing chess and attending the Yerevan Chess School. Unlike in my childhood, chess literature had become widely available, and I gradually built a large library. It was *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual*, however, that truly reignited my fascination with rook endings. Later, watching the 2010 Sasikiran – Aronian game online had a profound impact: A theoretically simple draw turned into a painful loss for my friend Levon. This encounter pushed me to examine rook endings much more deeply.

ORIGIN STORY

GM Krishnan Sasikiran (2653)
GM Levon Aronian (2781)
World Team Ch, Bursa, 2010
Annotations by John Hartmann



WHITE TO MOVE

51. Kf3 Rf8+ 52. Kg4 Kd6! 53. Kg5 Rg8+?

53. … Kd5! prevents White from making any progress. Instead White's king becomes active while the black king is cut off until it's too late.

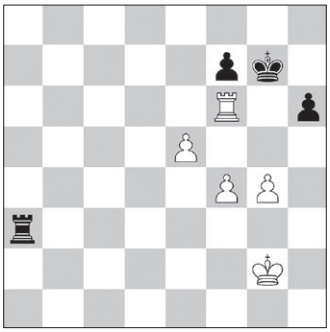
54. Kf6 Kd5 55. Re5+! Kd6 56. Re3 Kd5 57. Re5+ Kd6 58. Rg5! Rf8+ 59. Kg7 Rf3 60. g4 Rf4 61. Kh6 Ke7 62. Rg7+ Kf8 63. g5 Rf1 64. Ra7 Rg1 65. Kg6 Rg2 66. Ra8+ Ke7 67. Ra5 Kf8 68. Ra8+ Ke7 69. Rg8, Black resigned.

How do you do your analysis?

While working through Dvoretsky's manual, I analyzed the Capablanca – Yates ending over the board and found the move 6. e6, which engines confirmed was winning. This contradicted decades of accepted theory and encouraged me to re-examine much of the literature with a critical eye.

THE CLASSIC

Jose Raul Capablanca
F.D. Yates
Hastings (analysis), 12.30.1930
Annotations by John Hartmann



WHITE TO MOVE

1. Rb6?!

Today 1. Rd6! is seen to be more accurate, as the white rook can defend its king from lateral checks, but the game continuation should still win for White with best play.

1. ... Ra4!

This was for many years believed to save Black.

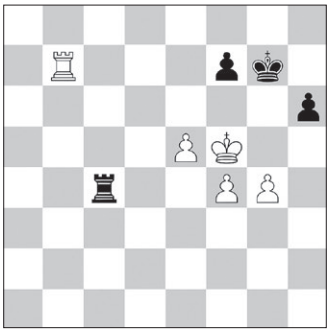
Yates played 1. ... Re3, and the game continued 2. Rb4 Rc3 3. Kf2 Ra3 4. Rb7 Kg8 5. Rb8+ Kg7 6. f5 Ra2+ 7. Ke3 Ra3+ 8. Ke4 Ra4+ 9. Kd5 Ra5+ 10. Kd6 Ra6+ 11. Kc7 Kh7 12. Kd7 Ra7+ 13. Kd6 Kg7 14. Rd8 Ra5 15. f6+ Kh7 16. Rf8 Ra7 17. Kc6 Kg6 18. Rg8+ Kh7 19. Rg7+ Kh8 20. Kb6 Rd7 21. Kc5 Rc7+ 22. Kd6 Ra7 23. e6 Ra6+ 24. Ke7 Rxe6+ 25. Kxf7 Re4 26. g5 hxg5 27. Kg6, Black resigned.

2. Kf3 Ra3+ 3. Ke4 Ra4+ 4. Kf5 Rc4

Kopaev summarized the winning plan (translated by Poghosyan on *Chesspub.com*) in *Shakhmaty Bulletin* (08.1956): "In order to achieve victory White should a) displace the black rook from the fourth rank, b) return the king to the center, and c) prepare the advance of the f-pawn."

5. Rb7

Now Black has to move the king to avoid problems after e5-e6. Which way to go?



5. ... Kf8?

Dvoretsky analyzed this in the first edition of *DEM*, saying that "White missed the correct way: he has brought his king, not his pawn, to f5, so he cannot win anymore." But in 2012 Poghosyan made a discovery:

6. e6!

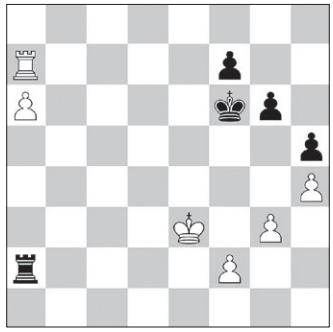
After 6. ... fxe6+ 7. Ke5 "Black loses because of his pawn on e6 which gets in the way and turns a drawn position into a loss. It proves a handicap by blocking vital sideways checks."

Would 5. ... Kg8 (a suggestion of GM Jon Speelman) have held? Now 6. e6? does not work: 6. ... fxe6+ 7. Ke5 Rc5+ draws after 8. Kf6 (or *8. Kxe6 Rc6+ 9. Kf5 Kf8!*) 8. ... Rc4. Instead the pawn push needs to be prepared with 6. Rb3! Kg7 7. Re3, and while White is theoretically winning after 7. ... Rd4 or 7. ... Rc6, the conversion is very difficult in practical terms.

VP: One of my most important findings was in the Kantorovich position.

THE KANTOROVICH POSITION

Annotations by Hartmann based on Poghosyan



WHITE TO MOVE



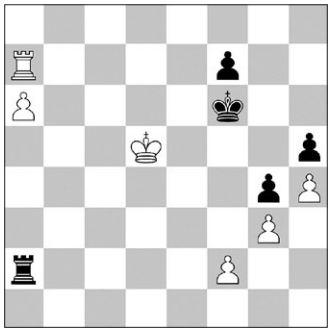
Vardan Poghosyan

PHOTO: COURTESY SUBJECT

1. Kd4 g5
Vadim Kantorovich believed that 1. … Rxf2? led to a draw in 1989, but Johannes Steckner discovered a win for White in 2003 after 2. Rc7 Ra2 3. a7 Kf5 4. Kc4! (Kantorovich only analysed *4. Rxf7+ Kg4 5. Kc5 Kxg3* with sufficient counterplay for the draw) 4. … Kg4 5. Kb3 Ra6 6. Rc4+ Kxg3 7. Ra4 when White wins by a single tempo.

2. Kd5 g4!
Poghosyan's 2011 find. The analysis here is immensely deep, so I will only provide the latest fruit from this tree: a Vancura-like save located by Erwin l'Ami in 2019 and refined by Poghosyan in 2025.

2. … Kg6 was later discovered by Jacob Aagaard to also draw, although perhaps not without some difficulty.



3. Kd6
Or 3. Kc6 Kg7 4. Ra8 (*4. Kb5 Rb2+! 5. Kc4 Rb6* returns to the Vancura setup) 4. … f5! (*4. … Rxf2?* loses to *5. Rb8 Ra2 6. Kb7 Rb2+ 7. Ka8 Rg2 8. a7 Rxg3 9. Kb7*) 5. Kb7 Rb2+! (again avoiding *5. … Rxf2? 6. Rb8 Rb2+ 7. Ka7 Rg2 8. Rb3*) 6. Ka7 Rxf2 7. Rb8 f4! 8. gxf4 Rxf4 9. Rb5 g3 10. Rg5+ Kh6 11. Rxg3 Rxh4, with equality.

3. … Re2!
A refinement over 3. … Rd2+ 4. Kc6 Rc2+ 5. Kb5 Rb2+ 6. Kc4, which also draws.

4. Ra8 Kg7 5. Kc6
5. a7 Ra2 is equal.

5. … Re6+ 6. Kd7 Kh7! 7. Kc7 Re7+ 8. Kc6 Re6+ 9. Kb5 Re5+ 10. Kc4 Re6
The draw is fairly clear here.

VP: From the start I doubted the traditional capture on f2 and believed Black should seek immediate counterplay. Modern engines and 7-piece tablebases now make it possible to analyze theoretical endings with remarkable precision. This accuracy finally allows us to establish reliable principles and generalizations that can be taught systematically — something I see as central to my work.

I am also interested in the historical development of rook endgame theory. The American mathematician Orrin Frink, for example, made contributions that deserve far wider recognition, and I am preparing an article on his work.

Why should practical players study endgame theory?
For anyone who plays competitively, endgame knowledge is essential. Even elite players commit serious mistakes under time pressure in positions they could handle with better theoretical grounding.

The Sasikiran – Aronian game is a perfect example: Levon lost because he was unfamiliar with a principle known since Chéron — that in certain rook and pawn versus rook endings, the defending king must advance toward the fifth or sixth rank, not retreat.

I believe that adjournments slowed theoretical progress in years gone by; players assumed they could analyze endings at home. With today's rapid and accelerated time controls, such luxury no longer exists. Deep endgame knowledge wins games.

What are your favorite chess books? Do you plan to publish your own?
It's difficult to single out one favorite. Among theoretical works on rook endings, I especially value the first edition of Averbakh's volume, written by the superb analyst Nikolay Kopaev. Although never translated into English, a German edition exists. I also appreciate Averbakh's two-volume German-language endgame textbook, which presents 263 rook endings in a very clear and methodical way.

At a more introductory level, I recommend de la Villa, Silman, and Averbakh's *Essential Knowledge*. And of course, the work closest to my heart is Dvoretsky's manual, continually refined by Karsten Müller and GM Alex Fishbein.

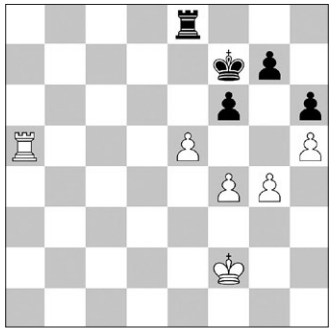
Between 2011 and 2012 I exchanged extensive correspondence with Mark Dvoretsky. I sent him analyses; he sent revised drafts of his manual, and I commented on them. After our work on specific positions, I submitted methodological observations on his rook endgame chapter. I also shared a long study on cutting off the king along files, proposing revised formulations of rules introduced by Chéron and later modified by Kopaev. Dvoretsky wrote that the study was "too large for a journal or website" and suggested preparing a full book that integrated my findings. He believed such a book "would certainly be noticed and influence future publications."

At the time my professional workload made this impossible, especially once I joined the Constitutional Commission in 2013. Today, however, the idea feels more realistic. My analyses continue to grow rapidly — though I am still deciding whether to publish a single comprehensive volume or release material in stages.

By way of conclusion, and as an example of how practical play can influence art and theory, I can offer a study I composed after analyzing Potapov – Shubin (Russian Rapid Ch, 2019). In the game, Black chose the natural-looking 44. … Rb8? and lost, whereas the precise 44. … Rd8! would have saved the day in true study-like fashion.

INSPIRATION

Pavel Potapov (2489)
Kirill Shubin (2416)
Russian Rapid Ch (11), Sochi, 10.16.2019
Analysis by Vardan Poghosyan



WHITE TO MOVE

43. Kf3 fxe5! 44. fxe5 Rb8?
Correct was 44. … Rd8! and now White has three tries, none of which suffice for victory:

(a) 45. Kf4 Rd1 46. Ra7+ Ke6! 47. Rxg7 Rd4+! 48. Kg3 Kxe5! 49. Re7+ Kf6! 50. Rh7 Rd6! 51. Rxh6+ Kg5! 52. Rxd6;

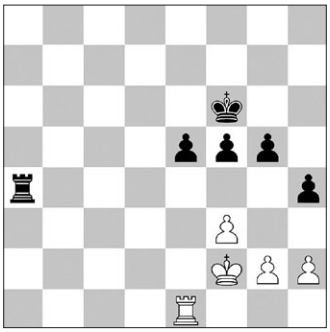
(b) 45. Ra7+ Ke6 46. Ke4 Rd1 47. Rxg7 Rd4+ 48. Ke3 Ra4 49. g5 hxg5 50. Rxg5 Ra3+ 51. Kd4 Ra4+! 52. Kc5 Rh4;

(c) 45. Ke4 Rd1 46. Ra7+ Ke6! 47. Rxg7 Rd4+! 48. Kf3 Kxe5 49. Re7+ Kf6! 50. Rh7 Kg5! 51. Rg7+ Kh4! 52. Rg6 Rd7 53. Rxh6 Rf7+.

45. Kf4 Rb1 46. Ra7+ Ke6 47. Rxg7 Rf1+ 48. Ke4 Re1+ 49. Kf3 Rf1+ 50. Kg2 Rf4 51. Kg3 Kxe5 52. Re7+ Kd6 53. Kxf4 Kxe7 and Black resigned.

INSPIRED BY

Vardan Poghosyan, 2025



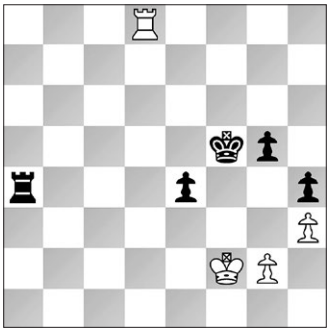
WHITE TO MOVE AND DRAW

1. h3
1. Rb1? loses after 1. ... g4 or 1. ... Ra2+.

1. ... e4
After 1. ... Ra2+ White has to be precise:
(a) 2. Kg1? Ke6! 3. Rb1 e4! 4. fxe4 fxe4 5. Rb5 (*5. Rb8 Ke5 6. Kf1 Kd4 7. Rb5 Kd3* wins for Black) 5. ... e3! 6. Kf1 Rf2+! 7. Kg1 Rf5 8. Rb3 Re5! 9. Kf1 Kf5 10. Rb4 Re4 and Black wins.
(b) 2. Kf1! Ke6 3. Rb1 Kd5 (*3. ... e4 4. fxe4! fxe4 5. Rb5! Kf6 6. Rc5* with equality) 4. Rb8 Kd4 5. Rf8! Ke3 6. Kg1! Ra1+ 7. Kh2 Kf4 (*7. ... f4 8. Rf5 e4 9. Re5 Kf2 10. Rxe4! Rg1 11. Re2+! Kxe2 12. Kxg1* is equal) 8. Rf7 Ra8 9. Rf6! Ra7 10. Rf8! with equality.

