

U.S. MASTERS ■ WILLIAM A. SCOTT III ■ WORLD SENIOR

CHESSLIFE

MARCH 2025 ■ USChess.org

THREE IN A ROW

Caruana wins U.S.
Championship

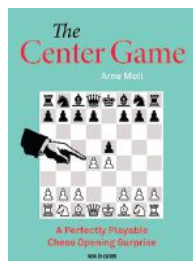
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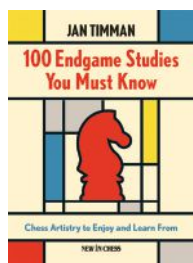
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The Center Game

Arne Moll

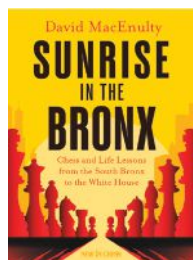
A great opening for club players. White starts with a center push, develops quickly, looks for opposite castling, and launches an attack. The setup will feel familiar in no time. The engines show that it is both sound and correct, and at least as good as the Ruy Lopez and the Italian. You'll get a position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



Chess artistry to enjoy and learn from

Jan Timman

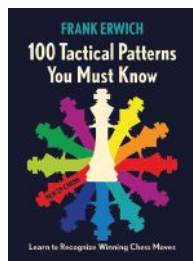
Perhaps the greatest beauty in chess can be found in endgame studies. Delightful twists and turns on the board are combined into true works of art. Chess is distilled to its purest form, with all pieces making only the essential moves. Jan Timman guides you through masterpieces of increasing difficulty.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

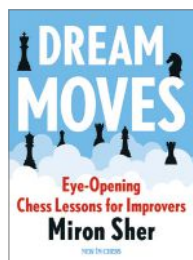
David MacEnulty dared to dream big. In the 1990s he became a pioneer of chess in the public schools of the Bronx. The obstacles were formidable – poverty, crime, racism, and ignorance. Yet, MacEnulty and his students defied all expectations. In *Sunrise in the Bronx*, MacEnulty describes his transformative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

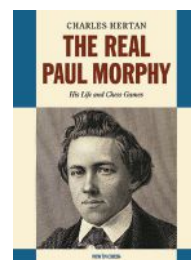
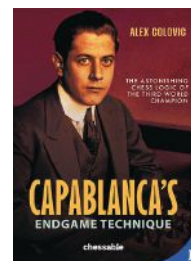
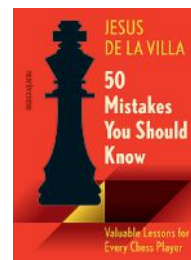
Alex Colovic

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.



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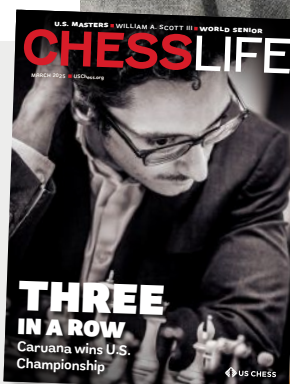
42 EVENTS WORLD SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP
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Shabalov strikes again in Senior
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ON THE COVER

GM Fabiano Caruana has been so good for so long that it's easy to forget just how rare a player like him really is. Only four players — Sammy Reshevsky, Bobby Fischer, and Walter Browne are the others — have won three (or more) consecutive U.S. Championships in the modern era. That's some heady company.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LENNART OOTES



