

FIROUZJA SWEEPS IN STL ■ DORTMUND ■ OLYMPIAD GEMS

CHESSLIFE

JANUARY 2025 ■ USChess.org

#18

At age 18,
Gukesh goes
the distance
to become the
18th World
Champion

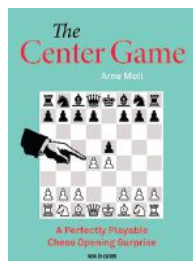




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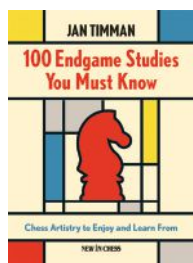
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The Center Game

Arne Moll

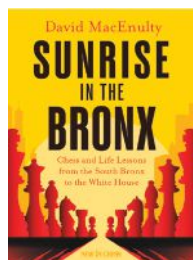
A great opening for club players. White starts with a center push, develops quickly, looks for opposite castling, and launches an attack. The setup will feel familiar in no time. The engines show that it is both sound and correct, and at least as good as the Ruy Lopez and the Italian. You'll get a position that you know well, but quite often will be new to Black.



Chess artistry to enjoy and learn from

Jan Timman

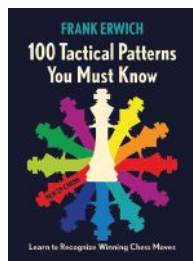
Perhaps the greatest beauty in chess can be found in endgame studies. Delightful twists and turns on the board are combined into true works of art. Chess is distilled to its purest form, with all pieces making only the essential moves. Jan Timman guides you through masterpieces of increasing difficulty. You will be amazed at the possibilities of chess and inspired to add more finesse to your own endgame play.



Chess and Life Lessons

David MacEnulty

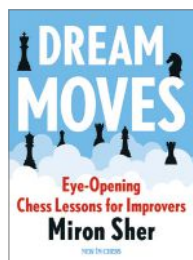
David MacEnulty dared to dream big. In the 1990s he became a pioneer of chess in the public schools of the Bronx. The obstacles were formidable – poverty, crime, racism, and ignorance. Yet, MacEnulty and his students defied all expectations. In *Sunrise in the Bronx*, MacEnulty describes his transformative journey from fumbling substitute teacher to legendary chess coach.



100 Tactical Patterns You Must Know

Frank Erwich

The long-awaited middlegame companion to the bestseller *100 Endgames You Must Know*. Experienced chess trainer Frank Erwich teaches the most frequent and easy-to-learn tactical patterns. The book offers clear, concise, and easy-to-follow chess tactics instruction, ideal for post-beginners, club players, and candidate masters.



Eye-Opening Lessons for Improvers

Miron Sher

Legendary chess coach Miron Sher, who trained GMs Robert Hess and Fabiano Caruana, collected hundreds of instructive positions for his students. This book focuses on five topics that Sher considered important for chess improvement, including Dream Moves. If you can dream about the final, decisive move that leads to a winning position, you will find your way there.

King's Anti-Sicilians for Black

Daniel King

This manual completes the Black repertoire that uses the Sicilian Kalashnikov. But everyone playing 1...c5 has to be ready when White avoids the Open Sicilian. King gives you the answer to all of the Anti-Sicilians, including the Rossolimo, the Alapin and the Grand Prix Attack. Less frequent variations such as the Morra and the Wing Gambit, are covered as well.

A complete and easy-to-learn guide

Christof Sielecki

A compact and easy-to-learn opening repertoire for White, starting with 1.e4 and a similar repertoire for Black. For beginners and improvers, there is probably no better guide than Christof Sielecki, who has already published four opening books and more than a dozen courses on the Chessable platform. He knows exactly what his students need and has indeed received thousands of five-star ratings.

Valuable lessons for every chess player

Jesús de la Villa

Jesús de la Villa (1958), the author of the international bestseller *100 Endgames You Must Know*, loves this quote from the American First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt: 'Learn from the errors of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself.' For his new book, he has carefully selected the 50 mistakes every player should be aware of – so the mistake can be avoided.

Capablanca's endgame technique

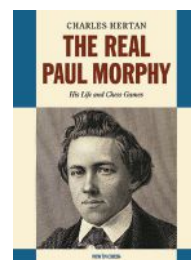
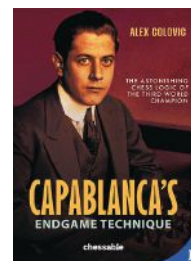
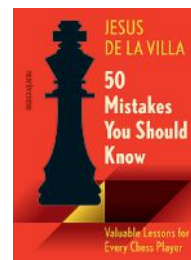
Alex Colovic

Although Jose Raul Capablanca was the World Chess Champion a century ago, his games remain among the most interesting to study. The clear logic and simplicity of his moves inspired other great players such as Mikhail Botvinnik and Bobby Fischer. And the clarity of his play will boost the confidence of any chess student.

Life and games of Paul Morphy

Charles Hertan

A comprehensive modern biography that delves deep into Morphy's fascinating career, unearthing new information about his origins, intertwined with an in-depth exploration of his games, often overturning more than 160 years of previous analysis. Hertan uses his experience as a professional psychotherapist to shed new light on Morphy's tragic mental deterioration and also examines the state of chess before Morphy.



Free Ground Shipping On All Books, Software and DVDS at US Chess Sales
\$25.00 Minimum - Excludes Clearance, Shopworn and Items Otherwise Marked



ON THE COVER

Did you stay up late (or get up early) to watch the games live? We did.

The 2024 World Championship match between Ding Liren and Gukesh Dommaraju was an entertaining battle that kept fans on the edge of their seats. Magnanimous in victory, Gukesh was a deserving winner, and his future looks very bright indeed.

PHOTOGRAPH BY **ENG CHIN AN**

CHESSLIFE *January*

16 EVENTS SINQUEFIELD CUP *A Sweep in St. Louis*

GM Alireza Firouzja wins the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz and the Sinquefield Cup — and wraps up the Grand Chess Tour in the process.

BY WGM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN

24 GAMES WOMEN'S OLYMPIAD *Hidden Gems*

The Women's Olympiad saw tremendous tactics and sharp endings.

BY JOHN HARTMANN

32 COVER STORY **NUMBER 18**

At age 18, Gukesh goes the distance to become the 18th World Champion.

BY RICK MASSIMO
ANNOTATIONS BY WGM TATEV
ABRAHAMYAN AND GM JOEL
BENJAMIN

47 EVENTS SPARKASSEN CHESS FESTIVAL *Another Rung on the Ladder*

IM Nico Zwiers tops 13 GMs to win 2024 Sparkassen Chess Festival
BY RICK MASSIMO
ANNOTATIONS BY IM NICO ZWIERS

Fig 1



Fig 2



Fig 3



Fig 4



Fig 5



Fig 6



Fig 7



Paws & Pawns
Exploring
Animal Chess Sets

Fig 1: Franz Bergman, Pig Set, Late 19th or early 20th century, Collection of Jon Crumiller; Fig 2: Unknown Japanese artist, Bird Set, c. 1900, Collection of Jon Crumiller; Fig 3: Franz Bergman, Dog Set, Late 19th or early 20th century, Collection of Jon Crumiller; Fig 4: Jordan, Pandas' World, c. late 1990s or early 2000s, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, formerly collection of Israel and Remi Raphaelli, Garden State Chess, NJ USA; Fig 5: Artist unknown, Animalier Chess Set, Early to mid-20th century, Collection of Jon Crumiller; Fig 6: Artist unknown, Dogs vs. Cats, Date unknown, Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame; Fig 7: Rachel Brennan, Sea Life Chess Set, 2024, Courtesy of Rachel Brennan



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**ON VIEW JAN 30
THROUGH AUG 31, 2025**

Paws and Pawns: Exploring Animal Chess Sets displays a menagerie of animal-themed chess sets from around the world, demonstrating the enduring appeal of the animal kingdom to chess artists. Many of these are from the collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, while others are on loan from artists, members of Chess Collectors International, and local collectors.

The mission of the World Chess Hall of Fame is to educate visitors, fans, players, and scholars by preserving, exhibiting and interpreting the game of chess and its continuing cultural and artistic significance.

The Museum does not discriminate or permit harassment or discrimination on the basis of gender, race, color, national and ethnic origin in the treatment of individuals with respect to employment, or admission or access to Museum facilities, programs or activities.

COLUMNS

10 CHESS TO ENJOY

ENTERTAINMENT

Manual Mistakes

BY GM ANDY SOLTIS

12 GETTING TO WORK

INSTRUCTION

Backward Moves

BY WGM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN

14 SOLITAIRE CHESS

INSTRUCTION

Chess in the Slow Lane

BY BRUCE PANDOLFINI

31 PUZZLES

MAKE YOUR MOVE!

BY FM CARSTEN HANSEN

52 ENDGAME SCHOOL

INSTRUCTION

Olympic Trials

BY GM JOEL BENJAMIN

54 BOOKS AND BEYOND

SHOULD I BUY IT?

Thinking Differently

BY IM JOHN WATSON



24



DEPARTMENTS

5 COUNTERPLAY

READERS RESPOND

6 FIRST MOVES

CHESS NEWS FROM
AROUND THE U.S.

8 US CHESS AFFAIRS

NEWS FOR OUR MEMBERS

56 TOURNAMENT LIFE

62 CLASSIFIEDS

63 SOLUTIONS



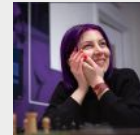
47

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RICK MASSIMO

(World Championship, Dortmund) is the assistant editor for US Chess publications. He's the author of two books; he's also working on a novel about a fictional ex-Soviet master, and he lives in Washington, D.C.



WGM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN

(Sinquefeld, World Championship) is an Armenian-American woman

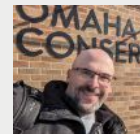
grandmaster. After moving to the United States in 2001, she has been a regular participant in U.S. Women's Championships and a stalwart member of our international teams. In 2023 she won the "Best Column" award from the Chess Journalists of America.



GM JOEL BENJAMIN

(World Championship) is a grandmaster and a three-time U.S. Champion. He was a consultant for IBM,

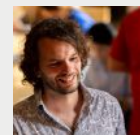
training Deep Blue before the famous 1997 match with GM Garry Kasparov, and in recent years has turned his attention to the world of chess books. He has six titles to his name, including his latest book, *Chessboard Combat: The Give and Take of Chess Tactics*. He was elected to the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame in 2008.



JOHN HARTMANN

(Hidden Gems) is the editor of *Chess Life* and *Chess Life Kids*. He will be dropping a new podcast series

for US Chess in 2025, and he is excited to return to USATE once again in February. In his "free time" he is learning to play the piano.



IM NICO ZWIRS

(Dortmund) is an international master from Amsterdam. In 2022, he shared first at the Cappelle-la-

Grande Open, but his victory at Dortmund was the biggest win of his career thus far. Visit his Lichess page for coaching and contact info: lichess.org/coach/FirstKnight.

2025

World Amateur Team & U.S. Amateur Team Championship East

Welcome to the country's favorite event!



February 15-17

Parsippany Hilton

1 Hilton Court

Parsippany, NJ 07054

Open to four-player teams with one optional alternate. Team average must be under 2200 (four highest ratings from 2025 January rating list used for ALL players — no exceptions). Teams rated over 2000 average — no more than 1000 points between boards 3 and 4. No more than two GMs on a team.

Time Control: 6SS, 40/100, SD/30 delay 5. **Rds.:** 1-7:30 Sat., 11-6 Sun., 9-3:30 Mon.

Registration: Online registration opens December 1st at official website www.njscf.org. Advance registration only — no on-site registration.

EF: \$275 online only by 1/15/25; ALL \$335 after. All teams: any changes at site or after entering — \$30 charge. **ENTRY MAXIMUM IS 325 TEAMS.** Enter early!

TEAM PRIZES: 1-5th place teams, plaque and 4 digital clocks; Top team (Denis Barry Award) U2100, 2000, 1900, 1800, 1700, 1600, 1500, 1400, 1300, 1200, 1000, each plaque and 4 digital clocks; Top college (same school), 4 digital clocks & plaque; Top high school (grades 9-12 same school), Top middle school (grades 5-9 same school), Top elementary school (grades K-6 same school), Top 2 scholastic teams (mixed schools okay) (Collins Award), Top mixed doubles (2 males, 2 females, no alternates), Top seniors (all players over age 50), Top military, each plaque & 4 digital clocks; Top company (full time only, same employer, noneducational), Top coaches (educational), Top all female, Top family (4 family members), Top

state (CT, DE, MD, MA, NJ, NY (Benjamin Award), PA, VA), each plaque; Top future team (all players under age 10), Top military college, Top parent/child (2 pairs, one parent, one child), each special plaque.

ADDITIONAL PRIZES: Best Player 1-4 and top alternate, all 6-0 scores, each digital clock. Biggest individual upset each round, engraved Cross pen. Entry fee refunded Sunday night to team with best "chess related" name. Best "chess related costumes or gimmick," 1st — gourmet dinner for 4. 2nd — gourmet dinner for 4. Surprises and special giveaways each round.

HR: See link to reserve room at www.njscf.org. Chess rates expire 1/17/2025.

Tournament Director NTD/IA: E. Steven Doyle (50 years) **Sunday night:** Bughouse \$25 per team. Cash prizes.



For help forming teams contact Worldamateurtteam@njscf.org
Visit new.uschess.org/2025-world-amateur-team-us-team-east for more details.





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U.S. CHESS TRUST

**Youngest-Ever USA
Female to Earn the IM Title!**

Alice Lee

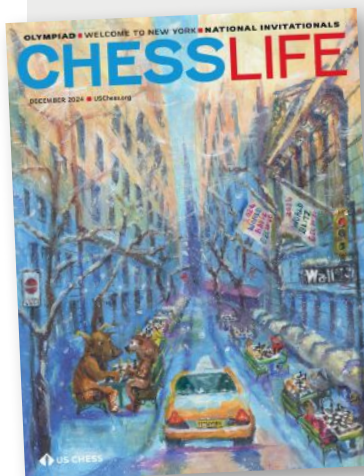
"I'd like to thank the U.S. Chess Trust for their support in my chess career. I have had the honor of receiving the prestigious Samford Fellowship, which has given me encouragement and support for my chess."



US CHESS TRUST
www.uschesstrust.org

The Trust is a separate 501(c)(3) organization operating independently of US Chess.

COUNTERPLAY



Double approval

I thought the cover for the December issue was fantastic. Even my wife liked it, and that's saying a lot!

Mike Vuolo
Via Facebook

John Hartmann responds:

Thanks! Our art director Natasha Roberts went the extra mile with the artist to make sure it was just what we wanted!

Annotate that!

I liked the Soltis column (November 2024) on blunders, and of course I agree that you need to punish your opponent for their mistakes. One question though: What is the correct annotation for failing to play mate in one?

Lawrence Cohen
Via email

John Hartmann responds:

This is not a question I've ever considered. Isn't the joy of unexpected victory (or, in my case, the pain of deserved defeat) sufficient?

Could it be?

I enjoyed the "My Best Move" column in the October issue, as I too am an ordinary chess

player! However, something else struck my eye — the opponent.

I am a retired statistics professor and I. J. Good is a name familiar to many in my field. I rate him among the ten greatest statisticians of all time. Could this be the very same I. J. Good that Paul Montague faced?

I put on my Sherlock Holmes cap and visited Wikipedia.

1) Dr. Good would have been 55 at that time and I. J. Good is not a common name.

2) The tournament was at Virginia Tech. Dr. Good was indeed a professor at Virginia Tech at that time.

3) Per *The Times*, Dr. Good humorously reported his research areas as "computing, statistics, and chess." In fact he has published much on computing, statistics, and their connections, but I was blissfully unaware of his interest in chess until just now. Good for him!

Three coincidences make a pattern, and I have great confidence his opponent was the distinguished Dr. Good. Just a bit of trivia many of our more mathematical or statistical readers might find entertaining.

Dr. DeWayne Derryberry
Via email

John Hartmann responds:

I sent Paul Montague your query, and when he saw the photo of Good on Wikipedia, he thought it likely your deduction was correct. Well done!

Errata:

In our October coverage of the World Senior Teams, we said that Elizabeth Shaughnessy had played in the 2023 U.S. Senior Women's Championship. In fact, she was the organizer, and not a participant.

We apologize to Shaughnessy and article author Julie O'Neill for our error.

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

National Chess Week Remind

National Recognition for Olympiad Teams and More

BY JJ LANG

N

ATIONAL CHESS WEEK WAS observed beginning Oct. 5 and culminating in National Chess Day, Oct. 12. At least 49 tournaments were held across the U.S. that week, and tournaments with National Chess Day, National Chess Week, NCD, or NCW as part of the tournament name combined to host 2,979 players and tens of thousands of rated games. Events ranged all over the country, including in some places where there aren't generally a lot of tournaments, and some of the organizers sent descriptions and pictures.

VIRGINIA IS FOR CHESS LOVERS

The Hampton Roads Chess Association, in Virginia, held a Rookie Training Camp Oct. 7 at the Virginia Beach Central Library,



featuring a morning orientation session on rules, tournament procedures and notation, followed by a practice game and lunch, then a four-round Swiss in the afternoon. Tina Schweiss, the co-founder and executive director, writes, "Monday was a Staff Day for the local public schools, so we created the event to help parents who needed to work: It was popular and maxed out the capacity of the space with 48 kids."

The Hampton Roads association wasn't finished, holding a National Chess Day quick tournament at the MacArthur Center, in Norfolk. That drew 95 players, including those in non-rated Rookie sections, Schweiss writes: "Other members of the public walked up and played some casual chess, and the kids enjoyed variation games in the back between rounds." The tournament was the association's annual fundraiser, and thanks to a sponsor who covered the expenses, the tournament raised nearly \$3,000 for children and adults to put toward class tuition, entry fees, and tournament travel.

EVERYTHING'S BIGGER IN TEXAS

The Houston Scholastic Chess Association hosted a one-day scholastic with 314 players



Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 118th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 170

WASHINGTON, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2024

No. 155

House of Representatives

CELEBRATING U.S. CHESS OLYMPIAD TEAMS DURING NATIONAL CHESS WEEK
HON. JAMIE RASKIN

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate National Chess Week and recognize the remarkable accomplishments of this year's U.S. Chess Olympiad teams, who recently traveled to Budapest, Hungary. Across the country, chess players young and old gather in parks, coffee shops, schools, and dorm rooms to analyze legendary games between grandmasters, play rapid games, and forge lasting friendships.

As a chess enthusiast who has loved the game since elementary school, I have come to understand and appreciate that chess is not just a tremendous passion for millions of people, but a universal language and a powerful tool for the education of young people. Chess stirs and fortifies every player's emotional, psychological, and intellectual development.

Widely considered to be the pinnacle of international chess, the Chess Olympiad is a biennial competition organized by the World Chess Federation where teams from all over the world gather to compete. This September, the 45th Chess Olympiad was held in Budapest, Hungary, with 188 nations and territories competing in the Open section and 169 teams in the Women's competition—both record turnouts.

In just the second time in almost 70 years, both U.S. teams medaled. Teammates Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana, Grandmaster Wesley So, Grandmaster Levon Aronian, Grandmaster Levon Aronian, Grandmaster Ray Robson, team captain International Master John Donaldson, and coach Grandmaster Mikhail Antipov secured a silver medal in the Open competition.

Their colleagues on the U.S. Women's team, International Master Guimkhbegim Tokhirjonova, International Master Carissa Yip, Grandmaster Irina Krush, International Master Alice Lee, International Master Anna Zatonskih, team captain Grandmaster Motikhet Khachiyan and coach Grandmaster Alexander Onischuk, took the bronze. Each of these remarkable chess players embodies the mission of U.S. Chess to "empower people, enrich lives, and enhance communities through chess." I have no doubt that the members of this year's U.S. teams will inspire future generations to excel at chess and to spread love of the game.

In my district, the U.S. Chess Center, established in beautiful Silver Spring, has shared chess with 40,000 students at over 150 schools across the National Capital Region. Former world champion and Grandmaster Garry Kasparov, perhaps the greatest chess player who has ever lived, played a significant role in encouraging the creation of this vibrant institution and made short work of the 119th District's United States Representative when we played, although it was still a great experience. Nearby, the recently established D.C. Chess Association promotes the joy of chess across our Nation's Capital.

Mr. Speaker, chess is for everyone to play and enjoy. During this National Chess Week, we invite Americans of all backgrounds and abilities to experience the timeless magic and strategic beauty of chess, and I again congratulate both U.S. Chess Olympiad teams on their historic achievements. May their continued success inspire generations of future champions.

across 14 sections on National Chess Day, Oct. 12. The previous weekend, a number of events from elsewhere around Texas — including 284 players from Dark Knights Chess Club's Edinburg event, United Warriors Chess Club's event in Combes with 238 players and Rocks & Rooks Chess Club's Austin event with 177 players — brought the total number of Texas tournament participants to 1,113!

FAR AND WIDE

There were plenty of events in chess meccas such as New York and Florida, but several tournaments from less populous areas stood out. First, the Alaska Arctic Chess



Club's tournament in Soldotna was just the ninth Alaskan tournament held this calendar year and — with 33 participants — the state's largest.

Speaking of tournaments in less populous states ...

FAMILIAR NAMES IN NEW PLACES

IM Justin Sarkar won the Fargo Chess Club's North Dakota Open with a 5½/6 score. Of the 33 participants, Sarkar was the only player rated over 2000! This was the New Yorker's 1,927th tournament, and first in North Dakota. Congratulations to Sarkar and a tip of the hat to Ryan Deering, who was the only player to take a half-point off Sarkar.

One week prior and roughly 740 miles away, GM Varuzhan Akobian won the Montana Chess Association's Chinook Open, in Great Falls. This was Akobian's first tournament in Montana and, like Sarkar, he was the only player rated over 2000 in the event. Akobian took clear first with a 4½/5 score, winning his first four games before taking a last-round bye. For players in both events, this was likely a rare opportunity to play such strong and experienced opposition!

ARMED FORCES OPEN

The 65th Annual Armed Forces Open was also held over the holiday weekend, Oct. 12-14, in Annapolis, Md. The event was open

to all current, retired, and former members of the U.S. Military, Coast Guard, and other uniformed federal services, as well as midshipmen/cadets attending one of the nation's military academies or a university where they are enrolled in an ROTC program. See Vladimir Lionter's report next month for all the details!

ON THE RECORD

As reported last month, the U.S. Olympiad teams set an American record for the best-ever joint finish. After 11 grueling rounds at the 45th FIDE Chess Olympiad — held Sept. 10-23 in Budapest, Hungary — Team USA boasted a silver medal finish in the Open and bronze in the Women's event. This was the Women's team's first podium finish in 16 years, after finishing just shy of a medal on tiebreaks in 2022.

But on the eve of National Chess Day, the Olympiad teams entered another kind of record book: U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin, of Maryland, introduced a resolution on the House floor on Friday, Oct. 11, recognizing the accomplishments of both American teams. The well-deserved accolades are now a matter of congressional record! ♦

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



PHOTO: COURTESY HRCA

REGISTER TO VOTE:

2025 US Chess Elections

US CHESS WILL HOLD AN ELECTION IN 2025 FOR FOUR AT-large positions on the US Chess Executive Board. For full details, please refer to the Call for Nominations published in the October and December 2024 issues of *Chess Life*. (Note: The nominating deadline was Dec. 31, 2024.)

If you are a US Chess member 16 or older (active as of June 1, 2025) whose membership expires on or after June 30 of the election year, you are eligible to vote in the election for Executive Board members. You must also have a US Chess membership of at least one year's duration. To vote, you must first register by June 1, 2025.

Visit new.uschess.org/registered-voters to see whether you are registered to vote, or log in to the US Chess website, where your voter status is easily seen on your profile dashboard.

To register to vote, log into your US Chess member dashboard and click on the blue Register to Vote button (located within your profile information between your membership expiration date and the line for TD Level). Please note that the postal ballot option is no longer available; voting is by online ballot only.

A Voter Registration line only appears if we have your birth date so that we can verify that you are over 16 years of age. You can either

provide us with your birth date or email governance@uschess.org to request any changes to your voter status.

Your voter registration must be completed by June 1, 2025 (11:59 p.m. CT) to be eligible for the 2025 Executive Board election.

If you do not have an account linked to the US Chess homepage uschess.org via the Member Site Login new.uschess.org/login in the upper right corner, visit and follow the prompts for a first time login below the User Account login box. You will need your US Chess ID and an email address unique to your US Chess membership to set up an account. Your account is your gateway for accessing your full range of US Chess benefits.

If you are unable to set up an account and register to vote online, you may also request to be registered to vote by sending your US Chess ID number to governance@uschess.org. Our staff will register you.

US Chess will be using Election Buddy to conduct the election, with oversight by the US Chess Election Committee. We will email you a link to participate in the election around June 10. That email will come from US Chess invitations@mail.electionbuddy.com and will have the subject "Vote now: US Chess – 2025 Executive Board Election."

Free TLAs and Email Blasts for Women's and Senior Events

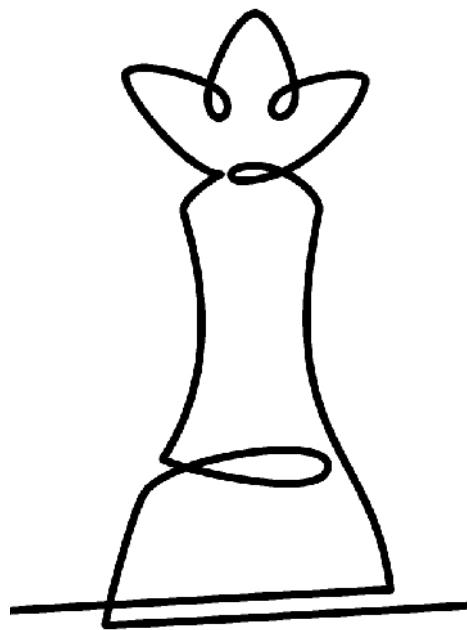
THROUGH DEC. 31, 2025, ANY NEW SENIOR-ONLY OR women-only tournament will receive one free TLA (Tournament Listing Announcement) and one free e-blast to all affiliates.

Please remember that in order to send out a TLA or e-blast, you must have a current membership and an active affiliate membership, and be authorized by your affiliate.

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Manual Mistakes

Fingerfiehlers and the hand hover ploy

BY GM ANDY SOLTIS

W

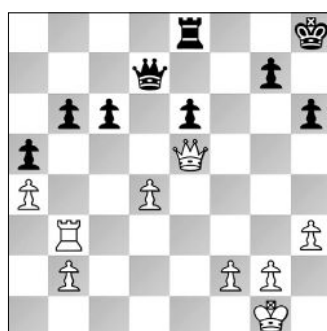
HEN YOU'RE A NEWCOMER to chess, there are telltale signs that you've become serious about the game.

In the old days, one common belief was "You're a serious player if you own more than one chess book." Another was, "... if you belong to a chess club." Today, a more common one is: "... if you hear someone say 'R and B' and think it means 'rapid and blitz.'"

But regardless of the era, there is one eternal tipoff: You are taking chess seriously when you play touch-move.

WHOOOPS

GM Andrei Volokitin
GM Vincent Keymer
FIDE Grand Swiss, Isle of Man,
10.28.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

Instead of defending with 34. ... Qd8, Black tried **34. ... c5**. He might have reached a drawable endgame after 35. Rxb6 Qxd4. But in response White mistakenly touched the c5-pawn. This was fatal because 35. dxc5 would lose a rook after 35. ... Qd1+.

When White tried to play 35. Rxb6 anyway, Black called for an arbiter to enforce the rule, and **White resigned**.

To people who don't play chess, touch-move seems an antiquated technicality. Why punish a player for changing his mind? If he hasn't punched his clock, it's the chess version of "No harm, no foul."

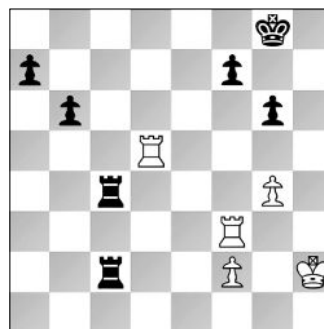
One reason we learn to respect the touch-move rule, even in casual games, is that it is invaluable mental discipline. It is one of the few rules that teaches something you can apply to outside of chess: You are responsible for the choices you make in life.

The *Wall Street Journal* asked World Champion Viswanathan Anand in 2013 how chess influences a person's thinking. He cited touch-move: "Once you make a decision you know you can't take it back," he said. "And you have to live with the consequences."

The German term *fingerfehler* makes it sound like a touch-move blunder is purely a manual mistake. But it is often the brain's fault. We mentally move pieces when we calculate — and then when we try to carry out our thoughts, we pick up the wrong one.

FAT FINGERS

GM Lev Polugaevsky
GM Viktor Korchnoi
Tilburg, 09.12.1985



BLACK TO MOVE

Black considered 44. ... R2c3, because a

trade of rooks would help win. He expected 45. Rf6 Kg7!.

But he found himself touching his king, not the rook. He gave **44. ... Kg7** two question marks when he annotated the game, because **45. Rd7!** and 46. Rdx7+ complicated his life. (He won anyway.)

Touch-move is one of those curiously optional rules. GM Ian Nepomniachtchi believed GM Magnus Carlsen touched a knight in the pivotal sixth game of the 2021 World Championship. When Carlsen moved another piece, Nepo did not object.

Asked about this later, he declined to criticize Magnus. But he recalled a game in the 2019 World Blitz Championship, when a young opponent captured a pawn then took his move back.

"If I had forced him to move that pawn, I would have won the game immediately," he told *Chess.com*. But I thought that I shouldn't be too hard on the kid — and he beat me."

Ever since arbiters tried to put touch-move into legal language, the rule has grown in complexity. When the FIDE Laws of Chess were revised in 2023, the touch-move section ran well over 200 words.

Still, there are gray areas. "Over-the-board" chess takes on a new meaning when you play a hand-hoverer. This is someone who picks up a piece and holds it above the board while he looks for the right square. How long can the hand hover? Ten seconds? Thirty? A minute? The rulebook is silent. Of course, there is no hovering in online chess. Nor is there the psychological ploy of a mid-move pause.

When Mikhail Tal was 19, a Soviet Championship opponent met his **1. e4** with **1. ... c6**. Tal quickly replied **2. d4** and expected to play a Caro-Kann Defense. Black picked up his own d-pawn, paused dramatically, then put it on d6. "I was too tired to move the pawn to d5," he joked later.

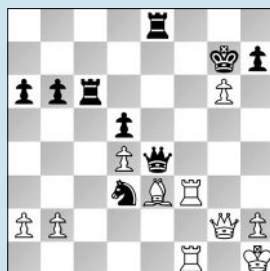
It didn't faze Tal, who went on to win

QUIZ FOR JANUARY

RETROACTIVE RATINGS

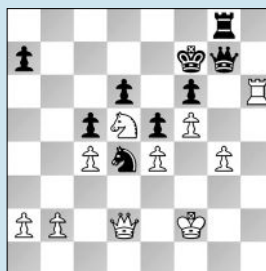
allow us to gauge when a good player of the past became great. They tell us, for example, that this year marks the 100th anniversary of the first time Alexander Alekhine achieved a 2800+ performance rating. This happened at the super-tournament Baden Baden 1925, according to *chessmetrics.com*. Alekhine coasted in the final rounds but still finished a point and a half ahead of a field that included seven of the world's top 10 players. In each of these positions from Baden Baden you are asked to find the fastest winning line of play. This will usually mean the forced win of a decisive amount of material. But watch out for forced mates. Solutions on page 63.

PROBLEM 1 Fritz Sämisch Rudolf Spielmann



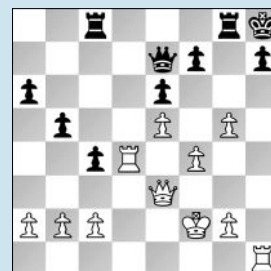
WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 2 Richard Réti Carl Carls



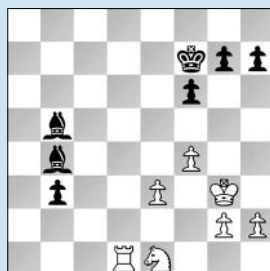
WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 3 Carlos Torre F.D. Yates



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 4 George Thomas Frank Marshall



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 5 Jan Te Kolste Carlos Torre



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 6 F. D. Yates Ernst Grünfeld



WHITE TO MOVE

his first widely known brilliancy. But three years later he used the ploy to make fun of Bobby Fischer.

In the 1959 Candidates tournament, Fischer played his usual 1. e4. Tal pushed his c-pawn one square, then smiled and held onto the pawn. He was making a silent joke about Fischer's rotten record against the Caro-Kann: Bobby had scored only one draw in three games in the tournament against 1. ... c6.

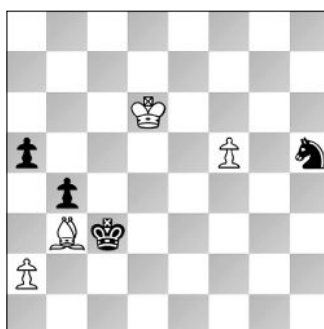
Fischer managed to remain expressionless as Tal grinned and completed the move 1. ... c5! Tal went on to win a nice Sicilian Defense.

It was a different story when the young Garry Kasparov tried this. In the 1978 Soviet Championship he met 1. e4 by pushing his c-pawn one square. Then, fingers still on the pawn, he looked up at his opponent, Adrian Mikhalchishin, apparently to detect his reaction. "He looked at me for about 10 seconds" before taking a deep breath and advancing the pawn another square, Mikhalchishin said. White won.

The great Pal Benko said he came up a new twist on hand-hovering when he used it to shame Fischer.