2. fxe4 fxe4 3. Rd1
If 3. Rb1? Kf5! 4. Rb8 Ra2+ 5. Ke3 Rxg2 6. Rb5+ Kg6 7. Kxe4 Rg3! (and not *7. ... Re2+? 8. Kf3 Rh2 9. Rb3! Rxh3+ 10. Kg4 Rxb3* with equality) wins.

3. ... Kf5 4. Rd8



Alas, 4. Rd6 and 4. Rd7 work just as well. (Studies are supposed to have unique paths to a solution.)

4. ... Ra2+ 5. Ke3 Rxg2 6. Rd5+ Kg6 7. Kxe4 Re2+
Or 7. ... Rg3 8. Rd6+ (*8. Rd3* is fine as well) 8. ... Kh5 9. Rd3! with a draw.

8. Kf3 Rh2 9. Rd3 Rxh3+ 10. Kg4 Rxd3, stalemate. ◆

WHO WAS ORRIN FRINK?

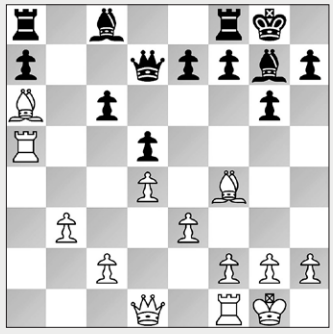
ORRIN FRINK JR. (1901-1988) WAS AN important 20th-century mathematician who introduced the concept of the Frink ideal. He taught at Penn State for more than 40 years after earning his doctorate in mathematics from Columbia in 1926 or 1927.

But mathematics was not Frink's only interest. He was a regular in the New York chess scene in the 1920s and likely (based on results and historical reconstruction) at least a master-strength player. Perhaps his best result was at the 1924 Manhattan Chess Club Championship, where he shared third place with an aged David Janowsky. Here's his game from that event with another star in Caïssa's pantheon, Carlos Torre Repetto.

LONDON SYSTEM, JOBAVA ATTACK (D00)

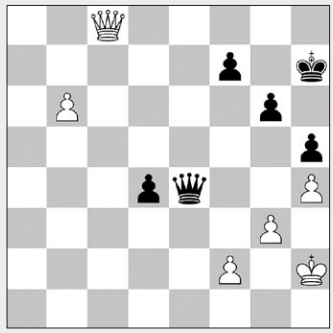
Carlos Torre Repetto
Orrin Frink
Manhattan CC Ch, New York, 1924

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 g6 3. Nc3 d5 4. Bf4 Bg7 5. e3 0-0 6. Bd3 c5 7. 0-0 c4 8. Be2 Nc6 9. Ne5 Qb6 10. b3 cxb3 11. axb3 Bf5 12. Na4 Qd8 13. Nxc6 bxc6 14. Ba6 Bc8 15. Nc5 Nd7 16. Nxd7 Qxd7 17. Ra5?!



A slip, allowing 17. ... Bxa6 18. Rxa6 c5! with equality. Frink went another way.

17. ... Re8?! 18. Qd3 e5 19. Bxe5 Bxe5 20. dxe5 Bxa6 21. Rxa6 Rxe5 22. Qc3 Re6 23. Rfa1 c5 24. Rxe6 Qxe6 25. Qxc5 Rc8 26. Qxa7 Rxc2 27. Qd4 Qc6 28. g3 Rc1+ 29. Rxc1 Qxc1+ 30. Kg2 Qc6 31. b4 h5 32. h4 Qb5 33. Qc5 Qd3 34. b5 Qe4+ 35. Kh2 Qf5 36. e4 Qxe4 37. b6 d4 38. Qc8+ Kh7



39. b7? Qe2! 40. Qc6 Qb2 41. Qd5 Kg7 42. Qe5+ Kh7 43. Qd5 Kg7 44. Kg2 d3! 45. Kf3 Qe2+ 46. Kg2 Qb2! 47. Qxd3 Qxb7+ 48. Qf3 Qb4, draw.

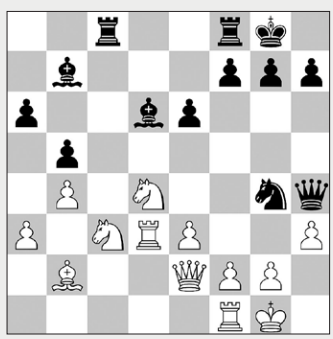
This fine save is emblematic of Frink's broader interest in the endgame. He regularly published problems, studies, and endgame analyses from 1919 through 1928, mostly in *The Chess Amateur*, including a study that anticipated a famous Vancura position attributed to Romanovsky in 1950.

But that's not to say that Frink couldn't play attacking chess. Check out this fine miniature published in the February 1920 issue of *American Chess Bulletin.*

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED, TARRASCH DEFENSE (D40)

M.I. Lockwood
Orrin Frink
Metropolitan League, New York 1920

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 c5 4. Nf3 Nc6 5. e3 Nf6 6. a3 a6 7. Bd3 dxc4 8. Bxc4 b5 9. Bd3 Bb7 10. dxc5 Bxc5 11. b4 Bd6 12. Bb2 0-0 13. Qc2 Rc8 14. Rd1 Qe7 15. 0-0 Ne5 16. Nd4 Nfg4 17. Qe2 Qh4 18. h3 Nxd3 19. Rxd3



19. ... Qxh3!, White resigned.
For the record: 20. gxh3 Bh2 mate. ◆

Dangerous

GM Efim Geller was very good, and for a good long time.

BY **BRUCE PANDOLFINI**

THE UKRAINIAN-SOVIET grandmaster Efim Geller (1925-1998) was one of the world's top players from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s. He was Soviet Champion in 1955 and again nearly a quarter-century later in 1979, and a world championship candidate six times (1953, 1956, 1962, 1965, 1968 and 1971). Geller was also an eminent analyst and a leading contributor to opening theory, who could muster sharp lines leading to quick knockouts of the game's very best (such as Bobby Fischer). In this month's contest we see him making fast work of Grandmaster Lev Psakhis.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED, TARTAKOWER DEFENSE (D58)

GM Lev Psakhis
GM Efim Geller
Yerevan Zonal, 1982

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Be7 4. Nf3 Nf6 5. Bg5 h6 6. Bh4



Now ensure that the position above is set up on your chessboard. As you play through the remaining moves in this game, use a piece of paper to cover the article, exposing Black's next move only after trying to guess it. If you guess correctly, give yourself the par score. Sometimes points are also awarded for second-best moves, and there may even be bonus points — or deductions — for other moves and variations. Note that ** means that Black's move is on the next line.**

6. Par Score 5 **0-0**
The steadiest move. Black gets ready for business.

7. **e3**
The e-pawn's advance clears the way for the light-squared bishop while defending the c-pawn. **

7. Par Score 5 **b6**
Black prepares to fianchetto the light-squared bishop.

8. **Bxf6**
It's OK here to give Black the two bishops, but more usual are either 8. cxd5 or 8. Rc1. **

8. Par Score 3 **Bxf6**

9. **cxd5**
White fixes the center. **

9. Par Score 4 **exd5**

10. **Qd2**
A little more common are 10. Bd3 and 10. Be2, but this is also fine. **

10. Par Score 5 **Be6**
Now that Black's e-pawn has vanished, this move makes sense, but you may accept ***full credit*** for 10. ... Bb7.

11. **Rd1**
White tries to discourage Black's ... c7-c5, but even so, Geller has no trouble getting activity. **

11. Par Score 5 **Qe7**
This is the typical development for the black queen.

12. **g3**
A questionable move. It weakens the light squares and costs time. Developing the f1-bishop would have been better. **

12. Par Score 6 **c5**
Geller grasps his opportunity. With the two bishops, and White's king still in the center of the board, opening the center is to Black's advantage.

13. **dxc5**
Psakhis eyes winning a pawn, but there's more to the position than that. **

13. Par Score 6 **Rd8**
So Geller has sacrificed a pawn for attack, and stays focused on opening the position by advances and exchanges.

14. **cxb6**
White goes for the pawn. He doesn't really have much better. **

14. Par Score 7 **d4**
Consistently, Geller plays to open the middle.

15. **Bg2**
White is trying to get castled. But doesn't this lose a piece? **

15. Par Score 5 **Nc6**
No, it doesn't lose a piece. ***Deduct 3 points*** if you settled on 15. ... dxc3, when 16. Qxd8+ Qxd8 17. Rxd8+ Bxd8 18. b7 puts White way ahead. Black is now armed to the teeth.

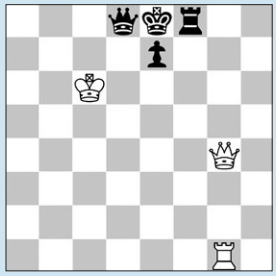
16. **Nxd4**
White's g2-bishop is unveiled, but the position is about to explode. **

ABCS OF CHESS

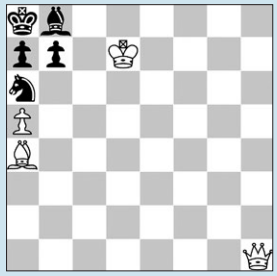
THESE PROBLEMS ARE all related to key positions in this month's game. In each case, White is to move. The answers can be found in Solutions on page 63.

FEBRUARY EXERCISE: Start with an empty board and set up a checkmate in one move. Keeping at least one unit for each side in place, change the position, adding or subtracting forces, to make a mate in two. Now do it again to create a mate in three. See how far you can get. It's much harder than you think. If you can get to four moves, you may have missed your calling. You should be a problem composer.

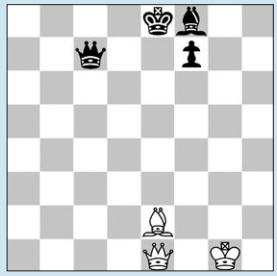
PROBLEM 1
Mating net



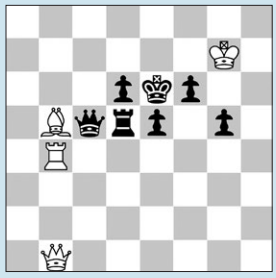
PROBLEM 2
Mating net



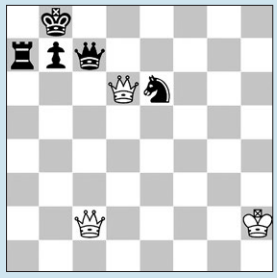
PROBLEM 3
Mating net



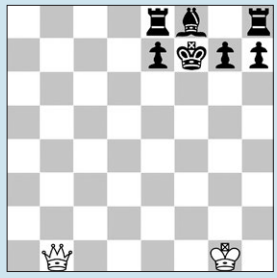
PROBLEM 4
Mating net



PROBLEM 5
Mating net



PROBLEM 6
Mating net



16. **Par Score 5** **Nxd4**

17. **exd4**
Add *1 bonus point* if you realized that you could answer 17. Bxa8 with the simple 17. ... Rxa8, when Black maintains a material edge after 18. exd4 Bd5+. **

17. **Par Score 5** **Bh3+**
A nasty discovered check. White's response is essentially forced.

18. **Kf1****

18. **Par Score 5** **Rxd4**

19. **Qe3**
Note that 19. Qe2 Qxe2+ 20. Kxe2 Bxg2 wins a piece, while on 20. Nxe2 Black has 20. ... Rxd1 mate (*1 bonus point* if you saw all this in advance). **

19. **Par Score 6** **Qb7**
A neat-looking crosspin. If 20. Bxh3, then 20. ... Qxh1+.

20. **f3**
White should have defended with 20. Rg1.**

20. **Par Score 5** **Rxd1+**

21. **Nxd1****

21. **Par Score 6** **Qa6+**
There really isn't a good answer to this check.

22. **Kg1****

22. **Par Score 5** **Rd8**
The knight is now threatened with check. On 23. Bxh3, Black would have 23. ... Bd4.

23. **Nf2**
It almost seems White is escaping, but he's not. **

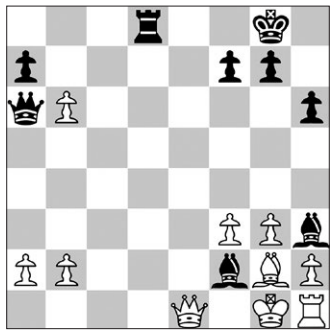
23. **Par Score 6** **Bd4**
At this point, White's best is to take the two pieces for the queen with 24. Qxd4 Rxd4 25. Bxh3, but the position is still miserable after 25. ... Rd2.

24. **Qe1****

24. **Par Score 6** **Bxf2+**

25. **White resigned.**
If 25. Qxf2, then 25. ... Rd1+; if instead 25. Kxf2, then 25. ... Qxb6+, when 26. Qe3 loses to 26. ... Rd2+ and 26. Kf1 is refuted by 26. ... Bc8, threatening the deadly 27. ... Ba6+. An incisive attacking game by Geller.

For up-to-date chess news and analysis, check out ***Chess Life Online*** at ***uschess.org/clo*** on a regular basis.



POSITION AFTER 24. ... Bxf2+

SOLITARE CHESS SCORING:
Total your score to determine your approximate rating below

Total Score	Approx. Rating
95+	2400+
81-90	2200-2399
66-80	2000-2199
51-65	1800-1999
36-50	1600-1799
21-35	1400-1599
06-20	1200-1399
0-05	under 1200

Pole Position

Blocked pawns can be surprising candidates for promotion.