CHESSBASE 18

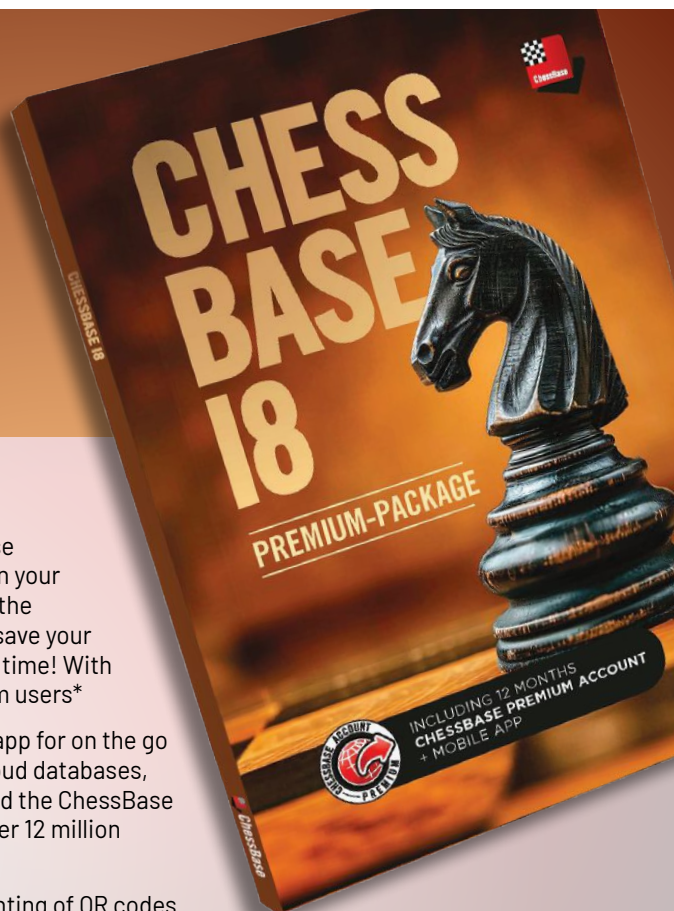
ChessBase is a personal, stand-alone chess database that has become the standard through-out the world. Everyone uses ChessBase, from the World Champion to the amateur next door. It is the program of choice for anyone who loves the game and wants to know more about it. Start your personal success story with ChessBase and enjoy the game even more.

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* Only in conjunction with a ChessBase Premium account, which is included with the purchase of CB18 (1 year). This also applies to CB18 access to the ChessBase Online Database.

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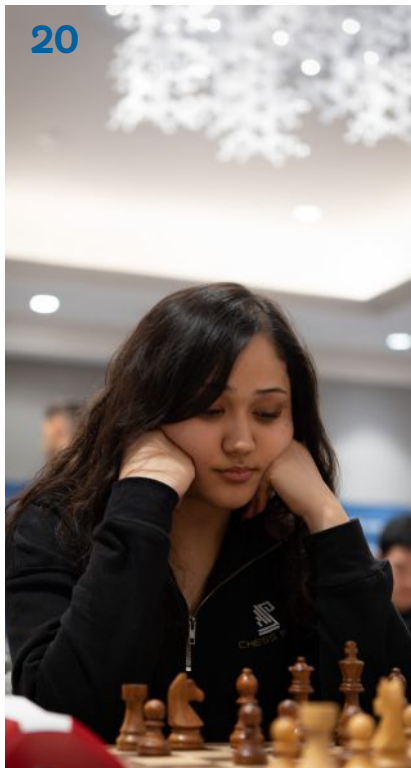
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John Watson is away from his desk this month. "Books and Beyond" will return in April.



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CONTRIBUTORS



AWONDER LIANG

(Cover Story) was born in Madison, Wisconsin, in 2003, and has lived there his whole life. Currently attending the University of Chicago, he is a two-time world youth chess

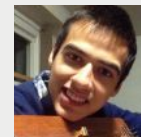
champion, as well as creator and keeper of many youth records. He qualified for the 2024 U.S. Championship as the top American at the 2024 U.S. Open.



MARK N. TAYLOR

(Remembering William A. Scott III) is an associate professor at Berry College and former senior editor

of *Georgia Chess* magazine and of *The Chess Journalist*. He has won numerous awards as editor and writer from the Chess Journalists of America. He is also compiling a comprehensive annotated bibliography of chess motifs in English narrative works.



IM MARK HEIMANN

(U.S. Masters) is a staff scientist in the Center for Applied Scientific Computing at Lawrence Livermore

National Laboratory. He earned a Ph.D. in computer science from the University of Michigan in 2020. Now an grandmaster-elect, Mark is a competitive powerlifter and a musician who plays multiple instruments, including the hammered dulcimer.



FM DOUG ECKERT

(World Senior) was the 1983 and 1984 U.S. Junior Open champion and achieved his FIDE Master

title in 1986. Doug also is an international master in correspondence chess and a five-time Missouri State Open champion. Now retired after a long career as a certified public accountant, Eckert has returned to active tournament play as he hunts for his over-the-board IM title.