QUIT PLAYING

GM Bobby Fischer
GM Pal Benko
Stockholm Interzonal, 01.28.1962



BLACK TO MOVE

With so little material left on the board, Benko could claim a draw if he eliminates both White pawns — say, if he could give up his knight for the f-pawn and also swap off White's a-pawn with ... Kb2-a3 followed by ... a5-a4!.

But there are ways for Black to lose, such as 56. ... Kb2?. Then 57. Ke5 Ka3? 58. Bf7!

Ng3 59. f6 and White wins. "I saw that he was playing for tricks," Benko recalled in his memoirs.

"So I picked up my piece and waved it to towards the square that would have trapped me," he said — he feinted 56. ... Nf6, which loses to 57. Kc5 Kb2? 58. Kb5! and 59. Kxa5.

But with his hand still on the knight he shook his head. This was play-acting "to show him I saw his silly traps." Then Benko made the correct move, 56. ... Ng7!.

"Only then did he agree to a draw" in view of 57. Ke5 Nxf5! 58. Kxf5 Kb2 and ... a5-a4. Or 57. f6 Ne8+ 58. Ke7 Nxf6 59. Kxf6 Kb2. ♠

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Backward Moves

Sometimes a step back is the way forward!

BY **WGM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN**

IN THEIR EXCELLENT BOOK *Invisible Chess Moves*, FM Emmanuel Neiman and IM Yochanan Afek explore an array of motifs that are “invisible” to even very strong players. One of those motifs is backward moves. Psychologically, it is not hard to explain why players overlook them in their calculation: Generally, we want to move forward when playing. We associate attacks and putting pressure on our opponent with forward moves. The authors also quote GM Bent Larsen, who said in his *50 Selected Games* that backward moves on diagonals are especially difficult to see, except for the long diagonals. In this column we will explore some examples of backward moves on diagonals and tips on how to spot them.

HANGING PIECES

I haven't read *50 Selected Games* myself, but the famous blunder by Karpov tells us that Larsen was onto something about backward moves on short diagonals.

OOPS!

GM Larry Christiansen (2620)
GM Anatoly Karpov (2725)
Wijk aan Zee (2), 1993



BLACK TO MOVE

11. ... Bd6??

This might look like an unusual developing square for the bishop, but the idea is to control the f4-square and play ... Qd8-c7. If Black could get away with it, it would work out great.

12. Qd1!, Black resigned.

Hitting the knight on h5 and the bishop on d6. Given that one of the pieces will be lost, Black called it a day.

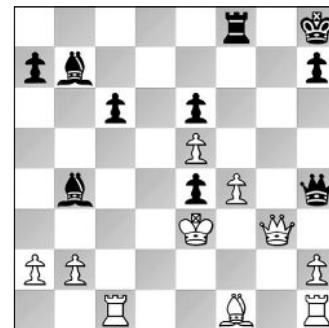
How could a player of Karpov's caliber make such a careless blunder? We can speculate all we want, but the important questions are how to avoid such moves and how to exploit them? In the diagram above, Karpov already had one loose piece: the knight on h5. The d6-square was not secure, so by placing the bishop there, Karpov left two pieces hanging. Before playing a move like this, we can make a note that we will have two hanging pieces and look for moves that can attack them both. Only the queen is powerful enough to attack such disconnected pieces and there aren't too many squares the queen can go to in order to attack the knight, thus logically we can spot 12. Qd1. We can do the same to spot our own backward moves: Once we see our opponent has more than one hanging piece, we look at every move that can attack them both.

CHANGING FLANKS

Making backward moves during an attack is extremely difficult. When we attack, we are looking at the enemy king that is usually far away from our pieces, so naturally we want our pieces to move toward it. Our natural inclination becomes to move forward. It is also logical that when attacked, our opponents bring in a lot of resources towards the king, so switching to the other flank can be devastating.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE

GM Zhansaya Abdumalik (2448)
WGM Turmunkh Munkhzul (2192)
FIDE Women's World Rapid Ch (1),
Almaty, 12.26.2022



BLACK TO MOVE

23. ... Qd8!

Perhaps not the most mysterious move, but a great demonstration of the queen infiltrating from the other side. White's kingside is fairly secure, but she has no way of dealing with a check from the queenside.

If 23. ... Qe7 24. Bc4! and the king will hide on e2.

24. Rc2

Now there isn't time for 24. Bc4: 24. ... Qd2+ 25. Kxe4 c5+ 26. Bd5 Bxd5 mate.

24. ... Qb6+ 25. Ke2 Rd8 26. Qe3 Ba6+ 27. Kf2 Be1+!

Not surprisingly, a tactical shot wins the game.

28. Kxe1 Qxe3+ 29. Be2 Bxe2 30. Rxe2 Qc1+, White resigned.

IMPROVING A PIECE

This is in the same spirit as changing flanks.

It is not easy to trap a bishop, but we know that bishops dislike closed positions and being blocked by pawns. In such situations, we can look to see whether there is a better diagonal for the bishop.

OPENING A LINE

IM Carissa Yip (2386)
WIM Mariam Mkrtchyan (2328)
45th Women's Olympiad (7),
09.18.2024



WHITE TO MOVE

Black is barely hanging on here — she has tons of weaknesses and her king is forever stuck in the center. Her only salvation is the knight blockade in the center.

33. Kh1!

The first step of the plan. The bishop on h2 is rather useless in this position, so Carissa finds a logical (and a bit surprising!) way to bring it into the game.

33. ... Nac4 34. f3 Kd8 35. Bg1!

This was the whole idea behind Yip's last two moves. Moving back with the bishop can be awkward, but unlike knights, bishops are long-range pieces and can rejoin the game quickly. From g1, the bishop dislodges the well-placed defensive piece on b6.

35. ... Rb7

There aren't any great choices. If 35. ... Rc6? White simply picks up material with 36. Rxb5, and if 35. ... Ra6 White can take advantage of the pinned a-pawn to kick out the knight with 36. b3!.

36. Rfd1

With one less defender, the d6-pawn will now fall.

36. ... Kc7

If 36. ... Nf7 White piles on with 37. Bc5!. And if 37. ... Nb6 we let Black take the rook: 38. Nxd6 Nxd5 39. Rxd5 Rc7 40. Nxf7+.

37. Nxd6

White now wins with tactics.

37. ... Nxd6 38. Rxd6 Qxd6

Might as well; 38. ... Qe7 loses to 39. Re6 Qf7 40. Qd5.

39. Rxd6 Kxd6 40. Qd5+, Black resigned.

One of the rooks will fall: 40. ... Kc7 41. Qc5+.

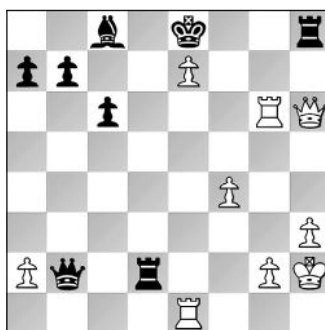
So how can we find these types of backward moves in our games? In the second example, the matters were more forced and Black's move was straightforward (so to speak). In the third game, Carissa had many good moves, but she found a way to bring another piece into an attack in a way that didn't require any calculation on her part. In both examples, looking at the board as a whole and not getting fixated on one side is very helpful. Sometimes after we place a piece on a good square, we forget that as the game progresses, that piece can become useless. In Munkzhul's case, the queen was no longer useful on the kingside and was stronger on the other side. In Carissa's game, the bishop had fulfilled its duties on the h2-b8 diagonal and it was time to find a new way to join the attack.

PROCESS OF ELIMINATION

Sometimes we can come across good moves by scanning through all of them. This sounds like a tedious process, but usually we only have to seriously consider a few moves as most of them won't have an effect on the position.

BACK UP

GM Geza Maroczy
Massimiliano Romi
San Remo (8), 01.25.1930



WHITE TO MOVE

White's attack and the passed e7-pawn

both look dangerous, but not only is Black hanging on tactically; he has some serious threats of his own against the White king, such as capturing the h3-pawn if the queen moves.

41. Qh5!!

Setting up the threat of Rg6-g8. Now there is no way to stop the e7-pawn from queening. Besides, every other move loses:

After (a) 41. Rg8+ Rxg8 42. Qh5+ Kd7 43. e8=Q+ Rxe8 44. Qxe8+ Kc7 Black stays up a piece. (b) 41. Qg5 fails to 41. ... Rxh3+ 42. Kg1 Qd4+ with checkmate, and a "pass" kind of move like (c) 41. Kh1 also doesn't help: Black has the strong resource 41. ... Rxg2! to distract the g6-rook from defending the queen. After 42. Rxg2 Qxg2+ 43. Kxg2 Rxh6 Black is winning.

41. ... Rxg2+

But now Black is in everything-loses mode: 41. ... Rxh5 42. Rg8+ Kd7 43. e8=Q+ Kc7 44. Qxh5, and 41. ... Kd7 42. e8=Q+ Rxe8 43. Qh7+ with checkmate coming up.

42. Rxg2+ Rxh5 43. Rxb2 Rxh3+ 44. Kg1 Rh7 45. Rh2 Rg7+ 46. Kf2 Rg8 47. Rh6 Kf7 48. e8=Q+ Rxe8 49. Rh7+, Black resigned.

Going through all the moves in the above example shouldn't take a lot of time. Most of the action has to do with the e7-pawn and finding a way to promote it. Once we realize that Black's threat is to trade on g2 and then capture the queen, then none of the pawn moves or moves with the e1-rook make sense, and we can eliminate them in seconds.

The more serious moves would be either with the g6-rook or the queen. If we seriously consider every move with the queen, then Qh6-h5 becomes findable. The key is to force ourselves to seriously consider every queen move.

GEOMETRIC MOTIFS

I have seen this position in several tactics books, and that context makes a difference.

A STUNNER

IM Rubens Alberto Filguth (2380)
Arturo De la Garza Madero
Mexico City (1), 08.18.1980

(continued on page 61)

Chess in the Slow Lane

The young Keres powerfully pushed pawns via postcard.

BY **BRUCE PANDOLFINI**

T

THESE DAYS, CHESS TENDS TO be played at a faster rate than in the past. Thanks to software and the internet, it's much easier

to take part in serious events and the play is much quicker. Go back a hundred years or so, though, and you'll find fewer events and much slower time controls. You'll also find a version of chess that seems to be a lot less popular nowadays: correspondence chess.

One of its advocates was the great Estonian grandmaster Paul Keres (1916-1975). In this correspondence contest from 1931, played when Keres was just 15 years old, we see his early postcard brilliance.

ALBIN COUNTER-GAMBIT (D08)

Aivi Karu

Paul Keres

Correspondence, 1931

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e5 3. Nc3 exd4 4. Qxd4 Nc6 5. Qxd5 Be6 6. Qb5 a6 7. Qa4 Bb4 8. Bd2 Bxc4 9. a3



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.**

9. **Par Score 5** **b5**

Black breaks the pin on the c6-knight and supports his light-square bishop. White's queen must withdraw.

10. **Qc2**
This retreat is much better than 10. Qd1, since it gives White the opportunity to give a queen check at e4 (if needed). **

10. **Par Score 6** **Nd4**
The intrusion of this knight brings a third minor piece across the frontier line. Still, the position is essentially even.

11. **Qe4+**
White saves his queen with a gain of time. **

11. **Par Score 3** **Be7**
In turn, Black saves his attacked dark-square bishop.

12. **Nf3**
White develops with a threat. **

12. **Par Score 5** **c5**

Keres defends his d4-knight with an aggressive pawn advance.

13. **Rc1**
This guards c2, but Black is starting to pull slightly ahead (though it might have taken weeks to see why). On 13. Nxd4 cxd4 14. Qc6+ Kf8, Keres' king is OK. Meanwhile, the white queen will be subject to attack. **

13. **Par Score 5** **Nf6**
Black keeps building his position through steadfast development.

14. **Qb1**
White's queen has been driven from the center. Keres has conjured a definite spatial advantage. **

14. **Par Score 5** **Qd6**
You may accept **full credit** for 14. ... 0-0.

15. **Nxd4**
Perhaps White should have tried 15. e3. **

15. **Par Score 4** **cx d4**

16. **Ne4**
This leads to another trade, but Keres is still in command. **

16. **Par Score 5** **Nxe4**

17. **Qxe4** **

17. **Par Score 5** **0-0**
Black's superiority in development and mobility is definite and clear.

ABCS OF CHESS

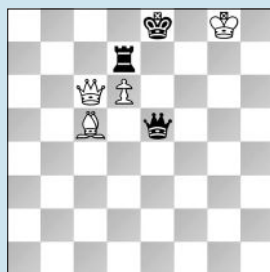
THESE PROBLEMS ARE ALL related to key positions in this month's game. In each case, White is to move. The answers can be found in Solutions on page 63.

JANUARY EXERCISE:

The center is the hub of activity. It provides more options and more control. It can pose a barrier, preventing opponents from deploying their own forces. So target the center from the start — develop toward it; guard and influence it. In turn, try to stop your opponent's similar aims toward you. Of course, there are few absolutes, and the center is often inaccessible and precarious. But after taking control of the center, you're ready to take control of the game.

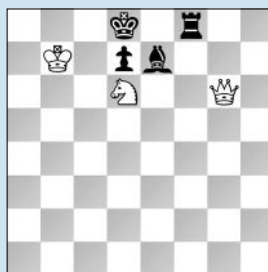
PROBLEM 1

Mating net



PROBLEM 2

Mating net



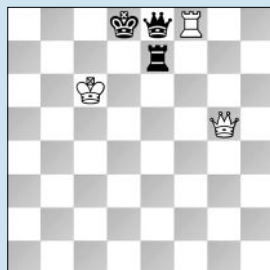
PROBLEM 3

Mating net



PROBLEM 4

Mating net



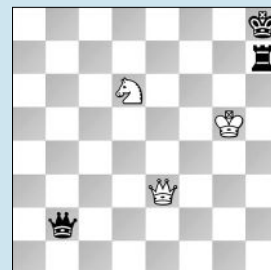
PROBLEM 5

Mating net



PROBLEM 6

Mating net



18. Bf4

Karu attacks the black queen. Note that on 18. Bb4, Black had 18. ... Qh6, when 19. Bd2 Qh5 20. Qxe7 is rebuffed by 20. ... Rfe8 (1 **bonus point** if you saw all this). **

18. Par Score 5

Qd8

Accept **full credit** for 18. ... Qd7.

19. Rd1

White pressures the d4-pawn, but Black has adequate answers. **

19. Par Score 5

Bf6

This supports the d-pawn and opens lines for attack. You may, however, accept **full credit** for 19. ... d3.

20. Qf3

White gets the queen off the open e-file, but perhaps a safer retreat was 20. Qb1. **

20. Par Score 6

Re8

Sure enough, Keres seizes the e-file. You may accept **full credit** for 20. ... Bd5, pestering White's queen.

21. b3

White doesn't really have time for this. Perhaps 21. e4 offered more hope. **

21. Par Score 7

d3

The simple 21. ... Bd5 (**full credit**) was more

than adequate, though Keres' move is certainly a crowd pleaser.

22. e4

After 22. bxc4 bxc4 23. e4 Bc3+ 24. Bd2 Bxd2+ 25. Rxd2 c3 26. Rxd3 Qa5, Black's attack is irresistible (1 **bonus point**). **

22. Par Score 5

Bc3+

23. Bd2

White waits for the bad news to come in the mail. **

23. Par Score 6

Qd4

Now the e4-pawn is threatened, and quite menacingly.

24. Bxc3

The position is also hopeless after 24. bxc4 Rxe4+. **

24. Par Score 5

Qxc3+

25. Rd2

**

25. Par Score 8

Rxe4+

This is crushing, though you may accept **full credit** for 25. ... Qc1+ (26. Qd1 Rxe4+), which is also crushing.

26. Qxe4

Black now has a forced mate in 2. **

26. Par Score 5

Qc1+

27. Rd1

**

27. Par Score 5

d2 mate!

A wonderful game, exemplifying Keres' teenage creativity and attacking prowess. ♠

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

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A Sweep in ST. LOUIS

Saint
CHESS

**GM Alireza
Firouzja wins the
Saint Louis Rapid
and Blitz and the
Sinquefield Cup
– and wraps up
the Grand Chess
Tour in the
process.**

**BY WGM TATEV
ABRAHAMYAN**





THE SAINT LOUIS RAPID and Blitz and the Sinquefield Cup are the final stops on the Grand Chess Tour. The 2023 edition was held during the gloomy months of November and December, so the return to the month of August in 2024 was a welcome change. The mood in the city was happier and the players were ready to fight.

Two previous tour winners, GMs Fabiano Caruana and Alireza Firouzja, came into the St. Louis showdown in a tight race. After a dominant win in the Zagreb Grand Chess Tour, Caruana entered the tournament with 22.25 tour points; Alireza trailed him with 17.58 points. Right below them were two Indian prodigies: GMs Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu and Gukesh Dommaraju, who were making their GCT debuts. With 13 tour points to be awarded for a clear first place in each of the Rapid and Blitz and the Sinquefield Cup, a lot of movement in the standings was still possible.

The Rapid and Blitz was really the Alireza Firouzja show. Firouzja tied for first place in the rapid portion with GMs Ian Nepomniachtchi and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, but took the lead in the blitz and clinched the tournament with two rounds to spare. Caruana's subpar showing (6th-7th, 4.5 tour points) meant Firouzja was now leading the GCT.

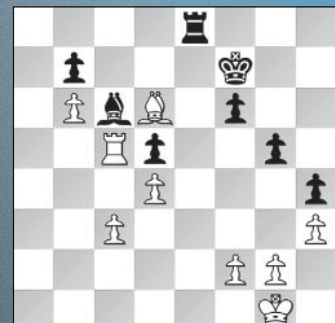
The 27-round Rapid and Blitz offered more brilliancies than can be fit in one article, but one of my absolute favorites was Firouzja's win over GM Wesley So. The final moments of the game were a perfect example of Firouzja's tactical prowess in time trouble.

OH SNAP!

GM Alireza Firouzja (2869)

GM Wesley So (2782)

Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz (12), St. Louis,
08.14.2024



BLACK TO MOVE

50. ... Re1+?

In a time scramble, So plays what looks like a logical and active move, but it's wrong: The king should head to the queenside with 50. ... Ke6 51. Bc7 Kd7 and the opposite bishops and the structure should be enough for Black to make a draw here.

51. Kh2 Rb1 52. Rxc6!!

Spotted by Firouzja with nine seconds on the clock.

52. ... bxc6 53. Bb4, Black resigned.

Those pesky backward moves that are so difficult to spot! The b-pawn will now run. If 53. ... Re1 54. b7 Re8 55. Bd6.

The closing ceremony was part of the annual Strategy Across the Board gala, organized by the Saint Louis Chess Club and the World Chess Hall of Fame. The gala celebrated the 10th anniversary of St. Louis becoming the chess capital of the country, as well as a fundraiser for the educational programs of the Saint Louis Chess Club. After one more free day, it was time for the games to resume.

The 2024 Sinquefield Cup saw the return of Ding Liren to St. Louis. His last showing, in 2019, was quite successful — he defeated Magnus Carlsen in the tiebreaks to win the tournament. Ding returned this year as world champion, and faced his challenger for the last time before their match. There was not much time to build up anticipation, as the two met in the very first round. There

was one moment in this game where Gukesh could have faced some danger but it did require Ding to find some rather strange-looking moves.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

GM Ding Liren (2745)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2766)

Sinquefield Cup (1), St. Louis, 08.19.2024

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. 0-0 Nf6 5. d3 d6 6. c3 a5 7. Re1 0-0 8. h3 Be6 9. Bb5 Ba7 10. Be3 Bxe3 11. Rxe3 Ne7 12. d4 Ng6 13. Bf1 d5 14. Nbd2 Nxe4 15. Nxe5 Nxe5 16. dxe5 Nxd2 17. Qxd2 c5 18. Rg3 d4 19. Qh6 g6

**20. Bd3**

The most natural-looking move, bringing in another attacker. However, Black gets time to create counterplay with a dangerous passed pawn.

White's other natural way to attack starts with 20. h4, but after 20. ... c4 21. h5 Qh4! the queen is right on time to defend the kingside, while the bishop on e6 prevents the rook from going to h3 to kick the queen.

White keeps an advantage with 20. Re1! planning another rook lift: Re4-h4. If the second rook joins the attack, the black king will be helpless. It's understandable that Ding didn't go for this line, though, as he has to find some computeresque moves. For example, 20. ... Bf5 stops Re1-e4, so White has to find 21. Rf3, preparing to bring the other rook to h4 via f4. It also matters that Black has also given up the control of the c4-square. Black needs to bring in a defender, and 21. ... Rc8 is the way.

Here the direct approach doesn't work: 22. Rf4 Rc6 (a rook lift to defend the king!) 23. Rh4?? g5 and Black is winning. But after 22. Bc4 Rc6 23. a4 White has a nice grip on the queenside and the d4-pawn won't be going far. It is difficult to find good moves for Black.

20. ... c4 21. Be4 d3 22. Bxg6

Ding decides to force matters.

White can still try to continue the attack with 22. f4!? but Black has plenty of defensive resources here. After 22. ... Qd7 23. Rf1 f5 24. exf6 e.p. Rxf6 the white pieces look out of the game and the d3-pawn is starting to look dangerous. It's probably time for White to bail out with a draw: 25. Bxg6 Rxd6 26. Rxd6 hxd6 27. Qxd6 Kf8 28. Qh6+ Kg8 29. Qg6+.

22. ... fxg6 23. Rxd6 hxd6 24. Qxd6 Kh8 25. Qh6+ Kg8 26. Qg6+ Kh8 27. Qh6+ Kg8 28. Qg6+, draw.

Since their faceoff, Gukesh went on to win gold at the Olympiad, while Ding had a poor showing and chose to sit out in his game against Gukesh during the China – India match.

The first round also featured the huge matchup between Caruana and Firouzja. In their game in Bucharest, it was Firouzja who had a big advantage out of the opening with the white pieces but let the advantage, and later, the game slip. This time, in the tumultuous 85-move affair, he made the penultimate mistake.

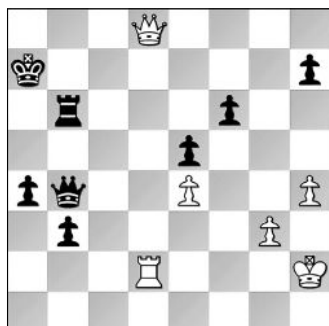
BACK AND FORTH

GM Fabiano Caruana (2793)

GM Alireza Firouzja (2751)

Sinquefield Cup (1), St. Louis, 08.19.2024





BLACK TO MOVE

78. ... b2??

An understandable move, but an impatient one.

79. Rd7+ Rb7 80. Rxh7+??

Caruana returns the favor. With 80. Rd5! White sets up a perpetual on the dark squares, and if Black queens it's a perpetual with (a) 80. ... b1=Q 81. Ra5+ Qxa5 82. Qxa5+ Kb8 83. Qd8+ Ka7 84. Qa5+.

Black has other tries, but the result is the same:

(b) 80. ... Ka6 81. Qa8+ Kb6 82. Qd8+ Kc6 83. Qxf6+ Kc7 84. Qd8+ and again the king cannot escape.

(c) 80. ... Rb6 81. Rd7+ Rb7 and Black needs to settle for the repetition, because after 81. ... Ka6?? 82. Qc8+ Ka5 83. Ra7+ Kb5 84. Qd7+ Rc6 (84. ... Kc4 85. Qd5+ leads to checkmate soon) 85. Rb7+ White picks up all the pieces.

(d) The most challenging try is 80. ... Qb5!. White draws by a hair: 81. Rxb5 Rxb5 82. Qc7+ Ka6 83. Qc6+ Ka5 and 84. Qc7+! is the only correct check; White needs to keep the king boxed in. After 84. ... Kb4 85. Qd6+ Kb3 86. Qd3+ Kb4 87. Qd6+ it's a draw.

80. ... Kxb7 81. Qd7+ Kb6 82. Qd8+ Kb5 83. Qd5+ Qc5 84. Qb7+ Qb6 85. Qd5+ Kb4, White resigned.

Caruana will soon be out of checks. For example, 86. Qd2+ Ka3 87. Qd3+ Ka2 88. Qc4+ Qb3.

With this victory over his closest rival, Firouzja took the lead in the tournament. In order to win the tour, he only needed to finish second in the Sinquefield Cup, but the 21-year-old had his eyes set on a higher prize.

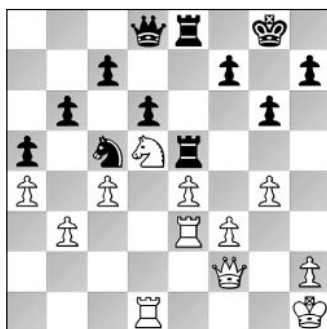
The peaceful second round kept things as they were, but there was plenty of action in the third round: Nepomniachtchi beat GM Anish Giri to join Firouzja in first, while Caruana scored his first victory by defeating the young super-GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov,

another GCT debutant, and was now only a half-point behind.

On move 34, Caruana got down to 30 seconds. Without a second time control after move 40, he had to play the rest of the game on increment, while Abdusattorov had around 30 minutes on the clock. Even with the huge time advantage, things got out of control on the board.

DANGER AVERTED

GM Fabiano Caruana (2793)
GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov (2762)
Sinquefield Cup (3), St. Louis,
08.21.2024



WHITE TO MOVE

28. Qg3

Caruana's initial idea was to threaten to plant the knight on f6 with 28. g5 Rxcg5 29. f4 Rh5 30. e5, but he had to give up on the idea once he spotted 30. ... Re6. After 31. Nf6+ Rxf6 32. exf6 Qxf6 Black is much better: The white rooks are irrelevant because there are no entry points, and Black's knight sits beautifully on c5. White's structure is horrendous and the pawns will start falling soon.

28. ... h5 29. h3 Kg7 30. Nf4 Rh8 31. Kg2 hxg4 32. hxg4 Ree8

Now White is really in danger, as Black threatens to double rooks on the h-file.

33. Ree1

Caruana spent five minutes on this move, getting down to 30 seconds.

33. ... Qf6

White gets plenty of counterplay after 33. ... Nxb3 34. e5.

34. Rh1 c6?

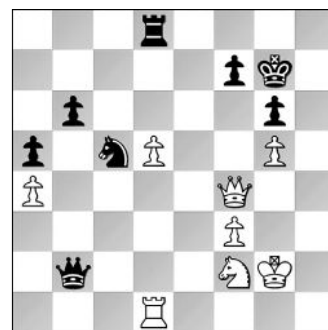
Now, though, Black should just grab the pawn. After 34. ... Nxb3 Caruana thought he had good drawing chances with 35. Nd5 Qb2+ 36. Qf2 Qxf2+ 37. Kxf2 Rxh1 38. Rxh1 c6 39. Nc3 Nd2 40. Rd1 Nxc4 41. Rd4, but

the engine still likes Black after 41. ... Na3 42. Rxd6 Re6.

35. Nh3 Rd8 36. g5 Qb2+ 37. Nf2 Rxh1 38. Rxh1 d5 39. cxd5 cxd5 40. Rd1

On the bright side for White, he got to make a lot of quick, basically forced moves in a row and build up some time. The position is now a mess.

40. ... Nxb3 41. exd5 Nc5 42. Qf4



White's king is rather safe now, and the threat is Kg2-g3 and Nf2-g4. Black needs to backtrack quickly.

42. ... Kg8?

Black could have kept the equilibrium with 42. ... Re8! preparing to bring the queen into the defense with ... Qb2-e5.

43. Kg3!

The black king is starting to look hopeless; the knight will land on f6 after all.

43. ... Nb7 44. Qc7

Picking up a piece.

44. ... Kg7 45. Ng4!

A nice touch, preventing any counterplay. White's still winning after 45. Qxb7 Qe5+ 46. Kg2 Qxg5+ 47. Ng4, but why allow any of this?

45. ... Rh8 46. Qxb7 Qe2 47. Rg1 Qd2 48. Qe7, Black resigned.

The following round saw another shift on top as So defeated Nepomniachtchi, joining Firouzja in first, but in round five, Firouzja solidified his lead with a victory over Giri.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

GM Alireza Firouzja (2751)
GM Anish Giri (2746)
Sinquefield Cup (5), St. Louis,
08.23.2024

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 Bc5 5. 0-0 d6 6. c3 a5 7. h3 0-0 8. Bb3 h6 9. Re1 Re8 10. Nbd2 Be6 11. Ba4 Qb8 12. Bxc6 bxc6 13. Nf1 Bb6 14. Ng3 a4 15. d4 Qa7 16. Be3 Qa5 17. Qc1 Kh7 18. Nh4 Ng8 19. Nh5 c5



20. dxe5

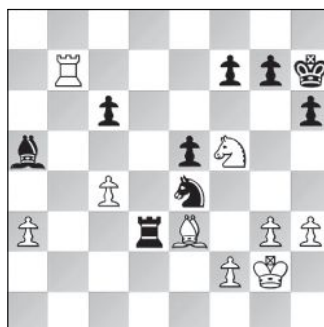
Not bad, but White can wrap things up with some piece sacrifices instead. There's an amazing shot with 20. Nxe7! although some very precise calculation is required: 20. ... Kxg7 21. d5 Bd7 22. Bxh6+! The second sacrifice leaves the king completely exposed — for example, 22. ... Kh7 23. Qg5 Nxh6 24. Nh5 Rg8 25. Nf6+ Kh8 26. Qxh6 mate. Firouzja saw 22. ... Nxh6 23. Qg5+ Kf8 24. Nh5 Ng8 25. Re3 c4 26. Rf3 Qb5 and thought Black's king was running away, but he overlooked the mate in two: 27. Rxf7+!! Kxf7 28. Qg7 mate.

20. ... Bxf5 21. Nxf5 dxe5 22. c4 Rad8 23. Rd1 Qa8 24. Rd5 c6 25. Rxd8 Rxd8 26. Qc2 Black survived the scare, but White is doing really well. Black's structure is really weak and there are some clear targets to attack.

26. ... Qa6 27. Rc1 Rd7 28. a3 Nf6 29. Qe2 Qc8 30. Qc2 Qa6 31. Qc3 Qa5 32. b4 axb3 e.p. 33. Qxb3 Bc7 34. g3 Qa6 35. Kg2 Rd8 36. Ra1 Qc8 37. Qc2 Qd7 38. Rb1 Ba5 39. Bxc5 Qd3 40. Qxd3 Rxd3 41. Rb7?

Rather hasty. White should hang onto the e4-pawn first with 41. f3.

41. ... Nxe4 42. Be3



42. ... Kg6??

Rather inexplicable. Black walks into a fork and drops more pawns. Black could have gotten the same position as in the game, but with an equal number of pawns, after 42. ... Rxa3 43. Rxf7 Kg6 44. Rf8 Bd2.

43. Ne7+ Kf6 44. Nxc6 Bd2 45. Rxf7+!

Black walks into another fork!

45. ... Ke6 46. Re7+ Kd6 47. Rd7+!

Again!

47. ... Kxd7 48. Nxe5+ Kd6 49. Nxd3 Bxe3 50. fxe3

With three extra pawns, the rest is easy.

50. ... Nd2 51. c5+ Kd5 52. a4 Nc4 53. Kf3

g5 54. e4+ Kd4 55. e5 Kxd3 56. e6 Ne5+ 57. Kg2 Nc6 58. a5, Black resigned.

After the tournament, Firouza said this victory made him feel more confident about winning it all, as it meant that he simply needed not to lose any games.

After a much-deserved day off, the second half was action-packed. The most famous game of the tournament, one we'll be seeing in tactics and calculation books, was Caruana's win over Nepomniachtchi in a sharp Dragon.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, DRAGON VARIATION (B76)

GM Ian Nepomniachtchi (2767)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2793)

Sinquefield Cup (6), St. Louis, 08.25.2024

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 g6

A trendy move order.

3. d4

White can try to "punish" 2. ... g6 by grabbing the center with 3. c3. Abdusattorov won against Caruana in the 2023 Speed Chess Championship after 3. ... d5 4. e5 Bg4 5. d4.

3. ... cxd4 4. Nxd4

Black is doing OK after 4. Qxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 Nc6 6. Qa4 d6 7. e5 dxe5 8. Nxe5 Bd7.

4. ... Bg7 5. Nc3

Black's move order allows 5. c4 with a Maroczy Bind, which is why most players avoid 2. ... g6, but White does not shy away from playing a Classical Dragon.

5. ... Nc6 6. Be3 Nf6 7. Bc4 0-0 8. Bb3 d6

We are now in a main-line Dragon, although these days White prefers castling queenside before putting the bishop on c4.

9. f3 Qa5

The classical way of playing the Dragon is with 9. ... Bd7 10. Qd2 Rc8.



Nepomniachtchi was on the wrong side of the tactics.

10. Qd3

An unusual move. At the time it had only been played once by a grandmaster. The natural follow-up with the bishop on e3 is 10. Qd2, looking to trade the dark-squared bishops. The position after 10. ... Nxd4 11. Bxd4 Be6 12. 0-0-0 b5 has been reached many times and is unclear.

10. ... Ne5

Black can try to exploit the awkward positioning of the white queen to snag the bishop pair with 10. ... Nd7!? 11. 0-0-0 Nc5 12. Qd2 Nxd4 13. Bxd4 Nxb3+ 14. cxb3 Be6. This position was seen in Colbow – Balakrishnan, Sant Ferran des Ses Roques 2024.

11. Qd2 Bd7 12. 0-0-0 Rfc8 13. Kb1 Nc4 14. Bxc4 Rxc4 15. g4

White naturally prepares for the h4-h5 attack and to kick the f6-knight away in order to play Nc3-d5. But it would have been more annoying to play 15. Nb3 first, because after 15. ... Qa6 16. e5! the difference is that the bishop is on d7 and is vulnerable. Black has to play 16. ... Ne8 (if 16. ... dxe5? 17. Nc5 Rxc5 18. Bxc5), and even though the engine evaluates 17. Nd5 Bxe5 18. Nxe7+ Kf8 19. Nd5 as equal, it feels slightly better for White, who has a better pawn structure and the attacking prospects.