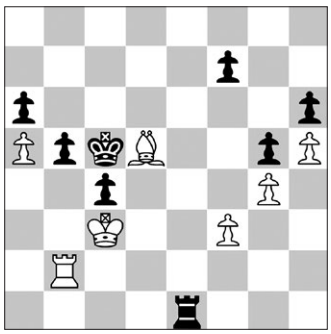
BY **GM JOEL BENJAMIN**

IN THE CONCLUDING CHAPTER of *Liquidation on the Chessboard,* I highlighted several themes I found particularly instructive, but in the last two years I have come across a trio of endgames featuring a pawn ending theme I omitted a decade ago. On the surface it can seem that it doesn't matter how pawns block each other in endgames, but the following examples show how wrong that notion can be.

On the Beeline

INVESTIGATING ALTERNATIVES

GM Evgenios Ioannidis (2497)
GM Matthias Bluebaum (2654)
European Ch (10), Petrovac, 11.18.2024 (analysis)



WHITE TO MOVE

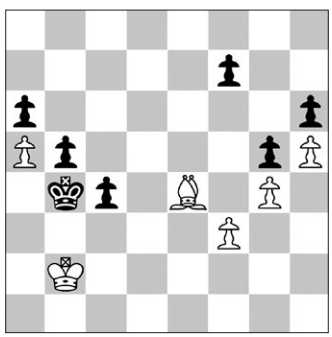
I came across this game in the database and decided to show it in a private lesson as an example of patient grandmaster technique. The game continued 45. Rd2? Rc1+!, and White resigned, because 46. Kb2 c3+ wins the bishop.

Curious as to whether White could still put up resistance, I let the engine run and discovered some incredible resources in the diagrammed position:

45. Kd2 Rf1 46. Be4
If 46. Ke2 Rh1.

46. ... Rf2+
Black can try 46. ... Ra1 47. Ke2 b4 48. Rd2 b3 49. Rd7 but White obtains counterplay.

47. Kc3 Rxb2 48. Kxb2 Kb4



White even wins after 48. ... b4? 49. Bg6 f6 50. Be8.

It seems like a Space Invaders-style advance is in the offing, but precise play from White can still save the game. The first step is, on the surface, a cheap trick.

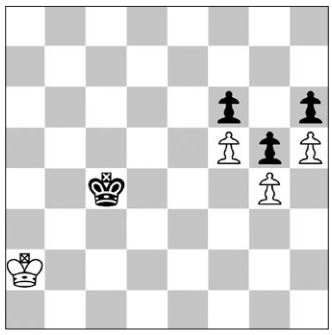
49. f4! f6 50. f5!!
The pawn takes up pole position, anticipating the coming pawn ending.

50. ... Kxa5 51. Kc3 Kb6 52. Kd4
White's last two king moves were necessarily to prevent a smooth advance of the pawns.

52. ... a5 53. Bb1 a4 54. Be4 a3 55. Bb1 Ka6!
It's a dead end after 55. ... Ka5 56. Kc3 Ka4 57. Bc2+ Ka5 58. Bb1.

56. Kc3 Ka5 57. Ba2 Ka4
It looks like a decisive *zugzwang,* but looks can be deceiving.

58. Bb1 b4+ 59. Kxc4 b3 60. Kc3 a2 61. Bxa2 bxa2 62. Kb2 Kb4 63. Kxa2 Kc4



White's king looks super far from the action, but it will be just in time to help Speed Racer.

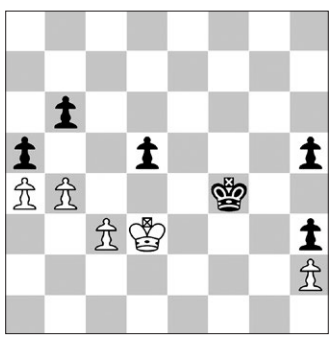
64. Ka3! Kd4 65. Kb4 Ke4 66. Kc5 Kf4 67. Kd5 Kxg4 68. Ke6 Kxh5 69. Kxf6 g4 70. Ke6 g3 71. f6 g2 72. f7 g1=Q 73. f8=Q
The result is not guaranteed, but the tablebase confirms White can hold the queen ending with proper play.

Sam Shankland lost a key game in the FIDE Grand Swiss when he missed our theme.

Zig Zag

HEARTBREAKER

GM Sam Shankland (2670)
GM Alireza Firouzja (2766)
FIDE Grand Swiss (5), Samarkand, 09.08.2025

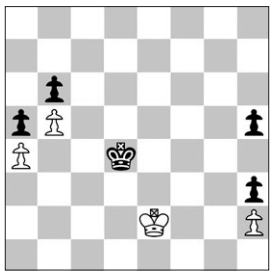


WHITE TO MOVE

There is a lot at stake, with both players hoping to snag a spot in the Candidates Tournament. Black's extra h-pawn doesn't

look like much, but it can provide a useful tempo later on.

47. bxa5?
This loses, but the drawing method is hardly intuitive. It begins with 47. Ke2 Ke4 48. b5! (the b-pawn has a bright future) 48. … d4 (*48. … h4 49. Kd2 Kf3 50. Kd3 Kg2 51. Ke2 Kxh2 52. Kf2* and Black now lacks the tempo to achieve an escape with his king) 49. cxd4 (*49. c4 d3+ 50. Kd2 Kd4 51. c5 Kxc5! 52. Kxd3 Kb4* wins) 49. … Kxd4, and this looks completely hopeless, but a zig zag will propel White's king forward in the race.



POSITION AFTER 49. … Kxd4

And now 50. Kf3!! But surely White doesn't have time to take both h-pawns? Well, no, but after 50. … Kc4 51. Ke4! the king is headed for the b6-pawn! After 51. … Kb4 52. Kd5 Kxa4 53. Kc6 both sides will queen, leaving a drawn endgame.

47. … bxa5 48. Kd4 Kf3 49. Kd3
After 49. Kxd5 Kg2 50. c4 Kxh2 51. c5 Kg3 52. c6 h2 Black queens with check.

49. … Kg2, White resigned.
Because 50. Ke2 Kxh2 51. Kf2 h4! springs the Black king from the trap.

Our final game was a high-profile affair: GM Wesley So suffered an early knockout in the World Cup under extraordinary circumstances.

Never Give Up, Never Surrender

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED, EXCHANGE VARIATION (D35)

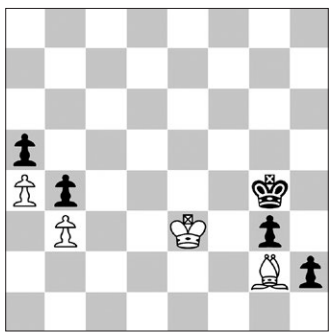
GM Titas Stremavicius (2544)
GM Wesley So (2764)
FIDE World Cup (2), Goa, 11.05.2025

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. c4 e6 4. Nc3 Be7 5. cxd5 exd5 6. Bf4 c6 7. h3 Qb6 8. Qc2 g6 9. e3 Bf5 10. Qc1 0-0 11. g4 Be4 12. Be2 Nbd7 13. 0-0 Bxf3 14. Bxf3 Qd8 15. Qc2 Ne8 16. e4 dxe4 17. Bxe4 Ndf6 18. Rad1 Nc7 19. Bg2 Qd7 20. Qb3 Ncd5 21. Be5 Rfe8 22. g5 Nxc3 23. gxf6 Nxd1 24. fxe7 Nxf2 25. Bf6 Rxe7 26. Bxe7 Qxe7 27. Rxf2 Rd8 28. d5 cxd5 29. Bxd5 Qg5+ 30. Bg2 Rd7 31. Qc3 Qe7 32. Rf1 b6 33. Re1 Qd8 34. Qe5 Rd1 35. Rxd1 Qxd1+ 36. Kh2 h5 37. a3 h4 38. Qe8+ Kg7 39. Qe3 Kg8 40. Qf2 Qd8 41. Kg1 Qg5 42. Qd4 Qg3 43. Kf1 Kh7 44. Qc3 Qg5 45. Bc6 Qe7 46. Bf3 Qd6 47. Be2 Qf4+ 48. Ke1 f5 49. Kd1 Kh6 50. Qd2 Kg5 51. Bb5? Qxd2+ 52. Kxd2 Kf4 53. Be8 g5 54. Bd7 g4 55. hxg4 fxg4 56. Ke2 g3 57. Bc6 Ke5 58. Ke3 h3?
This precipitous push torpedoed an impressive comeback.

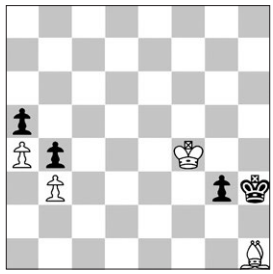
59. Bd7 h2 60. Bc6 Kd6 61. Bg2 Kc5 62. b3 a5 63. Kd3 b5 64. Bf3 Kd6 65. Kd4 Ke6 66. Be4 Kf6 67. Kd5 Kg5 68. Ke5 Kg4 69. Bg2 Kg5 70. a4?
This is the move that enables the hidden resource to split the point. It's motivated by wanting the pawns to be protectable by the bishop.

70. … b4!
The b-pawn gets in pole position for a race in the misty future. After 70. … bxa4 71. bxa4 Kg4 72. Ke4 Kh4 White can win by bringing the king to switch places with the bishop: 73. Kd3! (73. Kf4 h1=Q 74. Bxh1 Kh3 is a draw) 73. … Kg5 74. Ke2 Kf4 75. Bh1 Kg4 76. Kf1 Kf4 77. Bb7 Ke3 78. Kg2 Kf4 79. Kh3 and wins.

71. Ke4 Kg4 72. Ke3, Black resigned.



Facing the loss of his pawns with his final seconds ticking down, So quite understandably resigned. Unfortunately there was a draw to be had with an unlikely looking motif: 72. … Kh4 73. Kf4 (the plan of switching the king and bishop is a move too slow: *73. Ke2 Kg4 74. Bh1 Kf4 75. Kf1 Ke3 76. Kg2 Kd3 77. Kxg3 Kc3 78. Bd5 h1=Q 79. Bxh1 Kxb3*) 73. … h1=Q!! 74. Bxh1 Kh3.

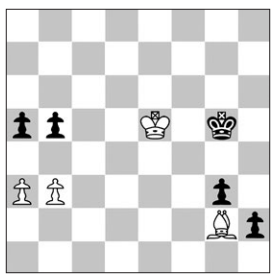


POSITION AFTER 74. … Kh3

Now we see the amazing stalemate idea take shape: 75. Kf3 Kh2 76. Bg2 Kg1 77. Bh3 (taking the pawn is stalemate, but the shortness of the diagonal renders the bishop ineffective) 77. … Kh2 78. Bf1 Kg1 79. Bd3 Kh2! (not *79. … g2? 80. Kg3 Kh1 81. Be4 Kg1 82. Bd5,* winning) and White has to face the facts.

The gorgeous stalemate trick made the rounds on social media, but it obscured the real question: How is it possible White doesn't win the pawn ending? White's king seems poised to eat the queenside pawns, but Black's king moves surprisingly fast. From the diagrammed position: 75. Ke5 g2 76. Bxg2+ Kxg2 77. Kd4 Kf3 78. Kc4 Ke3 79. Kb5 Kd3 80. Kxa5 Kc3 81. Kb5 Kxb3 82. a5 Kc3 83. a6 b3 84. a7 b2 85. a8=Q b1=Q+ leads to a draw. The white king's head start was cancelled by the "pole position" b4-pawn.

Let's return to the innocent-looking mistake that almost cost White the win.



GAME POSITION AFTER 69. … Kg5

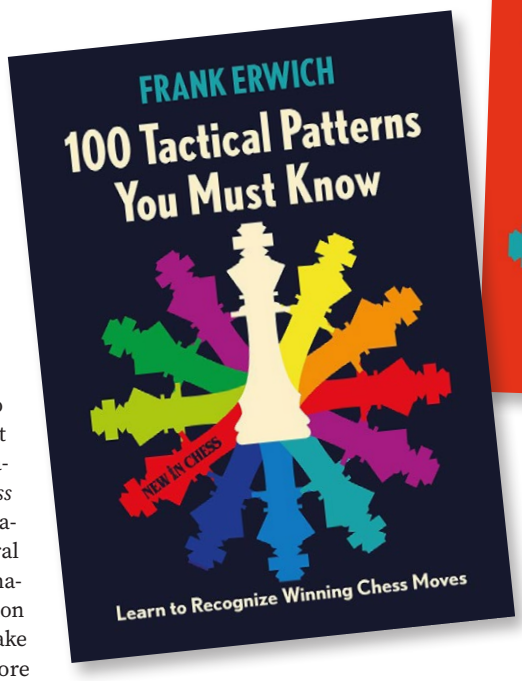
Instead of 70. a4?, the other push, 70. b4?, fails more clearly because the b4-pawn will be vulnerable to Black's king. After 70. … axb4 71. axb4 Kg4 72. Ke4 Kg5 73. Kf3 Kf5 74. Kxg3 Ke5 75. Kxh2 Kd4 it's a draw. White had to keep options open with 70. Ke4 Kg4 71. Ke3 a4 (on *71. … Kf5 72. a4!* now wins because *72. … b4 73. Kf3* clips the pawns; *71. … Kg5 72. Kf3 Kh4 73. Kf4 h1=Q 74. Bxh1 Kh3 75. b4* wins easily) 72. b4 Kf5. White wins now with a bit of tempo play: 73. Bc6 Kg4 74. Bh1 Kf5 75. Bg2 and Black is in *zugzwang*.

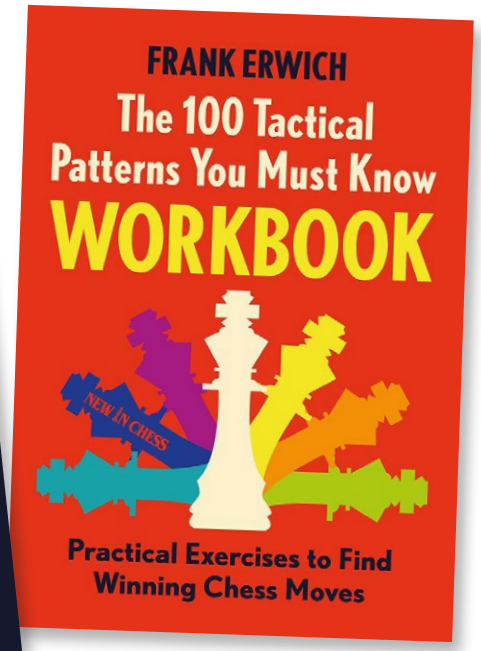
So beware of advanced pawns, even if they aren't passed … yet.

Decoding the Patterns

Erwich returns with more exercises for club-level players.

BY **IM JOHN WATSON**

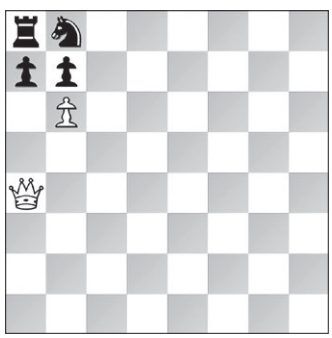




FRANK ERWICH has written a number of well-received books on chess tactics. His 2021 work *1001 Chess Exercises for Club Players* helps the reader, in Erwich's words, to "learn to recognize and utilize different tactics based on general positional features," while in his 2019 book *1001 Chess Exercises for Advanced Club Players*, "relatively more space is dedicated to general themes." Both works provide training material and are meant to test your calculation skills. Two more recent Erwich books take a different approach; they are much more focused and systematic.

In *100 Tactical Patterns You Must Know* and *The 100 Tactical Patterns You Must Know Workbook,* the author concentrates on "the specific arrangement of chess pieces and typical piece configurations." Erwich explains that "A tactical pattern is all about immediate threats that produce immediate results," and he identifies 100 of the most important ones, looking at their tactical implications through contrasting practical examples. The reader is meant to recognize patterns that will very likely recur in games throughout their playing life. This is an extremely useful approach, especially for improving players (the suggested range is 1500-2000; see below), who may be seeing these patterns for the first or second time and need to fix them securely in their memories.

An example should help. Here's a typical pattern in the general category of 'promotion':



WHITE TO MOVE

After 1. Qxa7, if the rook captures the queen, 2. bxa7 comes with a double threat of 3. a8=Q and 3. axb8=Q.

That's the pattern, which arises in various opening variations and middlegames. Here are two of several examples Erwich gives:

IN PRACTICE

Maksim Volkov
GM Daniel Fridman
***Chess.com* Titled Tuesday, 05.23.2023**



BLACK TO MOVE

11. ... b3+ 12. Qd2 Qxa2! 13. Rxa2
If 13. 0-0 Qxa1 14. Na3 Rxa3! with a winning material advantage.

13. ... bxa2 14. Na3 a1=Q+ 15. Nc1 Rxa3 16. bxa3 Qxa3 17. 0-0 Qxc5, White resigned.

Not all tactical patterns work in every situation:

OOPS

Achot Davitian
Frederic Trillaud
Issy les Moulineaux, 2000
Annotations by Frank Erwich



WHITE TO MOVE

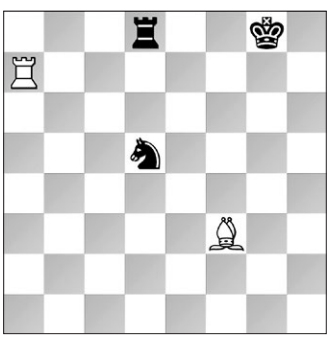
13. Qxa7 Rxa7?
13. ... 0-0! is how Black should have defended. The point is that by leaving the pawn on b6, Black prevents the queen from escaping using this square later: 14. Qxa8 Na6, and now White has a good option and a bad one: 15. Nxc6 (if *15. Qa7?* we see why the pawn on b6 does more harm than good for White: *15. ... Bb8 16. Qa8 Bxe5*) 15. ... Qd7! 16. Qxf8+ Bxf8 17. Ne5 Qa4 18. Nb1. The position is roughly balanced.

14. bxa7 0-0 15. a8=Q
Without a white pawn on b6, Black cannot trap the queen.

15. ... Bxa3
After 15. ... Na6 16. Qa7 the queen will escape via b6.

16. 0-0
With the extra Exchange, White managed to capitalize on his advantage. Black resigned after White's 28th move.

The following pattern falls under Double Attack:



WHITE TO MOVE

It begins with a decoy:

1. Ra8! Rxa8 2. Bxd5+ Kf8 3. Bxa8

The more aware of the pattern you are, the more easily (and quickly, in blitz and rapid) you can see similar tactics:

THE BOOK MOVE

To Nhat Minh
Matyas Marek
Kecskemet, 2016



WHITE TO MOVE

How to proceed?

24. Nxe6! Bxe6
After 24. ... Rxd5, 25. Nc7 wins.

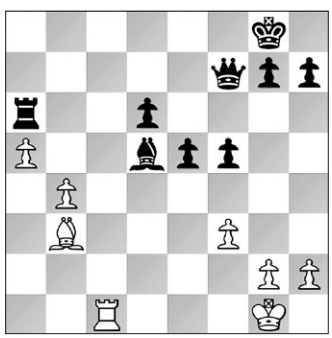
25. Rc8!
The decoy.

25. ... Bxd5
25. ... Rxc8 26. Bxe6+.

26. Rxe8+ Kf7 27. Rc8
and White is winning.

HERE'S HOW IT'S DONE

GM Sergey Karjakin
IM Alexandra Kosteniuk
Brissago 2003



WHITE TO MOVE

We're at the end of a wild tactical sequence.

32. Rc8+ Qe8 33. Rxe8+ Kf7
And here White had calculated the lovely ...

34. Ra8!!, Black resigned.
The idea is 34. ... Rxa8 (*34. ... Bxb3 35. Rxa6*) 35. Bxd5+ Ke7 36. Bxa8.

100 Tactical Patterns You Must Know is organized in conceptual fashion, with one chapter for each pattern and numerous annotated examples. The *Workbook* is designed as a training manual, with 516 exercises to solve and solutions at the end of the chapter. Each *Workbook* chapter features the same types of patterns as in the original book, and Erwich adds a chapter called "Pattern Combinations," in which multiple patterns are incorporated into single exercises. There are numerous positions that are given in both books, and most readers will likely do fine to choose one or the other. The material is ideally aimed for players in a 1500-2000 range, but I don't think anyone from 1300 to 2200 will think that their time has been wasted. Arguably, the workbook is more appropriate for a student who is trying to improve by applied study and calculation exercises, whereas *100 Tactical Patterns You Must Know* has more verbal explanation and will appeal to someone with limited time who wants to learn the patterns without needing to simulate over-the-board thinking conditions.

As a chess teacher, I used my own sets of tactical exercises collected over the years, but would definitely have improved my lessons with books such as these two. The systematic focus upon practical patterns one sees consistently over-the-board reduces the number of gaps in the student's knowledge and undoubtedly speeds their improvement. Whether you prefer to use tactical exercises on the computer is another matter. My guess is that at a lower level, learning with a book at hand and verbal guidance is probably a healthier way to improve, but that the more experienced you are, the faster and more efficiently you will absorb new material by using specialized computer training. In any case, you won't regret having at least one of these books in your library.

Erwich, Frank. 100 Tactical Patterns You Must Know. *New in Chess, 2024. 304pp. ISBN 9789083387727, $24.95. USCF Sales Product Code B0320NIC.* The 100 Tactical Patterns You Must Know Workbook. *New in Chess, 2024. 304 pp. ISBN 9789083387741, $24.95. US Chess Product Code B0323NIC.*

TOURNAMENT LIFE ANNOUNCEMENTS

NATIONAL EVENTS & BIDS NOW ON USCHESS.ORG Effective with the November 2020 *Chess Life*, we have removed the National Events and Bids page that has traditionally been part of our TLA section. This information continues to be available here:

new.uschess.org/national-events-calendar

For complete details on individual events, please visit *new.uschess.org/node/[TLA ID]*. You will find the event's unique five-digit TLA ID at the top of each TLA.

Nationals

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 US Amateur Team South

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017

Site: Westgate Lakes Resort & Spa **Address:** 9500 Turkey Lake Road, Orlando, FL 32819 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Charles W Hatherill • kingsgambit50@earthlink.net • 7027430305 • *thevillageschessclub.org*

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 US Amateur Team-West (USATW) National Championship

FEBRUARY 14-16, 2026 — CA TLA# 54162

Site: Sonesta Silicon Valley Event Center **Address:** 1800 Barber Ln, Milpitas, CA 95035 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** BayAreaChess • *events@bayareachess.com* • *bayareachess.com*

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • HERITAGE EVENT

2026 World Amateur Team & U.S. Team East

FEBRUARY 14-16, 2026 — NJ TLA# 52576

Site: Parsippany Hilton **Address:** 1 Hilton Ct., Parsippany, NJ 07054 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** New Jersey Chess Federation • esdoyle@aol.com • *njscf.org*

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 U.S. Amateur Team-North

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026 — IL TLA# 50285

Site: Hyatt Regency Schaumburg **Address:** 1800 E. Golf Rd., Schaumburg, IL 60173 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Glenn Panner • glenn@chessweekend.com • *chessweekend.com*

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

21st Annual KCF All-Girls National Championships

APRIL 10-12, 2026 — IL TLA# 52639

Site: Hyatt Regency McCormick Place **Address:** 2233 S Dr Martin Luther King Jr Dr., Chicago, IL 60616 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Renaissance Knights Chess Foundation • david.heiser@renaissanceknights.org • *allgirls.rknights.org*

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

2026 National Open

JUNE 10-14, 2026 — NV TLA# 52540

Site: Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino **Address:** 3000 Paradise Road, Las Vegas, NV 89109 **Overall Prize Fund:** $125,000 **GP Pts:** 200 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Vegas Chess Festival • vegaschess@gmail.com • 702-930-9550 • *vegaschessfestival.com*

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

2026 U.S. Women's Open

JUNE 10-11, 2026 — NV TLA# 53257

Site: Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino **Address:** 3000 Paradise Road, Las Vegas, NV 89109 **Overall Prize Fund:** $5,000 **GP Pts:** 60 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Vegas Chess Festival • vegaschess@gmail.com • 702-930-9550 • *vegaschessfestival.com*

Grand Prix

The Grand Prix point totals reflect all rated event information as of December 18, 2025, for the 2025 Grand Prix. These standings are updated regularly, but should be considered unofficial. Visit ratings.uschess.org/grand-prix/standings for up-to-date information.

2025 US CHESS GRAND PRIX STANDINGS

	Name	State/Ctry	Pts
1.	GM JIANCHAO ZHOU	MA	616.00
2.	EMMANUEL CARTER	NC	145.00
3.	THOMAS FANG	NC	112.00
4.	GM FIDEL CORRALES JIMINEZ	CA	105.00
5.	FM DANILA POLIANNIKOV	MA	105.00
6.	GM ALEXANDER IVANOV	MA	97.00
7.	GM AWONDER LIANG	WI	89.00
8.	GM PRAVEEN BALAKRISHNAN	VA	82.00
9.	BHARATH SUBRAMANIYAM H	FOR	82.00
10.	GM MIKHAIL ANTIPOV	MO	76.00

2025 Awards

$12,500 in cash prizes

First Prize $5,000

2nd: $2,500 — 3rd: $1,000
4th: $900 — 5th: $800
6th: $700 — 7th: $600
8th: $500 — 9th: $300
10th: $200

The Grand Prix continues in 2026. For information visit *new.uschess.org/us-chess-grand-prix-program*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Connecticut Classic: $12,000 in Prizes! FIDE rated!

FEBRUARY 6-8, 2026 — CT TLA# 54227

Site: Hilton Garden Inn Hartford North **Address:** 555 Corporate Drive, Windsor, CT 06095 **Overall Prize Fund:** $12,000 **GP Pts:** 40 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Connecticut State Chess Association • *chess.CSCA@gmail.com* • 8605930225 • *ChessCT.org*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess Super Bowl Sunday Grand Prix

FEBRUARY 8, 2026 — NC TLA# 53624

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,228 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • *jon@dragonknightchess.com* • (919) 422-2535 • *dragonknightchess.com*

AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

17th annual Southwest Class Championships

FEBRUARY 12-16, 2026 — TX TLA# 52346

Site: Westin Dallas Fort Worth Airport Hotel **Address:** 4545 W John Carpenter Freeway, Irving, TX 75063 **Overall Prize Fund:** $35,000 **GP Pts:** 200 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 PA State Game/75 Championship - West

FEBRUARY 14, 2026 — PA TLA# 53598

Site: William Pitt Union, Univ. of Pittsburgh **Address:** 5th Ave. & Bigelow Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15213 **Overall Prize Fund:** $695 **GP Pts:** 6 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Tom M Martinak • *martinak_tom_m@hotmail.com* • 412-908-0286 • *pscfchess.org/clearinghouse/*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess Valentine's Grand Prix

FEBRUARY 15, 2026 — NC TLA# 53625

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,228 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • *jon@dragonknightchess.com* • (919) 422-2535 • *dragonknightchess.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

10th annual Southwest Class Blitz Championship (Sunday Night)

FEBRUARY 15, 2026 — TX TLA# 52347

Site: Westin Dallas Fort Worth Airport Hotel **Address:** 4545 W John Carpenter Freeway, Irving, TX 75063 **Overall Prize Fund:** $500 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX

4th Music City Open

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026 — TN TLA# 53735

Site: Millennium Maxwell House Hotel **Address:** 2025 Rosa L Parks Blvd, Nashville, TN 37228 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1500 **GP Pts:** 60 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Nashville Chess Center • *director@nashvillechess.org* • 6292544737 • *nashvillechess.org*