15. ... Be6 16. Nb3 Qa6 17. Bd4 Rac8 18. g5??

White provokes the move that Black was planning to play! White could keep equality with 18. Qe3 defending the pawn, or by offering a queen trade in an unusual way with 18. Qg5 h6 19. Qa5.



18. ... Nxe4!!

The most memorable move of the tournament. By capturing this well-defended pawn, Black opens up the diagonals of his two bishops.

19. fxe4

If 19. Nxe4 Black has another wonderful tactic, showcasing the strength of the two

bishops: 19. ... Rxd4!! 20. Qxd4 (It's mate after 20. Nxd4 Qxa2+ 21. Kc1 Qa1) 20. ... Bxd4 21. Rxd4 Qe2 and Black is winning.

19. ... Bxd4 20. Nxd4 Rxc3!!

A typical Sicilian sacrifice!

21. a3

Black is also winning after 21. Nxe6 Rxc2 22. Qd5 Qb6! 23. b3 Qa6 24. a4 Qe2.

21. ... Qc4!

Black is relentless.

22. b3

It's also hopeless for White after 22. Qxc3 Qa2+ 23. Kc1 Rxc3 24. bxc3 Qxa3+ 25. Kd2 Bc4.

22. ... Qc5 23. Rc1 Qxa3 24. h4 R8c5 25. Rcf1 Bxb3, White resigned.

This round also featured one of my favorite endgames from the tournament, as Gukesh showed his nerves of steel in a tricky endgame against Vachier-Lagrave.

TECHNIQUE

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2766)

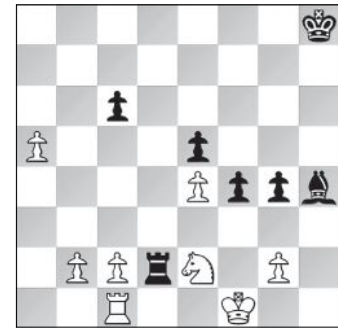
GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (2721)

Sinquefield Cup (6), St. Louis, 08.25.2024

(see diagram top of next column)

43. a6 f3!

I remember watching this game live and not being sure who was playing for a win. The a-pawn is impossible to stop, but Black has threats of his own and the white king



WHITE TO MOVE

is vulnerable. However, Gukesh only had about a minute against MVL's 30 and had to find several only-moves under pressure.

44. gxf3 gxf3 45. Nc3 Rh2 46. Kg1 Bg3 47. a7 f2+ 48. Kf1 Rh1+ 49. Kg2 Rxc1 50. a8=Q+ Kg7 51. Qb7+ Kg6 52. Qxc6+ Kg5 53. Qc4

The only move. White has to protect the f1-square, but must find the right square for the queen. It's not b5: 53. Qb5 Rg1+ 54. Kf3 Kh4!! and White has no checks. The black pawn will promote next.

53. ... Rg1+ 54. Kh3

Again, Gukesh chooses the correct square. The natural 54. Kf3?? loses to the same idea: 54. ... Kh4!! and the queen is once again useless while Black promotes.

54. ... f1=Q 55. Qxf1 Rxf1 56. Kxg3 Rc1 57. Kf3 Rxc2 58. Nd1 Rd2 59. Nf2 Rxb2 60. Nd3

It's a fortress.

60. ... Rb5 61. Ke3 Kg4 62. Ke2 Ra5 63. Ke3 Ra3 64. Ke2 Rxd3 65. Kxd3 Kf3



The Rapid and Blitz was less stress and more fun.

66. Kd2 Kxe4 67. Ke2 Kd4 68. Kd2 e4 69. Ke2 e3 70. Ke1 Kd3 71. Kd1 e2+ 72. Ke1 Ke3, draw.

Caruana was finally on Firouzja's heels, only a half-point behind with three rounds to go. Up until this point, Ding was staying solid with an even score, but Firouzja delivered the reigning world champion his first loss of the tournament, taking the lead by a full point over Caruana. In another Giuoco Piano, Ding collapsed in a difficult position with a lack of space and a 30-minute time disadvantage.

PULLING AWAY

GM Alireza Firouzja (2751)

GM Ding Liren (2745)

Sinquefield Cup (7), St. Louis, 08.26.2024

(see diagram top of next column)

29. ... exd4?

Black needs to continue shuffling back and forth with something like 29. ... Rfe8, but of course that's unpleasant to do, as he doesn't have an active plan.

30. cxd4 d5

Opening the position only favors White, since Black's queenside is unattended.



BLACK TO MOVE

31. exd5 cxd5 32. Bxg6+ Qxg6 33. Qxa5

There is nothing to worry about on the king-side; White can calmly collect the pawns.

33. ... Bb8 34. Bxb8 Rxb8 35. Qxd5 Nf4

36. Qb5 g4 37. hxg4 hxg4 38. Nh4 Qg5 39.

Nef5 Nxf5 40. Qxf5+ Qxf5 41. Re7+ Kh6

42. Nxf5+ Kg6 43. Nh4+, Black resigned.

All games were drawn in round eight, leaving Caruana a full point behind Firouzja with one round to go. All Firouzja needed to clinch his second tournament victory in a row was a draw with the white pieces against Praggnanandhaa, which he achieved without much trouble.

Although the race was over, Caruana finished the tournament with a beautiful win over Giri.

ENDGAME COMPLICATIONS

GM Fabiano Caruana (2793)

GM Anish Giri (2746)

Sinquefield Cup (9), St. Louis, 08.28.2024



WHITE TO MOVE

30. Bxf6

In order to grab the pawn, White has to ensure that the knight won't get trapped. Caruana is not one to shy away from calculation.

30. ... Bxf6 31. Nxb7 Rxd1 32. Kxd1 Be7

33. b4! cxb4 34. c5 Kf7 35. Kc2 Ke8 36. c6

So far, everything was forced. Now it's a matter of getting the king in.

36. ... Bf8 37. Kb3 Be7 38. Kc4 h5 39. Kd3!

Nice technique by Caruana, forcing Black



to place the bishop on a worse square. If White charges in with 39. Kd4 Bf8 40. Ke5 he makes no progress, because after 40. ... Ke7! 41. Kd4, the threat of ... Bf8-g7 mate forces the king back.

39. ... Bf8

After 39. ... h4 40. gxh4 Bxh4 41. Nc5 the knight gets out and the pawns will start to fall.

40. Kd4 Bg7+ 41. Kc5

The king is in now.

41. ... Bf8+

Black can queen after 41. ... b3, but White plays 42. Kd6! b2 43. c7 b1=Q 44. c8=Q+ Kf7 45. Qxe6+ Kf8 46. Qc8+ Kf7 47. Nd8+ Kg6 48. Qxa6 and not only wins a pawn but puts the black king in a mating net.

42. Kb6 b3 43. c7 Kd7 44. Nc5+!

The final touch.

44. ... Kc8

The pawn queens after 44. ... Bxc5+ 45. Kb7!

45. Nxb3 Bd6 46. Nd4 Bxc7+ 47. Kxa6, Black resigned.

With a clutch last-round victory over Ding, Vachier-Lagrave ended his 25-game drawing streak and secured his invitation to next year's tour by finishing in third place in the overall standings.

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR

GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (2721)

GM Ding Liren (2745)

Sinquefield Cup (9), 08.28.2024



BLACK TO MOVE

26. ... Bg4?

Black can get away with taking the pawn. After 26. ... Nxh4 White should change gears and go for the endgame with 27. Qf6!, as otherwise his own king might be in danger. Ding might have been afraid of the endgame

after 27. ... Qxf6 28. Rxf6 Ng6 29. Rxd6, but the well-placed knight keeps the e5-pawn secured and the other weaknesses are not so easy to attack.

27. Qf2

White hangs onto the h-pawn.

27. ... Kg7 28. a4!

Black has to worry about his weak king and White's pawn majority on the queenside.

28. ... Re8 29. Bd1 Rd7 30. a5 Nf4?

A devastating blunder.

31. Ba4 Nd3 32. Qb6 Re6 33. Bxd7 Qxd7

34. Qxa6 Be2 35. Rf5 Rg6 36. Kh2 d5 37.

Rg5, Black resigned.

Alireza's St. Louis debut in 2022 was a huge success: He won both the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz and the Sinquefield Cup, also securing a Grand Chess Tour victory. Two years later, he managed to repeat these re-

markable results, earning \$100,000 for his Sinquefield Cup victory, \$40,000 for the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz and a \$100,000 bonus for the Grand Chess Tour, bringing his total to \$323,750 for the entire tour.

Speaking to GM Cristian Chirila after his victory, the newly crowned champion praised his rival Caruana, commending his work ethic and the deep love for the game. He called the Grand Chess Tour "the most difficult thing to win in chess" and that his double victory shows that he's capable of playing at the very highest level — a proclamation that surprises no one.

Congratulations to the 21-year-old French-Iranian superstar on his double victory, and we look forward to his return to his lucky American city! ♠

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THE SAINT LOUIS RAPID AND BLITZ AT A GLANCE

AUG. 9-16, 2024 | ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

RAPID

1ST-3RD: GMs Alireza Firouzja, Ian Nepomniachtchi, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, 5½/9.

4TH: GM Levon Aronian, 5. **5TH-7TH:** GMs Wesley So, Hikaru Nakamura, Leinier Dominguez, 4½. **8TH-9TH:** GMs Nodirbek Abdusattorov, Fabiano Caruana, 4. **10TH:** GM Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu, 2.

BLITZ

1ST: GM Alireza Firouzja, 12/18. **2ND:** GM Wesley So, 11. **3RD:** GM Hikaru Nakamura, 10½. **4TH:** GM Fabiano Caruana, 10. **5th:** GM Levon Aronian, 9. **6TH-8TH:** GMs Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu, Nodirbek Abdusattorov, 8. **9TH:** GM Ian Nepomniachtchi, 7. **10TH:** GM Leinier Dominguez, 6½.

OVERALL (RAPID SCORED AS 2-1-0; BLITZ AS 1-½-0)

1ST: GM Alireza Firouzja, 23/36. **2ND:** GM Wesley So, 20. **3RD:** GM Hikaru Nakamura, 19½. **4TH-5TH:** GMs Levon Aronian, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, 19. **6TH-7TH:** GMs Fabiano Caruana, Ian Nepomniachtchi, 18. **8TH:** GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov, 16. **9TH:** GM Leinier Dominguez, 15½. **10TH:** GM Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu, 12.

THE SINQUEFIELD CUP AT A GLANCE

AUG. 18-28, 2024 | ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

1ST: GM Alireza Firouzja, 6/9. **2ND:** GM Fabiano Caruana, 5½. **3RD-4TH:** GMs Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Nodirbek Abdusattorov, 5. **5TH-7TH:** GMs Gukesh Dommaraju, Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu, Wesley So, 4½. **8TH-9TH:** GMs Ding Liren, Ian Nepomniachtchi, 3½. **10TH:** GM Anish Giri, 3.



Hidden Gems

The Women's Olympiad saw tremendous tactics and sharp endings.

BY **JOHN HARTMANN**

T

HE WOMEN'S OLYMPIAD produced dozens of interesting, thrilling, and beautiful games that got relatively little attention. Here's a selection of the cream of the crop — and this only scratches the surface!

TWO KNIGHTS DEFENSE (C58)

Anahi Alexandra Munoz Cortez (1868)
IM Gulnar Mammadova (2336)
45th Women's Olympiad (1), Budapest,
09.11.2024

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. Ng5 d5 5. exd5 Na5 6. Bb5+ c6 7. dxc6 bxc6 8. Qf3

As recommended in the *Chess Life Kids* 1. e4 repertoire! Black chooses to give up an Exchange for good compensation. Will the material or the initiative win the day?

8. ... cxb5! 9. Qxa8 Be7 10. 0-0 h6 11. Ne4 Qd7 12. Nxf6+ gxf6 13. Qe4

Getting the queen back into the game is logical, but White is burning a lot of tempi!

13. ... Rg8

The threat is ... Bc8-b7 followed by crashing through on g2, but White's solution only makes things worse.

14. f3?

Allowing Black to take over. 14. Qe2 leaves things entirely unclear.

14. ... Bc5+ 15. Kh1



15. ... Rxg2! 16. Qh4

16. Kxg2 loses to 16. ... Qh3+ 17. Kh1 Qxf1 mate.

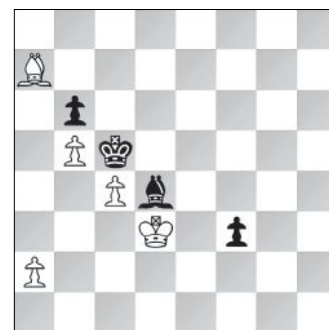
16. ... Rg4 17. Qxh6

Avoiding 17. fxg4? Qd5+. But with Black landing hammer blow after hammer blow, the result is never in doubt.

17. ... Qf5 18. d4 Bb7 19. Nd2 Bxd4 20. h3 Rg6 21. Qh4 Qxc2 22. Rb1 Bxf3+! 23. Rxf3 Qd1+ 24. Rf1 Rg1+! 25. Kh2 Qe2+ 26. Rf2 Bxf2 27. Qe4 Be3+, White resigned.

COMPARE, CONTRAST

Aleksandra Milovic (2121)
GM Bella Khotenashvili (2432)
45th Women's Olympiad (2), Budapest,
09.12.2024



WHITE TO MOVE

How can White hold this position?

50. a4?

It's clear that White can't stop the f2-pawn and also prevent the black king from eating all the pawns. Careful calculation reveals that only 50. Bb8!, preparing to bring the bishop back to attend to the f2-pawn, saves the game. Play continues 50. ... f2 51. Ke2 Kb4 52. Bg3! Kxc4 (52. ... Ka3 gives White a number of paths to safety, including 53. Bxf2 [53. Bd6+ Kxa2 54. c5! also holds; the variations are worth exploring!] 53. ... Bxf2 54. Kxf2 Kb4) 53. Bxf2 Bxf2 54. Kxf2 and Black cannot win, i.e., 54. ... Kxb5 55. Ke3 Ka4 56. Ke4 and Black can't both defend the b-pawn and win the a-pawn.

50. ... f2 51. Ke2 Kb4

51. ... Kxc4? lets White off the hook after 52. Bxb6! Bxb6 53. a5!.

52. Bb8 Bc5 53. Bg3 Kxa4 54. Bxf2 Bxf2
55. Kxf2

Now we see the difference — because White has kept the c-pawn instead of the a-pawn, the black king returns to the center to fend off the white king and shepherd her b-pawn to promotion.

55. ... Kb4 56. Ke3 Kxc4 57. Kd2 Kxb5 58. Kc3 Ka4, White resigned.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

GM Alexandra Kosteniuk (2483)

GM Harika Dronavalli (2502)

45th Women's Olympiad (3), Budapest, 09.13.2024

The former Women's World Champion gets the best of her opponent in this early round matchup.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. c3 Nf6 5. d3 d6 6. Nbd2 0-0 7. h3 a5 8. 0-0 h6 9. Re1 Be6 10. Bb5 Qb8 11. Nf1 Qa7 12. Re2 a4 13. Rc2!? Qa5 14. Bxc6 bxc6 15. Bd2 Qa6 16. c4 Qc8 17. Be3 Bxe3 18. fxe3 c5 19. Ng3 Nh7 20. Kh2 Qd8 21. Rf2 g6 22. Ne2 c6 23. Nc3 Qa5 24. Rc1 Ra7 25. Kh1 Rb8



26. d4 exd4 27. exd4 Bxc4 28. dxc5 Qxc5 29. Rd2 Ng5 30. Nd4 Qb6 31. Nxa4 Qa6? 32. b3 c5 33. Rxc4! cxd4 34. Rxd4 Qb7 35. Nc3 Rc8 36. a4 Raa8 37. Nd5 Rc5 38. Nf6+ Kg7 39. Ng4 h5 40. Rxc5! dxc5 41. Rd7 Qc6 42. Qa1+ Kh7 43. Nf6+ Kh6 44. h4 Nxe4 45. Rxf7 Nxf6 46. Qc1+, Black resigned.

CATALAN OPENING, OPEN VARIATION (E08)

WIM Maria Jose Campos (2252)

IM Ulviyya Fataliyeva (2378)

45th Women's Olympiad (3), Budapest, 09.13.2024

The power of the Catalan bishop shines through here. The material imbalance is interesting.

1. Nf3 d5 2. c4 e6 3. g3 Nf6 4. Bg2 Be7 5. 0-0 0-0 6. d4 dxc4 7. Qc2 a6 8. a4 Bd7 9. Rd1 Bc6 10. Bg5 Nbd7 11. Nbd2 h6 12. Bxf6 Nxf6 13. Qxc4 Rc8 14. Qc2 Bb4 15. Nb3 Be4 16. Qc4 Qe7 17. Rac1 b5!? 18. axb5 axb5 19. Qxb5 Rb8 20. Qa6 Rb6 21. Qc4 Bd5 22. Qd3 Bxb3 23. Qxb3 Bd2



24. Qxb6 cxb6 25. Rxd2

It's not clear whether necessity was the mother of invention in this case, but prepared or no, White has an excellent position after giving up the queen for rook, bishop, and pawn.

25. ... b5 26. Ne5 Qb4 27. Rcc2 Qa4 28. Bf3 b4 29. Kg2 Nd5 30. Rc5 Qa1 31. Nd3 b3 32. e4 Nf6 33. Rc3 Rb8 34. d5 exd5 35. exd5 g5 36. h3 h5 37. d6 g4 38. hxg4 hxg4 39. Bc6 Kg7 40. d7 Rh8?! 41. Nc1! Qa5 42. Nxb3 Qh5 43. Kf1 Rd8 44. Nc5 Qf5 45. Rdd3 Qh7 46. b4 Qh3+ 47. Kg1 Nxd7 48. Rxd7 Re8 49. Rd1 Re2 50. Rc4 Qh5 51. Nd3 Qf5 52. Nf4 Rb2 53. Rc5 Qc8 54. Nh5+ Kh8 55. Re1 Qa6 56. Re8+ Kh7 57. Be4+ f5

58. Bxf5+ Kh6 59. Rh8+, Black resigned.

LONDON SYSTEM (D02)

IM Nurgul Salimova (2412)

WIM Umida Omonova (2032)

45th Women's Olympiad (4), Budapest, 09.14.2024

White sacrifices one pawn, then another, in an attempt to knock off her lesser-rated opponent. Black is up to the challenge, and the result is a well-played draw. Some sources give the final move as 60. ... Ke5, which would lose, but this is likely the result of the king being placed in the center of the DGT board to signify the draw.

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Bf4 c5 4. e3 Nc6 5. Nbd2 e6 6. c3 cxd4 7. exd4 Nh5 8. Be3 Bd6 9. Ne5 Nf6 10. Nd3 0-0 11. Be2 Re8 12. Qc2 Qc7 13. f4 Ne7 14. Ne5 b6 15. Bf3 Bb7 16. Bf2 Nd7 17. 0-0-0 f6 18. Nd3 Bxf4 19. Nxf4 Qxf4 20. Rde1 e5 21. Be3 Qf5 22. Qd1 Qe6 23. dxe5 fxe5 24. Bg4 Qc6 25. Nf3 Ng6 26. h4 Nf6 27. Bf5 Bc8 28. Bc2 Bg4 29. Bg5 d4 30. h5 Nxh5 31. Be4 Qc5 32. Qb3+ Be6 33. Qc2 Ng3 34. Bxg6 hxg6 35. Rxe5 Qd6 36. Rhe1 d3 37. Qd2 Qd7 38. Nd4 Bc4 39. b3 Ba6 40. Bf4 Nh5 41. Bg5 Rxe5 42. Rxe5 Qg4 43. Nf3 Rf8 44. Be7 Re8 45. Qg5 Qf4+ 46. Qxf4 Nxf4 47. Bg5 Ne6 48. Nd4 Kf7 49. Nxe6 Rxe6 50. Rxe6 Kxe6 51. g3 Kf5 52. Bf4 Bb7 53. Kd2 Ke4 54. c4 a6 55. a4 b5 56. cxb5 axb5 57. axb5 Kd5 58. Be3 Bc8 59. Kxd3 Bd7 60. b6, draw.





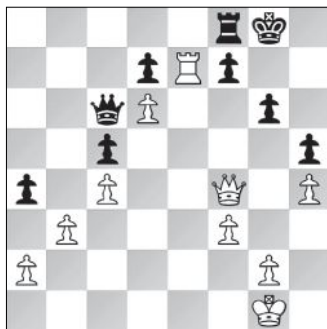
GM Bella
Khotenashvili

SICILIAN DEFENSE, TAIMANOV VARIATION (B45)

IM Sabrina Vega Gutierrez (2374)
IM Davaademberel Nomin-Erdene (2319)
45th Women's Olympiad (4), Budapest,
09.14.2024

What a king walk!

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6
5. Nc3 e6 6. Nxc6 bxc6 7. e5 Nd5 8. Ne4
Bb7 9. Be2 c5 10. 0-0 Qc7 11. Nd6+ Bxd6
12. exd6 Qc6 13. f3 e5 14. c4 Nf4 15. Bxf4
exf4 16. Bd3 0-0 17. Bc2 Rae8 18. Qd3 g6
19. Rfe1 Rxe1+ 20. Rxe1 Qb6 21. Qd2 Bc6
22. Be4 Rc8 23. Bxc6 Qxc6 24. Re7 Rf8 25.
h4 h5 26. b3 a5 27. Qxf4 a4



28. Kh2 axb3 29. axb3 Qb7 30. Qe3 Qc6
31. Qe5 Rb8 32. Kg3 Ra8 33. Qf6 Rf8 34.
Kf4 Kh7 35. Kg5 Qa8 36. Rxf7+ Rxf7 37.
Qxf7+ Kh8 38. Kh6, Black resigned.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

IM Anna M. Sargsyan (2364)
WGM Miaoyi Lu (2438)
45th Women's Olympiad (5), Budapest,
09.15.2024

Armenia's board four bronze medalist gets the better of the Chinese prodigy in an absolute slugfest. White sacrifices two pawns and then an Exchange in a furious attack.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 Bc5 5.
c3 d6 6. 0-0 0-0 7. Re1 a5 8. h3 Ba7 9. Bb3
h6 10. Nbd2 Be6 11. Bc2 Re8 12. Nf1 d5!
13. exd5 Qxd5 14. Be3 Bxe3 15. Nxe3 Qb5



16. Ba4!? Qxb2 17. Rb1 Qxc3 18. Rxb7 Re7
19. Qb1 Nb4 20. Rc1 Qa3 21. Bb3 Nxa2 22.
Rc6! Bxb3 23. Rxb3 Qa4



24. Rxf6!?

Not strictly necessary, as 24. Nf5 Re6 25. Rb8+ (25. Nxf6+!? gxf6 26. Rxe6 fxe6 27. Nxe5 gives interesting play for the piece) 25. ... Rxb8 26. Qxb8+ Re8 27. Qxc7 Nd5 is also possible. But the Exchange sacrifice puts immense pressure on Black's position.

24. ... gxf6 25. Nf5 Ree8 26. d4! exd4? 27. N3xd4 Rad8 28. Nxf6+ Kf8

28. ... Kg7 is met by 29. Ndf5+! Kh7 (29. ... Kf8 30. Rg3; 29. ... Kh8 30. Nxf7+) 30. Rg3 Rd7 31. Nd6+! Re4 32. Qb8! and mate cannot be stopped.

29. Qh7 Re1+ 30. Kh2 Qc4 31. Nhf5 Ke8 32. Rd3!

The rook is untouchable, as it is indirectly defended by the queen.

32. ... Kd7 33. Ne6+ Kxe6

If 33. ... Qxd3 34. Nc5+ Kc6 35. Nxd3 Rxd3 36. Ne7+ Rxe7 37. Qxd3 and White wins.



GM Alexandra
Kosteniuk

34. Rxd8 Qf4+ 35. Ng3 Re5 36. Qc2 Nb4
37. Qxc7 Re4 38. Qd7+, Black resigned.

QUEEN'S PAWN GAME (A50)

WIM Zsoka Gaal (2385)

IM Deysi Cori T. (2366)

45th Women's Olympiad (6), Budapest,
09.16.2024

1. d4 e6 2. c4 b6 3. a3 Bb7 4. Nc3 Nf6 5.
d5 exd5 6. cxd5 Bd6 7. Nf3 0-0 8. Bg5 h6
9. h4! c5

Greed is indeed a sin after 9. ... hxc5 10. hxc5
Nh7 11. Qd3 with serious advantage to White.

10. Qc2 Be7 11. 0-0-0 d6 12. e3 a6 13. g4!
Nxc4 14. Bd3!? Bc8



15. Bxe7?

Trading pieces only aids Black's task. In-
stead, White could keep the pressure with
15. Bf5! Bxf5 (15. ... hxc5 16. Bh7+! Kh8 17.
hxc5; 15. ... Nxf2 16. Bxc8 Nxd1 17. Kxd1 and
now the threat of Bg5xh6 looms) 16. Qxf5
Nxf2 17. Bxh6!.

Also effective is 15. Rdg1! f5 (trying to
keep the g-file blocked) 16. Ne2!, looking to
bring the e2-knight to f4 and e6 or g6. Now
if Black tries to win material with (a) 16. ...
Nxf2, White gets a terrific attack with 17.
Bxh6 Bf6 18. Nf4 Nxh1 19. Ng5. The same is
true after (b) 16. ... hxc5 17. hxc5 Bxc5 18.
Rxc4!? (18. Nxc5 Qxc5 19. Nf4 leaves White a
bit ahead) 18. ... fxc4 19. Bh7+ Kh8 20. Nxc5
Qxc5 21. Qe4!, when Black is forced to play
21. ... g6 and struggle to hold on. After 22.
Bxc6 Kg8 23. Rh5 Bf5 24. Bh7+ Kh8 25. Qh1!
Black has to give back material to survive.

15. ... Qxe7 16. Ng5?

Another piece offered on g5! OK; it's not
sound, but the aesthetics!

16. ... Ne5?

16. ... hxc5? loses to 17. Bh7+ Kh8 18. hxc5,
but if Black keeps developing with 16. ...
Nd7! it's hard to see how the attack can
succeed. If 17. Bh7+ Kh8 18. Rdg1 Ndf6 and

IM Divya Deshmukh



Black is not only surviving but thriving!

17. Bxa6! hxc5 18. hxc5 Ng6 19. Bd3?!

White should take the full point after 19.
Bxc8! Rxc8 20. Rh3!.

19. ... Qe5?

Again Black needs to get pieces out with
something like 19. ... Nd7.

20. Ne4! c4 21. f4!

Clearing the second rank with tempo.

21. ... Nxf4 22. exf4 Qxf4+ 23. Qd2 Qxd2+

24. Rxd2 f5 25. g6 fxe4 26. Rdh2, Black
resigned.

FRENCH DEFENSE, ADVANCE VARIATION (C02)

IM Divya Deshmukh (2483)

GM Elina Danielian (2393)

45th Women's Olympiad (6), Budapest,
09.16.2024

White uses a trendy line against the French
to take the initiative from the get-go. Black
is forced to vacate her king to the center
and then the queenside in the face of sig-
nificant pressure, and White's domination
of the board allows her to push her h-pawn
Winawer-style to win material and eventu-
ally the game.

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 c5 4. c3 Nc6 5. Nf3
Bd7 6. Bd3 Qb6 7. 0-0 cxd4 8. Re1 Rc8 9.
Nbd2 Nge7 10. Nb3 dxc3 11. bxc3 Na5 12.
Rb1 Nxb3 13. Rxb3 Qc7 14. Qe2 Nc6 15.
Ng5 Na5 16. Rb1 Bc6



17. Nxe4! Be7 18. Qg4 g6 19. Ng5! Bxc5
20. Bxc5 Kd7 21. c4! dxc4 22. Bxc6!? Rcf8
23. Be4 Kc8 24. Bf6 Rhg8 25. Qf3 Kb8 26.
h4! Rc8 27. h5 Bxe4 28. Rxe4 c3 29. h6 c2
30. Rc1 Qd7 31. h7 Rh8 32. Bxh8 Rxh8 33.
Qg4 Qd2 34. Qg8+ Kc7 35. Ree1 Qd8 36.
Rxc2+ Nc6 37. Qxf7+ Qd7 38. Qxd7+ Kxd7
39. Rd1+ Ke7 40. Rb1, Black resigned.

RUY LOPEZ, ZAITSEV VARIATION (C92)

IM Stavroula Tsolakidou (2444)

WIM Afruza Khamdamova (2313)

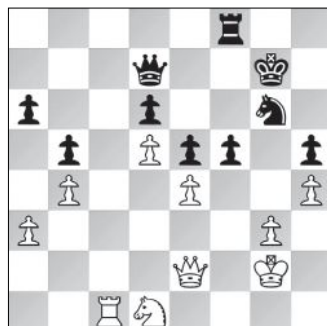
45th Women's Olympiad (7), Budapest,
09.18.2024

With an opening that looks straight out of
the mid-1970s, White — who plays for the
Saint Louis University chess team — even-
tually takes the full point with another in-
teresting material imbalance.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6
5. 0-0 Be7 6. Re1 b5 7. Bb3 d6 8. c3 0-0 9.
h3 Bb7 10. d4 Re8 11. a3 h6 12. Ba2 Bf8
13. d5 Ne7 14. b3 c6 15. c4 Ng6 16. Nc3



cx d5 17. cxd5 Qa5 18. b4 Qc7 19. Bd2 Bc8 20. Rc1 Qb7 21. Bb1 Bd7 22. Bd3 Nf4 23. Bf1 g5 24. h4 g4 25. Nh2 h5 26. g3 Ng6 27. Be2 Rac8 28. f3 Qb6+ 29. Kg2 Qd4 30. Rf1 Bg7 31. Rc2 Rf8 32. Qc1 gxf3+ 33. Nxf3 Qb6 34. Nh2 Qc7 35. Bd3 Qb7 36. Bh6 Ng4 37. Bxg7 Kxg7 38. Nxg4 Bxg4 39. Qe3 Rc7 40. Rfc1 f6 41. Be2 Qc8 42. Qd2 Qd7 43. Nd1 Rxc2 44. Qxc2 Bxe2 45. Qxe2 f5



46. Ne3? fxe4? 47. Qxh5! Qf7 48. Qg5 Kh7 49. Rf1? Nf4+! 50. gxf4 Rg8 51. Ng4 Rxg5 52. fxe5 Qc7

The rook and knight are equal to the queen here, especially with the potent g- and h-pawns.

53. h5 Qc2+ 54. Rf2 Qd1 55. g6+ Kg8 56. Kg3 e3?

Black has to try 56. ... Qe1 to trouble White's piece coordination; it gives Black just enough to keep the balance.

57. Rf7!

With mate threatened with Ng4-f6+/h6+, the game is soon over.

57. ... Qe1+ 58. Kg2 Qe2+ 59. Kh3 Qxg4+ 60. Kxg4, Black resigned.

FOUR KNIGHTS VARIATION (C48)

WGM Candela Be Francisco Guecamburu (2294)

WFM Anjum Noshin (2085)

45th Women's Olympiad (9), Budapest, 09.20.2024

The Argentinian number one had one of the prettiest wins of the Olympiad with this ninth-round victory.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bb5 Bc5 5. 0-0 0-0 6. Nxe5 Nxe5 7. d4 Bd6 8. f4 Neg4 9. e5 Bb4 10. f5 d6 11. exf6 Nxf6 12. Bg5 Bxc3 13. bxc3 d5 14. Bd3 Qd6 15. Qf3 c6 16. Rae1 h6 17. Bf4 Qd8 18. g4 c5 19. dxc5 Bd7 20. Be5 Bc6 21. Qf4 Ne4?



22. Bxg7! Kxg7 23. Rxe4! dxe4 24. f6+! Kh7 25. Qf5+ Kg8 26. Qh5! Qd7 27. Rf5

Even stronger was 27. Rf4!, defending the g-pawn. Black cannot stop mate.

27. ... Qxf5 28. gxf5 Kh7 29. Bc4 Be8 30. Kf2 With Black effectively in zugzwang, White takes time to bring the king to the center, preventing any rook intrusions.

30. ... Rd8 31. Ke3 Rc8 32. Qd1! Bc6 32. ... Rxc5 is met with 33. Qd6.

33. Qg4 Rg8 34. Qh5 Rg5 35. Qxf7+ Kh8 36. Qe6 Rf8 37. Qe7 Re8 38. f7, Black resigned.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B90)

WGM Alicja Sliwicka (2373)

WGM Alua Nurman (2324)

45th Women's Olympiad (9), Budapest, 09.20.2024

White gives up a pawn for no good reason, but Black soon hands the initiative back to her opponent. The battle rages back and forth until Black's knight returns to the fray, handing control and eventually the full point to Team Kazakhstan.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. f3 e5 7. Nb3 Be6 8. Be3 h5 9. Qd2 Nbd7 10. Nd5 Bxd5 11. exd5 Rc8 12. 0-0-0 Nb6 13. Qa5 Qc7 14. c3 Nbd7 15. Qb4 Be7 16. h4 b5 17. Be2 Qb7 18. Na5 Qa8 19. Qb3 Nc5 20. Bxc5 Rxc5 21. Nc6 Nxd5 22. Nxe7 Kxe7 23. Bd3 Nf6 24. Rhe1 Rd8 25. Rd2 Kf8 26. Kb1 Qc6 27. Qd1 g6 28. g4 Qc7 29. Bc2 a5 30. Rd3 Kg7 31. g5 Ng8 32. f4 exf4 33. Rf3 d5 34. Ref1 Rc4 35. Bd3 Re4 36. Qc1 Re7 37. Rxf4 Qc5 38. Bc2 Rdd7 39. Qd2 Re5 40. Qd3 Re6 41. a3 Rde7 42. Ka2 Re4 43. Bb3 Rxf4 44. Rxf4 Rd7 45. Qh3 Qc7 46. Rd4 Ne7 47. Qf1 Nf5 48. Rd2 Qc5 49. Ka1 Rd6 50. Qh1 b4 51. cxb4 axb4 52. a4 Nd4 53. Rd3 Nxb3+ 54. Rxb3 Ra6 55. Qe1 Rxa4+ 56. Kb1 Qd4 57. Rf3 Ra7 58. Qe2 Rb7 59. Rd3 Qxh4 60. Qe5+ Kh7 61. Qxd5 Re7 62. Ka2 Qe4 63. Qb5 Qe6+ 64. Kb1 Qf5 65. Qxf5 gxf5 66. Rd6 Re6 67. Rd4 Rb6 68. Rd8 Kg7 69. Kc2 Re6 70. Rb8 Re4 71. Rb6 f4 72. Rh6 f3 73. Rf6 Re3 74. Kd2 Re2+ 75. Kd1 Rxb2 76. Rxf3 Rg2 77. Rf5 b3 78. Kc1 b2+ 79. Kb1 h4 80. Rf3 Kg6 81. Rf6+ Kxg5 82. Rxf7 h3 83. Ka2 Kg4 84. Rg7+ Kf5 85. Rf7+ Ke6 86. Rf1 h2, White resigned.