GRAND PRIX

2026 Charlotte February Open

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026 — NC TLA# 54026

Site: Hilton Garden Inn - Southpark **Address:** 34808 Sharon Road, Charlotte, NC 28210 **Overall Prize Fund:** $5,500 **GP Pts:** 40 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Charlotte Chess Center • *events@charlottechesscenter.org* • *charlottechesscenter.org/events*

GRAND PRIX

The Baton Rouge Dual

FEBRUARY 21, 2026 — LA TLA# 52339

Site: Baton Rouge Bridge Center **Address:** 3033 Old Forge Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70808 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,000 **GP Pts:** 6 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Downriver Chess Club of New Orleans • *info@downriverchess.com* • *downriverchess.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess Be Humble Day Grand Prix

FEBRUARY 22, 2026 — NC TLA# 54228

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,228 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • *jon@dragonknightchess.com* • (919) 422-2535 • *dragonknightchess.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

10th annual George Washington Open

FEB. 27-MAR. 1, 2026 — VA TLA# 52348

Site: Washington Dulles Marriott Hotel **Address:** 45020 Aviation Dr, Dulles, VA 20166 **Overall Prize Fund:** $17,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

New York State Senior Championship (With Young Adult/Middle Age Section)

FEB. 28-MAR. 1, 2026 — NY TLA# 52921

Site: Saratoga Hilton Hotel **Address:** 534 Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 **Overall Prize Fund:** $4,200 **GP Pts:** 40 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

33rd annual Western Class Championships

MARCH 6-8, 2026 — CA-S TLA# 52914

Site: Hilton Orange County Airport Hotel **Address:** 18800 Macarthur Blvd, Irvine, CA 92612 **Overall Prize Fund:** $20,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Pennsylvania Quick Chess Championship

MARCH 6, 2026 — PA TLA# 53595

Site: Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg Hershey **Address:** 4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111 **Overall Prize Fund:** $750 **GP Pts:** 6 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Tom M Martinak • *martinak_tom_m@hotmail.com* • 412-908-0286 • *pscfchess.org/pascholasticchamp*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX •

10th annual Western Class Blitz Championship

MARCH 7, 2026 — CA-S TLA# 52915

Site: Hilton Orange County Airport Hotel **Address:** 18800 Macarthur Blvd, Irvine, CA 92612 **Overall Prize Fund:** $500 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Ira Lee Riddle Memorial Pennsylvania State Championship & Pennsylvania Collegiate Championship

MARCH 7-8, 2026 — PA TLA# 53597

Site: Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg Hershey **Address:** 4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,875 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Tom M Martinak • *martinak_tom_m@hotmail.com* • 412-908-0286 • *pscfchess.org/pascholasticchamp*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess Start of Daylight Savings Grand Prix

MARCH 8, 2026 — NC TLA# 54229

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,228 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • *jon@dragonknightchess.com* • (919) 422-2535 • *dragonknightchess.com*

GRAND PRIX

2026 Lone Star Open

MARCH 13-15, 2026 — TX TLA# 54213

Site: Doubletree by Hilton (IAH) **Address:** 15747 John F. Kennedy Blvd, Houston, TX 7703 **Overall Prize Fund:** see online TLA **GP Pts:** XX **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Cypress Chess, LLC • *peter.craney@cypresschess.net* • 7137252877 • *cypresschess.net*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

23rd annual Southern Class Championships

MARCH 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 54208

Site: Delta Hotels By Marriott Orlando Celebration **Address:** 2900 Parkway Boulevard, Kissimmee, FL 34747 **Overall Prize Fund:** $17,000 **GP Pts:** 80 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

3rd Annual Dragon Knight Chess St. Patrick's Grand Prix

MARCH 15, 2026 — NC TLA# 54230

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000

Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,228 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • *jon@dragonknightchess.com* • (919) 422-2535 • *dragonknightchess.com*

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

30th annual Mid-America Open

MARCH 20-22, 2026 — MO **TLA# 52913**

Site: Clayton Plaza Hotel St. Louis-Clayton **Address:** 7750 Carondelet Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105 **Overall Prize Fund:** $20,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

12th annual Mid-America Open Blitz Championship

MARCH 21, 2026 — MO **TLA# 52947**

Site: Clayton Plaza Hotel St. Louis-Clayton **Address:** 7750 Carondelet Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105 **Overall Prize Fund:** $500 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX

BCF Spring Festival

MARCH 21-22, 2026 — MA **TLA# 53781**

Site: Boylston Chess Club **Address:** 35 Kingston St, Unit 1, Boston, MA 02111 **Overall Prize Fund:** $4,000 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Boylston Chess Foundation • *info@boylstonchess.org* • *boylstonchess.org/events/1460/spring-festival*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Atlantic City Open (Replaces Continental Chess Open At Foxwoods and Princeton Open, During Easter Weekend)

APRIL 1-5, 2026 — NJ **TLA# 52908**

Site: Tropicana Casino And Resort Hotel **Address:** 2831 Boardwalk, Atlantic City, NJ 08401 **Overall Prize Fund:** $40,000 **GP Pts:** 200 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

7th Colonial Open

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA **TLA# 53535**

Site: Executive Conference and Training Center **Address:** 22685 Holiday Park Dr Ste 60, Sterling, VA 20166 **Overall Prize Fund:** $10,000 **GP Pts:** 50 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Anand Dommalapati. • *co2026@capitalareachess.com* • 703-627-5314 • *capitalareachess.com/colonialopen*

GRAND PRIX

13th Annual Reno - Larry Evans Memorial Open

APRIL 3-5, 2026 — NV **TLA# 54080**

Site: J Resort Casino Hotel **Address:** 345 N. Arlington Avenue, Reno NV 89501 **Overall Prize Fund:** $27,500 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Jerome V. Weikel. • *wackyykl@aol.com* • 775-747-1405 • *https://sites.google.com/site/renochessclub/*

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 PA State Game/29 Championship - West

APRIL 4, 2026 — PA **TLA# 53599**

Site: William Pitt Union, Univ. of Pittsburgh **Address:** Room 548, 5th Floor, William Pitt Union, Univ. of Pittsburgh, 5th Ave. & Bigelow Blvd., Pittsburgh PA 15213 **Overall Prize Fund:** $690 **GP Pts:** 6 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Tom M Martinak • *martinak_tom_m@hotmail.com* • 412-908-0286 • *pscfchess.org/clearinghouse/*

GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

5th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Saturday Action Chess

APRIL 11, 2026 — CA **TLA# 54197**

Site: UC Davis Conference Center **Address:** 550 Alumni Lane, Davis, CA 95616 **Overall Prize Fund:** $2,560 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Michael Aigner • *michael@fpawn.com* • *sosnickchess.com*

GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

5th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Sunday Rapid Chess

APRIL 12, 2026 — CA **TLA# 54199**

Site: UC Davis Conference Center **Address:** 550 Alumni Lane, Davis, CA 95616 **Overall Prize Fund:** $2,560 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Michael Aigner • *michael@fpawn.com* • *sosnickchess.com*

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

31st Space Coast Open Chess Festival

APRIL 24-26, 2026 — FL **TLA# 53028**

Site: Hilton Melbourne at Rialto Place **Address:** 200 Rialto Place, Melbourne, FL 32901 **Overall Prize Fund:** $20,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Space Coast Chess Foundation, Inc. • *jon@bocachess.com* • 561-302-4377 • *spacecoastchessfoundation.org/event/spacecoastopen*

GRAND PRIX

2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY **TLA# 52295**

Site: Bridges Conference Center, Bridges Campus **Address:** 13 Lane Lane, Sheridan, WY 82801 **Overall Prize Fund:** $9,000 **GP Pts:** 100 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Brian Kuehl • *admin@sheridanchess.com* • 202-679-6779 • *SheridanChess.com*

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

35th Annual Chicago Open

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL **TLA# 53431**

Site: Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel **Address:** 601 North Milwaukee Ave, Wheeling IL 60090 **Overall Prize Fund:** $100,000 **GP Pts:** 200 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

15th Annual Chicago Open Blitz Championship!

MAY 24, 2026 — IL **TLA# 53432**

Site: Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel **Address:** 601 North Milwaukee Ave, Wheeling IL 60090 **Overall Prize Fund:** $2,500 **GP Pts:** 30 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL **TLA# 54211**

Site: Fort Lauderdale Marriott North **Address:** 6650 N. Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309 **Overall Prize Fund:** $10,600 **GP Pts:** 50 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Boca Raton Chess Club • *jon@bocachess.com* • 561-302-4377 • *bocachess.com*

GRAND PRIX

Walter Browne Memorial National Open Blitz Championship

JUNE 13, 2026 — NV **TLA# 52998**

Site: Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino **Address:** 3000 Paradise Road, Las Vegas, NV 89109 **Overall Prize Fund:** $5,000 **GP Pts:** 40 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Vegas Chess Festival • vegaschess@gmail.com • 702-930-9550 • *vegaschessfestival.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

4th annual DC International (in cooperation with the DC Chess Association)

JUNE 25-29, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53620**

Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel **Address:** 2500 Calvert St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 **Overall Prize Fund:** $20,000 **GP Pts:** 200 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53565**

Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel **Address:** 2500 Calvert St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 **Overall Prize Fund:** $208,000 **GP Pts:** 300 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX

13th Annual Washington International

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD **TLA# 54236**

Site: Rockville Hilton **Address:** 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852 **Overall Prize Fund:** $51,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Michael W Regan • *mregan@stsci.edu* • 4104195130 • *mdchess.com*

Regional

ALABAMA

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL **TLA# 53017**

2026 US Amateur Team South

See Nationals.

FEBRUARY 21, 2026 — AL **TLA# 53833**

Tom Nard Memorial XII

Site: Evangel Church **Address:** 3975 Vaughn Rd, Montgomery, AL 36106 **Overall Prize Fund:** See online TLA **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Doug Strout • *evangelchess@yahoo.com* • *www.facebook.com/evangelchessclub*

MARCH 13-15, 2026 — FL **TLA# 54208**

23rd annual Southern Class Championships

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL **TLA# 54211**

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

See Grand Prix.

ARKANSAS

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL **TLA# 53017**

2026 US Amateur Team South

See Nationals.

PLEASE NOTE

DEADLINE FOR PRINT TLA SUBMISSIONS

TLAs appearing in *Chess Life* must be uploaded online on the 10th, two months prior to the issue cover date in which the ad is to appear. (For example, October TLAs must be uploaded no later than August 10th.) TLAs uploaded past this deadline cannot be published without special approval by US Chess.

2026 - 13th Annual Reno-

Larry Evans Memorial Open

Apr 3-5 & Apr 4-5 (3-day & 2-day schedules)

6SS; 6 Sect; Open-FIDE Rated; A Weikel Tourney

NEW LOCATION: J RESORT CASINO HOTEL, RENO, NV

Hotel Rates: Sun-Thu. $92.66; Fri-Sat. $149.41

Hotel Reservation: 1-866-386-7829, Group Code CHESS 42026

PRIZE FUND $27,500 (b/275) Gtd. $17,000

A great tournament - Yes!...But so much more...

IM John Donaldson: *"A Weikel Tournament is like a chess festival!"*

Just Look! Wed.: GM Kudrin Clock Simul/Analysis! (only $30)

Thu.: 6-7:15P Premier Chess Lecturer IM Donaldson (FREE)

7:30P GM TBA - Simul ($20); 7:30P Blitz Tourney ($25)

Sat.: 3-4:30P IM Donaldson FREE Game/Position Analysis

Plus: Trophies, Sets & boards provided, Wall charts,

5 Demo boards, Entry under $195!

Player: *"I've played all over the US: this is the best organized chess tournament I've seen."*

INFO: Email wackyykl@aol.com or Web: www.renochess.org

SEE TLA on page 55

The Atlantic City Open– *A New CCA Event!*

April 1-5, 2-5 or 3-5, 2026 (Easter Weekend), Tropicana Casino & Resort

$40,000 Guaranteed Prizes with GM and IM norms possible!

Open Section: 9 rounds, Apr 1-5, 40/80, SD/30, d30, FIDE rated.

Other sections: 7 rounds, Apr 2-5 or 3-5, 40/80, SD/30; d30 (3-day option, rds 1-2 G/60 d10). U2200 & U2000 Sections also FIDE rated.

Tropicana Casino And Resort Hotel, 2831 Boardwalk, Atlantic City, NJ 08401. Free self-parking.

In 7 sections:

Open:$5000-2500-1500-1200-1000-800-500, clear or tiebreak 1st $200 bonus, top FIDE U2300/Unr $2000-1000. 200 Grand Prix Points.

Under 2200, Under 2000, Under 1800 Sections: each $2000-1000-600-500-300-200.

Under 1600 Section: $1600-800-500-300-200-100.

Under 1400 Section::$1200-600-400-300-200-100.

Under 1100: $800-400-300-200.

FIDE ratings used in Open, **Apr. official** USCF in others. Unofficial or USCF Online Regular ratings usually used if otherwise unrated in Under 2200/below. USCF memb. required: see chessevents.us for special rates.

Mixed Doubles Bonus Prizes: Best male+female combined 2-player team scores in Rounds 1-7 among all sections: $1200-600-400-300. Teams must average under 2200, may play in different sections, register before both begin round 2.

Unrated limits: $200 U1100, $400 U1400, $500 U1600. $800 U1800. **Cannot play** below USCF Online Regular Rating - 100 points **Reentry** $100, except Open.

U1400 through U2200 Section EF: $188 at **chessaction.com** by 3/30, $210 later or at site until 1 hr before rd 1. **U1100 Section** $80 less.

Open Section EF: $218 online at **chessaction.com** by 3/30, $240 later or at site until 6 pm Wed ($500 extra in Open Section unless 2200+ USCF or 2000+ FIDE). US IMs/WGMs, foreign FIDE 2000+ in Open: $100 less, GMs, foreign IMs/WGMs in Open: free.

Seniors 65/over in Under 1400/up: $50 less. No mail entries

Foreign titled minimum prize guarantees: see **chessevents.us.**

5-day Schedule (Open Section only). reg. ends Wed 6 pm, rounds Wed 7 pm, Thu 1 pm & 7 pm, Fri 11 & 5, Sat 10 & 4, Sun 10 & 3:30.

4-day (no Open Section). reg. ends Thu 6 pm, round Thu 7 pm, Fri 11 & 5, Sat 10 & 4, Sun 10 & 3:30.

3-day (no Open Section), reg. ends Fri 10 am, rds Fri 11, 2 & 5, merges with 4-day Fri at 5 pm.

Half-point byes: OK all, limit 3, must commit before rd 3.

See chessevents.us for more rules. No checks, credit cards OK.

Bring set, board, clock if possible- none supplied.

Special Chess Hotel Rates: Sun-Thu $59, Fri $149, Sat $209, $25 extra for 3-4 in room, $10/night additional resort fee. Reserve by 3/17 or rate may go up (see **chessevents.us**) or 609-340-4000.

Email: director@chess.us.

Enter online (and see advance entry list) at**: chessaction.com.** $15 charge for refunds.

Blitz tournament Sat 9:30 pm, enter at site Sat. by 8:45 pm.

35th annual CHICAGO OPEN

May 21-25, 22-25, 23-25 or 24-25, 2026 Memorial Day Weekend- see chessevents.us

8 sections, prizes $100,000 unconditionally guaranteed!

Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel, Wheeling IL - Northwest of Chicago

Open section, 5/21-25, 9 rounds, 40/90, SD/30; d30.

U2300 through U1300 sections: 5/22-25 or 23-25: 7 rounds, 40/90, SD/30; d30 (3-day option, rds 1-2 G/90, d10). All merge and play for same prizes within the section.

Under 1000 Section, 5/24-25: 7 rounds, G/90, d10.

Open: $10000-5000-2500-1300-1000-800-600-500-400-400, clear or tiebreak first $300 bonus, top FIDE U2400/Unr $2000-1000. FIDE rated, GM and IM norms possible.

U2300, U2100, U1900, U1700 Sections: Each $5000-2500-1200-600-600-500-400-300-300-300. U2300 & U2100 sections are FIDE rated.

U1600: $4000-2000-1000-700-500-400-300-300-300-300

U1300: $3000-1500-1000-700-500-400-300-300-300-300.

U1000: $1500-600-600-400-300-200-200-100-100-100

FIDE ratings used for Open, May official USCF for others (In U2300 & below, unofficial USCF or USCF Online Regular ratings usually used if otherwise unrated; cannot play below USCF Online Regular rating - 100 points).

If any post-event Regular OTB or Regular Online rating posted 5/2025-5/2026, or current Regular Online rating, is more than 40 pts over section maximum, prize limit $600.

Under 20 games prize limits as of May 1st: U1000 $500, U1300 $1000, U1500 $1500, U1700 $2000, U1900 $2500.

Unrated prize limits: U1000 $200, U1300 $300, U1500 $400, U1700 $600, U1900 $800, U2100 $1200.

Mixed Doubles: $2000-1000-500-400-300.

Entry fee: $207 at chessaction.com by 5/19, $227 by 5/19, $250 online or at site until 1 hour before round 1. $500 more to play in Open Section unless 2300+ USCF or 2000+ FIDE. Senior 65/up in U1300 & above, $100 less, Online EF $25 less to ICA members (ilchess.org). Titled entry: see chessevents.us. Refunds, $15 service charge.

Under 1000 Section: $87 at chessaction.com by 5/19, $120 online or at site until 9 am 5/24.

Open titled minimum prizes: see chessevents.us.

6-day schedule (Open only): enter Thu to 6 pm, rds Thu 7 pm, Fri 1 & 7, Sat 11 & 5, Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 4.

4-day schedule (U2300 to U1300): enter Fri to 6, rds Fri 7, Sat 11 & 5, Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 4. No 4-Day Open.

3-day schedule (U2300 to U1300): enter Sat to 10 am, rds Sat 11, 2 & 5; Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 4. No 3-Day Open.

2-day schedule (U1000 Section only): enter Sun to 9 am, rds Sun 10, 1, 4, 7, Mon 10, 1 & 4.

1/2-pt byes: limit 3 (2 last 4 rds); must commit before rd 3.

Hotel rates: 1-4/room $139, see chessevents.us (or 800-937-8461, 847-777-8500), reserve by 5/7, may sell out before.

USCF membership required, see chessevents.us.

Bring set, board, clock if possible- none supplied. No cellphone possession during play (in bag near table OK). See chessevents.us for more rules, details and prize restrictions.

Enter online: chessaction.com. No mail entries.

$2500 guaranteed Blitz tournament, Sunday 10 pm.

ARIZONA

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147
SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls
Site: Coconino High School **Address:** 12801 N Izabel St, Flagstaff, AZ 86004 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Bill Cheney • *chessnacc@gmail.com* • 9282662122) • *nazchesscenter.org*

MARCH 6-8, 2026 — CA-S TLA# 52914
33rd annual Western Class Championships
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 10-14, 2026 — NV TLA# 52540
2026 National Open
See Nationals.

JUNE 10-11, 2026 — NV TLA# 53257
2026 U.S. Women's Open
See Nationals.

JUNE 13, 2026 — NV TLA# 52998
Walter Browne Memorial National Open Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix.

CALIFORNIA

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147
SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls
See Arizona.

MARCH 6-8, 2026 — CA-S TLA# 52914
33rd annual Western Class Championships
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MARCH 7, 2026 — CA-S TLA# 52915
10th annual Western Class Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

APRIL 11, 2026 — CA TLA# 54197
5th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Saturday Action Chess
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 12, 2026 — CA TLA# 54199
5th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Sunday Rapid Chess
See Grand Prix.

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL TLA# 53431
35th Annual Chicago Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JUNE 10-14, 2026 — NV TLA# 52540
2026 National Open
See Nationals.

JUNE 10-11, 2026 — NV TLA# 53257
2026 U.S. Women's Open
See Nationals.

JUNE 13, 2026 — NV TLA# 52998
Walter Browne Memorial National Open Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC TLA# 53577
54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD TLA# 54236
13th Annual Washington International
See Grand Prix.

COLORADO

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147
SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls
See Arizona.

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 10-11, 2026 — NV TLA# 53257
2026 U.S. Women's Open
See Nationals.

CONNECTICUT

FEB. 28-MAR. 1, 2026 — NY TLA# 52920
58th annual New York State High School Championship
See New York.

FEB. 28-MAR. 1, 2026 — NY TLA# 52921
New York State Senior Championship (With Young Adult/Middle Age Section)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MARCH 7-8, 2026 — NY TLA# 52923
58th annual New York State Scholastic Championships, OPEN TO GRADES K-8 ONLY
See New York.

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
7th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC TLA# 53577
54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

DELAWARE

MARCH 7-8, 2026 — DE TLA# 52572
Delaware State Championship New Castle County
Site: Ramada Inn **Address:** 260 Champman Road, Newark , DE 19702 **Overall Prize Fund:** See online TLA **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Delaware Chess Association • *aa.legolas@gmail.com* • **410-219-3179** • *delawarechessassociation.org*

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
7th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC TLA# 53577
54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD TLA# 54236
13th Annual Washington International
See Grand Prix.

DIST. OF COLUMBIA

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
7th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 25-29, 2026 — DC TLA# 53620
4th annual DC International (in cooperation with the DC Chess Association)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC TLA# 53577
54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections
Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel **Address:** 2500 Calvert St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 **Overall Prize Fund:** $17,000 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency: N Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

FLORIDA

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
See Nationals.

MARCH 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 54208
23rd annual Southern Class Championships
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
7th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 11, 2026 — FL TLA# 52390
2026 FSCL Super Championship Tournament
Site: Hialeah Gardens High School **Address:** 11700 Hialeah Gardens Blvd., Hialeah Gardens, FL 33018 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Florida Scholastic Chess League • *liz@fsclchess.org* • 786-755-FSCL (3725) • *fsclchess.org*

APRIL 24-26, 2026 — FL TLA# 53028
31st Space Coast Open Chess Festival
See Grand Prix.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL TLA# 53431
35th Annual Chicago Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 25-29, 2026 — DC TLA# 53620
4th annual DC International (in cooperation with the DC Chess Association)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC TLA# 53577
54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD TLA# 54236
13th Annual Washington International
See Grand Prix.

GEORGIA

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
See Nationals.

MARCH 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 54208
23rd annual Southern Class Championships
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
7th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 24-26, 2026 — FL TLA# 53028
31st Space Coast Open Chess Festival
See Grand Prix.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 25-29, 2026 — DC TLA# 53620
4th annual DC International (in cooperation with the DC Chess Association)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC TLA# 53577
54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD TLA# 54236
13th Annual Washington International
See Grand Prix.

IDAHO

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

ILLINOIS

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 6-8, 2026 — IL TLA# 50286
2026 Illinois K-8 State Championship
Site: Hyatt Regency Schaumburg **Address:** 1800 E. Golf Rd., Schaumburg, IL 60173 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency: N Org:** Glenn Panner • *glenn@chessweekend.com* • *chessweekend.com*

MARCH 20-22, 2026 — MO TLA# 52913
30th annual Mid-America Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL TLA# 53431
35th Annual Chicago Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MAY 24, 2026 — IL TLA# 53432
15th annual Chicago Open Blitz Championship!
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC TLA# 53577
54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD TLA# 54236
13th Annual Washington International
See Grand Prix.

INDIANA

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026 — IL TLA# 50285
2026 U.S. Amateur Team-North
See Nationals.

MARCH 20-22, 2026 — MO TLA# 52913
30th annual Mid-America Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL TLA# 53431
35th Annual Chicago Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MAY 24, 2026 — IL TLA# 53432
15th annual Chicago Open Blitz Championship!
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

IOWA

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026 — IL TLA# 50285
2026 U.S. Amateur Team-North
See Nationals.

KENTUCKY

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
See Nationals.

LOUISIANA

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
See Nationals.

FEBRUARY 12-16, 2026 — TX TLA# 52346
17th annual Southwest Class Championships
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

FEBRUARY 21, 2026 — LA TLA# 52339
The Baton Rouge Dual
See Grand Prix.

MARYLAND

FEB. 27-MAR. 1, 2026 — VA TLA# 52348
10th annual George Washington Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — VA TLA# 52295
George Washington Saturday 11 AM Satellite Octos
See Virginia.

APRIL 1-5, 2026 — NJ TLA# 52908
Atlantic City Open (Replaces Continental Chess Open At Foxwoods and Princeton Open, During Easter Weekend)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
7th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 25-29, 2026 — DC TLA# 53620
4th annual DC International (in cooperation with the DC Chess Association)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC TLA# 53577
54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD TLA# 54236
13th Annual Washington International
See Grand Prix.

MASSACHUSETTS

JAN. 1, 2026-WEEKLY — MA TLA# 47199
FMCA
Site: Clock Tower Center, Future Masters Chess Academy **Address:** 200 Homer Avenue, Mezzanine Level, Suite 200, Ashland, MA 01721-1716 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Future Masters Chess Academy • Info@FutureChessMasters.com • (508)622-5388 • *futurechessmasters.com*

FEB. 28-MAR. 1, 2026 — NY TLA# 52920
58th annual New York State High School Championship
See New York.

FEB. 28-MAR. 1, 2026 — NY TLA# 52921
New York State Senior Championship (With Young Adult/Middle Age Section)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MARCH 7-8, 2026 — NY TLA# 52923
58th annual New York State Scholastic Championships, OPEN TO GRADES K-8 ONLY
See New York.

MARCH 21-22, 2026 — MA TLA# 53781
BCF Spring Festival
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 1-5, 2026 — NJ TLA# 52908
Atlantic City Open (Replaces Continental Chess Open At Foxwoods and Princeton Open, During Easter Weekend)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
7th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 25-29, 2026 — DC TLA# 53620
4th annual DC International (in cooperation with the DC Chess Association)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD TLA# 54236
13th Annual Washington International
See Grand Prix.

MICHIGAN

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026 — IL TLA# 50285
2026 U.S. Amateur Team-North
See Nationals.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL TLA# 53431
35th Annual Chicago Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MAY 24, 2026 — IL TLA# 53432
15th annual Chicago Open Blitz Championship!
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD TLA# 54236
13th Annual Washington International
See Grand Prix.

MINNESOTA

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026 — IL TLA# 50285
2026 U.S. Amateur Team-North
See Nationals.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL TLA# 53431
35th Annual Chicago Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MISSISSIPPI

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
See Nationals.

MISSOURI

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026 — IL TLA# 50285
2026 U.S. Amateur Team-North
See Nationals.

MARCH 20-22, 2026 — MO TLA# 52913
30th annual Mid-America Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MARCH 21, 2026 — MO TLA# 52947
12th annual Mid-America Open Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
7th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL TLA# 53431
35th Annual Chicago Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MONTANA

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

NEBRASKA

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

NEVADA

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147
SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls
See Arizona.

MARCH 6-8, 2026 — CA-S TLA# 52914
33rd annual Western Class Championships
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

APRIL 3-5, 2026 — NV TLA# 54080
13th Annual Reno - Larry Evans Memorial Open
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 11, 2026 — CA TLA# 54197
5th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Saturday Action Chess
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 12, 2026 — CA TLA# 54199
5th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Sunday Rapid Chess
See Grand Prix.

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 10-14, 2026 — NV TLA# 52540
2026 National Open
See Nationals.

JUNE 13, 2026 — NV TLA# 52998
Walter Browne Memorial National Open Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
7th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

NEW JERSEY

FEBRUARY 22, 2026 — NJ TLA# 53223
2026 New Jersey Elementary and Junior High School Championships
Site: Brookdale Community College - Student Life Center **Address:** Arena Dr, (Park in lot #7), Lincroft, NJ 07738 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** New Jersey State Chess Federation • *tournaments@njscf.org* • *njscf.org*

FEB. 28-MAR. 1, 2026 — NY TLA# 52920
58th annual New York State High School Championship
See New York.