LONDON SYSTEM (D02)

IM Le Thao Nguyen Pham (2380)

WIM Zsoka Gaal (2385)

45th Women's Olympiad (10), Budapest, 09.21.2024

Black gets the better of things, but White drags the game into a tactical morass to muddy the waters. After a series of punches and counterpunches, Gaal takes the

full point for Hungary and clinches an IM norm.

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. Bf4 d5 4. e3 c5 5. c3 Bd6 6. Bb5+ Nc6 7. Bg3 Bxg3 8. hxc3 Qb6 9. a4 a6 10. dxc5 Qxc5 11. Qd4 Qxd4 12. Bxc6+ bxc6 13. exd4 a5 14. Ne5 Bd7 15. Nd2 Ke7 16. f3 Rhb8 17. b3 Ra7 18. Kf2 Be8 19. Rac1 h6 20. c4 Kd6 21. cxd5 cxd5 22. Rc3 Ng8 23. Nd3 Ne7 24. g4 Nc6 25. Ke3 f6 26. f4 Re7 27. Nf3 Bg6 28. Rhc1 Rb6 29. Nc5 Nb4



30. Ne5!?

Almost forced, else White is just much worse.

30. ... fxe5?

Letting White back into the game. Instead, the calm 30. ... Be8! keeps a serious advantage, and if White persists in offering the knight with something like 31. Rd1 (avoiding ... Nb4-a2) now 31. ... fxe5! 32. dxe5+ Kc7 33. Nxe6+ Kb7 34. Nd4 (34. Nd8+? Kb8 leaves White with no attack) 34. ... Bd7! gives Black good chances to win.

31. dxe5+ Kc7 32. Nxe6+ Kb7 33. Nd8+ Ka6

Avoiding 33. ... Kb8? 34. Rc8+ Ka7 35. R1c7+ Rxc7 36. Rxc7+ Kb8 37. Rxc7 with a tremendous position.

34. Rc8?

Too slow. White had to keep the pressure on with 34. Rc7 d4+ 35. Kd2 Rxc7 36. Rxc7 Be4 (in light of f4-f5) 37. Rxc7 Nd3 38. Rd7 and the position is unclear, especially with the time control looming!

34. ... d4+! 35. Kd2

Worse is 35. Kxd4? Rd7+ 36. Ke3 Nd5+ when Black starts grabbing pawns.

35. ... Be4 36. R1c4 Bb7

White's attack is all bluster, so it's safe to grab the pawn with 36. ... Bxg2!.

37. Nxb7 Kxb7 38. R8c5 Nc6! 39. Rb5?! g5!

Undermining White's pawns. Black goes on

to win without difficulty, although I suspect she had to calculate the final moves a bit!

40. g3 gxf4 41. gxf4 Rf7 42. g5 hxc3 43. fxc3 Rxb5 44. axb5 Nxe5 45. Ra4 Rf2+ 46. Ke1 Nd3+ 47. Kd1 Nb2+ 48. Ke1 Nxa4 49. Kxf2 Nc5 50. g6 Ne6 51. Kf3 Kb6 52. Ke4 Kxb5 53. Ke5 d3!, White resigned.

PETROFF DEFENSE (C42)

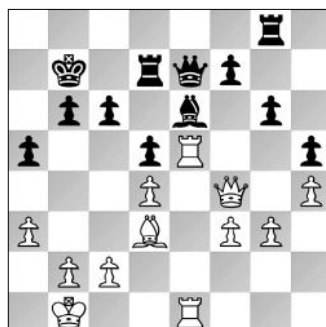
IM Divya Deshmukh (2483)

WGM Ni Shiquan (2348)

45th Women's Olympiad (10), Budapest, 09.21.2024

A key victory for India and for Deshmukh on the way to her gold medal on board three. Her technique is impressive throughout this game.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nxe5 d6 4. Nf3 Nxe4 5. Nc3 Nxc3 6. dxc3 Be7 7. Bf4 Nc6 8. Qd2 Be6 9. 0-0-0 Qd7 10. h4 h6 11. Kb1 Bf6 12. Nd4 Nxd4 13. cxd4 c6 14. Be2 h5 15. Bf3 d5 16. Rde1 0-0-0 17. Re3 Be7 18. Qa5 b6 19. Rb3!? Qb7 20. Qa4 Bd6 21. Bxd6 Rxd6 22. Be2 a5 23. Qa3 Kc7 24. Re3 g6 25. Re1 Qc8 26. Re5 Rg8 27. Qg3 Qd8 28. Bd3 Kb7 29. Qf4 Rd7 30. g3 Bg4 31. f3 Be6 32. a3 Qe7



33. Rh1! Qd8 34. g4! hxc4 35. fxc4 g5 36. hxc5 Rh8 37. Rh6 Rd6 38. Rxh8 Qxh8 39. Rxe6!, Black resigned.

BREAK ON THROUGH

WGM Alua Nurman (2324)

GM Bella Khotenashvili (2432)

45th Women's Olympiad (10), Budapest, 09.21.2024

(see diagram top of next column)

Khotenashvili has an excellent position in an important game for the standings, but how to break through remains to be solved.

48. ... Kc7



BLACK TO MOVE

A better idea is 48. ... b4 49. cxb4 c3 50. bxc3 b2 51. Rxb2 Nxb2 when the extra rook should defeat the pawns.

49. Rh1 Kb6

Both 49. ... Nxc3+ 50. bxc3 Rxa3 and 49. ... Nxb2 50. Rxb2 Rxa3 are promising.

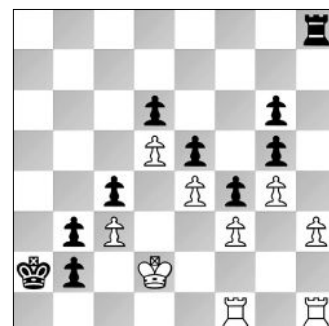
50. Nd1 Kc5

Stretching the White defenses with 50. ... Rah8 51. Nf2 Nxc3+! 52. bxc3 Ra7 53. Ra1 Rha8 also does the trick.

51. Rh2 Rha7 52. Rh1 Nxb2?

Mistimed. Now White manages to conjure a defense.

53. Nxb2 Rxa3 54. Rdd1 Ra2 55. Rb1 Rh8 56. Kd2 Ra7 57. Rh2 Ra2 58. Rhh1 b4 59. Rh2 Kb5 60. Rhh1 Ra7 61. Rh2 Ra7 62. Rbh1 Rh6 63. Nd1 Ra8 64. Nb2 Rh7 65. Rb1 Rha7 66. Rhh1 Ra2 67. Rhc1 Rh8 68. Rh1 Rh7 69. Rh2 Rxb2+ 70. Rxb2 Ka4 71. Rb1 Ka3 72. Rhh1 b2 73. Kc2 b3+ 74. Kd2 Ka2 75. Rbf1 Rh8 76. Rfg1 Rh7 77. Rf1 Rh8, draw.



The final position looks like something you might see in an endgame study! ♡

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

Happy NEW YEAR!

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**Read & Write
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by Dr. Jeanne Cairns Sinquefield

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MAKE → YOUR → MOVE

BY **FM CARSTEN HANSEN**

THIS MONTH'S PUZZLES ARE TAKEN FROM GAMES IN THE 2024 U.S. Championships in St. Louis.

The puzzles start easy and gradually become more difficult. It is worth noting that "easy" is a relative thing; if you are a newer player, the easy ones can also pose a challenge.

Try first to solve the puzzle before reading the text under the diagram. If you're unsuccessful, play through the solution, but return to the puzzle in a week or two to see whether you can now solve it. That way, you gradually expand your tactical vision, and you're more likely to spot tactics as they occur in your games. Whatever you do, do not use an engine to solve the puzzles; that will only cheat you out of improving your game. ♠

TACTIC 1.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 2.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 3.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 4.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 5.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 6.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 7.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 8.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 9.



BLACK TO MOVE

Position 1: DOMINATION BY REDUCTION

Position 2: SCOUTING FOR TROUBLE

Position 3: THE RIGHT KIND OF CAPTURE

Position 4: INCISIVE PRECISION

Position 5: A STAB IN THE CHEST

Position 6: FINDING THE WAY IN

Position 7: PERFECT INTERFERENCE

Position 8: SURPRISING DYNAMICS

Position 9: UNUSUAL EXPLORER



The new champion had "all the feels" after winning game 14.

Number

18

At age 18, Gukesh goes the distance to become the 18th World Champion.

BY **RICK MASSIMO**

ANNOTATIONS BY **WGM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN**
AND **GM JOEL BENJAMIN**

A

fter last-game drama in a match full of fireworks, GM Gukesh Dommaraju unseated GM Ding Liren to win the world championship in Singapore last month.

This makes Gukesh the 18th World Champion, and at the age of 18, it makes him by far the youngest player to take the undisputed title. The previous record was held by Garry Kasparov, who was 22 when he won the title in 1985. (Ruslan Ponomarev was a few months younger than Gukesh when he won the 2002 FIDE championship at a time of

schism on the world championship level; Vladimir Kramnik had recently beaten then-champion Kasparov in a non-FIDE match. It was quite a time.)

Prematch predictions ran heavily in favor of Gukesh, who was hot off a great Olympiad performance and ranked number 5 in the world, while Ding came into the match at number 23 after taking time away from the board and suffering some uninspiring results.

All this doubled the surprise when Ding came out and won Game 1 with Black, but (granting that hindsight is 20/20) some of the roots of Ding's defeat were visible even then: He spent 25 minutes on his seventh move and was 45 minutes behind Gukesh on the clock after move 10.

This was a recurring theme in the match: Gukesh won Game 3 with white — a game in which Ding left himself with 53 minutes (and no increment) after move 13 to make it to move 40 — and it really reared its head in Game 11, when Ding spent 40 minutes on move 4 and another 22 minutes on move 5, then blundered away a piece in a difficult position.

That game put Gukesh a point up with three (at most) to go, but then Ding showed the fight that he showed last year, when he overcame one-point deficits three times against GM Ian Nepomniachtchi to take the title on tiebreaks: He steamrolled Gukesh to level the scores going into Game 13, which was drawn, though Gukesh had been pushing.

Game 14 saw Ding, with White, play carefully — timidly, says GM Joel Benjamin, whose annotations you can see below. He eventually liquidated into a pawn-down endgame with a rook and bishop on each side. A draw, and tiebreaks, seemed likely, but

Gukesh kept pushing. On move 55 — down to around nine minutes plus a 30-second increment for the rest of the game — Ding cracked, offering a trade of rooks that also allowed Gukesh to trade bishops, leaving him with a winning king-and-pawn endgame.

The pictures and video of the end are compelling: First Gukesh is as shocked as all the commentators as he sees the win; his hand briefly shakes. As the exchanging proceeds, Ding lays his head on the table in dejection, while Gukesh covers his mouth to hide a smile. But after Ding resigns and leaves the board, it's Gukesh's turn to lay his head on the table. Then he bursts into tears and, seemingly not knowing what else to do, sets the pieces back up.

But as Ding said at the final press conference, “no game tomorrow.”

At the closing ceremony, Gukesh addressed the crowd with orange, white and green confetti — the colors of the Indian flag — still in his hair. With Ding in the audience, Gukesh called him “in my eyes, a true cham-

pion.” Addressing the former champ directly, he said, “I really admire you.” He went on to thank the Indian government, his school and especially his parents, saying “this means more to them than it means to me.”

It's the culmination of a great chess year for Gukesh and for India, a nation that has been rising in world chess for years. India won both team gold medals at the Olympiad in Budapest, paced by Gukesh's gold-medal-winning performance on board 1 for the open team, and three Indians are currently in the FIDE top 10.

The match ended on *Chess Life's* deadline; we present here the scores of all the games, as well as annotations of the decisive games by WGM Tatev Abrahamyan and GM Joel Benjamin, adapted from their notes for *Chess Life Online*. That said, many of the draws were exciting affairs; you can find annotations of all the games by Abrahamyan, Benjamin, and IMs John Watson and Robert Shlyakhtenko at new.uschess.org/2024-fide-world-championship.



THE GAMES

FRENCH DEFENSE, STEINITZ DEFENSE (C11)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

FIDE World Championship (1),
Singapore, 11.25.2024

Annotations by WGM Tatev Abrahamyan

What a start! There had been a lot of speculation about Ding's form leading up to the match, so this result was a shocker for many. It also raised the question of the relative importance of experience and nerves, even when one of the players is clearly struggling in the purely chessic sense.

1. e4 e6!

Although Ding did use the French in Game 7 of the 2023 match against GM Ian Nepomniachtchi, he had been sticking with 1. ...

e5, including in his game against Gukesh earlier this year at Tata Steel. The World Champion won that game with the black pieces in 37 moves — his last win in classical chess before this one. (See our preview in the November issue for that game. ~ed.)

2. d4 d5 3. Nc3

The most challenging move a French player can face. The knight puts pressure on the center from c3, although it blocks the c2-pawn from supporting the center.

3. ... Nf6

Theoretically, this approach seems to be superior to the Winawer (3. ... Bb4).

4. e5

The other major line is 4. Bg5, to which the most common response these days is 4. ... dxe4 (Black can play 4. ... Be7 but the pawn sac after 5. e5 Nfd7 6. h4 Bxg5 7. hxcg5 Qxg5 8. Nh3 Qe7 9. Nf4 gives White a huge initiative) 5. Nxe4 Be7 6. Bxf6 gxf6, resulting in a double-edged position where Black has the worse structure but the bishop pair compensates.

4. ... Nfd7 5. f4

Generally, when White wants to bring the knight from c3 to e2 and then support the center with c2-c3, they do it right now, with 5. Nce2 c5 6. c3 Nc6 7. f4, which would transpose to the line in the game.

5. ... c5 6. Nce2

I am not sure whether Gukesh was avoiding something with this move order. 6. Nf3 is the most common move in this position, when 6. ... Nc6 7. Be3 leads to huge theory.

6. ... Nc6 7. c3



7. ... a5

After a 25-minute think, Ding deviates from the main lines. In the postgame press conference, he revealed that he couldn't remember his preparation well and had to make a decision over the board whether to play the line he knew not too well or come up with something over the board. He chose the latter.

The standard approach to the position is 7. ... Be7 8. Nf3 0-0, followed by the standard French ideas of ... Qd8-b6 and ... f7-f6.

8. Nf3 a4 9. Be3 Be7 10. g4

A committal move that Gukesh played in less than a minute. When GM Maurice Ashley asked him about it at the press conference, Gukesh replied, "A move like 10. g4 you don't play without preparation."

White can also play 10. Qd2 0-0 11. h4. The game Duda – Caruana, *Chess.com* 2020, went 11. ... b5 12. dxc5 Nxc5 13. Bxc5 Bxc5 14. Ned4 Nxd4 15. cxd4 Be7 when White had a small advantage and went on to win.

10. ... Qa5

Played after another long think by Ding, which put him 45 minutes behind the clock. Gukesh revealed that he was on his own after this move.

Castling after your opponent has just played g2-g4 is, of course, scary. But after 10. ... 0-0!? Black is threatening to play ... f7-f6 and blow open the center, which forces White's hand: 11. g5 (after 11. h4 f6 the opening of the center can only favor Black, as the rook is perfectly positioned on the f-file) 11. ... b5 and now that f4-f5 is not coming, Black can start playing on the queenside. Black has some clear ideas of either pushing ... b5-b4 and ... Qd8-a5 or ... Nd7-b6-c4.

11. Bg2

Gukesh's first long think in the game. Clearly he was choosing whether to play a2-a3, stopping Black's next. After 11. a3 f6 the position is a mess, typical of a French structure. It is impossible to give an evaluation here.

11. ... a3

I am not sure it's a good idea to encourage b2-b3, which takes away the c4-square from Black's own knight. Black could play 11. ... Nb6 and head to c4.

12. b3 cxd4 13. b4!

A standard response, as White wants to chase away the queen from the a5-square and keep the c3-pawn safe. It does give back the c4-square, though.

If White plays 13. Nfxd4 Black can hit back with another standard idea in the French: 13. ... g5! The goal here is to get the central pawns, and by attacking the f4-pawn, Black weakens the e5-pawn. The black king will be all right in the center for a while.

13. ... Qc7 14. Nxd4 Nb6

At this point, Ding was about an hour behind on the clock. In the press conference, Gukesh referred to this moment as the turning point: He thought he still should be better, but he was unsure of the position. Perhaps this is where he started to lose the thread of the game.

If 14. ... Nxd4 15. Qxd4, now the knight is stuck on d7, and after 15. ... b6 16. 0-0 Ba6 17. Rf2 Black has to deal with the threat of f4-f5: 17. ... h5 18. f5 and things are starting to get out of control here.

15. 0-0

The computer's top choice is 15. Nb5 Qd8 16. Bf1, preventing ... Nb6-c4, but playing Bf1-g2 then Bg2-f1 a few moves later is extremely unnatural. However, it is also difficult to find ideas for Black. The computer's suggestion is 16. ... d4 (because 16. ... Nc4? 17. Bxc4 dxc4 18. Qxd8+ Bxd8 19. Nd6+ Kf8 20. 0-0-0 looks devastating for Black) 17. Nfxd4 Nd5 18. Qd3 Nxd4 19. Bxd4 Bh4+ 20. Kd2 and again, the position is an absolute mess.

15. ... Nc4 16. Bf2 Bd7

A useful move. Black doesn't need to decide where to put the king yet, as f4-f5 is not coming.

17. Qe2

A very natural move — one could make it in seconds in a blitz game, but it took Gukesh 40 minutes. He rejected the direct approach 17. Nd2 challenging the annoying knight. After 17. ... Nxd4 18. Bxd4 Nxd2 19. Qxd2 the e5-pawn is defended and White is ready to push f4-f5. Without any knights, Black doesn't have clear play here as there's no way to target the weak c3-pawn. Black absolutely has to force the white pawn to g5 in order to prevent f4-f5, with 19. ... h5 20. g5, and then shut down the kingside with 20. ... g6. The computer evaluates the position as equal here, but Black always has to watch out for f4-f5 and sacrifices of the light-squared bishop on the d5-square.

17. ... Nxd4 18. Nxd4

Play is similar to the previous note after 18. Bxd4 h5. Again, White wants to play f4-f5 at some point, so Black should discourage it. It's unclear after 19. g5 g6.



18. ... Nb2!

Ding finds great counterplay starting with this move.

19. Qe3

Black is happy to enter the endgame after 19. Nb5 Bxb5 20. Qxb5+ Qc6 21. Qxc6+ bxc6 as the knight is an excellent piece and the

g2-bishop is not very useful against the pawn chain. White can also try the ambitious 19. f5 but it doesn't lead to clear play: 19. ... Qxc3 20. Rac1 Qd3 21. Qe1 Rc8 and even down a pawn, the position is a mess. I realize how unhelpful it is to keep giving this evaluation, but I do want to emphasize what it's like to analyze and understand, let alone play, this position. We have the benefit of using the engine, while the players have to navigate this on their own with limited time.

19. ... Rc8 20. Rac1?

In and of itself, this move is not a huge mistake; the problem is what happens next. Black's idea is to play ... Qc7-c4-d3, and if

White doesn't have a way of dealing with it, he's in trouble.

White can prevent it with 20. Rfc1 followed by bringing the bishop back to the f1-square, but after committing to play on the kingside, it is so difficult to switch gears and move the rook away from the f-file. Black can once again shut down the kingside with 20. ... h5 and then after 21. g5 g6 the position is locked and it is difficult to find clear ideas for either side.

20. ... Qc4! 21. f5 Qd3



This was the whole idea behind Black's 18. ... Nb2. Ding is happy to enter the endgame: He won't have to worry about his king anymore and the weaknesses in White's camp can become a problem. Black shouldn't get sidetracked with the greedy pawn grab 21. ... Qxa2? After 22. f6 White will open the position and, with Black's queen far away, the king will come under fire.

22. Qe1?

Gukesh must have played this reluctantly, but the engine already evaluates it as a big mistake.

He initially wanted to play (a) 22. Qf4 but he spotted 22. ... g5! 23. fxe6 *e.p.* Qxg6! Backward captures are hard to spot! The queen positions herself on the kingside and it is now the White king that will come under attack. After 24. Qf3 h5 25. gxh5 Qxh5 (or 25. ... Rxh5), the black king is very comfortable in the center with f7 defended and White's position is starting to collapse.

White also can't trade queens: (b) 22. Qxd3? Nxd3 23. Rc2 0-0 and the e5-pawn is hanging while Black also has the threat of ... Bd7-a4, winning the c3-pawn.

The computer's top move is (c) 22. g5, but it is difficult to come up with this without having seen what happens with Black's bishop in the game. Logically, Black would play 22. ... Qxe3 (the top engine choice here is 22. ... g6 but it is hard to believe we would ever see the next sequence of moves over the board: 23. fxe6 fxe6 24. Bh3 0-0 25. Bxe6+ Bxe6

26. Nxe6 Rf3) 23. Bxe3 Nd3 24. Rcd1 Nxe5 25. Bf4. According to the engine, White is doing fine here but it is nearly impossible to come up with this stuff over the board. This also shows why 20. Rac1 was a poor choice: To justify that decision, White has to come up with some weird stuff here.

22. ... Bg5!

A simple and natural move.

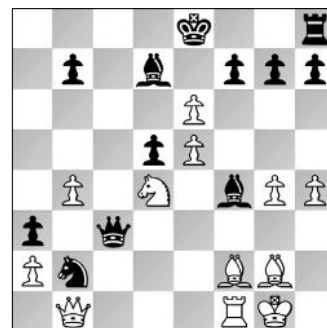
23. Rc2 Rc4

With the simple threat of ... Rc4xd4. White's position is barely hanging on; he cannot move most of his pieces.

24. h4 Bf4 25. Qb1 Rxc3

Careful! Black can still hang a piece: 25. ... Bxe5?? 26. Rxb2 Qxb1 27. Rxbx1.

26. Rxc3 Qxc3 27. fxe6



27. ... fxe6?

Ding's only big mistake in the entire game. The more accurate move was 27. ... Bxe6, which we can see by comparing it to the game: After 28. Ne2 Qxe5 29. Nxf4 Qxf4 30. Bc5 Qxg4 the difference is that the f-file is closed for the white rook, and Black has a clear path of getting the king to safety either via ... f7-f6 and ... Ke8-f7, or even bringing the knight to c4 and bringing the king to d7. Black has such a nice grip on the center that the king can live there safely.

28. Ne2 Qxe5 29. Nxf4 Qxf4 30. Qc2?

The final mistake. After (a) 30. Bc5! White will go down three pawns but the Black king is permanently stuck in the center, giving White play. (This is why capturing on e6 with the bishop was better.) After 30. ... Qxg4 White plays 31. Qc2! with the idea of Qc2-f2, utilizing the open f-file. Black should play 31. ... Nc4 (be careful of the c-file as well! Black can play 31. ... Na4 but after 32. Bd6 Qd4+ 33. Rf2 White has the big threat of the queen coming to the c7-square, and after 33. ... Qc3 34. Qe2 Kd8 35. Qg4 Black doesn't have any clear ideas of how to get out this bind;



even down three pawns, White has enough counterplay) and after 32. Qf2 the king has to start running: 32. ... Kd8 33. Bb6+ Nxb6 34. Qxb6+ Ke8 35. Qd6 and White has play for the material.

White could also play (b) 31. Rf3, with the idea of doubling on the f-file by bringing the queen to f1.

It looks like there's a beautiful tactic with (c) 31. Qxh7 as (c1) 31. ... Rxh7?? 32. Rf8, mate, but it allows a beautiful tactic in return: (c2) 31. ... Qd4+!! deflects the bishop, and Black is winning after either 32. Bxd4 Rxh7 or 32. Kh2 Qxh4+ 33. Qxh4 Rxh4+ 34. Kg3 Rh8.

30. ... Qc4!

30. ... Qxg4 works against 31. Qc7? 0-0! 32. Qxd7 Nd3! with the threat of ... Nd3-f4 with mate, but 31. Bc5 would have given White counterplay again.

31. Qd2

The king is in no danger in the endgame, so after 31. Qxc4 Nxc4 32. Bc5 Bb5 Black starts cleaning up by playing ... b7-b6 and bringing the king to safety on the d7-square.

31. ... 0-0

Once the king gets to safety, it's all over for White.

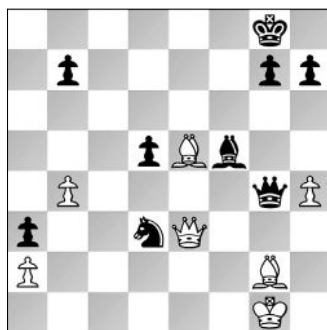
32. Bd4 Nd3 33. Qe3 Rxf1+

One can't capture this rook without seeing the next move.

34. Bxf1 e5!

Ding takes care of matters tactically.

35. Bxe5 Qxg4+ 36. Bg2 Bf5



Now all the black pieces are in the game.

37. Bg3 Be4 38. Kh2 h6!

Black has many good moves here, but safeguarding the king's position is very good technique.

39. Bh3 Qd1 40. Bd6 Qc2+ 41. Kg3 Qxa2 42. Be6+ Kh8, White resigned.

Of course, Ding doesn't fall for a simple tactic but it goes to show that it's never too late to blunder! White wins a piece after 42. ... Kh7?? 43. Qxe4+ dxe4 44. Bxa2 although the engine still evaluates the position as basically equal. An excellent game by the World Champion.

GIUOCO PIANO (C50)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

FIDE World Championship (2),

Singapore, 11.26.2024

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. d3 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. a4 d6 7. 0-0 h6 8. Be3 Be6 9. a5 Bxc4 10. dxc4 0-0 11. Bxc5 dxc5 12. b3 Qxd1 13. Rfxd1 Rad8 14. Rdc1 Nd4 15. Ne1 Rd6 16. Kf1 g6 17. Rd1 Rfd8 18. f3 Kg7 19. Kf2 h5 20. Ne2 Nc6 21. Nc3 Nd4 22. Ne2 Nc6 23. Nc3 Nd4, draw.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED, EXCHANGE VARIATION (D37)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

FIDE World Championship (3),

Singapore, 11.27.2024

Annotations by WGM Tatev Abrahamyan

1. d4

Gukesh chooses a different first move.

1. ... Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. c4 e6 4. cxd5

The Exchange Variation has become trendy. The main option is 4. Nc3 to keep the pressure in the center. Black can go in many directions — 4. ... c5, 4. ... Bb4, 4. ... Nbd7 — all of which are very playable.

4. ... exd5 5. Nc3 c6



The Carlsbad structure. Black secures the central pawn and wants to develop the light-squared bishop. In this structure White's typical idea is the minority attack on the queenside, meaning pushing the b-pawn and asking Black how they're going to react to

it. Black's main problem is the light-squared bishop, as so many of the pawns are on light squares. If Black manages to develop the bishop or exchange it, then they're typically doing fine.

Black could also play the immediate 5. ... Bf5 but it leads to some sharp stuff. After 6. Qb3 Black doesn't have a comfortable way of defending the pawn, unlike in the game — Black doesn't want to play 6. ... b6 because White will be perfectly positioned to blow up the center after 7. Bg5 c6 8. e4! dxe4 9. Ne5 Be6 10. Bc4 with a big advantage.

So Black would need to follow 5. ... Bf5 6. Qb3 with dynamic play, such as 6. ... Nc6!. It's playable for Black after 7. e4!? (not 7. Qxb7? Nb4! with the big threat of ... Nb4-c2+) 7. ... Nxe4 8. Qxb7 Bd7 (8. ... Nb4 is not ideal here as White has 9. Bb5+!), but Black has to know this line well, whereas ... c7-c6 is a solid move.

6. Qc2

Preventing ... Bc8-f5.

6. ... g6

Preparing ... Bc8-f5.

7. h3!?

Reacting to the upcoming ... Bc8-f5 by preparing to kick the bishop with a future g2-g4.

The main line is 7. Bg5 Be7 8. e3 Bf5 9. Bd3 Bxd3 10. Qxd3 Nbd7 and, as far as Carlsbads go, Black is quite comfortable. After 11. 0-0 0-0 12. Rab1 a5 Black is all right.

7. ... Bf5 8. Qb3 Qb6 9. g4

This was the idea behind h2-h3 and has been played twice by GM Vladimir Kramnik. Trading queens favors Black: 9. Qxb6 axb6 and the a8-rook immediately becomes an active piece. For example, after 10. g4 Be6 11. Bg2 b5 is a very annoying move to face: ... b5-b4 is coming; the knight won't have a good place to go to, and the a2-pawn will forever be a target.

9. ... Qxb3

Ding spent 15 minutes on this trade. Black doesn't have to take: In 2023, Nepomniachtchi played 9. ... Be6 10. Bg2 h5 11. g5 Nfd7 12. 0-0 Bd6 against Kramnik and never captured on b3.

10. axb3 Bc2

The doubled pawns look quite ugly for White and it makes sense that Black tries to immediately exploit the weaknesses. However, as we will see in the game, the bishop can also get stuck here. The more solid choice was 10. ... Be6.

11. Bf4 h5

Black shouldn't immediately capture the pawn. After 11. ... Bxb3? 12. Nd2 Bc4 (the bishop gets trapped after 12. ... Bc2 13. Rc1 Be4 14. f3) 13. Nxc4 dxc4 14. e3 White will capture on c4, ending up with the bishop pair, more space and a nice edge.

12. Rg1

White wants to maintain the pawn on g4 in an attempt to trap the c2-bishop. If White plays 12. g5 then after 12. ... Ne4 13. Bg2 (if 13. Rc1 now Black can take, because after 13. ... Bxb3! there is no Nf3-d2 anymore thanks to the e4-knight) 13. ... Bb4 14. 0-0 Bxc3 15. bxc3 Nxc3 16. Rfe1 White has compensation for the pawn, but Black's bishop can get back with 16. ... Bf5.

12. ... hxg4 13. hxg4 Nbd7

Ding spent 30 minutes on this move, leaving himself 53 minutes on the clock, a full hour behind Gukesh.

Black played 13. ... Bxb3 in Kramnik – Erigaisi, Dusseldorf 2023. Black managed to draw in 72 moves, but after 14. Nd2 Bc4 15. Nxc4 dxc4 16. e3 Bb4 17. Bxc4 White is doing very well.

14. Nd2

This was Gukesh's first long think in the game – about 15 minutes. He is now threatening to trap the bishop with Ra1-c1.

14. ... Rg8 15. g5

This goes against everything White has been trying to do so far: Now the f5-square is available for the bishop.

If White traps the bishop with 15. Rc1 Black can save it by opening the diagonal by force: 15. ... g5! 16. Be3 (after 16. Bxg5 Rxc2 17. Rxc2 Rxc4 18. Rxc4 Nxc4 19. e3 Bd6 Black has no issues) and 16. ... Be4 seems more accurate than retreating to the h7-square, as it doesn't allow for White's Nd2-f3 idea: If 16. ... Bh7 17. Nf3 Ne4 18. Nxe4 dxe4 19. Nxc5 Bb4+ 20. Kd1 Bg6 21. Nh3 White's pieces look a bit awkward for now, but they're up a full pawn.

But after 16. ... Be4 17. Ndxe4 (17. f3 Bh7 because now there is no Nd2-f3) 17. ... Nxe4 (after 17. ... dxe4 18. Bg2 Nxc4 19. Bd2! White will maintain the bishop pair and get the pawn back) 18. f3 Nxc3 19. bxc3 a5! 20. Rh1 White can slide the e3-bishop back, play e2-e3, Bf1-d3, and Ke1-e2, then try for e3-e4. The position looks more comfortable for White due to the bishop pair and the better center.

15. ... Nh5 16. Bh2 Rh8 17. f3

White still wants to play e2-e4 and try to trap the bishop.

17. ... Ng7

Things have improved significantly for Black as he now has control of the h-file again and the bishop has a return square. On the downside, Ding reached this position with only 30 minutes on the clock against Gukesh's 1:24. With no increment, severe time trouble was unavoidable.

18. Bg3**18. ... Rh5?**

Already a big mistake by Ding. He missed a move by Gukesh down the line.

In the press conference after the game, Ding showed the line 18. ... Be7 19. Rc1 (if 19. e4 the bishop on c2 will survive: 19. ... Bxg5 20. Rc1 Bxd2+ 21. Kxd2 Bxb3) 19. ... Bf5 20. e4 Be6 21. exd5 Bxd5 22. Nxd5 cxd5 23. Rc7 Ne6 24. Rxb7. Both players thought over the board that White is doing better, but agreed that after 24. ... a6! Black would have had a slight advantage.