FEB. 28-MAR. 1, 2026 — NY TLA# 52921
New York State Senior Championship (With Young Adult/Middle Age Section)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MARCH 7-8, 2026 — NY TLA# 52923
58th annual New York State Scholastic Championships, OPEN TO GRADES K-8 ONLY
See New York.

APRIL 1-5, 2026 — NJ TLA# 52908
Atlantic City Open (Replaces Continental Chess Open At Foxwoods and Princeton Open, During Easter Weekend)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
7th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 3-5, 2026 — PA TLA# 51915
2026 World Chess Festival - Malvern
See Pennsylvania.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL TLA# 53431
35th Annual Chicago Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 25-29, 2026 — DC TLA# 53620
4th annual DC International (in cooperation with the DC Chess Association)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC TLA# 53577
54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD TLA# 54236
13th Annual Washington International
See Grand Prix.

NEW MEXICO

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147
SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls
See Arizona.

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

NEW YORK

FEBRUARY 22, 2026 — NJ TLA# 53223
2026 New Jersey Elementary and Junior High School Championships
See New Jersey..

HERITAGE EVENT • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

FEB. 28-MAR. 1, 2026 — NY **TLA# 52920**

58th annual New York State High School Championship

Site: Saratoga Hilton Hotel **Address:** 534 Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 **Overall Prize Fund:** $2,550 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency: N Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

FEB. 28-MAR. 1, 2026 — NY **TLA# 52921**

New York State Senior Championship (With Young Adult/Middle Age Section)

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 7-8, 2026 — NY **TLA# 52923**

58th annual New York State Scholastic Championships, OPEN TO GRADES K-8 ONLY

Site: Saratoga Hilton Hotel and 3 other nearby locations **Address:** Hilton Hotel: 534 Broadway; Saratoga City Center: 522 Broadway; Saratoga Courtyard Marriott: 11 Excelsior Ave, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency: N Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

APRIL 1-5, 2026 — NJ **TLA# 52908**

Atlantic City Open (Replaces Continental Chess Open At Foxwoods and Princeton Open, During Easter Weekend)

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA **TLA# 53535**

7th Colonial Open

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 3-5, 2026 — PA **TLA# 51915**

2026 World Chess Festival - Malvern

See Pennsylvania.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL **TLA# 53431**

35th Annual Chicago Open

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL **TLA# 54211**

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

See Grand Prix.

JUNE 25-29, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53620**

4th annual DC International (in cooperation with the DC Chess Association)

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53577**

54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53565**

54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD **TLA# 54236**

13th Annual Washington International

See Grand Prix.

NORTH CAROLINA

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL **TLA# 53017**

2026 US Amateur Team South

See Nationals.

FEBRUARY 8, 2026 — NC **TLA# 53624**

Dragon Knight Chess Super Bowl Sunday Grand Prix

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 15, 2026 — NC **TLA# 53625**

Dragon Knight Chess Valentine's Grand Prix

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026 — NC **TLA# 54026**

2026 Charlotte February Open

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 22, 2026 — NC **TLA# 54228**

Dragon Knight Chess Be Humble Day Grand Prix

See Grand Prix.

MARCH 8, 2026 — NC **TLA# 54229**

Dragon Knight Chess Start of Daylight Savings Grand Prix

See Grand Prix.

MARCH 15, 2026 — NC **TLA# 54230**

3rd Annual Dragon Knight Chess St. Patrick's Grand Prix

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA **TLA# 53535**

7th Colonial Open

See Grand Prix.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL **TLA# 54211**

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

See Grand Prix.

JUNE 25-29, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53620**

4th annual DC International (in cooperation with the DC Chess Association)

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53577**

54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53565**

54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

NORTH DAKOTA

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY **TLA# 52295**

2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open

See Grand Prix.

OHIO

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026 — IL **TLA# 50285**

2026 U.S. Amateur Team-North

See Grand Prix.

MARCH 20-22, 2026 — MO **TLA# 52913**

30th annual Mid-America Open

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA **TLA# 53535**

7th Colonial Open

See Grand Prix.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL **TLA# 53431**

35th Annual Chicago Open

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53577**

54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53565**

54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD **TLA# 54236**

13th Annual Washington International

See Grand Prix.

OKLAHOMA

FEBRUARY 12-16, 2026 — TX **TLA# 52346**

17th annual Southwest Class Championships

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ **TLA# 54147**

SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls

See Arizona.

OREGON

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY **TLA# 52295**

2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open

See Grand Prix.

JUNE 10-14, 2026 — NV **TLA# 52540**

2026 National Open

See Nationals.

PENNSYLVANIA

FEBRUARY 22, 2026 — NJ **TLA# 53223**

2026 New Jersey Elementary and Junior High School Championships

See New Jersey.

FEB. 27-MAR. 1, 2026 — VA **TLA# 52348**

10th annual George Washington Open

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

FEB. 28-MAR. 1, 2026 — NY **TLA# 52921**

New York State Senior Championship (With Young Adult/Middle Age Section)

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — VA **TLA# 52295**

George Washington Saturday 11 AM Satellite Octos

See Virginia.

HERITAGE EVENT • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 7-8, 2026 — PA **TLA# 53596**

2026 Pennsylvania State Scholastic Championships

Site: Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg Hershey **Address:** 4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Tom M Martinak • *martinak_tom_m@hotmail.com* • 412-908-0286 • *pscfchess.org/paschollasticchamp*

APRIL 1-5, 2026 — NJ **TLA# 52908**

Atlantic City Open (Replaces Continental Chess Open At Foxwoods and Princeton Open, During Easter Weekend)

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA **TLA# 53535**

7th Colonial Open

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 3-5, 2026 — PA **TLA# 51915**

2026 World Chess Festival - Malvern

Site: Desmond Malvern by Hilton Hotel **Address:** 1 Liberty Road, Malvern, PA 19355 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Joe Hanley • *hanleychessacademy@gmail.com* • *hanleychessacademy.com/2026WCFMalvern.html*

APRIL 4, 2026 — PA **TLA# 53599**

2026 PA State Game/29 Championship - West

See Grand Prix.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL **TLA# 53431**

35th Annual Chicago Open

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL **TLA# 54211**

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

See Grand Prix.

JUNE 25-29, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53620**

4th annual DC International (in cooperation with the DC Chess Association)

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53577**

54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53565**

54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD **TLA# 54236**

13th Annual Washington International

See Grand Prix.

PUERTO RICO

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL **TLA# 54211**

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

See Grand Prix.

RHODE ISLAND

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA **TLA# 53535**

7th Colonial Open

See Grand Prix.

SOUTH CAROLINA

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA **TLA# 53535**

7th Colonial Open

See Grand Prix.

SOUTH DAKOTA

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL **TLA# 53017**

2026 US Amateur Team South

See Nationals.

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY **TLA# 52295**

2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open

See Grand Prix.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL **TLA# 54211**

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

See Grand Prix.

TENNESSEE

DEC. 28, 2025-WEEKLY — TN **TLA# 54477**

Spring Hill Weekly Chess-Off

Site: Just Roll With It!Cards and Games **Address:** 2001 Campbell Station Pkwy Ste C11, Spring Hill, TN 37174 **Overall Prize Fund:** see online TLA **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Jared McDonald • *Jaredmcdo@gmail.com* • 9097259605

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL **TLA# 53017**

2026 US Amateur Team South

See Nationals.

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026 — TN **TLA# 53735**

4th Music City Open

See Grand Prix.

MARCH 20-22, 2026 — MO **TLA# 52913**

30th annual Mid-America Open

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA **TLA# 53535**

7th Colonial Open

See Grand Prix.

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC **TLA# 53565**

54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

TEXAS

FEBRUARY 12-16, 2026 — TX **TLA# 52346**

17th annual Southwest Class Championships

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

FEBRUARY 15, 2026 — TX **TLA# 52347**

10th annual Southwest Class Blitz Championship (Sunday Night)

See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us.*

FEBRUARY 21, 2026 — TX **TLA# 52786**

Texas Action Championship 2026

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147
SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls
See Arizona.

MARCH 13-15, 2026 — TX TLA# 54213
2026 Lone Star Open
See Grand Prix.

MARCH 20-22, 2026 — MO TLA# 52913
30th annual Mid-America Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL TLA# 53431
35th Annual Chicago Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 10-14, 2026 — NV TLA# 52540
2026 National Open
See Nationals.

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC TLA# 53577
54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

JULY 25-29, 2026 — MD TLA# 54236
13th Annual Washington International
See Grand Prix.

UTAH

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147
SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls
See Arizona.

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 10-14, 2026 — NV TLA# 52540
2026 National Open
See Nationals.

JUNE 10-11, 2026 — NV TLA# 53257
2026 U.S. Women's Open
See Nationals.

JUNE 13, 2026 — NV TLA# 52998
Walter Browne Memorial National Open Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix.

VERMONT

FEB. 28-MAR. 1, 2026 — NY TLA# 52920
58th annual New York State High School Championship
See New York.

FEB. 28-MAR. 1, 2026 — NY TLA# 52921
New York State Senior Championship (With Young Adult/Middle Age Section)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

MARCH 7-8, 2026 — NY TLA# 52923
58th annual New York State Scholastic Championships, OPEN TO GRADES K-8 ONLY
See New York.

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
7th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

VIRGINIA

FEB. 27-MAR. 1, 2026 — VA TLA# 52348
10th annual George Washington Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — VA TLA# 52398
George Washington Saturday 11 AM Satellite Octos
Site: Washington Dulles Marriott Hotel **Address:** 45020 Aviation Dr, Dulles, VA 20166 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *chesstour.com*

HERITAGE EVENT • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
MARCH 6-8, 2026 — VA TLA# 52708
2026 Virginia Scholastic & College Chess Championships
Site: Thomas Jefferson High School for S&T **Address:** 6560 Braddock Road, Alexandria, VA 22312 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** Y **Org:** Mike Hoffpauir, NTD/IA • *mhoffpauir@aol.com* • 757-846-4805 • *vachess.org*

APRIL 1-5, 2026 — NJ TLA# 52908
Atlantic City Open (Replaces Continental Chess Open At Foxwoods and Princeton Open, During Easter Weekend)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
7th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL TLA# 53431
35th Annual Chicago Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 25-29, 2026 — DC TLA# 53620
4th annual DC International (in cooperation with the DC Chess Association)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC TLA# 53577
54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

WASHINGTON

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 10-14, 2026 — NV TLA# 52540
2026 National Open
See Nationals.

WEST VIRGINIA

HERITAGE EVENT • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
MARCH 21, 2025 — WV TLA# 53693
55th Annual WV Scholastic Chess Championships
Site: Harrison County Senior Center **Address:** 500 W Main St., Clarksburg, WV 26301 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Harrison County Chess Club • *greerlaw@aol.com* • 3046419241 • *wvsca.com*

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
7th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

WISCONSIN

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026 — IL TLA# 50285
2026 U.S. Amateur Team-North
See Nationals.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL TLA# 53431
35th Annual Chicago Open
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

MAY 24, 2026 — IL TLA# 53432
15th annual Chicago Open Blitz Championship!
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
See Grand Prix.

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)
See Grand Prix or *chessevents.us*.

WYOMING

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

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201.347.2269
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207.318.4630
www.dirigochessclub.org/

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Hialeah, FL
786-755-FSCL (3725)
www.fsclchess.org/

Hamden Chess Club
Hamden, CT
203.680.8456
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Chicago, IL
773.317.8347
www.kingregistration.com/

Marshall Chess Club
New York, NY
212.477.3716
www.marshallchessclub.org

New York State Chess Association
New York, NY
646-232-3155
https://nysca.net/

Ocean State Chess Association
Riverside, R.I.
401.212.1335
oceanstatechess.com/

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San Diego, CA
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Saint Louis Chess Club
Saint Louis, MO
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saintlouischessclub.org/

Washington Chess Federation
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ICCF Server

7-Player Championship Events

2026 Golden Knights (Postal) | **2026 Electronic Knights**

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as single round robin, groupings based on order entries received. Players start in Preliminary round and qualify for Semi-final and then Final rounds based on scores in previous round. **ENTRY FEE:** $35 per entry. Players can enter up to a maximum of 10 times per event. **PRIZES:** Prize fund of $2300 based on 200 entries. $15 correspondence chess gift certificate to players knocked out in Preliminary round.

7-Player Round Robins

Victor Palciauskas Tournament (ICCF Server)

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as single round robin, groupings based on ratings. **ENTRY FEE:** $5 per entry. **PRIZES:** 1st place receives a signed certificate.

4-Player Quads

John W. Collins Memorial (Postal) | **Walter Muir E-Quads** (ICCF Server)

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as double round robin, groupings based on ratings. **ENTRY FEE:** $10 per entry. **PRIZES:** 1st place receives $25 correspondence chess gift certificate and signed certificate.

2-Player Matches (Postal or Email)

FORMAT: Players play either 2, 4, or 6 games against the same opponent. Selecting multiple options may facilitate faster pairings. Pairings based on ratings or players may name their own opponent. **ENTRY FEE:** $5 per entry. **PRIZES:** None.

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- ICCF Server events are open to all US Chess members with access to the ICCF internet based correspondence chess server and an ICCF account (free to create) in good standing.
- For events with groupings based on ratings, the following rating classes will be used:
  - o Class A: 1800 and above
  - o Class B: 1500-1999
  - o Class C: 1200-1699
  - o Class D: 1399 and below
- If you do not have an existing correspondence rating, please estimate your playing strength when submitting your entry.
- Correspondence chess gift certificate prizes can be used on correspondence chess entries only. They cannot be used for membership renewals or at US Chess Sales.