Black can also just go back with 18. ... Bf5 when after 19. e4 Be6 20. exd5 Bxd5 21. Nxd5 cxd5 it's similar to the line where the bishop retreats first. White does have the bishop pair but also all the pawn weaknesses, whereas Black's structure is undisturbed. Thus the position is slightly better for Black.

19. e4

Of course, White continues with the idea of trapping the bishop. Here Gukesh thought he would win a piece, but things aren't so easy.

19. ... dxe4

It would have been better to play the immediate 19. ... Ne6! White can play 20. Rc1 Nxd4 21. Bf2! Bg7 and now White has a decision:

(a) After 22. Ne2 Nxf3+ Black wins another pawn, unlike in the game – 23. Nxf3 Bxe4 and it's unclear.

(b) Trading right away with 22. Bxd4 favors Black: If 22. ... Bxd4 23. Rg2 Bxc3 24. bxc3 Bxb3 25. Nxb3 dxe4 26. fxe4 Rh4! 27.

Nd2 Nc5 and without the dark-squared bishops, the black pieces are more active. Black has a good chance of holding this.

(c) 22. Rg2 is more accurate than taking on d4 first: This way, the recapture is not with tempo. After 22. ... Nxf3+ Black grabs three pawns for the piece, but after 23. Nxf3 Bxe4 24. Nxe4 dxe4 25. Nd2 Bxb2 26. Rc2 Be5 27. Nxe4 White still has excellent chances of winning with the two bishops and a lot of pieces left on the board.

20. fxe4 Ne6 21. Rc1 Nxd4 22. Bf2 Bg7 23. Ne2!

An excellent find by the challenger and the move that Ding missed. White wins the bishop without giving up the dark-squared bishop. Ding had anticipated 23. Rg2, when after 23. ... Bxb3 24. Bxd4 Bxd4 25. Nxb3 Be3! Black will win the third pawn and is doing quite OK here.

23. ... Nxb3 24. Rxc2 Nxd2 25. Kxd2!

An accurate capture. If 25. Rxd2? Ne5 Black wins another pawn with the double threat of ... Ne5-f3 and ... Ne5-c4. Black would be thrilled to get the position after 26. Nd4 (if 26. Rg3 Rxc5 Black wins the pawn anyways thanks to the fork: 27. Rxc5 Nf3+ 28. Kd1 Nxc5) 26. ... c5 27. Be2 cxd4 28. Bxh5 gxh5.

25. ... Ne5

Perhaps 25. ... a5 would have offered Black some practical chances, although the engine finds 26. Kc1 to preserve more pawns. After 26. ... a4 27. Kb1! a3 28. b3 the king is right on time to avoid a pawn trade.

26. Nd4

The position is objectively winning here, but White still needs to do some work.

26. ... Rd8 27. Ke2 Rh2 28. Bg2

White is not in a hurry. Black has placed all of his pieces on their optimal squares but there is nothing more he can do.

28. ... a6 29. b3

Another patient move. By pushing the pawn forward, it can never be targeted by the dark-squared bishop and it also takes away the c4-square from the knight.

29. ... Rd7 30. Rcc1

The rook is headed to the d-file. White could have played Rc2-d2, but the rook is more secure on d1 and again, White has all the time in the world.

30. ... Ke7 31. Rcd1 Ke8

Black is shuffling back and forth; he can't find any other ideas.

32. Bg3 Rh5 33. Nf3 Nxf3 34. Kxf3 Bd4

If Black takes the pawn immediately, White can start attacking: 34. ... Rxc5 35. Rxd7 Kxd7 36. Rd1+ Ke6 (36. ... Ke8 37. Bh4 with mate on d8) 37. Bh3+ f5 38. Re1! Kf7 39. exf5 gxf5 40. Kf4 Rh5 41. Bxf5.

35. Rh1 Rxc5 36. Bh3 f5

Of course 36. ... Rd8 loses to 37. Bh4.

37. Bf4 Rh5, Black lost on time.

Ding couldn't press the clock in time. White is completely winning after 38. Bxf5 Rxh1 39. Bxg6+ or 39. Bxd7+.

An excellent game by the challenger, who is known for his comebacks, leveling the score going into the first rest day.

RÉTI OPENING (A06)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

FIDE World Championship (4),
Singapore, 11.29.2024

1. Nf3 d5 2. e3 Nf6 3. b3 Bf5 4. Be2 h6
5. Ba3 Nbd7 6. 0-0 e6 7. Bxf8 Nxf8 8. c4
N8d7 9. Nc3 0-0 10. cxd5 exd5 11. b4 c6
12. Nd4 Bh7 13. Qb3 Ne5 14. a4 Rc8 15. a5
b6 16. Nf3 Nxf3+ 17. Bxf3 d4 18. Ne2 dxe3
19. dxe3 Be4 20. Rfd1 Qe7 21. Bxe4 Nxe4
22. axb6 axb6 23. Nc3 Rfd8 24. Nxe4 Qxe4
25. h3 c5 26. Rxd8+ Rxd8 27. bxc5 bxc5
28. Rc1 Qe5 29. Qc2 Rd5 30. g3 f5 31. Kg2
Kh7 32. Qc4 Qd6 33. e4 Re5 34. exf5 Rxf5
35. Qe4 Qd5 36. Qxd5 Rxd5 37. Kf3 Kg6
38. Ke4 Rd4+ 39. Ke3 Rd5 40. Ke4 Rd4+
41. Ke3 Rd5 42. Ke4 Rd4+, draw.

FRENCH DEFENSE, EXCHANGE VARIATION (C01)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

FIDE World Championship (5),
Singapore, 11.30.2024

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. exd5 exd5 4. Nf3 Nf6 5.
Bd3 c5 6. c3 c4 7. Bc2 Bd6 8. Qe2+ Qe7 9.
Qxe7+ Kxe7 10. 0-0 Re8 11. Re1+ Kf8 12.
Rxe8+ Kxe8 13. Bg5 Nbd7 14. Nbd2 h6 15.
Bh4 Nh5 16. Re1+ Kf8 17. g4 Nf4 18. Bg3
Nb6 19. g5 hxg5 20. Nxc5 Bd7 21. Ngf3
Re8 22. Ne5 Bxe5 23. dxe5 Nd3 24. Bxd3
cxd3 25. f3 Nc4 26. Nxc4 dxc4 27. Re4 Bc6
28. Rd4 Bxf3 29. Kf2 Bc6 30. Rxc4 Rd8 31.
Rd4 Rxd4 32. cxd4 Bd5 33. b3 Ke7 34. Ke3
Ke6 35. Kxd3 g6 36. Kc3 a6 37. Kd3 Kf5 38.
Ke3 Ke6 39. Kd3 Kf5 40. Ke3 Ke6, draw.

LONDON SYSTEM (D02)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

FIDE World Championship (6),
Singapore, 12.01.2024

1. d4 Nf6 2. Bf4 d5 3. e3 e6 4. Nf3 c5 5. c3
Bd6 6. Bb5+ Nc6 7. Bxc6+ bxc6 8. Bxd6
Qxd6 9. Qa4 0-0 10. Qa3 Ne4 11. Nfd2 e5
12. Nxe4 dxe4 13. Qxc5 Qg6 14. Nd2 Qxg2
15. 0-0-0 Qxf2 16. dxe5 Rb8 17. Nc4 Be6
18. Rd2 Qf3 19. Re1 Bxc4 20. Qxc4 Qf5
21. Qxc6 Qxe5 22. Qd5 Qe7 23. Qd6 Qg5
24. Qd5 Qe7 25. Qd6 Qg5 26. Qd5 Qh4 27.
Red1 g6 28. Qe5 Rbe8 29. Qg3 Qh5 30.
Qf4 Qa5 31. a3 Qb5 32. Rd4 Qe2 33. R1d2
Qf3 34. Kc2 Qxf4 35. exf4 f5 36. h4 e3 37.
Re2 Re7 38. Kd3 Rfe8 39. h5 gxh5 40. Rd5
h4 41. Rxf5 Rd7+ 42. Kc2 Kg7 43. Rg2+
Kh8 44. Re2 Kg7 45. Rg2+ Kh8 46. Re2
Kg7, draw.

GRÜNFELD DEFENSE, NEO- GRÜNFELD VARIATION (D78)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

FIDE World Championship (7),
Singapore, 12.03.2024

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 g6 3. d4 Bg7 4. c4 c6 5.
Bg2 Nf6 6. 0-0 0-0 7. Re1 dxc4 8. e4 Bg4
9. Nbd2 c5 10. d5 e6 11. h3 Bxf3 12. Bxf3
exd5 13. exd5 Nbd7 14. Nxc4 b5 15. Na3
Qb6 16. Bf4 Rfe8 17. Qd2 Rad8 18. Nc2
Nf8 19. b4 c4 20. Be3 Qa6 21. Bd4 Rxe1+
22. Rxe1 Qxa2 23. Ra1 Qb3 24. Ra3 Qb1+
25. Kg2 Rd7 26. Ra5 Qb3 27. Ra3 Qb1 28.
Ra5 Qb3 29. Rxb5 Qd3 30. Qf4 Qxc2 31.
Bxf6 Qf5 32. Qxf5 gxf5 33. Bxg7 Kxg7 34.
Rc5 Ng6 35. Rxc4 Ne5 36. Rd4 Nc6 37. Rf4
Ne7 38. b5 Kf6 39. Rd4 h6 40. Kf1 Ke5 41.
Rh4 Nxd5 42. Rxh6 Nc3 43. Rc6 Ne4 44.
Ke1 f6 45. h4 Rd3 46. Bd1 f4 47. gxf4+
Kxf4 48. Bc2 Rd5 49. Rc4 f5 50. Rb4 Kf3
51. Bd1+ Kg2 52. Rb3 Re5 53. f4 Re7 54.
Re3 Rh7 55. h5 Nf6 56. Re5 Nhx5 57. Rxf5

Ng3 58. Rf8 Rb7 59. Ba4 Kf3 60. f5 Kf4 61.
f6 Ne4 62. Bc2 Nd6 63. Rd8 Ke5 64. Bb3
Nf7 65. Rd5+ Kxf6 66. Kd2 Rb6 67. Bc4
Rd6 68. Kc3 Rxd5 69. Bxd5 Nd6 70. Kb4
Nxb5 71. Kxb5 a6+ 72. Kxa6, draw.

ENGLISH OPENING (A21)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

FIDE World Championship (8),
Singapore, 12.04.2024

1. c4 e5 2. Nc3 Bb4 3. Nd5 Be7 4. Nf3 d6 5.
g3 c6 6. Nxe7 Nxe7 7. Bg2 f6 8. 0-0 Be6 9.
b3 d5 10. Ba3 0-0 11. Rc1 a5 12. Ne1 Re8
13. f4 exf4 14. Rxf4 dxc4 15. bxc4 Ng6 16.
Re4 Na6 17. Nc2 Qc7 18. Nd4 Bf7 19. d3
Ne5 20. Nf3 Nd7 21. Rxe8+ Rxe8 22. Rb1
b5 23. cxb5 Qb6+ 24. Kf1 cxb5 25. Bb2
Bxa2 26. Bd4 Nac5 27. Rc1 Bb3 28. Qe1
Be6 29. Qf2 Rc8 30. Be3 Rc7 31. Nd4 Bf7
32. Nc6 Rxc6 33. Bxc6 Qxc6 34. Bxc5 h6
35. Ke1 b4 36. Qd4 Ne5 37. Kd2 Qg2 38.
Qf2 Qd5 39. Qd4 Qg2 40. Qf2 Qd5 41. Qd4
Qa2+ 42. Rc2 Qe6 43. Qd8+ Kh7 44. Qxa5
b3 45. Rc1 Qd5 46. Qb4 Qg2 47. Qe4+
Qxe4 48. dxe4 b2 49. Rb1 Ba2 50. Rxb2
Nc4+ 51. Kc3 Nxb2, draw.

CATALAN OPENING (E11)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

FIDE World Championship (9),
Singapore, 12.05.2024



1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. g3 Bb4+ 4. Bd2 Be7 5. Bg2 d5 6. Nf3 0-0 7. 0-0 c6 8. Qc2 Nbd7 9. Rd1 b6 10. Bc3 Bb7 11. Nbd2 Qc7 12. Rac1 Rfd8 13. b4 c5 14. bxc5 bxc5 15. Qb2 Nb6 16. Ba5 dxc4 17. Nxc4 Bxf3 18. Bxb6 axb6 19. Bxf3 Ra6 20. Qb5 Rxa2 21. Nxb6 Qa7 22. Qb1 Rb8 23. dxc5 Ra6 24. Qb5 Bxc5 25. Qxc5 Qxb6 26. Qxb6 Raxb6 27. Rc6 Rxc6 28. Bxc6 g5 29. Kg2 Rb2 30. Kf1 Kg7 31. h3 h5 32. Ra1 Rc2 33. Bb5 Rc5 34. Bd3 Nd7 35. f4 gxf4 36. gxf4 Rc3 37. Kf2 Nc5 38. Ke3 Nxd3 39. exd3 Rc2 40. Kf3 Rd2 41. Ra3 Kg6 42. Rb3 f6 43. Ra3 Kf5 44. Ra5+ e5 45. fxe5 Rxd3+ 46. Ke2 Rxh3 47. exf6+ Kxf6 48. Kf2 h4 49. Kg2 Rg3+ 50. Kh2 Kg6 51. Rb5 Rg5 52. Rxc5+ Kxc5 53. Kh3 Kf6 54. Kxh4, draw.

LONDON SYSTEM (D02)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

FIDE World Championship (10),
Singapore, 12.07.2024

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. Bf4 e6 4. e3 c5 5. Be2 Bd6 6. dxc5 Bxc5 7. c4 0-0 8. 0-0 Nc6 9. Nc3 dxc4 10. Bxc4 Nh5 11. Bg5 Be7 12. Ne4 Nf6 13. Nxf6+ Bxf6 14. Qxd8 Rxd8 15. Bxf6 gxf6 16. Rfd1 Bd7 17. Rac1 Be8 18. Rxd8 Rxd8 19. Kf1 Kg7 20. a3 f5 21. Ke1 Kf6 22. Be2 Ne7 23. g3 Rc8 24. Rxc8 Nxc8 25. Nd2 Nd6 26. Nc4 Nxc4 27. Bxc4 Bc6 28. f4 b6 29. Kd2 Ke7 30. Kc3 Kd6 31. b4 f6 32. Kd4 h6 33. Bb3 Bb7 34. Bc4 Bc6 35. Bb3 Bb7 36. Bc4 Bc6, draw.

RÉTI OPENING (A09)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

FIDE World Championship (11),
Singapore, 12.08.2024

Annotations by WGM Tatev Abrahamyan

1. Nf3 d5 2. c4

This is the first time we are seeing this move from Gukesh in this match.

2. ... d4

A principled response, and one that Ding regretted later. 2. ... e6 is the more solid option, after which White has a large choice of setups.

3. b4

Gukesh came to the game with this idea in mind. He later credited his team for working hard on this line and was happy overall with the work they had done.

3. ... c5

The most popular move here is actually 3. ... f6, with the idea of ... e7-e5. Ding had faced this move with the white pieces against Giri in 2017.

4. e3

White gets a Blumenfeld Gambit in reverse. The Blumenfeld is theoretically dubious, but up a tempo, it's quite playable for White. Grabbing the pawn with 4. bxc5 is not the correct approach for White. Black would be very happy with something like 4. ... Nc6

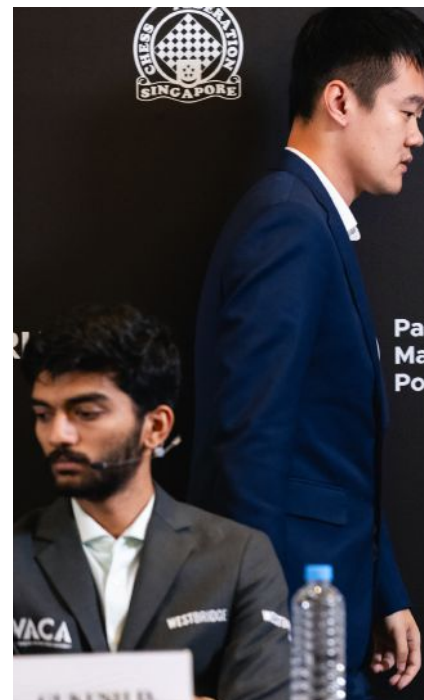
5. e3 e5 as he will recapture on c5 with the bishop and the d4-pawn will be very secure.

4. ... Nf6

Played after a 40-minute think. After the game, Ding said he had already been unsure what to do here: He'd once played this move against Adhiban in a rapid game, who responded with 5. b5, but Ding wasn't sure what to do against anything else. Gukesh's response took him by surprise.

Accepting the pawn sacrifice with 4. ... dxe3 is quite dangerous and impractical against a well-prepared opponent. After 5. fxe3 cxb4 6. d4 Nf6 7. Bd3 (White can also play 7. Be2, and GM Arjun Erigaisi has played this in several blitz games; Gukesh dodged the question of whether Erigaisi is on his team) 7. ... g6 8. a3 bxa3 9. Bxa3 Bg7 10. 0-0 this seems to be a standard position for this opening. White is down a pawn but has a lot of compensation due to the center and the lead in development.

5. a3!?



PHOTOS: COURTESY FIDE / EMELIANOVA (CENTER), FIDE / ENG CHIN AN (LEFT, RIGHT)

This must have been a key position of Gukesh's preparation, as this move has only been tried in several correspondence games. It came as an unpleasant surprise for Ding, who regretted spending 40 minutes on the previous move to calculate what he called "nonsense variations."

The Adhiban – Ding game went 5. b5 Nbd7 6. exd4 cxd4 7. Nxd4 Nc5 8. Bb2 e5 9. Nb3 Bf5 10. Nxc5 Bxc5 11. Be2 Qd6 12. 0-0 h5!3. d4 exd4 14. Bd3 Ng4 when Ding had a big advantage and went on to win.

5. ... Bg4

After another 22 minutes, Ding comes up with the plan of giving up the bishop pair in order to defend his center. It looks logical to play 5. ... Nc6, but it forces Black to leave the knight on a5. Three correspondence games have gone 6. b5 Na5 7. d3 dxe3 8. Bxe3 b6, with all ending in draws.

6. exd4 cxd4 7. h3 Bxf3 8. Qxf3 Qc7 9. d3?!

This move is slow and allows Black quick and natural moves. With 9. c5! White takes up some more space, opens the diagonal of the bishop, and also takes away the c5-square from the knight. After 9. ... a5 10. Bb5+ Nc6 11. 0-0 axb4 White has the intermediate 12. Bb2!, winning back the pawn because White gets a huge initiative after 12. ... bxa3? 13. Nxa3 e5 14. Nc4 — Black's position will fall apart as soon as all of White's pieces are in the game.

So after 12. Bb2 Black should play 12. ... e5 13. axb4 Rxa1 14. Bxa1 Be7. White's light-squared bishop is more active but now they have to worry about bringing the dark-squared bishop back into the game. The position is very complicated.

9. ... a5 10. b5 Nbd7

Ding got these moves in very quickly. His play now flows as all his pieces have comfortable squares.

11. g3

In a surprising turn of events, Gukesh went into an hour-long think. He was chasing the ghost of the preparation: looking for and trying to remember something that wasn't there.

11. ... Nc5 12. Bg2 Nfd7

Ding's idea is to put pressure on the d3-pawn. He could also play the normal developing move 12. ... e5, which leads to a reversed Benoni structure. Play could go 13. 0-0 Bd6 14. a4 0-0 15. Nd2 Rae8! and Black will play ... b7-b6 next. While the g2-bishop

looks very strong, it is biting on air as there is nothing going on on the long diagonal. Black's position is very comfortable, with a nice blockade on the dark squares.

13. 0-0 Ne5 14. Qf4

Gukesh was very unhappy with this but he has to hang on to his d3-pawn. After 14. Qe2 Nxd3 White doesn't really have a path to win back the pawn.

14. ... Rd8 15. Rd1?

The engines absolutely hate this normal-looking move. Gukesh described what transpired between 11. g3 and this point as a "stupid plan." He went from a normal position to one where his queen is suddenly stuck on f4.

The engines say 15. Nd2 is the only move to keep the game imbalanced, although it is not super obvious why. The top engine recommendation here is (a) 15. ... e6, I suppose because the d3-pawn will fall anyway and White doesn't have a super useful move here. After 16. Rb1 the b1-square is taken away from the queen, and play can go 16. ... Ncxd3 17. b6 Qb8 18. Qg5. The engine evaluates this as close to equal but this was a rather unusual sequence.

The engine thinks pawn-grabbing with (b) 15. ... Ncxd3 is inferior. Play continues 16. Qe4 Nc5 17. b6 Qb8 18. Qb1 with the idea of Qb1-b5+. I can't claim that I understand this computer sequence or why this is suddenly evaluated to be so good for White.

15. ... g6



Ding called this a horrible move. His idea is to play ... h7-h5 and ... Bf8-h6, asking the white queen some questions.

Of course the right move is not (a) 15. ... Ncxd3? 16. Rxd3. But (b) 15. ... e6, with the idea of ... Bf8-d6, gives Black a huge edge. Ding must have been under the impression that he's much worse because he said that after 15. ... e6, he's maybe doing OK. Gukesh was surprised and said they had a "difference of opinion," because he thought that

Black would be doing well after this move. After (b1) 16. a4 Bd6 White might actually just be lost. They're extremely underdeveloped with a poorly placed queen and a permanent weakness on d3. The queen cannot go back to either d2 or c1 because of the ... Nc5-b3 fork. So White needs to develop with (b2) 16. Bb2, and then comes 16. ... Rd7. The d3-pawn will fall with the queen defended.

16. a4!

The start of a brilliant idea by Gukesh to free his queen.

16. ... h5 17. b6!

The idea is to lure the queen to b6 in order to capture on c5 with tempo. The harmony in Black's position has been disrupted.

17. ... Qd6 18. Ba3 Bh6

After 18. ... Nxd3 19. Qxd6 exd6 (19. ... Rxd6? 20. Rxd3 Nxd3 21. Bxd6 exd6 22. Bxb7 and the b6-pawn is now super dangerous) 20. Nd2 the black knights are now stuck, as Black really doesn't want to lose the b7-pawn. White will play Ra1-b1 and Nd2-b3, challenging the c5-knight.

19. Bxc5 Qxc5 20. Qe4

The queen is out of danger now and the d3-pawn has survived. Here the players had around 20 minutes each on the clock with 20 more moves to go, and without any increment.

20. ... Nc6

Black defends the b7-pawn.

21. Na3!

A nice way to develop the knight. Gukesh doesn't mind giving up the b6-pawn. The flow of the game has changed; not only is he no longer in danger, but he even has the easier moves to make. The problem for Black is the h6-bishop; despite being on an open diagonal, it's not actually doing anything.

It would be less accurate to play 21. Nd2 because Black would be happy to get rid of the useless bishop with 21. ... Bxd2! 22. Rxd2 Qxb6.

21. ... Rd7 22. Nc2!

Preventing the black knight from going to b4 and shutting down the b-file.

22. ... Qxb6 23. Rab1 Qc7 24. Rb5 0-0 25. Na1!

An interesting maneuver; the knight is headed to c5. Gukesh thought it was a good practical decision, one that would be difficult for Ding to face in time trouble.

Gukesh wasn't sure what to do after 25. Rdb1 Rb8 and wanted to keep his rook on d1 in order to prevent the bishop from going to d2 and then b4. However, White can continue with 26. Qe2 with the idea of taking the c6-knight, then the a5-pawn, while simultaneously preventing the bishop from reentering the game. Black can instead give up the d4-pawn with 26. ... Rd6 27. Bxc6 Rxc6 28. Nxd4 Rc5 and get some compensation as the h6-bishop can finally rejoin the game.

25. ... Rb8

Ding got down to seven minutes. Gukesh's strategy clearly worked.

Gukesh said he had at first missed 25. ... Na7 and thought it should lead to a draw. Presumably, he meant the endgame after 26. Rxb7 Qxb7 27. Qxb7 Rxb7 28. Bxb7 Rb8 29. Rb1 (not 29. Bg2? Rb2! and the knight is stuck on a1!) 29. ... e5, when the black bishop can finally join the game again.

26. Nb3 e6 27. Nc5 Re7 28. Rdb1



Objectively, this lets go of a big chunk of the advantage, but the game ended in one more move, so we can't be very critical of it!

It's not hard to spot 28. Nxb7!, but White has to evaluate the resulting endgame correctly. After 28. ... Rxb7 29. Qxc6 Qxc6 30. Bxc6 there are opposite-colored bishops, but even so the endgame is very good for White. After 30. ... Ra7 (not 30. ... Rxb5 31. axb5 when the pawns will simply queen) 31. Bf3 White can run the pawn all the way to c6, bring the king to e2 to stop the bishop from going to d2, and then finally play Rd1-b1.

28. ... Qc8??

The last chance to fight back was 28. ... Nb4 29. Nxb7 Bf8!, a super strong idea by the engine that finally brings the bishop into the game and somehow holds everything together. After 30. Rxa5 Rxb7 31. Qxb7 Qxa5 32. Qxb4 Qxb4 33. Rxb4 Ra7! unlike in the position from the previous note, the black bishop is part of the game; a pair of rooks has been traded, and the a4-pawn will fall.

29. Qxc6, Black resigned.

A sad end to the game. Although this wasn't the highest level of chess for a World Championship match, there are a lot of key takeaways: the importance of being practical and of managing your time, and the dangers of half-remembering your preparation. Both players made decisions that are quite reliable for many players.

ENGLISH OPENING (A13)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

FIDE World Championship (12),

Singapore, 12.09.2024

Annotations by WGM Tatev Abrahamyan

1. c4 e6

Varying from Game 8, which went 1. ... e5 2. Nc3 Bb4 3. Nd5 Be7.

2. g3 d5 3. Bg2 Nf6 4. Nf3 d4

Another principled decision. Black has a wide variety of solid options here, including 4. ... dxc4 and 4. ... Be7.

5. 0-0 Nc6

It's a reverse Benoni after 5. ... c5 6. e3 Nc6 7. exd4 cxd4; it's happened many times, including in Carlsen – Ding, Norway 2024.

6. e3 Be7

Hanging onto the center with 6. ... e5 is fine, but Black must know a wild line. White can play 7. exd4 when the principled response is 7. ... e4. (White seems to get a very small edge with 7. ... exd4 8. Re1+ Be7 9. d3 0-0 10. Na3 with the idea of Na3-c2, b2-b3, and then Bc1-b2.) Then the games Esipenko – Keymer, FIDE Grand Swiss 2023, and Assaubayeva – Muzychuk, World Rapid Team 2024, went 8. d5 exf3 9. Qxf3 Ne5 10. Re1 Qe7 11. Qd1 Bg4 12. f3 Bxf3 13. Qa4+ Kd8 14. d4 Bxg2 15. Rxe5 Qd7 16. Qxd7+ Nxd7 17. Kxg2 Nxe5 18. dxe5. Black is objectively OK, though White won both games.

Black can also play 6. ... dxe3, when White can recapture either way: After 7. dxe3 8. Rxd1 Be7 9. Nc3 a6 10. b3 White's position seems to be more pleasant here due to Black's problematic light-squared bishop. And after 7. fxe3 Qd3 8. Nc3 Qxc4 9. d4 White has tons of compensation for the pawn, and it is not clear what is the queen doing on c4.

7. d3

Ding avoids 7. exd4 Nxd4 8. Nxd4 Qxd4 9. d3 0-0 10. Nc3 e5 11. Be3 Qd8, which is similar to the game except that the trade of knights favors Black: Since there is no pressure on

the e5-pawn, Black can play ... c7-c6, controlling the d5-square and shutting down the diagonal of the g2-bishop.

7. ... dxe3

Gukesh decides to release the tension in the center and change the pawn structure.

GM Richard Rapport has played 7. ... 0-0 8. exd4 Nxd4 9. Nc3, so I think it is safe to say it was considered in the preparation — especially since he played it against GM Ni Hua, who is also on Team Ding! Rapport – Ni, China 2019, went 9. ... Nxf3+ 10. Bxf3 Rb8 11. Bf4 a6 12. Qb3 Bd6 and a draw was agreed on move 41.

8. Bxe3

After White has played d2-d3, it makes the most sense to recapture with the bishop. White could play 8. fxe3, of course, but Black can fight back for the center and finish developing after 8. ... e5 9. Nc3 0-0 10. d4 Bg4. And if 11. d5, Black has the nice counterstrike 11. ... e4! 12. Nxe4 Nxe4 13. dxc6 Qxd1 14. Rxd1 bxc6 with equality.

8. ... e5 9. Nc3 0-0 10. Re1 h6

After a 15-minute think, Gukesh plays a useful move. Chasing the bishop with 10. ... Ng4 doesn't lead to anything good for Black: After 11. Bd2 Qxd3?! 12. h3 Nf6 White plays for the initiative with 13. Nd5! Nxd5 14. cxd5 Qxd5 15. Nxe5 Qd6 16. Nxc6 bxc6 17. Qe2 and even though White is down a pawn, the bishops are monstrous and it doesn't look like the c6-pawn will live for a long time.

11. a3 a5



Black stops b2-b4 but permanently gives away the b5-square. White's position looks much easier to play and he has many simple improving moves, many of which Ding ends up playing rather quickly. It's a great outcome from the opening for a must-win game: All the pieces are still on the board and White has a clear path with a pawn breakthrough in the center.

12. h3 Be6

Black can force White's hand a bit with 12. ... Bf5, but 13. d4 exd4 14. Nxd4 Nxd4 15. Bxd4 c6 16. Na4 also looks pleasant for White.

13. Kh2 Rb8

A curious move, but it makes sense if he plays ... Nc6-d4 next.

14. Qc2 Re8

The reasonable follow-up to 13. ... Rb8 was 14. ... Nd4. After 15. Bxd4 exd4 16. Nb5 comes 16. ... c5 and now the b7-pawn is not under attack, although after 17. Re2 White is still doing better here.

15. Nb5 Bf5 16. Rad1 Nd7 17. Qd2

This was Ding's longest think; he was most likely calculating the consequences of 17. ... Nc5.

17. ... Bg6



If Black isn't willing to go for it with 17. ... Nc5, then he's really out of ideas. Gukesh said that after 17. ... Nc5 18. d4 Nd3 (not 18. ... Ne4 19. Qe2 when something will fall here for Black: After 19. ... exd4 20. Nfxd4 the positions of the queen, the f5-bishop and the e4-knight are all dangerously loose) 19. d5 Nxe1 it looked tricky for him but didn't elaborate further. This is also the engine's top choice. It still looks good for White after 20. Qxe1 Nd4 21. Nbx d4 exd4 22. Nxd4 Bg6 23. Qxa5 but at least Black isn't getting steamrolled in the center.

18. d4

White has placed all the pieces on their best squares, and it is now time to strike in the center.

18. ... e4

After 18. ... exd4 White doesn't have to recapture right away: 19. Bf4! and things are looking dire for Black as White goes after the c7-pawn. If 19. ... Rc8 20. Nfxd4 Nxd4 21. Qxd4 Black cannot hang on to everything here: 21. ... Nc5 22. Nxc7 and White's winning.

19. Ng1 Nb6 20. Qc3 Bf6 21. Qc2 a4 22. Ne2 Black's position is miserable. He has no center, no space and bad pieces.

22. ... Bg5

It's still pretty sad for Black after 22. ... Na5 but at least Black is getting some squares for the knights: 23. c5 Nbc4 24. Nf4 Bf5 25. Bf1 Nxe3 26. fxe3 is still bad though.

23. Nf4 Bxf4 24. Bxf4 Rc8 25. Qc3



White has improved his position even more. He has the center, better pieces, and now even the bishop pair. The best part for him is that Black has no counterplay, which means Ding doesn't have to exert any energy on calculation.

25. ... Nb8 26. d5

A classy move: White grabs more space in the center and squeezes out Black even

more instead of the pedestrian 26. Na7, winning the Exchange. In the press conference, Ding admitted that he didn't even see this!

26. ... Qd7 27. d6 c5 28. Nc7 Rf8 29. Bxe4 Material starts to fall.

29. ... Nc6

The point is that Black's not actually winning a piece after 29. ... Bxe4 30. Rxe4 Rxc7: White wins with 31. dxc7 Qxd1 32. cxb8=Q Rxb8 33. Bxb8.

30. Bg2

As the lazy saying goes, the rest is a matter of technique.

30. ... Rcd8 31. Nd5 Nxd5 32. cxd5 Nb8

33. Qxc5 Rc8 34. Qd4 Na6 35. Re7 Qb5 36. d7 Rc4 37. Qe3 Rc2 38. Bd6 f6 39. Rxe7+, Black resigned.

If 39. ... Kxe7 40. Bxf8+ Kxf8 41. d8=Q+. A very simple, straightforward win for the World Champion, striking back to even the score.

FRENCH DEFENSE, STEINITZ VARIATION (C11)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

FIDE World Championship (13), Singapore, 12.11.2024



1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5 Nfd7 5. Nce2 c5 6. c3 Nc6 7. a3 Be7 8. Be3 Nb6 9. Nf4 cxd4 10. cxd4 Nc4 11. Bxc4 dxc4 12. Nge2 b5 13. 0-0 0-0 14. Nc3 Rb8 15. Nh5 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 Rxe7 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.

QUEEN'S PAWN GAME (D02)

GM Ding Liren (2728)

GM Gukesh Dommaraju (2783)

FIDE World Championship (14),

Singapore, 12.12.2024

Annotations by GM Joel Benjamin

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 c5 3. Bg2 Nc6 4. d4 e6
5. 0-0 cxd4 6. Nxd4 Nge7

I love Gukesh's ability to find novel opening ideas! After more than 50 years in chess, I

am impressed whenever I see a GM play an opening move that is completely unfamiliar to me.