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Name_____ USCHESSID#_____ Est.Rating_____ Phone_____

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☐ Golden Knights EF: $35 ☐ Electronic Knights EF: $35 | ☐ Palciauskas ICCF EF: $5 | ☐ Muir ICCF Quad EF: $10 ☐ Collins Quad EF: $10 | 2-player matches, EF: $5 per entry, see above for options Postal Match: 2 ☐ | 4 ☐ | 6 ☐ Email Match: 2 ☐ | 4 ☐ | 6 ☐

☐ Check here if you do not wish to have an opponent who is incarcerated (note that this may slow down your assignment).

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Solutions

PAGE 13 CHESS TO ENJOY

PROBLEM 1. 28. Rg8+!, Black resigned because of 28. … Rxg8 29. Nf7 mate. **PROBLEM 2.** The game went **52. … Qf5+! 53. Kc4 Qb1!, White resigned.** There's no way to stop 54. … Qb5 mate. If 53. Kd2 Nf1+. **PROBLEM 3.** Black resigned after **27. Nxg7!** If he takes on g7, White plays 28. Qc3!. **PROBLEM 4. 23. Qd5+! Kh8 24. Qf7!, Black resigned. PROBLEM 5. 20. Rxe5+! Qxe5 21. Qf7+ Kd8 22. Qc7+ Ke8 23. d7+, Black resigned.** If 20. … Kd8 21. Qxc5, threatening 22. Qc7+ and mates. **PROBLEM 6. 23. g4! Bc2 24. Be4+ Bxe4 25. Rxd6+!, Black resigned** in view of 25. … Qxd6 26. Qh5+ (or *26. Nxe4*) 26. ... Kf6 27. Nxe4+ and 28. Nxd6.

PAGE 43 MAKE YOUR MOVE!

TACTIC 1. 27. Rc7! Boom! **Black resigned.** After 27. … Qxc7 28. Qxd5+, Black loses the rook on a8, leaving White a piece up. Rapport – Supi, FIDE World Cup 2025. **TACTIC 2. 26. Nxd4!** After this capture, Black's carefully staged defense of the back rank collapses, and material losses follow. **26. ... Re7** Both 26. … Nxd4 and 26. … Bxd4 are also met by 27. Rc8+ with mate on the back rank. **27. Rc8+, Black resigned**. Svane – Mamedov, FIDE World Cup 2025. **TACTIC 3. 30. ... Ng5!** Before this move, it looked like White was doing OK: The bishop on d4 points at g7 and the pawn on b6 could have become a strong asset. But now White's position collapses rapidly. **31. Bb2** The alternatives also do not work out for White, e.g., 31. Qc5 Qe4! 32. Ne1 Kh7 33. Qc4 (or *33. Qe5 Qxe5 34. Bxe5 Nxe3*) 33. ... Rb2 34. Rf4 Rxg2+! 35. Nxg2 Nh3+ 36. Kf1 Nxf4, and Black wins. **31. ... Nxe3! 32. Bxg7** Or 32. Rf2 Qd1+ and Black wins. **32. ... Nxf3+ 33. Rxf3 Rxg2+, White resigned**; Black forces mate in a few moves. Tin Jingyao – Sevian, FIDE World Cup 2025. **TACTIC 4. 21. Ne5!** Not White's only good move, but by far the strongest. **21. ... Be6** Or 21. … Be8 22. a4 Na7 23. Nxg6! and White wins. **22. a4 g5** After 22. … Nd6 or 22. … Na7, White wins with 23. Nxg6. **23. Qg3 Na7 24. Bc2!** A nasty little move that prepares Qg3-d3-h7 mate. **24. ... Bf8 25. Qd3! f6 26. Qg6+** Or 26. Bd4 Qg7 27. Ng6 Bf7 28. Nxf8 Kxf8 29. Qf5 and Black's position falls apart. **26. ... Qg7** Black can't play 26. … Bg7 on account of 27. Qh7 mate, but after the text move, Black's position falls apart. **27. Bxa7 Rxa7 28. Nxc6 Qxg6 29. Bxg6 Rg7 30. Rxe6 Rxg6 31. Nd4, Black resigned.** Blohberger – Lupulescu, FIDE World Cup 2025. **TACTIC 5. 25. Rg4+!** White has sacrificed a piece, but Black's king position is very drafty, and the black pieces are poorly coordinated. The text move sacrifices a further Exchange to launch a decisive attack. **25. ... Nxg4** If 25. … Kh8, White wins back the piece with 26. Rxg3 while retaining the attack. One pretty line is 26. ... Rg8 27. Qd4 Rxg3 28. Qxf6+ Rg7 29. Rg1 Qf8, and now, the only move to win is the "quiet" 30. d7!!, when Black's queen cannot simultaneously defend the d8-square and the rook on g7; White ends up with an extra piece or maybe even more. **26. Qxg4+ Kh8 27. Qd4+ f6 28. Qd2!** The only winning move! **28. ... Rf7** Or 28. … Kg7 29. Re7+ and Black gets mated. **29. Bxf7 Kg7** 29. … Qf8 30. Re7 also wins for White. **30. Qd3!, Black resigned.** A beautiful conclusion! Aronian – Aronyak, FIDE World Cup 2025. **TACTIC 6. 17. Qxe4! Bxe3** Or 17. … Bxb2 18. Qxb7 Qxe6 19. Qxa8+ Kf7 20. Qxa7 and White wins, but not 20. Qxh8?? Nf3+ and Black survives. **18. Bf7+!!** Boom! The only winning move! **18. ... Kxf7 19. fxe3** White wins Black's queen and gets a decisive advantage. Securing the full point only took a few extra moves. **19. ... Rhe8 20. Qxb7 Qxf1+ 21. Rxf1+ Kg8 22. Qxc7 a5 23. a4 Rad8 24. Qxa5 Nc4 25. Qc3 Nd2 26. Rd1, Black resigned.** Wei Yi – Piorun, FIDE World Cup 2025. **TACTIC 7. 18. Ba6!** White could also play 18. a4 or 18. b5 but the text move is much stronger. **18. ... c6 19. b5! c5** Or 19. … bxa6 20. bxc6 Qe6 21. d5 Qf7 22. Qd3 with a lethal attack against Black's king. **20. b6!** The hits keep coming! **20. ... bxa6** Or 20. … axb6 21. Rxb6 e4 22. Qe2 and White wins. **21. bxa7** White would also win after 21. dxc5 or 21. dxe5 fxe5 22. Qa8+ Bb8 23. Rxe5. **21. ... Qxa7 22. Qc6+ Bc7** If 22. … Qc7, then 23. Qxa6+ wins for White. **23. Qe6+ Rd7 24. dxc5!** The only winning move! The threat, of course, is c5-c6. **24. ... Qxc5 25. Qxa6+ Kd8 26. Qa8+, Black resigned.** Esipenko – Abasov, FIDE World Cup 2025. **TACTIC 8. 27. Bh3!!** An incredibly strong move and very difficult to find. White missed it in the game and after inaccuracies on both sides, Black won. **27. ... Bd7** Or 27. … Qb7 28. Qg2 (*28. Qf4 Rc5 29. Rh4* also wins for White) 28. … Qf7 29. Qg4 Rc5 30. Rh4 Be7 31. Rf1 Bxc2+ 32. Ka1 and White wins. **28. Rh1 Qe3 29. Rh8+!** Boom! **29. ... Kf7 30. Bxc3** and White wins. Tran Thanh Tu – AR Salem, FIDE World Cup 2025 (analysis). **TACTIC 9. 18. Rxe3!!** White has already sacrificed his queen and now throws more material on the fire. **18. ... dxe3+ 19. Bxe3 Rxf3+** Or 19. … Qxb2 20. Bg5+ Rf6 (Not *20. … Ke6?? 21. Bc4 mate*) 21. Re1!! Qb6+ 22. Kf1 Kf8 23. exf6 Qxd6 24. Nh4 and White is winning. **20. Kxf3 Qxb2 21. Bg5+ Ke6 22. Re1** White also wins after 22. Bc4+ Kxe5 23. Rd1 Qc3+ 24. Kg4 Qd4+ 25. Rxd4 Kxd4 26. Bd3. **22. ... b5 23. Bf5+ Kd5 24. Be4+ Ke6 25. Bxa8.** White has a decisive advantage and soon won: **25. ... Qc3+ 26. Re3 Qxc2 27. Be4 Qd1+ 28. Kg3 Qh5 29. h4, Black resigned.** Harikrishna – Nesterov, FIDE World Cup 2025.

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PROBLEM 1. Black is upended in 2: **1. Qh5+ Rf7 2. Rg8 mate. PROBLEM 2.** Black is diagonalized in 2: **1. Qxb7+ Kxb7 2. Bc6 mate. PROBLEM 3.** Black is doubled over in 2: **1. Bb5+ Kd8 2. Qe8 mate**. **PROBLEM 4.** Black is squished in 2: **1. Qf5+ Kxf5** (if *1. … Ke7 2. Qd7 mate*) **2. Bd7 mate**. **PROBLEM 5.** Black is bounced in 2: **1. Qcxc7+ Nxc7 2. Qd8 mate. PROBLEM 6.** Black's eliminated in 2: **1. Qf5+ Kg8 2. Qe6 mate**.

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MARK CAPRON

EDITOR, TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR, DRUMMER



I STARTED PLAYING CHESS when I was very young, then found out about organized chess while in high school. I joined US Chess and played correspondence chess (which I still play regularly today), achieving an expert rating. After a few OTB tournaments, I won the Iowa Junior and then the Iowa Reserve Championship. But most of my chess success has been away from the board.

At one of my junior events, Roger Gotschall convinced me to become a club-level tournament director. I learned many directing skills from Roger and John Osness (the "Iowa Chess Man"), and I am now a senior-level director for US Chess and a FIDE national arbiter. My biggest claim to fame is the Iowa Open Tournament, which regularly draws more than 150 players from many states.

I edited the *Iowa Chess News En Passant* for 17 years, and in 2021 I became the editor of *The Chess Journalist*. I served on the board of the Iowa State Chess Association for 24 years and was inducted into the Iowa Chess Hall of Fame in 2023.

I worked as a chemist, managing a quality control lab for many years, but recently was lucky enough to retire. I now split my time between my two grandchildren, playing drums in my band Juniper Street, teaching chess to kids in K-6, and editing *The Chess Journalist*.

The 1995 Ames Chess Festival started out with a bang for me — I was able to knock off my first expert! As the game progressed, I felt like I was doing well, and the amount of time my opponent was taking gave me more confidence. Then I saw "my best move" and took it at move 32.

SCOTCH GAME (C45)

Mark Capron (1471)
Ilya Karasik (2185)
Ames Chess Festival XI (1), Ames, 11.04.1995

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 exd4 4. Nxd4 Qh4 5. Nc3! Bb4 6. Qd3?
IM Gary Lane in his book *Winning With the Scotch* gives 6. Be2 Qxe4 7. Nb5 Nf6 8. 0-0! Bxc3 9. bxc3 Kd8 10. Be3 Re8 as the main line, with ideas of a white sacrifice on d6.

6. ... Nge7?
6. ... Bxc3+ must be stronger.

7. Nf3 Qh5 8. Bd2 Ne5?
Around here I realized my opponent only played the 4. ... Qh4 line to get me out of book and didn't really know how to play this, which put us on even ground.

9. Nxe5 Qxe5 10. 0-0-0 0-0 11. Nd5?
This throws away my advantage.

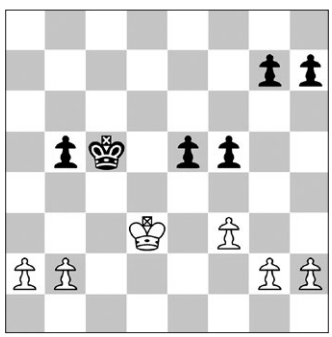
11. ... Nxd5 12. Qxd5 Bxd2+ 13. Rxd2 Qxd5 14. exd5 d6 15. Bb5 a6 16. Ba4 b5 17. Bb3 Re8 18. Kd1 Bb7 19. Re1 Kf8 20. f3 Re5 21. Rxe5 dxe5 22. d6!
Now my pawn majority will be the smaller of the two, and should produce a passed pawn quicker!

22. ... cxd6 23. Rxd6 Ke7 24. Rd3 f5 25. Bd5 Bxd5 26. Rxd5 Rd8 27. Rxd8 Kxd8 28. Kd2 Kd7 29. Kd3 Kd6 30. c4 Kc5 31. cxb5 axb5?
This loses. The engine says 31. ... Kxb5 holds the draw.

(see diagram top of next column)

And now **My Best Move**:

32. g4



POSITION AFTER 31. ... axb5

The reality is that this move draws; White can't really make progress after 32. ... g6 33. Kc3 h5 or 33. g5 Kb4.

There is a win after 32. a3!. The idea is to create an outside passer with b2-b3 followed by a3-a4, but while keeping the black king from getting to the fourth rank. There's a trick here: 32. ... e4+ 33. fxe4 fxe4+ and if 34. Kxe4 Kc4 35. Ke3 Kb3 36. Kd4 Kxb2 37. Kc5 Kxa3 and it's a draw. White has to play 34. Kc3! e3 35. Kd3 and the king gets back in time after 35. ... e2 36. Kxe2 Kd4 37. Kd2 Kc4 38. Kc2.

But part of the reason this is my best move is that I added the complication of a draw offer with the move. Ilya kept thinking and thinking until ... **Black lost on time.**

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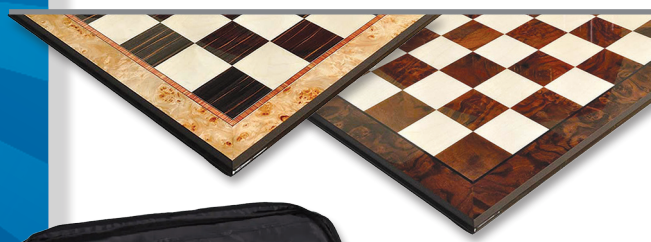
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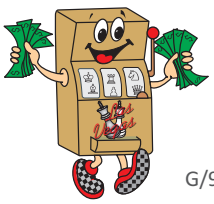
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