As it happens, I have actually played a similar idea with colors reversed against the Grünfeld, but this seems a bit nervy with a tempo less. Of the nine games I turned up in the database, only one effort was from a grandmaster, making this a virtual novelty. Perhaps Ding was prepared for 6. ... Bc5, which Gukesh's countryman and fellow Candidate Praggnanandha has played a few times.

7. c4 Nxd4 8. Qxd4 Nc6 9. Qd1 d4 10. e3 Bc5

We are already on new ground.

11. exd4 Bxd4 12. Nc3 0-0 13. Nb5



13. ... Bb6

The engines suggest Black is best off conced-

ing the bishop pair with 13. ... e5 14. Nxd4 exd4 when the d-pawn can be a strength but is more likely to be a weakness. Play might continue 15. b3 Bf5 16. Bb2 Qd7 and White can win the d-pawn but has to trade into opposite-colored bishops to do so. Gukesh prefers to fight rather than grovel, as he did consistently throughout the match.

14. b3

Natural enough, but it does not prepare for his knight to be chased away. After 14. Qe2 e5 (or 14. ... a6 15. Rd1 Bd7 16. Bxc6 bxc6 17. Nd6) 15. Rd1 Qf6 16. Be3 Nd4 17. Nxd4 exd4 18. Bf4 White has the edge.

14. ... a6 15. Nc3 Bd4 16. Bb2 e5 17. Qd2 Be6 18. Nd5 b5 19. cxb5

This toothless choice shows Ding did not come prepared to battle for victory in the final game. 19. Bxd4 Nxd4 20. f4 is close to equal but White can at least fight for an advantage.

19. ... axb5 20. Nf4 exf4 21. Bxc6 Bxb2 22. Qxb2 Rb8 23. Rfd1 Qb6

(see diagram top of next page)

24. Bf3

The position is drawish however you slice it, but given Ding's approach he might as well go all-in for the draw with 24. Bd7 or 24. Bd5. Then he could potentially fall back on the





POSITION AFTER 23. ... Qb6

rook and two pawns versus rook and three ending which (from Game 13) we know he is able to draw!

24. ... f3 25. h3 26. a4

It seems like this was an intentional bailout into an ending with all the pawns on one side. But is White in any real danger if he just plays with his rooks — with 26. Rd4, for example? It's hard to imagine a universe in which Black does better than give up the b-pawn for the two queenside pawns. There is also the idea of trying to trade bishops into an even more drawish rook ending.

26. ... bxa3 e.p. 27. Rxa3 g6 28. Qd4 Qb5 29. b4

Perhaps the most practical choice, as currently White's position is not well-coordinated.

29. ... Qxb4 30. Qxb4 Rxb4 31. Ra8 Rxa8 32. Bxa8 g5 33. Bd5 Bf5

No bishop trade for you! It is interesting that the ending after a trade of bishops or rooks is a trivial draw, but with the pieces staying on, Black can apply pressure.

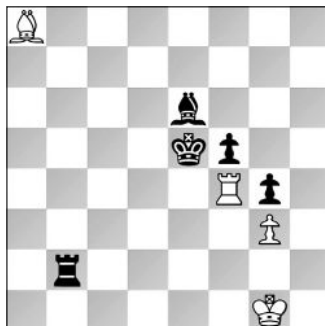
34. Rc1 Kg7 35. Rc7 Bg6 36. Rc4 Rb1+ 37. Kg2 Re1 38. Rb4 h5 39. Ra4 Re5 40. Bf3 Kh6 41. Kg1 Re6 42. Rc4 g4 43. Bd5 Rd6 44. Bb7 Kg5 45. f3

I'm not sure how to evaluate this move. I think it's OK — trading pawns is logical — but White can also wait for a Black pawn break. 45. Be4 f5 46. Rc5 looks sensible.

45. ... f5 46. f3 47. Rb4 Bf7 48. Kf2 Rd2+ 49. Kg1 Kf6 50. Rb6+ Kg5 51. Rb4 Be6 52. Ra4 Rb2 53. Ba8 Kf6 54. Rf4 Ke5

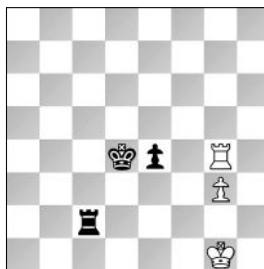
(see diagram top of next column)

Now we reach the moment that will live in chess infamy. White seems to have a fortress; the only plan I can see (and White may try to prevent its execution) evolves



POSITION AFTER 54. ... Ke5

in the line 55. Bg2 Rc2 56. Kf1 Bc4+ 57. Kg1 Bd3 58. Bb7 Be4 59. Bxe4 fxe4 60. Rxd4 Kd4.



Here the draw is easy enough to work out, but unless your endgame knowledge is encyclopedic, you may not foresee it: 61. Kf1 Ke3 62. Rg8 Rc1+ (62. ... Kf3 63. Rf8+ Kxg3 64. Ke1 is a dead draw) 63. Kg2 Ke2 64. g4 e3 65. g5 and the g-pawn secures the draw. White will eventually sacrifice his rook for the pawn and force Black to do the same.

55. Rf2?? Rxf2

Ding had been dreaming of trades for so long he forgot his bishop was trapped in the corner!

56. Kxf2 Bd5 57. Bxd5 Kxd5 58. Ke3 Ke5, White resigned.

For the record: White's best chance is 59. Kd3, otherwise the king invades (59. Kf2 Kd4 60. Ke2 Ke4 61. Kf2 Kd3 etc.), but after 59. ... f4 60. Ke2 f3+! (60. ... fxg3?? lets White off the hook as after 61. Kf1 the second g-pawn does not help because of stalemates, e.g., 61. ... Ke4 62. Kg2 Kf4 63. Kg1 Kf3 64. Kf1 g2+ 65. Kg1 g3) 61. Kf2 Ke4 62. Kf1 f2! (the only winning idea) 63. Kxf2 Kd3 64. Kf1 Ke3 65. Kg2 Ke2 66. Kg1 Kf3 67. Kh2 Kf2 68. Kh1 Kxg3 69. Kg1 Kh3 70. Kh1 g3 71. Kg1 g2 the pawn promotes. Of course, this theme is so well-known to experienced players that Ding does not bother to test his opponent and acknowledges the inevitable.

This game plays like White was one of my students against someone rated 200 points

higher. I don't know Ding's motivation. He said after Game 13 that he was tired; perhaps he felt he would have the advantage in the faster playoff games, or perhaps he felt this strategy would enable him to better relax. In any case, he seemed to only look for a draw. Meanwhile Gukesh came to win, as he did for every game.

It is dangerous to seek a draw from a position of weakness. There is far more psychological pressure on the defender, and as we saw in this match, one false move can blow things up. Gukesh displayed a killer instinct in Singapore, always playing to win and passing up several draws in positions where other players would have shaken hands. There were certainly moments he lacked wisdom: He squandered a few winning positions, and his opening strategy in Game 12, playing with the lead, seemed naive. But the player who is always playing for the win is more likely to get there.

From a fan standpoint, there has been much complaint (especially from my peer group of old GMs) about the quality of play. I think there were certainly a number of surprising howlers in this match. Perhaps there weren't more bad moves than usual, but there were some very bad ones!

But in terms of entertainment value, the match was a success. Five decisive games from 14 played is pretty good for the 21st century. Almost none of the draws were bloodless. Most of the games were flank openings of some sort, and there were many original positions after just a few moves. I certainly prefer this to churning out dry positions in the Giuoco Piano! I'm wondering whether this is a sign for future matches, and hoping that it is. ♠



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Another Rung on the Ladder

IM Nico Zwirs tops 13 GMs to win 2024 Sparkassen Chess Festival

BY **RICK MASSIMO**

ANNOTATIONS BY **IM NICO ZWIRS**

AFTER DROPPING A LOT OF RATING points early in the summer, the Dutch IM Nico Zwirs says he had “no expectations at all” going into the Open section of the annual Sparkassen Chess Trophy in Dortmund, Germany, in August; “the main goal was to play good games and see where it would bring me.” It brought him to the top of a field that included 13 grandmasters, with an undefeated 7½ out of 9.

After an “okayish” start, Zwirs was in a big tie for first going into the seventh round with the daunting assignment of the black pieces against the top seed, Ukrainian GM Anton Korobov. “For a while I hadn’t faced such a great opponent and I was very motivated for this game,” Zwirs says. After “a lot of turning points,” he managed a draw:

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B92)

GM Anton Korobov (2648)

IM Nico Zwirs (2467)

Sparkassen A-Open (7), Dortmund, 08.16.2024

Annotations by IM Nico Zwirs

1. e4

Korobov used to play 1. d4 openings all the time. He’s been playing more 1. e4 lately, but this still came as a surprise.

1. ... c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6

Korobov is one of the great players in the Scheveningen structure, which arises very often in the Najdorf. One of my good friends is a huge Korobov fan so before the game I told him that it was a pity I had to face him with Black, because if I had White we would surely get a Najdorf. And now here it is with colors reversed!

6. Be2

This was Korobov’s choice in the few games where he’s faced the Najdorf.

6. ... e5 7. Nb3 Be7 8. 0-0 0-0 9. Re1

The first surprise, but since the character of the game is relatively slow I wasn’t worried.

9. ... Be6 10. Be3 Nbd7

It would have been better to keep the options open for the knight on b8 with 10. ... h6. For example, if White plays a2-a4, the knight would want to be on c6.

11. a4 Qc7 12. a5



At this point I misremembered the position — I’ve had something similar but with White’s bishop on f3, and I remembered that ... b7-b5 is a strong equalizer there, so I started to play for it here.

12. ... h6

A flexible waiting move. I could have immediately gone for 12. ... b5 13. axb6 e.p. Nxb6 14. Rxa6 Rxa6 15. Bxa6 Nc4 when I’m supposed to have compensation, but I couldn’t find a good followup after 16. Bc1.

13. h3

White does the same. White’s main idea is 13. Nd5 but after 13. ... Nxd5 14. exd5 Bf5 15. c4 Black has a lot of options. I could play for ... f7-f5 or proceed without it. Here, since

the rook is still on f8 I would go for it with 15. ... Bg6.

13. ... Rfd8?

I'm too focused on ... b7-b5. This misplaces the rook and makes the Nc3-d5 jump much stronger. There's an interesting alternative in 13. ... Kh8!? with the idea of playing ... Rf8-g8 and pushing the g-pawn. I have seen this a few times but I didn't dare. Probably the best is to play 13. ... Rac8, forgetting about the ... b7-b5 option and preventing Nc3-d5 since the c2-pawn will drop in the end.

14. Nd5!

Of course! I anticipated 14. Bf1 when 14. ... b5 works: After 15. axb6 *e.p.* Nxb6 16. Bxa6 d5 the rook is doing a great job on d8 and Black is fine.

14. ... Nxd5 15. exd5 Bf5 16. c4

Without the rook on f8 I didn't want to go for ... f7-f5. Anyway, it would weaken the e6-square, and after an eventual ... e5-e4 White can play Nb3-d4-e6. Instead I went for a plan which had seen in the game Warmerdam – Kaasen, Teplice 2024, which was a reversed Najdorf.

16. ... Re8

Avoiding any Be3-b6 skewer ideas, and setting up the plan of ... e5-e4 and ... Nd7-e5/c5-d3.

17. Nd2 Nc5 18. Ra3 e4 19. Bg4!

Spot on again! I totally missed this. My idea was that after 19. b4 Nd3 20. Bxd3 (the best move is 20. Rf1! but that's not easy to find with the b4-pawn hanging) 20. ... exd3, the pawn on d3 is very annoying for White and the position is opening up, improving my bishops a lot.

19. ... Bh7 20. b4 Nd7



Obviously, retreating wasn't planned, and White is much better here. I can still get the knight to d3 via e5, but I need a bit of preparation because 20. ... Nd3? loses now:

White is totally dominating after 21. Bb6 Qb8 22. Rxd3 exd3 23. Bd7. But somehow Korobov got a bit scared and decided to take off the knight.

21. Bxd7?

Releasing the pressure. I'm back in business! The best way to continue was 21. Rc3, aiming for c4-c5.

21. ... Qxd7 22. Qg3 Bf5

Keeping the structure flexible. I still didn't like the hole on e6 that would result after 22. ... f5. White can play 23. Qg3 and aim for a dark-squared blockade on the kingside with h3-h4.

23. Qg3 Bg6 24. Bd4 Bg5 25. Nf1 Qd8!

Preventing the threatened h3-h4-h5 winning material. The queen could go to e7, but on d8 it prevents c4-c5 because the d5-pawn just drops.

26. Qc3 Kh7 27. g3

The bishop gets locked in after 27. Bxg7? f6. White can get the piece back after 28. Qg3 Kxg7 29. h4, but the worst is over for Black, and I might even be slightly better.

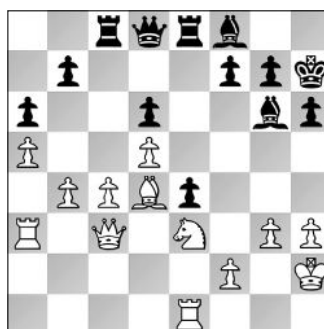
27. ... Be7?

My turn to lose nerve. I should have gone all in with 27. ... f5! 28. Bxg7 f4 when it's unclear.

28. Ne3 Rc8

Fighting against c4-c5 once again.

29. Kh2 Bf8



Staying flexible and defending the g7-pawn, but it gives White the opportunity to break through.

30. c5??

Surprisingly enough, the wrong pawn break. The right idea was b4-b5, though neither of us mentioned it during the postgame analysis. After 30. Rb3 Qd7 31. b5 axb5 32. Rxb5 White has a lot of pressure against b7 and

Black can't start an attack. For example, after 32. ... f5 33. Reb1 f4 34. Rxb7 the queen is being harassed and the g7-pawn is falling.

30. ... Qd7 31. Rc1 f5!

Time to attack!

32. c6 Qf7

Now I finally have a great setup, and suddenly White cannot do anything good on the queenside.

33. c7?! f4 34. gxf4 Qxf4+ 35. Kg1



I realized during the game that this was the critical moment.

35. ... Bh5

Bringing the bishop to f3 will be very strong, but I could have improved by playing 35. ... Qg5+ first. After 36. Kf1 Re7 I have a big advantage, with ... Re7-f7 and ... Bg6-h5 coming up.

36. Ng2 Qg5

It was better to play 36. ... Qf5. The ... Bh5-f3 idea will still be there.

37. h4 Qxd5?

Too greedy. Now White can exchange the bishop. The best move was still 37. ... Qf5!.

38. Nf4 Qf5 39. Nxh5 Qxh5 40. Qh3

I slowly realized how important my bishop had been. I have no attack against White's king anymore.

40. ... Qf7 41. Rg3 Rxc7 42. Rxc7 Qxc7 43. Qf5+ Kg8 44. Qg6

I'm still better, but it's hard to make progress. White has a safe king and an attack against mine.

44. ... Qf7

I got scared of the threats against the h-pawn and decided to play it safe, but the best way to move forward is to allow some counterplay with 44. ... Qc1+ 45. Kg2 Re7 46. Be3! Qc4 47. Qxh6 Qxb4.

45. Qxh6 Re6 46. Qg5 Kh7 47. Qd5 Re7

The advantage was gone, so I decided to force the draw.

48. Qg5 Re6 49. Qd5 Re7 50. Qg5, draw.

Right after the game, Anton said "Why didn't you take your chances to win? You inspired me with every move." It was a great compliment that boosted my confidence for the rest of the tournament.

Next up in the penultimate round was the young FM Christian Glöckler — bad news for Zwirs's hopes of getting his last GM norm, because it meant he wouldn't face the required three grandmasters, but Zwirs's win put him back into a tie for first going into the last round with Korobov and the German GM Frederick Svane.

"The top two boards were playing on a stage," Zwirs remembers, "and you know you've done well if the top three seeded players and you are playing on the stage in the final round." While Korobov and Svane drew quickly, Zwirs took the top spot by beating American GM Christopher Yoo. "I had many tough moments where I had to survive," Zwirs says, "but when I did, Yoo overpushed a bit and from there on I converted in a very nice way."

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION

IM Nico Zwirs (2467)

GM Christopher Yoo (2616)

Sparkassen A-Open (9), Dortmund,
08.18.2024

Annotations by IM Nico Zwirs

**1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6
5. Nc3 a6 6. f3 e5 7. Nb3 Be6 8. Be3 Nbd7
9. g4 b5 10. Qd2 Be7 11. 0-0-0 Nb6**



A surprise. I knew this line existed, but I didn't remember the concrete details. Also, at this point the Svane – Korobov game ended in a draw which gave me a huge boost!

12. Qf2

The best move is 12. g5, which is also in the Open Sicilian repertoire GM Roeland Pruijssers and I made for ChessBase in 2019.

12. ... Nfd7!

A very flexible move, but White also has to know how to deal with 12. ... Nc4. There's a cool trick here: 13. Bxc4 bxc4 14. Na5 Qxa5?? 15. Bb6 Qb4 16. a3 trapping the queen.

13. Kb1 Rc8

The best move, setting up a potentially strong Exchange sacrifice on c3. It looks like 13. ... Nc4 is strong, but it's a mistake here. After 14. Bxc4 bxc4 15. Nc1 the b-file looks dangerous, but Black is too slow: 15. ... Rb8 16. N1e2 Qc7 17. Ka1 Qb7 18. Rb1 and all the important squares are protected; Black doesn't have any good pawn breaks, and White can push with the g- and h-pawns and make use of the d5 outpost.

14. Nd5 Bxd5 15. exd5 Nc4 16. Bc1

I still felt fine here. My position looks harmonious.

16. ... Bh4!

Strong again, preventing h2-h4. Castling right away is a mistake: 16. ... 0-0? 17. h4 and White has a big attack while Black is lacking ideas.

17. Qe2?

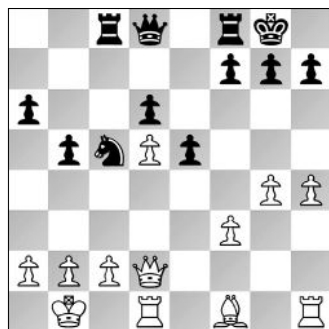
Wrong choice. I should have followed my first instinct and played 17. Qg2! After 17. ... Bg5 (17. ... 0-0 18. g5 trying to trap the bishop) 18. Bxg5 Qxg5 19. Bxc4 bxc4 (19. ... Rxc4 20. Na5) 20. Nd2 Qd8 21. Ne4 Qb6 is about equal, while 20. ... c3 doesn't hurt because of 21. Ne4 winning the c-pawn.

17. ... 0-0 18. Nd2

Forcing some trades to clarify the position.

18. ... Bg5 19. h4 Bxd2 20. Bxd2 Nxd2+

21. Qxd2 Nc5



Here I slowly got optimistic again. I knew Black was better and that I was in survival



mode, but the position has cleared up a lot and plans are easier to find. Unfortunately, I made a mistake immediately.

22. Bd3? Nxd3! 23. Qxd3 Rc4!

I completely missed this. Now my f-pawn is fixed.

24. Qe3

Aiming to enter on the queenside.

24. ... Qc7

The first slight mistake. With the pawn on e4 in these structures, White will attack on the kingside while Black attacks on the queenside. When White trades on d5 and finishes with e4xd5, play shifts a bit: White normally focuses on the queenside (very often with c2-c4) while Black focuses on the kingside, usually with ... f7-f5. Here Yoo may have been focusing too much on the queenside; I was more afraid of the ... f7-f5 break.

25. c3 Rb8

Once again going for the wrong idea: 25. ... Rf4 followed up by ... f7-f5 seemed very strong to me.

26. h5!

Finally I'm able to improve my pawn structure on the kingside, and even create some slight

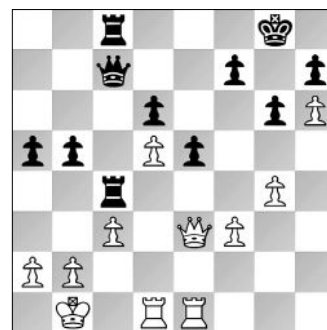
Left: Crowding around the pairing sheets is the same everywhere. Below: Zwirs (second from left) is happy to take home his trophy!

threats. Meanwhile, Black is playing too slowly.

26. ... a5 27. h6 g6 28. Rhe1

My idea was to play Qe3-g5, trade queens on d8 and then fix the hole on f4 by playing Re1-e4. I can't play 28. Qg5 right away because 28. ... Qd8 29. Qxd8+ Rxd8 is still extremely good for Black — if 30. Rhe1 Rf4. But there's another sneaky threat to 28. Rhe1 as well.

28. ... Rc8



29. Rd4!

The game has turned upside down, and White is fully back!

29. ... b4

Increasing the pressure. Black has to be precise after 29. ... Rxd4 30. cxd4 Qc2+ 31. Ka1: 31. ... f6! provides equalizing counterplay, but 31. ... a4?? loses; for example, 32. dxe5 dxe5 33. d6. Of course, 29. ... exd4?? is mate after 30. Qe8+ Rxe8 31. Rxe8.



30. Rxc4!

30. Qg5 doesn't work, unfortunately: (a) 30. ... bxc3?? loses to 31. Qf6 Kf8 32. Rxc4 Qxc4 33. Qxd6+ Kg8 34. Qxe5; (b) 30. ... exd4?? is still mate after 31. Qf6 because the rook on e1 takes away the e-file, and White's just a rook up after (c) 30. ... Qd8?? 31. Qxd8+ Rxd8 32. Rxc4. But the unexpected capture (d) 30. ... Rxd4! wins on the spot: 31. Qf6 Kf8 32. cxd4 Qc2+ wins for Black, and after 31. cxd4 Qc2+ 32. Ka1 exd4 there's no back-rank mate for White and again Black is simply winning.

30. ... Qxc4 31. Rc1!

Black's attack lands first after 31. Qg5?? bxc3 32. Qf6 Qd3+ 33. Ka1 cxb2+ 34. Kxb2 Qc3+ 35. Kb1 Rb8 mate.

31. ... bxc3 32. Rxc3 Qf1+ 33. Kc2

I could have forced matters with 33. Rc1 Rxc1+ 34. Qxc1 Qxc1+ 35. Kxc1 Kf8 36. g5 Ke7 37. a4. Now Black has to be precise, but after 37. ... f5! 38. gxf6+ Kxf6 39. b4 Ke7 Black is in time to draw. White's king can never enter the queenside because Black will play the pawn sacrifice ... g6-g5-g4 and promote the e-pawn.

33. ... Qg2+ 34. Kb1 Qh1+ 35. Kc2

I survived a bad position, so a draw and a tie for first was fine by me. Yoo, on the other hand, needed a win for a prize, so he kept on trying.

35. ... Rb8 36. Qc1!

A nice move to secure my king.

36. ... Qxc1+

After 36. ... Qg2+ 37. Kb1 White starts to take over.

37. Kxc1 Kf8 38. g5

Fixing Black's majority.

38. ... Rb5 39. Rc8+ Ke7 40. Rc7+

Move 40! I hadn't been in terrible time trouble, but I made it with only two or three minutes to spare.

40. ... Ke8 41. Rc8+ Kd7??

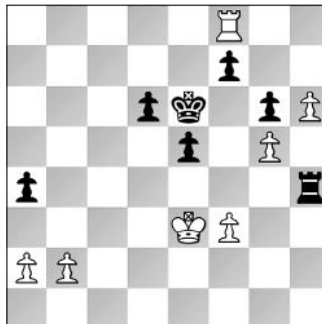
Yoo should have accepted the new situation and aimed for the draw. I have 30 more minutes on the clock, so I can make good decisions again. After 41. ... Ke7 I would probably have just repeated with 42. Rc7+. I could try to play like in the game with 42. Rh8, but here Black has the f7-pawn protected and the easiest draw is with 42. ... Rxd5 43. Rxh7 e4 44. fxe4 Rg5. Black can play 42. ... Rc5+ 43. Kd2 Rxd5+, but after 44. Ke3 I still prefer White. It's true that 44. ... Rb5 draws, but I could still win after 44. ... Rd4?? 45. Rxh7 Rh4 46. Rh8.

42. Rh8 Rc5+ 43. Kd2 Rxd5+ 44. Ke3 Rd4 45. Rxh7 Ke6

The move he had to make, thanks to 41. ... Kd7.

46. Rh8 Rh4 47. Rf8!

A very nice prophylactic move, preventing ... Ke6-f5.

47. ... a4

During the game this felt like the final mistake.

48. b4!

My pawn is very fast and can't be taken!

48. ... axb3 e.p.

I promote the h-pawn after 48. ... Rxb4 49. h7.

49. axb3 Ke7 50. Ra8 d5 51. b4

In order to stop the b-pawn, Black has to sacrifice some kingside pawns.

51. ... Kd7 52. b5 Rh5 53. Ra7+

The most forcing way to convert. I saw the funny variation 53. Rf8 Ke7 54. b6 and it works: 54. ... Kxf8 55. b7 d4+ 56. Kd3 e4+ 57. Kxe4 and the b-pawn promotes. But I decided to keep it simple.

53. ... Kd6 54. Rxf7 Kc5 55. b6!

Exchanging the b-pawn for the g-pawn.

55. ... Kxb6 56. Rf6+ Kc5 57. Rxg6 Rh3 58. Kf2 e4 59. fxe4

And the rest was a matter of technique (or TechNico as some friends sometimes call me).

59. ... dxe4 60. Kg2 Rh5 61. Kg3 Kd4 62. Kg4 Rh1 63. Re6 e3 64. Re7 Rg1+ 65. Kf5 Kd3 66. h7 Rh1 67. g6 e2 68. Kf6 Rf1+ 69. Kg7, Black resigned.

Zwirs calls winning the tournament "by far the biggest highlight of my career" and adds, "Hopefully I'm able to surprise myself again in the future." ♡

2024 SPARKASSEN CHESS TROPHY AT A GLANCE

AUGUST 10-18, 2024 | DORTMUND, GERMANY

A-OPEN

1ST: IM Nico Zwirs, 7½/9. **2ND-7TH:** GMs Anton Korobov, Frederik Svane, David Gavrilescu, Yahli Sokolovsky, Evgeny Romanov, Andrey Sumets, 7. **AMERICANS:** GM Christopher Yoo, 6. 193 players.

B-OPEN

1ST-2ND: Oleksandr Kasapchuk Jr., Richard Walter, 6½/7. **3RD-6TH:** Andreas Leidig, Thomas Rosenberg, Tom Niklas Arnz, Zachary Garden, 6. **AMERICANS:** Gösta Stomberg, 3½. 191 players.

PAEHTZ – WAGNER MATCH

GM Elisabeth Paehtz, 3. IM Dinara Wagner, 3.

For more information and photos, visit sparkassen-chess-trophy.de/index.php/en.

Olympic Trials

Matches can hinge on endgame fundamentals.

BY GM JOEL BENJAMIN

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HE U.S. APPARENTLY ROMPED to victory over Singapore in the second round of the 2024 Budapest Olympiad.

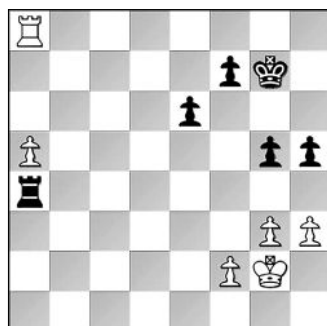
Upon closer inspection, the 4-0 whitewash was fueled by GMs Leinier Dominguez and Ray Robson both winning dead drawn endgames. Robson triumphed in a rook ending with a four versus three majority on the kingside — even though his opponent had a passer on the queenside.

This type of rook ending is so common that it behooves players at all levels to know some general principles and specific themes.

FOUR V. THREE PLUS ONE

NOT NEARLY SO EASY

GM Kevin Goh Wei Ming (2449)
GM Ray Robson (2700)
45th Olympiad (2), Budapest,
09.12.2024



BLACK TO MOVE

When I show this position to students, they often think White is going to win the game. But the a-pawn is completely under wraps, while Black has some play with his kingside majority. White is the one who has to be careful.

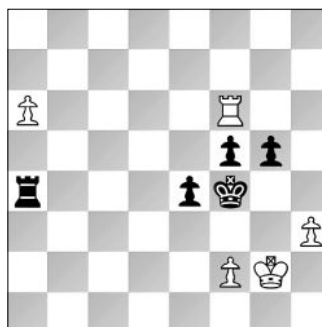
33. ... h4 34. gxh4?!

White follows the general rule of trading pawns when behind, and the capture does enable him to reposition his rook. But now Black's pawns will become quite mobile, while his king will earn a dominant position. 34. g4 was definitely a simpler path. White can stand pat while Black's only idea to alter the position, ... f7-f5, will result in split or bunched pawns on the kingside.

34. ... Rxh4 35. Rb8

Black will never expose his king to a check, so having the rook in front of the pawn doesn't contribute much. On the other hand, the rook on the side gives the black rook more freedom.

35. ... Ra4 36. Rb5 Kg6 37. Rc5 Ra3 38. Rb5 f6 39. Rb6 e5 40. a6 e4 41. Rc6 Kf5 42. Rb6 Ke5 43. Rc6 f5 44. Rc5+ Kf4 45. Rc6 Ra4 46. Rf6



White avoids an unnecessary *zugzwang*: 46. Re6 Ra2 47. Rb6 e3 48. Rb4+ Ke5 49. Kf3 e2 50. Rb1 Kd4 and now (a) 51. a7 Kd3 52. a8=Q Rxa8 53. Rb3+ Kd2 54. Rb2+ Kd1 55. Rb1+ Kc2 56. Re1 Kd3 57. Rxe2 g4+ is decisive, so only (b) 51. h4!! can save the game: After 51. ... gxh4 52. a7 Kd3 53. Re1 Rxa7 54. Rxe2 Black no longer has the resource ... g5-g4+ winning the rook!

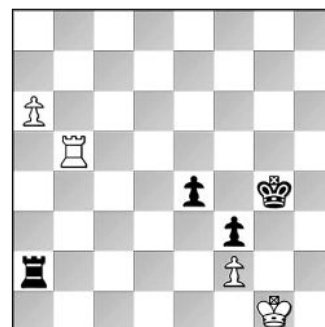
46. ... Ra5 47. Rb6 Ra1 48. Rc6 Ke5 49. Rc5+ Kf4 50. Rc6 Ra2 51. Re6 g4 52. hxg4 Kxg4 53. Rg6+ Kf4 54. Rb6 Kg5 55. Re6 Ra3 56. Kf1 Kf4 57. Kg2 Ra5 58. Rb6 Ke5 59. Rh6 Ra2 60. Rb6 f4

If Black tries 60. ... e3, then 61. Kf3 e2 62. Rb1 holds.

61. Kg1

White can come out of the shell with 61. Kh3, as 61. ... Rxf2?? 62. Rb5+ Kd4 63. Ra5 even wins for White! After 61. ... e3 62. fxe3 fxe3 63. a7 Rxa7 64. Kg2 Rf7 65. Rb2 Ke4 66. Ra2 White reaches a book draw despite having the king cut off — useful information to have stored!

61. ... f3 62. Rb5+ Kf4 63. Rb6 Kf5 64. Rb5+ Kg4



65. Rb4??

This simply loses, but White could not accept that he needed to jettison the a-pawn now. Occasionally that queenside passer can be a hindrance, keeping the defender from getting the rook to the necessary position. After 65. Re5 Kf4 White must drop his attachment to the pawn because 66. Re6?? Ra1+ 67. Kh2 Rf1 scoops up the f2-pawn and wins. Instead, 66. Re8! Rxa6 67. Rf8+ (or a handful of other moves) reaches a drawn position, though White has to remain alert.

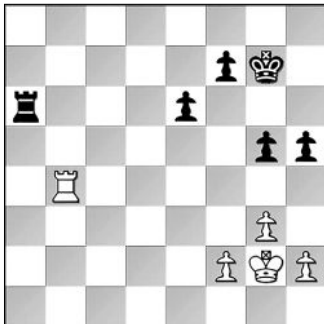
65. ... Kh3 66. Rb1 e3 67. fxe3 Kg3 68. e4 Rg2+, White resigned.

Seven tables away, another grandmaster was also trying to trick a lower-rated opponent in a standard four versus three rook ending.

CLASSIC ENDGAME

HOLDING ON

IM Jan Emmanuel Garcia (2380)
GM Frederik Svane (2640)
45th Olympiad (2), Budapest,
09.12.2024



WHITE TO MOVE

Here Black has a clear pawn advantage, but at least White can devote all his resources to defense.

49. h4

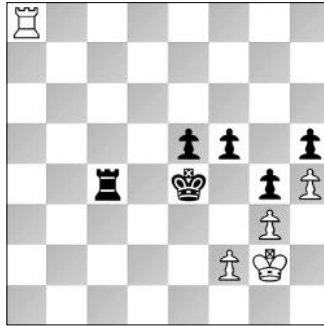
This isn't really a mistake, though I would prefer 49. h3 as in the last example. In the game the h5-pawn does become a target, but if the black pawns do get going the presence of h-pawns will be greatly in Black's favor.

49. ... g4 50. Rb5 Kg6 51. Rg5+ Kh6 52. Rg8 Ra5 53. Rh8+ Kg7 54. Re8 Rd5 55. Ra8 Kf6 56. Rg8 Rf5 57. Kf1 Re5 58. Kg2 Rd5

59. Kf1 Kf5 60. Ra8

White should benefit from his 49th move by sitting on the h-pawn with 60. Rh8 Ke4 61. Kg2. How can Black make progress if he cannot put pawns on his fourth rank?

60. ... Ke4 61. Ra7 f5 62. Ra1 Rd2 63. Kg2 e5 64. Ra4+ Rd4 65. Ra8 Rc4



Black plays a lot of waiting moves in this ending, perhaps for clock reasons, but why not 65. ... f4 immediately?

66. Rd8

The attack on the h-pawn has lost its power: 66. Rh8 f4 67. gxf4 exf4 68. Rxh5 Rc2 followed by 69. ... g3 wins for Black.

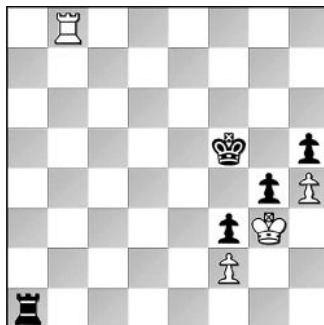
66. ... Rc1 67. Re8 Rc5 68. Rh8

White should keep the pin with 68. Re7.

68. ... f4 69. gxf4 exf4 70. Re8+ Kd4 71. Rd8+ Rd5 72. Rf8 Ke4 73. Re8+ Kd3 74. Rf8 Rd4 75. Ra8 Rd5 76. Rf8 Ke4 77. Re8+ Re5 78. Rf8 Ra5 79. Re8+ Kf5 80. Rf8+ Ke5 81. Re8+ Kd5 82. Rd8+ Ke6 83. Re8+ Kf7 84. Rb8 Kg6 85. Rb6+

It makes more sense to push the king back: 85. Rg8+ Kf7 86. Rb8 f3+ 87. Kg3 Ra1 88. Rb5 Kg6 89. Kf4 (other moves draw, too) 89. ... Rh1 90. Rg5+ Kh6 91. Kf5 Rxh4 92. Kf6 Rh1 93. Rg6+ Kh7 94. Rg7+ Kh8 95. Kf7 and now Black can even lose after 95. ... h4?? 96. Rg5.

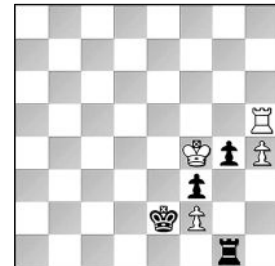
85. ... Kf5 86. Rb8 f3+ 87. Kg3 Ra1



88. Rb5+??

White needs to force the king to an awkward location. After 88. Rf8+ Ke4 (88. ... Kg6 89. Rg8+ Kf6 90. Rg5 Rg1+ 91. Kf4 is equal) 89. Re8+ Kd3, Stockfish does not distinguish between the two drawing moves, but (a) 90. Rd8+ Ke2 91. Re8+ Kf1 92. Re5 Ra2 93. Rxh5 (or 93. Rb5 with equality) 93. ... Rxf2 94. Kxg4 Kg2 95. Rf5 Rf1 96. h5 draws easily, sacrificing the rook for the pawn and forcing Black to do the same with the h-pawn.

White can also draw with (b) 90. Re5, but only after a problem-like finish: After 90. ... Rg1+ 91. Kf4 Kd2 (91. ... Rg2 92. Rxh5 Rxf2 93. Kxg4 Ke4 94. Ra5 Rg2+ 95. Kh3 Rg1 96. Ra4+ with continued checking) 92. Rxh5 Ke2 ...



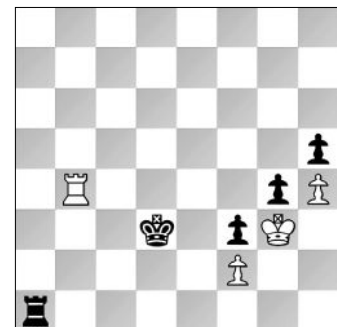
POSITION AFTER 92. ... Ke2

White can only draw with the mysterious 93. Rc5!!, the subtle point only showing up in the variation 93. ... Kxf2 94. h5 Kf1 (94. ... Kg2 95. Kxg4 f2 96. Rf5 is equal) 95. h6 f2 96. h7 Kg2 97. h8=Q f1=Q+ 98. Kg5 and, because of the fortuitous placement of the rook on c5, Black does not benefit much from being on move because he has no checks.

88. ... Ke4 89. Rb4+

Black wins after 89. Rxh5 Rg1+ 90. Kh2 Rg2+.

89. ... Kd3



Black will win one of the pawns and further resistance becomes futile.

90. Rb3+ Kc4 91. Rb8 Rh1 92. Ra8 Rh3+ 93. Kf4 Rxh4 94. Ra5 Rh2 95. Ke3 Rh1 96. Kf4 Kd3 97. Re5 Rh2 98. Re3+ Kd4 99. Re4+ Kd5 100. Re5+ Kd6 101. Ra5 Rxf2 102. Rxh5 Rg2 103. Rf5 f2, White resigned. ♠

Thinking Differently

Tiger Hillarp Persson's latest embraces the richness – and the chaos – of the game.

BY IM JOHN WATSON

A

AT A TIME WHEN THE GREAT GM Ulf Andersson was easily the biggest influence on Scandinavian players, Swedish

Grandmaster Tiger Hillarp Persson went his own way. While Andersson played slow openings and became known for exchanging queens early in the game, Tiger was more likely to sacrifice his queen than exchange it – a good deal of his new book is devoted to queen sacrifices.

I should say that I've always admired Persson's games and style, and thought that his book *Tiger's Modern* (2005) was simply brilliant (I haven't read the 2014 edition *The Modern Tiger*, presumably the one to order if you're interested).

The scope of Hillarp Persson's new book, *Tiger's Chaos Theory*, is so broad, and Tiger jumps from one subject to another so quickly, that even the author doesn't succeed in succinctly describing what it's about. Still, some general themes recur, notably the nature of creativity and intuition in chess. "I have arrived at a point where I view creativity in chess as a combination of two things," he writes – "an ability to apply patterns and mix them in new ways and a subversive attitude towards the material aspect of the game." He adds that the book is "not so much 'about creativity' as it is a map towards improving the reader's intuition in some rather extreme areas. ... it turned out to be a book about intuition; or perhaps on how to use intuition creatively."

Persson insists that there is much more to chess than meets the eye, even in apparently simple positions. Regarding rules-based play, he says: "I cannot stand impractical principles that attempt to reduce the complexity of the game into easy-to-understand, quick fixes. I have read only a small fraction of the last thirty years of chess literature; but if I am to believe my students, then it must

be teeming with just this: pretensions of making chess simpler." In a recent podcast interview with Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam, Tiger allows that there are such things as chess principles, but says that any principles have to be flexible, because the devil is in the details. In the book you will see the occasional rephrasing of old nostrums. For example, the rule "A knight on the rim is dim" becomes the guideline "A knight on the rim must have a clear purpose." That's much better, although my guess is that it still won't prove very useful to an improving student.

With that background, let me touch upon just a few of the subjects from this far-reaching work. Chapter 1 goes into a deep dive of a variation Tiger discovered and played against several grandmaster opponents, as in this game:

GRÜNFELD DEFENSE (D80)

GM Tiger Hillarp Persson (2535)

GM Victor Mikhalevski (2632)

Reykjavik Open, 03.11.2008

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 d5 4. Bg5 Ne4 5. Bh4 Nxc3 6. bxc3 dxc4 7. e3 Be6 8. Rb1 Nd7

Tiger says that he would still be willing to play this line for White today, but 8. ... b6, 8. ... Bg7 and 8. ... c5 are all fully satisfactory for Black, so he probably wouldn't reach his favorite position often enough.

9. Qa4

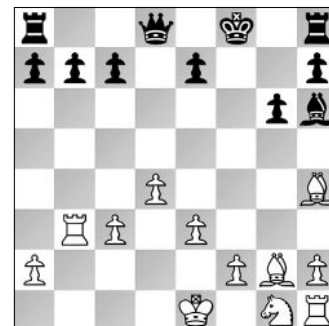
Last played in 2013. Elsewhere in the book Tiger writes about how the development of strong engines eliminated so many variations that were incredibly rich and unresolved; they suddenly became impractical or outright unsound. We older players lament the disappearance of beautiful variations you could study and keep using for years without

having to resort to simplifying or drawing lines. Many of these are now barely mentioned in books and articles; this is correct, of course, but something of value is lost.

9. ... Bd5 10. Bxc4!!? Bxg2 11. Qb3 Bh6

This and what follows are virtually forced.

12. Bxf7+ Kf8 13. Bd5 Nc5! 14. Bxg2 Nxb3 15. Rxb3



Tiger first conceived of this variation in 2006. White has two pieces for the queen as well as several positional advantages, but that's a lot of material. "The story could have ended here," Tiger comments, "seeing that the engines evaluate the position as completely winning for Black. But I found something I liked about the position, and eventually I came to 'believe' in it, meaning that I thought it to be much (much) better for White than the engines indicated. It is, by now, probably the position I have spent the most hours on in my lifetime."

For the record, my most recent Stockfish and Leela engines land somewhere around -1.4 here, as Tiger also indicates. But my older engines favor Black by more, as much as -3.0, the assessment that Tiger himself was confronted with and boldly ignored. How many players today would even bother to keep looking?

From the diagram, many moves have been tried, and Tiger says he has analyzed every possible one with top engines; as a small sample of ideas from this position, he includes 11 dense pages of games and analysis in the book, and amazingly, after all these years he has come to no definite conclusion. This fascinating example informs later discussions in the book about intuition, structure, and handling long-term compensation.

The next chapter is about “breakouts,” mostly spectacular ways of escaping from cramped positions. There follow a couple of chapters on queen sacrifices (a favorite topic) and one on how to decide where your pieces can and cannot go, with an emphasis on counterintuitive and tactical solutions. One lovely game involves what Tiger calls a “true sacrifice,” which is one that “does not fall within patterns which are already known to us.” I think you’ll agree that this qualifies:

ENGLISH OPENING (A30)

GM Julio Granda Zuniga (2590)

GM Yasser Seirawan (2595)

Buenos Aires, 1993

1. Nf3 Nf6 2. c4 c5 3. Nc3 e6 4. g3 b6 5. Bg2 Bb7 6. 0-0 Nc6 7. e4 e5 8. d3 g6



This all seems innocent enough. Black has developed slowly, but it’s a closed position with no pawn breaks for White, so we might expect a lengthy maneuvering game. Instead, White plays an amazing positional sacrifice:

9. Nxe5!!

“!!?” according to Tiger, and called “?! ” by annotators when this game was first published, but I think it’s completely sound and causes Black enormous practical problems. It’s also incredibly gutsy: I’ve always loved to make speculative sacrifices, but I would never have dared to play this one over the board.

9. ... Nxe5 10. f4 Nc6

10. ... Nfg4! is recommended, but according to my engines, Tiger’s line 11. h3! h5! 12. hxg4 Nxg4 13. e5 Bxg2 14. Kxg2 Bg7 15. f5! ultimately gives White a small advantage, which is more than one might expect after perfect defense from Black.

11. e5 Ng8

11. ... Nh5 12. f5! Ng7! 13. Ne4! is similar to the game and hard to defend.

12. f5! Nh6?!

12. ... Rb8! is best, but that’s slow and not easy to find. Then 13. Bxc6!? Bxc6 14. Nd5! is extremely messy and apparently level if Black defends perfectly, and White has other tries.

13. Ne4

13. Bd5 is also strong.

13. ... Nxf5 14. Nf6+ Ke7

15. Nd5+ Ke8 16. Nf6+ Ke7 17. g4?

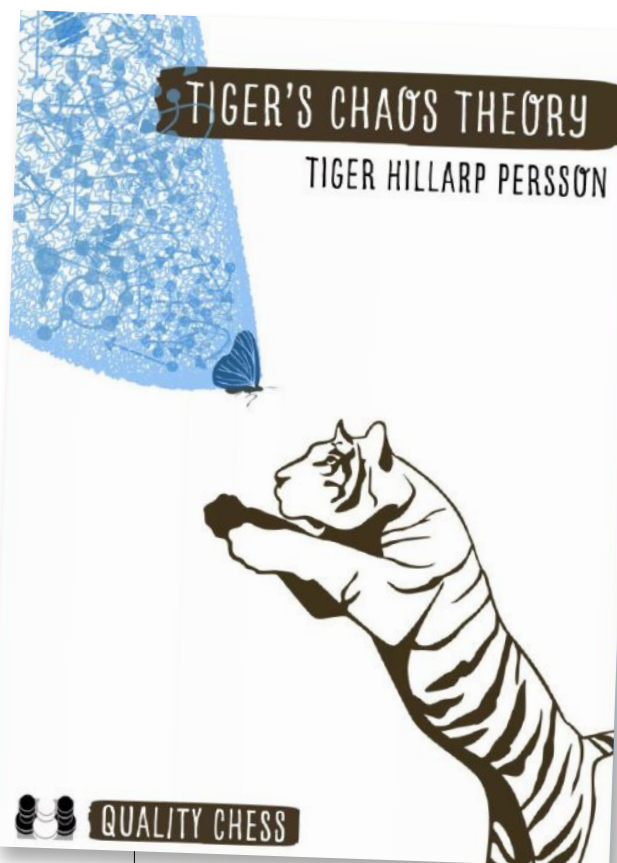
17. Rxf5! gxf5 18. Bg5 is winning, as Tiger demonstrates.

17. ... Nfd4

This is still a mess, and objectively Black stands equal here, but White won. Tiger devotes nine detailed pages to this game, and two of his sayings apply here: “What’s so great about material?” and “Don’t expect the impossible to always be impossible.”

Another chapter in *Tiger’s Chaos Theory* features a series of king walks in the middle-game, most of them right up the board and exposed to attack. Many authors (myself included) have written about this subject without much excuse for including it in their books. It’s simply irresistible to show the king risking all, against our ingrained instincts.

A very short but entertaining chapter recounts Tiger’s experiment in which he intentionally “channels Karpov.” After losing a couple of games in a tournament playing with his usual dynamic style, he decides to consciously play like his stylistic opposite, in this case Karpov (whose games he has been studying). It works wonderfully, presumably because he forced himself outside of his comfortable (and perhaps stale) ways of thinking to refresh his view of the game and find new ideas.



Tiger’s Chaos Theory is full of philosophic ramblings and musings, so it makes sense to conclude with a quote from Tiger’s ‘Final Thoughts’ towards the end of the book:

“Sometimes I become pessimistic when considering the future of creativity in chess. It is not that I think the creative element will completely disappear but over time, I have seen it become relatively less important, especially in the opening stages. ... Twenty years ago I considered chess as a form of art, but now I see it as more of a science.” Nevertheless, he says, “To take an idea, look at it, turn it around and then find a place for it in a different context — that is what got me hooked on chess, and what keeps me there. It is my main reason for playing chess.”

Part of me thinks that much of *Tiger’s Chaos Theory* describes a vanished and impractical style of play, and that’s probably the case. But upon reflection, this book might also inspire a fresh way of thinking that could give a new generation player an advantage over his or her contemporaries. Even if not, you can still have fun with the exciting games and positions Tiger has selected, so I can freely recommend it to any player who is at club level or above. ♠

Persson, Tiger Hillarp. *Tiger’s Chaos Theory*. Quality Chess, 2024. ISBN: 978-1784832131, 280 pp. \$39.95 list.

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/\[TLA ID\]](http://new.uschess.org/node/[TLA ID]). You will find the event's unique five-digit TLA ID at the end of each TLA.

Nationals

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • HERITAGE EVENT

2025 World Amateur Team & U.S. Team East

FEBRUARY 15-17, 2025, NEW JERSEY
Event site: Parsippany Hilton Address: 1 Hilton Ct., Parsippany, N.J. 07054 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: New Jersey Chess Federation Email: Worldamateurtournament@njscf.org Phone: n/a Website: <http://njscf.org> TLA ID: 45828

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 U.S. Amateur Team North FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025, ILLINOIS

Event site: Hyatt Regency Schaumburg Address: 1800 E. Golf Rd., Schaumburg, Illinois 60173 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Chess Weekend Inc. Email: glenn@chessweekend.com Phone: n/a Website: <https://www.chessweekend.com/> TLA ID: 46274

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 KCF All-Girls National Championships

APRIL 4-5, 2025, ILLINOIS
Event site: Hyatt Regency McCormick Place Address: 2233 S Dr Martin Luther King Jr Dr, Chicago, IL 60616 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: David Heiser Email: david.heiser@renais-sanceknights.org Phone: n/a Website: <https://allgirls.rknights.org/> TLA ID: 45885

Grand Prix

The Grand Prix point totals reflect all rated event information as of Dec. 31, 2023, for the 2023 Grand Prix.

FINAL 2023 GRAND PRIX STANDINGS

Congratulations to the 2023 Grand Prix Champion

GM JIANCHAO ZHOU

Name	State/Ctry	Pts
1. GM JIANCHAO ZHOU	MA	562.94
2. GM FIDEL CORRALES JIMENEZ	NY	481.29
3. GM MIKHAIL ANTIPOV	MO	194.33
4. GM ARMAN MIKAELIAN	--	157.10
5. GM RAHUL P SRIVATSHAV	--	128.74
6. FM SHARVESH R DEVIPRASATH	TX	121.10
7. IM SAFAL BORA	MI	115.33
8. GM ALEXANDER FISHBEIN	TN	111.47
9. IM JUSTIN WANG	TX	108.62
10. GM VIKTOR MATVIISHEN	TX	106.09

2023 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 2024. For information visit new.uschess.org/us-chess-grand-prix-program

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

57th Virginia Open

JANUARY 3-5, 2025, VIRGINIA

Event site: Marriott Washington Dulles Airport Address: 45020 Aviation Drive, Dulles, VA 20166 Overall prize fund: \$8,000 GP Points: 40 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Mike Hoffpauir, NTD/IA Email: mhoffpauir@aol.com Phone: 7578464805 Website: <https://www.vachess.org> TLA ID: 46390

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

13th annual Boston Chess Congress

JANUARY 3-5, 2025, MASSACHUSETTS

Event site: Hyatt Regency Boston Harbor Address: 101 Harborside Dr, Boston, MA 02128 Overall prize fund: \$12,000 GP Points: 80 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Email: director@chess.us Phone: n/a Website: chess-tour.com TLA ID: 45408

GRAND PRIX

2025 Austin Winter Open

JANUARY 3-5, 2025, TEXAS

Event site: Austin Southpark Hotel Address: 4140 Governors Row, Austin, TX 78744 Overall prize fund: \$5,435 GP Points: 30 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Austin Chess Club Email: director@chess.us Phone: n/a Website: <https://www.austinchess-tournaments.com/> TLA ID: 46339

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight National Spaghetti Day Grand Prix

JANUARY 4-5, 2025, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall prize fund: \$764 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Email: jon@drag-onknightchess.com Phone: 919-422-2535 Website: DragonKnightChess.com TLA ID: 46351

GRAND PRIX

Dewey Beach Open 2025

JANUARY 4-5, 2025, DELAWARE

Event site: Hyatt Place Address: 1301 Coastal Highway, Dewey Beach, DE 19971 Overall prize fund: \$5200 GP Points: 15 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Delaware Chess Association Email: connect@delawarechessassociation.org Phone: 302-593-3752 Website: <http://Delawarechess-association.org> TLA ID: 46249

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 PA State Game/75 Championship - West

JANUARY 11, 2025, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: William Pitt Union, Univ. of Pittsburgh Address: 5th Ave. & Bigelow Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15213 Overall prize fund: \$695 GP Points: 6 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Tom M Martinak Email: martinak_tom_m@hotmail.com Phone: 412-908-0286 Website: <http://www.pscfchess.org/clearinghouse/> TLA ID: 46820

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Eagle Day Grand Prix

JANUARY 11, 2025, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall prize fund: \$764 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Email: jon@drag-onknightchess.com Phone: 919-422-2535 Website: DragonKnightChess.com TLA ID: 46352

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

16th annual Golden State Open

JANUARY 17-20, 2025, CALIFORNIA, N.

Event site: Doubletree Berkeley Marina Hotel Address: 200 Marina Blvd., Berkeley, CA 94710 Overall prize fund: \$25,000 GP Points: 150 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Email: director@chess.us Phone: n/a Website: chess-tour.com TLA ID: 45890

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

57th annual Liberty Bell Open

JANUARY 17-20, 2025, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: Sonesta Philadelphia Rittenhouse Hotel Address: 1800 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103 Overall prize fund: \$25,000 GP Points: 150 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Email: director@chess.us Phone: n/a Website: chess-tour.com TLA ID: 45412

HERITAGE EVENT • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Michigan Master/Expert & Class Championships

JANUARY 18-19, 2025, MICHIGAN

Event site: Ramada Lansing Hotel Address: 7501 W Saginaw Hwy, Lansing, MI 48917 Overall prize fund: \$4,200 GP Points: 20 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Michigan Chess Association Email: djefchess@charter.net Phone: 810-955-7271 Website: <https://www.michess.org/> TLA ID: 46870

sible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Michigan Chess Association Email: djefchess@charter.net Phone: 810-955-7271 Website: <https://www.michess.org/> TLA ID: 46870

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Big January Dragon Knight Grand Prix

JANUARY 18, 2025, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall prize fund: \$1,120 GP Points: 15 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Email: jon@dragonknightchess.com Phone: 919-422-2535 Website: DragonKnightChess.com TLA ID: 46822

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

12th annual Liberty Bell Open Blitz Championship

JANUARY 19, 2025, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: Sonesta Philadelphia Rittenhouse Hotel Address: 1800 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103 Overall prize fund: \$500 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Email: director@chess.us Phone: n/a Website: chess-tour.com TLA ID: 46423

GRAND PRIX

The 2025 Cardinal Open

JANUARY 24-26, 2025, OHIO

Event site: Doubletree by Hilton Akron Fairlawn Address: 3180 W. Market Street, Akron, OH 44333 Overall prize fund: \$10,000 GP Points: 60 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Progress With Chess Email: stacia@progresswithchess.org Phone: n/a Website: <https://progresswithchess.org/cardinal/> TLA ID: 46437

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight National Seed Swap Day Grand Prix

JANUARY 25, 2025, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall prize fund: \$764 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Email: jon@drag-onknightchess.com Phone: 919-422-2535 Website: DragonKnightChess.com TLA ID: 46823

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

Land of the Sky XXXVII

JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 2, 2025, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Crowne Plaza Resort Asheville Address: One Resort Dr, Asheville, NC 28806 Overall prize fund: \$11,000 GP Points: 30 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Wilder Wadford Email: info@landofthesky.us Phone: n/a Website: <https://landofthesky.us/> TLA ID: 44223

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Barber Day Grand Prix

FEBRUARY 1, 2025, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall prize fund: \$764 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Email: jon@dragonknightchess.com Phone: 919-422-2535 Website: DragonKnightChess.com TLA ID: 46824

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Global Movie Day Grand Prix

FEBRUARY 8, 2025, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall prize fund: \$764 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Email: jon@dragonknightchess.com Phone: 919-422-2535 Website: DragonKnightChess.com TLA ID: 46825

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.

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

16th annual Southwest Class Championships

FEBRUARY 13-17, 2025, TEXAS

Event site: Westin Hotel Dallas Fort Worth Airport **Address:** 4545 W John Carpenter Freeway, Irving, TX 75063 **Overall prize fund:** \$35,000 **GP Points:** 200 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess **Email:** director@chess.us **Phone:** n/a **Website:** chess.us **TLA ID:** 45893

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight World Pangolin Day Grand Prix

FEBRUARY 15, 2025, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall prize fund:** \$764 **GP Points:** 10 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Dragon Knight Chess **Email:** jon@dragonknightchess.com **Phone:** 919-422-2535 **Website:** DragonKnightChess.com **TLA ID:** 46286

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

9th annual George Washington Open

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025, VIRGINIA

Event site: Washington Dulles Marriott Hotel **Address:** 45020 Aviation Dr, Dulles, VA 20166 **Overall prize fund:** \$17,000 **GP Points:** 120 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess **Email:** director@chess.us **Phone:** n/a **Website:** chess.us **TLA ID:** 45891

GRAND PRIX

3rd Annual Music City Open

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025, TENNESSEE

Event site: Millennium Maxwell House Hotel **Address:** 2025 Rosa L Parks Blvd, Nashville, TN 37228 **Overall prize fund:** \$10,000 **GP Points:** 60 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Nashville Chess Center **Email:** director@nashvillechess.org **Phone:** 6292544737 **Website:** https://nashvillechess.org/content.aspx?page_id=4091&club_id=164844&item_id=2365098 **TLA ID:** 46248

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Indiana Chess Congress

MARCH 7-9, 2025, INDIANA

Event site: La Quinta Inn & Suites Indianapolis South **Address:** 5120 Victory Dr, Indianapolis, IN 46203 **Overall prize fund:** \$15,000 **GP Points:** 30 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Indiana State Chess Association **Email:** president@indianachess.org **Phone:** (317) 283-9976 **Website:** <http://indianachess.org/> **TLA ID:** 45655

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

32nd annual Western Class Championships

MARCH 7-9, 2025, CALIFORNIA, S.

Event site: Hilton Hotel Orange County Airport **Address:** 18800 Macarthur Blvd, Irvine, CA 92612 **Overall prize fund:** \$20,000 **GP Points:** 120 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess **Email:** director@chess.us **Phone:** n/a **Website:** chess.us **TLA ID:** 45892

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

22nd annual Southern Class Championships

MARCH 7-9, 2025, FLORIDA

Event site: Delta Hotels Orlando Celebration **Address:** 2900 Parkway Boulevard, Kissimmee, FL 34747 **Overall prize fund:** \$17,000 **GP Points:** 80 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess **Email:** director@chess.us **Phone:** n/a **Website:** chess.us **TLA ID:** 46246

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

New York State Senior Championship (With Young Adult/Middle Age Section), out of state welcome!

MARCH 15-16, 2025, NEW YORK

Event site: Saratoga Hilton Hotel **Address:** 534 Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 **Overall prize fund:** \$4,200 **GP Points:** 40 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess **Email:** director@chess.us **Phone:** n/a **Website:** chess.us **TLA ID:** 46836

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

29th annual Mid-America Open

MARCH 21-23, 2025, MISSOURI

Event site: Clayton Plaza Hotel St. Louis-Clayton **Address:** 7750 Carondelet Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105 **Overall prize fund:** \$20,000 **GP Points:** 120 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess **Email:** director@chess.us **Phone:** n/a **Website:** chess.us **TLA ID:** 46238

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

The Princeton Open

APRIL 16-20, 2025, NEW JERSEY

Event site: Westin Princeton at Forrestal Village **Address:** 201 Village Blvd., Princeton, NJ 08540 **Overall prize fund:** \$60,000 **GP Points:** 200 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess **Email:** director@chess.us **Phone:** n/a **Website:** chess.us **TLA ID:** 46241

GRAND PRIX

12th Annual Reno Larry Evans Memorial Open

APRIL 18-20, 2025, NEVADA

Event site: J Resort Casino Hotel **Address:** 345 N. Arlington Avenue, Reno, NV 89501 **Overall prize fund:** \$27,500 **GP Points:** 150 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Jerome V. Weikel **Email:** wackykl@aol.com **Phone:** 775-747-1405 **Website:** <https://www.renochess.org> **TLA ID:** 46828

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

30th Space Coast Open Chess Festival

MAY 2-4, 2025, FLORIDA

Event site: Hilton Melbourne at Rialto Place **Address:** 200 Rialto Place, Melbourne, FL 32901 **Overall prize fund:** \$20,000 **GP Points:** 100 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Space Coast Chess Foundation, Inc. **Email:** suresh231975@gmail.com **Phone:** 6168811094 **Website:** <https://www.spacecoastchessfoundation.org/event/spacecoastopen> **TLA ID:** 46260

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

34th annual Chicago Open

MAY 22-26, 2025, ILLINOIS

Event site: Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel **Address:** 601 North Milwaukee Ave., Wheeling, IL 60090 **Overall prize fund:** \$100,000 **GP Points:** 200 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess **Email:** director@chess.us **Phone:** n/a **Website:** chess.us **TLA ID:** 46255

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

18th annual Philadelphia International

JUNE 26-30, 2025, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown **Address:** 201 N 17th Street, Philadelphia PA 19103 **Overall prize fund:** \$20,000 **GP Points:** 200 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess **Email:** director@chess.us **Phone:** n/a **Website:** chess.us **TLA ID:** 46651

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

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections)

JULY 2-6, 2025, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown **Address:** 201 N 17th Street, Philadelphia PA 19103 **Overall prize fund:** \$208,000 **GP Points:** 300 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess **Email:** director@chess.us **Phone:** n/a **Website:** chess.us **TLA ID:** 46655

Regional

ALABAMA

MARCH 7-9, 2025

22nd annual Southern Class Championships (FL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

ARIZONA

JANUARY 17-20, 2025

16th annual Golden State Open (CA-N)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 2, 2025

32nd annual Western Class Championships (CA-S)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

CALIFORNIA

JANUARY 4, 2025-MONTHLY ON SATURDAY

Antelope Valley Chess Club Monthly Tournament

Event site: n/a **Address:** 333 West Avenue, Lancaster, CA 93534 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Antelope Valley Chess Club **Email:** chessguru77@outlook.com **Phone:** 661 917 7628 **Website:** <https://avchess.com> **TLA ID:** 36404

JANUARY 17-20, 2025

16th annual Golden State Open (CA-N)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 2, 2025

32nd annual Western Class Championships (CA-S)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IU)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)

See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

CONNECTICUT

JANUARY 3-5, 2025

13th annual Boston Chess Congress (MA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 15-16, 2025

New York State Senior Championship (With Young Adult/Middle Age Section), out of state welcome! (NY)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 16-20, 2025

The Princeton Open (NJ)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)

See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DELAWARE

JANUARY 3-5, 2025

57th Virginia Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 4-5, 2025

Dewey Beach Open 2025 (DE)

See Grand Prix.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)

See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FLORIDA

MARCH 7-9, 2025

22nd annual Southern Class Championships (FL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IU)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)

See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

GEORGIA

MARCH 7-9, 2025

22nd annual Southern Class Championships (FL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 5-4, 2025

30th Space Coast Open Chess Festival (FL)

See Grand Prix.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)

See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

ILLINOIS

JANUARY 24-26, 2025

The 2025 Cardinal Open (OH)

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 8, 2025

2025 Greater Chicago K-12 Championship

Event site: McCormick Place **Address:** 2301 S Dr Martin Luther King Jr Dr, Chicago, IL 60616 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** David Heiser **Email:** david.heiser@renaissance-knights.org **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <https://greaterchicago.rknights.org/> **TLA ID:** 45884

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025

2025 US Amateur Team North (IL)

See Nationals.

MARCH 21-23, 2025

29th annual Mid-America Open (MO)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IU)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)

See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

INDIANA

JANUARY 24-26, 2025

The 2025 Cardinal Open (OH)

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025

2025 US Amateur Team North (IL)

See Nationals.

MARCH 21-23, 2025

29th annual Mid-America Open (MO)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

IOWA

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025

2025 US Amateur Team North (IL)
See Nationals.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

KENTUCKY

JANUARY 24-26, 2025

The 2025 Cardinal Open (OH)
See Grand Prix.

LOUISIANA

JANUARY 11, 2025

New Orleans G/30 Senior Open
Event site: NOLA VFW Post 8973 Address: 531 Lyons St, New Orleans, LA 70115 Overall prize fund: \$600
GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Downriver Chess Club of New Orleans Email: info@downriverchess.com Phone: 202-656-9754 Website: <https://downriverchess.com> TLAID: 46277

FEBRUARY 13-17, 2025

16th annual Southwest Class

Championships (TX)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARYLAND

MARYLAND CHESS TOURNAMENTS (NORTH PENN CHESS CLUB)

Maryland Chess runs 21+ annual K-12 tournaments every other Saturday from September through June & 12+ annual 1-day or multi-day open tournaments for adults & K-12 players on weekends. See www.MDchess.org for tournament announcements, registration for tournaments, updated wallcharts, live standings, sign up for K-12 & open e-newsletters, lists of coaches & clubs, camp announcements, & news. K-12 MD players who compete in the Varsity section (for players rated 1600+) of 1 of 8+ annual MD-Sweet-16 Qualifiers can qualify for the \$48,000+ scholarship to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County awarded annually. UMBC is a perennial top-10 contender for the collegiate national chess championship.

JANUARY 3-5, 2025

57th Virginia Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 4-5, 2025

Dewey Beach Open 2025 (DE)
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 17-20, 2025

57th annual Liberty Bell Open (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025

9th annual George Washington Open (VA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 16-20, 2025

The Princeton Open (NJ)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 26-30, 2025

18th annual Philadelphia International (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MASSACHUSETTS

JANUARY 3-5, 2025

13th annual Boston Chess Congress (MA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 8-9, 2025

57th annual New York State Scholastic Championships (out of state welcome)-- OPEN TO GRADES K-8 ONLY
See New York.

MARCH 15-16, 2025

57th annual New York State High School Championship, GRADES 9-12 (grades 6-8 also permitted but with prize restrictions)
See New York.

MARCH 15-16, 2025

New York State Senior Championship (With Young Adult/Middle Age Section), out of state welcome! (NY)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 26-30, 2025

18th annual Philadelphia International (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections

(Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MICHIGAN

JANUARY 24-26, 2025

The 2025 Cardinal Open (OH)
See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025

2025 US Amateur Team North (IL)
See Nationals.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MINNESOTA

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025

2025 US Amateur Team North (IL)
See Nationals.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MISSOURI

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025

2025 US Amateur Team North (IL)
See Nationals.

16th annual Southwest Class Championships

Feb 13-17, 14-17 or 15-17, 2025 (Presidents Weekend), Irving, Texas

\$35,000 guaranteed prizes, GM & IM norms possible!

Master Section: 9-SS, Feb 13-17, 40/80, SD/30; d30. **Expert through Class E:** 7 rounds, Feb 14-17 or 15-17, 40/80, SD/30; d10 (3-day rds 1-2 G/60, d10).

Westin Dallas Fort Worth Airport, 4545 W John Carpenter Fwy, Irving TX 75063. Free parking, free airport shuttle.

In 7 sections, top 3 FIDE-rated. Unr may enter A-E. See peakrating.us.

Master (USCF 2100/up or FIDE 2000/up): \$4000-2000-1500-1200-1000-800-600, clear/tiebreak 1st \$200, FIDE U2300/Unr \$1800-900. FIDE ratings used, 200 GPP (Enhanced).

Expert (1900-2199), **Class A** (1700-1999), **Class B** (1500-1799): each \$2000-1000-500-300-200.

Class C (1300-1599), \$1600-800-500-300-200.

Class D (Under 1400), **Class E** (Under 1200): \$800-400-300-200-100.

Unrated prize limits: E \$100, D \$200, C \$300, B \$400, A \$500.

Mixed doubles: \$1000-600-400. All sections OK, rds. 1-7, must average under 2200. See chessevents.us.

FIDE ratings used in Master, Feb. Official Ratings used in Expert/below, unofficial USCF ratings or USCF Online Regular ratings usually used if otherwise unrated; **Cannot play** below USCF Online Reg. rating-100 points.

Master Section entry fee: \$278 at chessaction.com by 2/12, \$300 later or at site by 6 pm 2/13. **Titled/foreign entry & minimum prizes:** see chessevents.us.

Expert to Class C entry fee: \$168 at chessaction.com by 2/12, \$190 later or at site until 1 hour before rd 1.

Class D or E sections: Entry fees \$70 less than Expert through C.

Re-entry (except Master): \$80.

No checks at site, credit cards OK. USCF membership required. See chessevents.us for special USCF dues with magazine if paid online with entry.

No Cellphone possession during play (in bag near table OK).

5-day schedule (Master): Reg. ends Thu 6 pm, Thu 7, Fri 1 & 7, Sat 11 & 5, Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 3:30.

4-day schedule: Reg. ends Fri 6 pm, Rds Fri 7 pm, Sat 11 & 5, Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 3:30 (no 4-day Master).

3-day schedule: Reg. ends Sat 10 am, rds Sat 11, 2 & 5, Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 3:30 (no 3-day Master).

Half point byes OK all, limit 2; must commit before rd 3.

All: Bring clock, set, board if possible- none supplied. See chessevents.us for rules, details.

Hotel rates: \$127-127, use link at chessevents.us or 972-929-4500, reserve by 1/28 or rate may increase.

Entry: chessaction.com. \$15 service charge for refunds.

Email: director@chess.us.

Blitz tournament Sun. 9:30 pm, enter at site Sun. by 9:10 pm.

MARCH 21-23, 2025

29th annual Mid-America Open (MO)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NEVADA

JANUARY 17-20, 2025

16th annual Golden State Open (CA-N)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 2, 2025

32nd annual Western Class Championships (CA-S)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NEW JERSEY

JANUARY 3-5, 2025

57th Virginia Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 3-5, 2025

13th annual Boston Chess Congress (MA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JANUARY 4-5, 2025

Dewey Beach Open 2025 (DE)
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 17-20, 2025

57th annual Liberty Bell Open (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEBRUARY 23, 2025

2025 New Jersey Elementary and Junior High School Championships
Event site: Brookdale Community College - Student Life Center Address: Arena Dr, (Park in lot #7), Lincroft, NJ 07738 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: New Jersey State Chess Federation Email: tournaments@njscf.org Phone: n/a Website: <https://njscf.org/> TLA ID: 46692

MARCH 8-9, 2025

57th annual New York State Scholastic Championships (out of state welcome)-- OPEN TO GRADES K-8 ONLY
See New York.

MARCH 15-16, 2025

57th annual New York State High School Championship, GRADES 9-12 (grades 6-8 also permitted but with prize restrictions)
See New York.

MARCH 15-16, 2025

New York State Senior Championship (With Young Adult/Middle Age Section), out of state welcome! (NY)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 16-20, 2025

The Princeton Open (NJ)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 4-5, 2025

30th Space Coast Open Chess Festival (FL)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 26-30, 2025

18th annual Philadelphia International (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NEW YORK

AUGUST 26, 2024-WEEKLY ON MONDAY

Raise Your Rating Monday Quads G25 d5.
Event site: Chess Max Academy of West Village Address: 466 Avenue of the Americas, Ground Floor, New York, NY 10011 Overall prize fund: \$60 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Maxim Dlugy Email: office@chessmaxacademy.com Phone: 646-783-1386 Website: <https://chessmaxacademy.com/> TLA ID: 45510

AUGUST 27, 2024-WEEKLY ON TUESDAY

Funky Chess Max Format Tuesday Blitz
Event site: Chess Max Academy of West Village Address: 466 Avenue of the Americas, Ground Floor, New York, NY 10011 Overall prize fund: \$400 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Maxim Dlugy Email: office@chessmaxacademy.com Phone: 646-783-1386 Website: <https://chessmaxacademy.com/> TLA ID: 45511

AUGUST 28, 2024-WEEKLY ON WEDNESDAY

World Champions Wednesday Rapids
Event site: Chess Max Academy of West Village Address: 466 Avenue of the Americas, Ground Floor, New York, NY 10011 Overall prize fund: \$500 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Maxim Dlugy Email: office@chessmaxacademy.com Phone: 646-783-1386 Website: <https://chessmaxacademy.com/> TLA ID: 45512

AUGUST 30, 2024-WEEKLY ON FRIDAY

Trifecta Friday Super Speed

Event site: Chess Max Academy of West Village Address: 466 Avenue of the Americas, Ground Floor, New York, NY 10011 Overall prize fund: \$760 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Maxim Dlugy Email: office@chessmaxacademy.com Phone: 646-783-1386 Website: <https://chessmaxacademy.com/> TLA ID: 45513

AUGUST 31, 2024-WEEKLY ON SATURDAY

Saturday Long Rapid G/45 d:5

Event site: Chess Max Academy of West Village Address: 466 Avenue of the Americas, Ground Floor, New York, NY 10011 Overall prize fund: \$1,490 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Maxim Dlugy Email: office@chessmaxacademy.com Phone: 646-783-1386 Website: <https://chessmaxacademy.com/> TLA ID: 45514

SEPTEMBER 1, 2024-WEEKLY ON SUNDAY

Sunday Team Bughouse Tournament

Event site: Chess Max Academy of West Village Address: 466 Avenue of the Americas, Ground Floor, New York, NY 10011 Overall prize fund: \$450 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Maxim Dlugy Email: office@chessmaxacademy.com Phone: 646-783-1386 Website: <https://chessmaxacademy.com/> TLA ID: 45517

SEPTEMBER 1, 2024-WEEKLY ON SUNDAY

Sunday USCF Rated Blitz G/3 inc.2

Event site: Chess Max Academy of West Village Address: 466 Avenue of the Americas, Ground Floor, New York, NY 10011 Overall prize fund: \$960 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Maxim Dlugy Email: office@chessmaxacademy.com Phone: 646-783-1386 Website: <https://chessmaxacademy.com/> TLA ID: 45516

SEPTEMBER 1, 2024-WEEKLY ON SUNDAY

Sunday USCF Rated G/15 inc.3

Event site: Chess Max Academy of West Village Address: 466 Avenue of the Americas, Ground Floor, New York, NY 10011 Overall prize fund: \$1,150 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Maxim Dlugy Email: office@chessmaxacademy.com Phone: 646-783-1386 Website: <https://chessmaxacademy.com/> TLA ID: 45516

The PRINCETON OPEN – A New CCA Event!

April 16-20, 17-20 or 18-20, 2025 - New Site For Easter Weekend!

All sections are 9 rounds with new schedules and \$65,000 Guaranteed!

Note Changes: 9-SS, 40/80, SD/30; d30 (4-Day option, rds. 1-2 G60, d10; 3-day option only for Under 1100 Section, G60, d10).

Westin Princeton Hotel at Forrestal Village, about halfway between New York City and Philadelphia, near Princeton University in NJ. Free parking.

\$5,000 Increase In Prize Fund!

In 7 sections:

Open (5-Day only): \$5000-3000-2000-1000-800-600-500-400, clear or tiebreak 1st \$200 bonus, top FIDE 2250-2399 \$2000-1000, top FIDE U2250/Unr \$2000-1000. GM & IM norms possible. 200 GPP.

U2200, U2000, U1800: Each \$3500-2000-1000-700-500-400-300-300. U2200 & U2000 also FIDE-rated (except for rds. 1-2 of 4-Day).

U1600, U1400: Each \$2500-1500-800-600-500-400-300-300.

U1100 (3-Day Only): \$1000-700-500-400-300-200-200.

FIDE ratings used in Open, Apr. official USCF in others (USCF unofficial or Online Regular ratings usually used if otherwise unrated).

Mixed Doubles: male+female 2-player teams among all sections: \$1000-600-400 (limit \$400 to teams with an unrated). Team average U2200, may play different sections, register before both begin round 2.

If under 26 games rated by Apr. 2025 list, limit \$600 U1100, \$1000 U1400, \$1400 U1600, \$1800 U1800.

Unrated limits: \$200 U1100, \$400 U1400, \$600 U1600, \$800 U1800.

Cannot play below Online Regular Rating-100 points. If any post-event Regular OTB or Regular Online rating posted 4/14/24-4/14/25, or current Online Regular Rating, was more than 40 points over section max., prize limit \$500.

Entry fee: \$228 online by 4/14, \$250 later or at site. \$500 more to play in Open Section for US players U2200/Unr USCF and U2100/Unr FIDE. GMs, foreign IMs/WGMs in Open: free. US IMs/WGMs & FIDE foreign in Open: \$100 less. U1100 section, \$80 less. Seniors 65/over in U1400/up: \$80 less. No mail entries.

5-day reg. ends Wed 6 pm, rds Wed 7 pm; Thu-Fri 11 & 5; Sat-Sun 10-4. No 5-Day U1100 Section.

4-day (U2200-U1400 only) reg. ends Fri 10 am, rds Thu 11, 2, 5; Fri 11 & 5; Sat-Sun 10 & 4.

3-day (U1100 only) reg ends Fri 10 am, rds Fri 11, 2 & 5; Sat-Sun 10-1-4.

Half-point byes: OK all, limit 4 (limit 2 in last 4 rds). must commit before rd 3. \$15 charge for refunds

See chessevents.us for details, rules, prize restrictions, etc.

Foreign titled players: see chessevents.us for minimum prizes.

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

Hotel Chess rate: \$165-165-165-165, use link at chessevents.us (or call 609-452-7900); reserve by 3/26 or rate may increase.

Enter online (plus list of entries): chessaction.com.

Email: director@chess.us

Blitz tournament Sat 9:30 pm, register onsite Sat by 8:45 pm.

office@chessmaxacademy.com Phone: 646-783-1386
Website: <https://chessmaxacademy.com> TLA ID: 45515

JANUARY 3-5, 2025

57th Virginia Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 3-5, 2025

13th annual Boston Chess Congress (MA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JANUARY 4-5, 2025

Dewey Beach Open 2025 (DE)
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 17-20, 2025

57th annual Liberty Bell Open (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEBRUARY 23, 2025

2025 New Jersey Elementary and Junior High School Championships (NJ)
See New Jersey.

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • JUNIOR
GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 8-9, 2025

57th annual New York State Scholastic Championships (out of state welcome)--OPEN TO GRADES K-8 ONLY

Event site: Saratoga Hilton Hotel, Saratoga City Center and Saratoga Courtyard by Marriott Address: Lower 8 sections for grades 5 and below at Saratoga Hilton (and adjacent Saratoga City Center), 534 Broadway, Middle School (K-8) Sections at Courtyard By Marriott, 11 Excelsior Ave, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Email: director@chess.us Phone: n/a Website: chess.us TLA ID: 46314

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • JUNIOR
GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 15-16, 2025

57th annual New York State High School Championship, GRADES 9-12 (grades 6-8

also permitted but with prize restrictions)

Event site: Saratoga Springs Courtyard Hotel by Marriott Address: 11 Excelsior Ave, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 Overall prize fund: \$2,000 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Email: director@chess.us Phone: n/a Website: chess.us TLA ID: 46315

MARCH 15-16, 2025

New York State Senior Championship (With Young Adult/Middle Age Section), out of state welcome! (NY)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 16-20, 2025

The Princeton Open (NJ)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 5-4, 2025

30th Space Coast Open Chess Festival (FL)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 26-30, 2025

18th annual Philadelphia International (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NORTH CAROLINA

JANUARY 3-5, 2025

57th Virginia Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 4, 2025

Dragon Knight National Spaghetti Day Grand Prix (NC)
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 11, 2025

Dragon Knight Eagle Day Grand Prix (NC)
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 18, 2025

Big January Dragon Knight Grand Prix (NC)
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 25, 2025

Dragon Knight National Seed Swap Day Grand Prix (NC)
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 2, 2025

Land of the Sky XXXVII (NC)
See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 1, 2025

Dragon Knight Barber Day Grand Prix (NC)
See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 1, 2025, NORTH CAROLINA

Land of the Sky XXXVII Blitz
Event site: Crowne Plaza Resort Asheville Address: One Resort Dr, Asheville, NC 28806 Overall prize fund: see print TLA GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Wilder Wadford Email: info@landofthesky.us Phone: n/a Website: <https://landofthesky.us> TLA ID: 45237

FEBRUARY 8, 2025

Dragon Knight Global Movie Day Grand Prix (NC)
See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 15, 2025

Dragon Knight World Pangolin Day Grand Prix (NC)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 5-4, 2025

30th Space Coast Open Chess Festival (FL)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OHIO

JANUARY 24-26, 2025

The 2025 Cardinal Open (OH)
See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025

2025 US Amateur Team North (IL)
See Nationals.

MARCH 21-23, 2025

29th annual Mid-America Open (MO)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OKLAHOMA

FEBRUARY 13-17, 2025

16th annual Southwest Class Championships (TX)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

PENNSYLVANIA

North Penn Chess Club

Main & Richardson - St. John's UCC, 500 West Main St., Lansdale, PA 19446. See www.northpennchessclub.org for schedules & info or 215-699-8418

JANUARY 3-5, 2025

57th Virginia Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 4-5, 2025

Dewey Beach Open 2025 (DE)
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 17-20, 2025

57th annual Liberty Bell Open (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JANUARY 19, 2025

12th annual Liberty Bell Open Blitz Championship (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JANUARY 24-26, 2025

The 2025 Cardinal Open (OH)
See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025

9th annual George Washington Open (VA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEBRUARY 23, 2025

2025 New Jersey Elementary and Junior High School Championships (NJ)
See New Jersey.

MARCH 15-16, 2025

New York State Senior Championship (With Young Adult/Middle Age Section), out of state welcome! (NY)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 16-20, 2025

The Princeton Open (NJ)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 5-4, 2025

30th Space Coast Open Chess Festival (FL)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 26-30, 2025

18th annual Philadelphia International (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections

JUNE 27-29, 2025, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown Address: 201 N 17th Street, Philadelphia PA 19103 Overall prize fund: \$17,000 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Email: director@chess.us Phone: n/a Website: chess.us TLA ID: 46653

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

SOUTH CAROLINA

MAY 5-4, 2025

30th Space Coast Open Chess Festival (FL)
See Grand Prix.

TENNESSEE

MARCH 21-23, 2025

29th annual Mid-America Open (MO)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Pennsylvania.



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SEE TLA on page 57

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

TEXAS

JANUARY 3-5, 2025

2025 Austin Winter Open (TX)
See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 13-17, 2025

16th annual Southwest Class Championships (TX)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 21-23, 2025

29th annual Mid-America Open (MO)
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JUNE 27-29, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

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VIRGINIA

JANUARY 3-5, 2025

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JULY 2-6, 2025

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See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 17-20, 2025

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WISCONSIN

HERITAGE EVENT • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

FEBRUARY 1-2, 2025

Michael A. Selig Memorial/58th NorthEastern Open

Event site: DoubleTree by Hilton **Address:** 123 E. Wisconsin Ave., Neenah, WI 54956 **Overall prize fund:** \$1,400 **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Mike Nietman **Email:** mike.nietman@charter.net **Phone:** 608-467-8510 **Website:** <https://www.wisconsinchess.org/> **TLA ID:** 46256

HERITAGE EVENT

FEBRUARY 15, 2025

Waukesha Memorial (42nd Annual)

Event site: Country Inn & Suites **Address:** 1250 South Moorland RD, Brookfield, WI 53005 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Waukesha Chess Club **Email:** jnickell@wi.r.com **Phone:** (262) 544-6266 **Website:** <https://www.WaukeshaChessClub.com> **TLA ID:** 46873

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025

2025 US Amateur Team North (IL)
See Nationals.

MAY 22-26, 2025

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See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

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See Pennsylvania.

JULY 2-6, 2025

53rd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (Open through Under 1400 Sections) (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

19. ... Qf6 20. Bg5!!

The bishop is untouchable due to the checkmate on h7.

20. ... hxc5 21. hxc5, Black resigned.

Black has to give up the queen.

This is the most difficult example we have seen thus far. When we see it as a puzzle in a tactics book, we know there is a solution, so we can keep looking until we find one. During a game, we are not equipped with such information, and looking for something forever will inevitably lead to time trouble. Since White has so many pieces aiming at the king and Black's last move of 18. ... Qf6-f5 was a bit awkward, it should lead White to believe that there has to be something in the position.

Now, this kind of thinking is a double-edged sword, as sometimes even sloppy-looking moves can hold a position together, and believing too much in our position can lead to frustration. In this particular example, we are combining the themes of trapping the queen and checkmate. Just like in the example above, we can scan every move with the queen, including 19. Qh1.

As you can see, backward moves are very tricky to spot and even some very strong players miss them in their calculations. Don't beat yourself up if you don't spot them in your games, but do keep an open mind about moving backwards when considering moves. ♠

(continued from page 13)



WHITE TO MOVE

19. Qh1!!

It turns out the black queen is trapped.

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4-Player Quads

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Solutions

PAGE 11 CHESS TO ENJOY

PROBLEM 1. 32.Bh6+!, Black resigned (32. ... Kxh6 33. Qh3+ and mates). **PROBLEM 2.** Fastest is 35. Qa5!, threatening Qa5-c7+ or Qa5xa7+. **PROBLEM 3.** 29. Rxh7+! Kxh7 30. Qh3+ Kg6 31. Qh6+ Kf5 32. Qh7+ Rg6 33. Qh3 mate. **PROBLEM 4.** 34. ... Bxe1+! 35. Kxe1 Bd3! and 36. ... b2 promotes. **PROBLEM 5.** Fastest is 25. ... Bg5. The game finished 26. Qxc6 Qxc6 27. dxc6 Bf5, White resigned. If 26. Qh5 cxd5 27. Rxd5 Qc6. **PROBLEM 6.** 30. Rxe8+ Qxe8 31. Nf5! Black resigned. Or 30. ... Rxe8 31. Qe7!.

PAGE 15 ABCS OF CHESS

PROBLEM 1. Mating net: Black is mated in 2: 1. Qc8+ Rd8 2. d7 mate. **PROBLEM 2.** Mating net: It ends in 2: 1. Qe8+ Rxe8 2. Nf7 mate. **PROBLEM 3.** Mating net: White wins in 2: 1. Qxc8+ Bxc8 2. Rd8 mate. **PROBLEM 4.** Mating net: White mates in 2: 1. Rxe8 Kxe8 2. Qg8 mate. **PROBLEM 5.** Mating net: White triumphs in 2: 1. Rb8+ Bxb8 2. Rxb8 mate. **PROBLEM 6.** Mating net: White mates in 2: 1. Qe8+ Kg7 2. Nf5 mate.

PAGE 31 MAKE YOUR MOVE

TACTIC 1. 22. Qe1! Black's pieces look active, while her queenside pawn structure is compromised. White offers the exchange of queens to kill Black's activity and better be able to attack Black's weak pawns. 22. ... Qd8 Or 22. ... Qxe1+ 23. Rxe1 Rd2 24. Ra1 and Black will lose the c5-pawn. 23. Bxc5 g5 Black desperately tries to break through on the kingside. If Black instead plays 23. ... Bh4, White continues 24. Nb2 Rd2 25. Rd1 and White is winning. 24. Qe2 gxf4 25. Bxe7 f3 26. Qxf3! Rxf3 27. Bxd8 Rd3 28. Bf6 Bc8 29. Nc5, Black resigned. (M. Lee – A. Lee, US Women's Ch, St. Louis 2024) **TACTIC 2.** 19. Ng5! White accurately targets Black's kingside and the f7-pawn in particular. 19. ... Ng6 Nothing else seems to work, e.g., 19. ... Qf8 20. Nd6, or 19. ... Rc6 20. Qh5 and Black cannot defend both h7 and f7. 20. Nxf7 Qf6 21. Qxe6! The game instead continued 21. Ncd6? Ndf4 22. gxf4 Bxg2 23. Qg4? (23. f5!) 23. ... Nxf4 24. Nxc8 h5 25. Qg3 h4 26. Qe3? (26. Qg4!) 26. ... Rxc8 27. Ne5 Bxh3?! (27. ... Qf5!) 28. Kh2 Ng2 29. Ng4 Bxg4 30. Kxg2 Rf8 31. Rg1 bxc3 32. bxc3 Qxc3 33. Rac1 Qb2 34. Rxc5 Bf3+?? (Black would have been okay after 34. ... h3+ 35. Kh1 Rxf2 36. Rxd4 Rf1+ 37. Qg1 Rxd1+ 38. Rxd1) 35. Kh3 Bd5 36. Rxd5?? (36. f4 would have won the game for White) 36. ... exd5 37. Qe6+ Rf7 38. Qe8+ Rf8 39. Qe6+ Rf7 40. Qe8+ Rf8 41. Qe6+, draw. (Zatonskih – A. Lee, US Women's Ch, St. Louis 2024) Also, 21. Nfd6 would have been better than the game continuation. 21. ... Qxe6 22. Rxe6 Kxf7 23. Rae1 and Black cannot defend, e.g., 23. ... Rc7 24. Nd6+ Kg8 25. Nxb7 and White is two pawns up. **TACTIC 3.** 26. ... Nxc4 In the game (Paikidze – Zatonskih, US Women's Ch, St. Louis 2024), Black instead sacrificed the bishop: 26. ... Bxc4 27. Nxc4 Nxc4 28. Bb4 Na5 29. Bxa5 bxa5 30. Bxf5 Rab8 31. Rxd5 Rxb3+ 32. Ka2 a4 33. Rc5 Rxc5 34. dxc5 Rc3 35. Rg5 Kf7 36. Kb2 Rc4 37. Rg4 h5 38. Rg5 g6 39. h4 Kf6 40. Rd5 Kf7 41. Rg5 Kf6 42. Rd5 Kf7 43. Rg5

Kf6, draw. 27. bxc4 dxc4 28. Kc2 c3 White cannot stop the pawns. 29. Nb1 Bd3+ 30. Kc1 c2 Or 30. ... Bxb1 31. Kxb1 Rxa3 and Black wins. 31. Nd2 Rxa3 and Black is winning. **TACTIC 4.** 31. ... Qe7! Black's queen penetrates decisively. 32. Rg3 Or 32. Kg2 Rf8 and Black wins. 32. ... Qe1+ 33. Kg2 Qe2+ 34. Kxh3 Bc8 Winning White's queen. 35. Qxc8+ Rxc8 36. g6 Rf8 37. Ne5 Qh5+ 38. Kg2 Qe2+ 39. Kh3 Qf1+ 40. Rg2 Rf5 41. Nf7+ Kg8 42. gxh7+ Kxh7, White resigned. (Sevian – Dominguez, US Ch, St. Louis 2024) **TACTIC 5.** 25. Nxd6! This nice combination makes Black's position fall apart with a thump. White could also have won with 25. Qg5+ Kh8 26. Rg3 Qxe1+ 27. Kh2, but the game continuation was best. 25. ... f6 If 25. ... exd6, then White mates elegantly after 26. Qg5+ Kh8 27. Qg7+ Bxg7 28. Rxe8+ Bf8 29. Rxf8 mate. 26. Nxc4 Qxc4 27. f4 Kh8 28. fxe5 Rg8 29. Rd2, Black resigned. (Aronian – Shankland, US Ch, St. Louis 2024) **TACTIC 6.** 29. ... e4! The dominating Carissa Yip missed out on an interesting and very strong opportunity in this position. Instead, the game continued 29. ... Ne7 30. Be3 Qg6 31. Nf2 e4? (this idea doesn't work as well as on move 29) 32. fxe4 (White should have played 32. Nxe4 g4 33. Ng5 and White is winning) 32. ... Rxf2 33. Kxf2 Qxe4 34. Bxg5 Qg2+ 35. Ke1 Qxh2 36. Bxe7 Qxg3+ 37. Kd2 Qf4+ 38. Kc2 Qe4+ 39. Kb3 Qxe7 40. Ka3 Qh4 41. Bd3 Qg3 42. Bf1 Qh4 43. Bd3 Ne5 44. Rxb6 Nxd3 45. Qb5 Nb4 46. Rxa6 (Krush could have saved the game with 46. Rf1 Qe7 47. Rb8 h2 48. Kb3 Kd8 49. cxb4 Qe3+ 50. Kc2 Qe2+ 51. Kb3 Qxf1 52. Rxc8+ Kxc8 53. Qe8+ with a draw by perpetual check) 46. ... Bxa6 47. Qxa5+ Kd7 48. cxb4 Qg3+ 49. Kb2 Qe5+ 50. Kc2 Qe2+ 51. Kc3 Qxc4+ 52. Kb2 Qd4+ 53. Ke1 Qc3+ 54. Kd1 h2, White resigned. (Krush – Yip, US Women's Ch, St. Louis 2024) 30. fxe4 Or 30. Qc2 exf3 31. Bd3 Qf7 and Black is much better. 30. ... Nxb3 31. Bxg3 Qxe4 32. Bf1 Qxg4 and Black should win. **TACTIC 7.** 34. Ne6! This move interferes with Black's defensive set-up. In the game, Fabiano missed this chance, and eventually had to settle for a draw: 34. Rh2 Rb7 35. Be2 Qf6 36. Rg1 Rg7 37. Qg5 Rf8 38. Qe5 Qxe5 39. fxe5 Nf5 40. Rg5 Ne7 41. Rxh7+ Rxh7+ 42. gxh7 Kxh7 43. e6 Rf6 44. Bh5 Rh6 45. Kg1 Bxe6 46. Re5 Ng6 47. Rxe6 Rxh5 48. Rxa6 Rh3 49. Nxb5 Nf4 and 30 moves later, a draw was agreed upon in Caruana – Aronian, US Ch, St. Louis 2024. 34. ... Bxe6 Or 34. ... Rb7 35. Qe5+ Kg8 36. gxh7+ Kf7 37. Rg1 and White wins. 35. Qe5+ Kg8 36. gxh7+ Kf7 37. Qh5+ Kf6 38. h8=Q+ Rxh8 39. Qxh8+ and it is curtains for Black. **TACTIC 8.** 35. ... Bxe6!! Rather surprisingly, Black is able to save herself after this move. Admittedly, the point is not easy to spot. In the game, Black missed the hidden save and instead promptly collapsed: 35. ... Qxf3?? 36. Qxd7 Bh6 37. Be2 Qxe2 38. Qe8+ Kh7 39. Qxf7+ Kh8 40. Qxg6 Be3+ 41. Bxe3, Black resigned. (A. Lee – Krush, US Women's Ch, St. Louis 2024) 36. dxe6 Qxe6 37. Qa1 It looks like Black is losing the wayward knight, but Black has a surprise ready... 37. ... d5!! Boom! 38. Ba7 Not 38. cxd5?? Qxb6+, or 38. Bc5 dxe4 39. Qxd1 exd3 40. Qxd3 with equal chances. 38. ... hxb3 39. cxd5 Qh3 40. Qxd1 g2 41. Ng3! The only move. 41. ... Qxg3 42. Qe2 Bf4 43. Qxg2 Qe1+ 44. Bf1 Ng5 and somehow Black is fine.

TACTIC 9. 19. ... Nc2!! This brilliant stroke doesn't win for Black in analysis, but White would have to defend with computer-like precision to keep Black's advantage within reasonable levels. The game instead continued: 19. ... Qe7 20. Qb2 (20. Nh2!?) 20. ... Rae8 21. Bc3?! Nxc3 22. Qxc3 Be4 23. Nd2 Bc6 24. e4 Rd8 25. Re1 Rd4 26. Bf1 Rfd8 (26. ... Re8!) 27. Nc4? (27. Nf3 Rxe4 28. Ne5 was better) 27. ... g6 28. Ne3 Qxe4 29. Bg2 Qf4 30. Bxc6 Rd2 31. Rf1 Nxc6 32. Ng2 Qd6 33. Qg3 Qxg3 34. fxb3 R8d3 35. Rf2 Nd4 36. Rxd2 Rxd2 37. Nf4 Nxb3 38. Re1 Kf8 39. Re5 c4 40. Nd5 Nd4 41. Re3 Ne2+ 42. Kf1 Nxb3+ 43. Rxb3 Rxd5, White resigned. (Mishra – Liang, US Ch, St. Louis 2024). 20. Ne5! This is White's best chance to stay in the game. If 20. Rac1, then 20. ... Nxe1 21. Rxe1 Rad8 22. Kg2 h6 23. Qf1 Rfe8 and White is almost without reasonable moves. 20. ... Qxe5 21. Qxc2 Ng5 22. Qe2 Be4 This is stronger than 22. ... Nxb3+ 23. Kg2 b5 24. axb5 axb5 25. Rxa8 Rxa8 26. Kxh3 bxc4 27. Qxc4 Be4 which looks good for Black but is, according to the engines, close to equal. 23. f4 Nf3+ 24. Kf1 Qf6 25. Qf2 Rad8 and Black is clearly better.

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U2300 through U1300 Sections: 7 rds, choice of 5/23-26 or 5/24-26. 40/80, SD/30; d30 (3-day option, rds 1-2 G/60 d10). 4-day & 3-day merge and compete for same prizes.

Under 1000 Section: 7 rds, 5/25-26, G/60, d10.

Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel, 601 N Milwaukee Ave, Wheeling IL 60090. Free parking. In 8 sections:

Open: \$10000-5000-2500-1300-1000-800-600-500-400-400, clear/tiebreak bonus \$300, top FIDE U2400/Unr \$2000-1000. FIDE rated, GM/IM norms possible, 200 GPP.

Under 2300: \$5000-2500-1200-800-600-500-400-300-300-300.

Under 2100: \$5000-2500-1200-800-600-500-400-300-300-300. Unrated limit \$1200.

Under 1900: \$5000-2500-1200-800-600-500-400-300-300-300. Unrated limit \$800.

Under 1700: \$5000-2500-1200-800-600-500-400-300-300-300. Unrated limit \$600.

Under 1500: \$4000-2000-1000-700-500-400-300-300-300-300. Unrated limit \$400.

Under 1300: \$3000-1500-1000-700-500-400-300-300-300-300. Unrated limit \$300.

Under 1000: \$1500-800-600-400-300-200-200-100-100-100. Unrated limit \$200.

Mixed Doubles: Best male+female combined 2-player team score in rds. 1-7: \$2000-1000-500-400-300. Teams with an unrated, \$500 limit. Must average under 2200, same section not required. Register before both begin rd 2. See chessevents.us.

Ratings: U2300/below, May official USCF ratings used, unofficial or Online Regular USCF ratings usually used if otherwise unrated. Cannot play below Online Regular Rating -100 points. Foreign, FIDE ratings see foreignratings.com. May FIDE used for Open.

Prize limits: If any post-event Regular OTB or Regular Online rating posted 5/21/24-5/21/25 or current Regular Online rating was over 40 points above section max, limit \$800. If under 26 lifetime games, limits: U1000 \$500, U1300 \$1000, U1500 \$1500, U1700 \$2000, or U1900 \$2500.

Top 7 sections entry fee: \$207 online at chessaction.com by 3/21, \$227 by 5/21, \$250 online or at site until 1 hr before round 1. Open EF \$500 extra to US players U2300/Unr USCF & U2100/Unr FIDE. Seniors 65/over \$100 less in U1300 & above.

Titled players in Open: GMs & foreign IMs/WGMs free, \$200 deducted from prize. US IM/WGM foreign FM \$100 less, also \$100 deducted from prize. Deductions cannot lower prize to below minimum. Minimum prizes, if entering online by 5/2 and playing all 9 games without byes: foreign GM \$800, foreign IM/WGM \$400, foreign FM \$200.

U1000 Section entry fees: \$97 online at chessaction.com by 5/21, \$120 online or at site until 9 am 5/25.

Online EF \$5 less to ICA members; join at il-chess.org. No checks, credit cards OK.

USCF membership required. Special dues: chessevents.us or chessaction.com.

5-day schedule (Open only): Late entry to Thu 6 pm, rds Thu 7 pm, Fri 1 pm & 7 pm; Sat 11 & 5; Sun 10 & 4; Mon 10 & 4.

4-day schedule (U2300 to U1300): Late entry to Fri 6 pm, rds. Fri 7 pm; Sat 11 am & 5 pm; Sun 10 am & 4 pm; Mon 10 & 4.

3-day schedule (U2300 to U1300): Late entry to Sat 10 am, rds. Sat 11 am, 2 pm & 5 pm; Sun 10 am & 4 pm; Mon 10 & 4.

2-day schedule (U1000 only): Reg. ends Sun 9 am; rds. Sun 10, 1, 4, 7; Mon 10, 1, 4.

Half point byes OK all rounds, limit 3 (2 in last 4 rds). must commit before round 3.

Hotel rates: \$138 for 1-4/room (use link at chessevents.us or 800-937-8461, 847-777-6500). Reserve by 5/8 or rate may increase; could sell out earlier.

All: See chessevents.us for rules and further details. **Bring set, board, clock** if possible- not supplied. \$15 charge for refunds. Entries posted at chessaction.com. **Questions:** chesstour.com, chesstour.info, or email: director@chess.us.

\$2500 guaranteed Blitz Sun. 10 pm.