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MAIN EVENT

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Sections: U8, U10, U12, U14,
U16, & U18

Friday: Round 1

Saturday: Rounds 2, 3, & 4

Sunday: Rounds 5 & 6



ENTRY FEE

\$100 by 2/17, \$125 by 3/10,
\$175 by 3/24, \$225 by 4/3



SIDE EVENTS ON 4/4

Blitz: 5 double Rounds, G/3 +2

Bughouse: # Rds TBD, G/5,d0



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reserve early hotel may sell out

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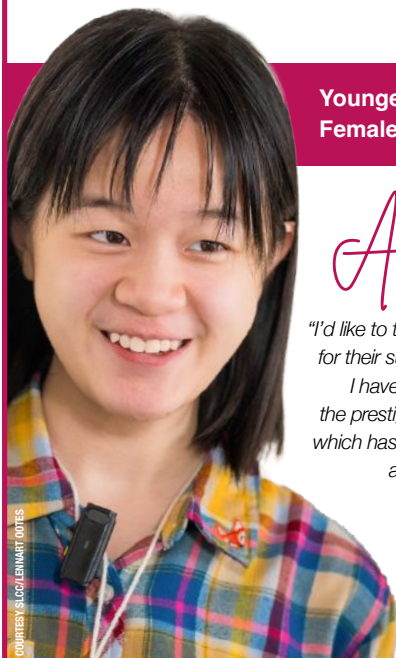
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U.S. CHESS TRUST



**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."



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

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PREVIEW

LOOKING AHEAD TO APRIL

THE WORLD RAPID AND BLITZ CHAMPIONSHIPS were a lavish (and controversial!) capstone to 2024. FM Alisa Melekhina takes you into the tournament hall in the April issue. Among our guest annotators is World Women's Rapid champion GM Humpy Koneru!



ALSO IN APRIL: WFM Natalya Tsodikova won the 2024 U.S. Senior Women's Championship with a round to spare! Julie O'Neill reports from Salt Lake City. We also bring you coverage of the Saint Louis Masters and a preview of SuperNationals VIII!



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

Member Appreciation

Meet the Washington Chess Federation, one of our 2023 MAP Winners.

BY **NM JOSH SINANAN**



THE NONPROFIT WASHINGTON Chess Federation (WCF), founded in 1946, is the governing body for US Chess-rated events in Washington State, and supports and promotes chess-related activities throughout Washington.

The WCF has recently transitioned back to hosting exclusively OTB events after several years of running both online and in-person events during the pandemic. Our dedicated team of tournament directors, staff, and volunteers have empowered us to run quality in-person chess tournaments year-round for scholastic and adult players. Over the

past year, WCF has run about 70 events, including open and scholastic tournaments, simul, workshops, and seminars, and has partnered with several other chess organizations to bring the benefits of chess to a wider audience on both a local and national level. In late October, WCF co-hosted the 2024 Susan Polgar Foundation National Open for Girls and Boys, played in Bellevue for the fourth consecutive year. The event attracted a record 488 players from Washington, Oregon, British Columbia, and California. Chess continues to boom throughout the greater Seattle area, with record-breaking attendance at most tournaments hosted

on an annual basis, and there's no sign of slowing down.

One of the more memorable events that WCF helped to organize last year was a 45-board Tandem Twin Simul exhibition, conducted last May by 2024 Washington State Champion NM Daniel He and his identical twin brother, NM Samuel He. Tandem simul are like regular simul, except two chess masters are making moves, alternating moves on each board. No verbal communication was allowed between them to discuss moves and plans, so attempts at twin telepathy was their only way to communicate!

In addition to running more FIDE-rated events, WCF has branched out into several exciting and entertaining chess variants, which are typically run as side events attached to a main tournament. At this year's Washington Class Championships, hosted over Thanksgiving weekend, a total of 10 side events were held over three days, including the Gukesh Thanksgiving Scholastic, Adult Novice Swiss, Chess960/Fischer Rapid, Robson Puzzle Solving, Workshop for Girls & Women, August Piper Memorial Adult Swiss, Casablanca Rapid, Firouzja Bullet, Carlsen Rapid, and "Knight-Time" Blitz. With such an offering of fun side events in addition to the classical games offered in the main tournament, there was something for everyone.

As the Pacific Northwest prepares to host the 2025 National K-12 Grade Championships in Spokane in December, WCF will be working hard to prepare and encourage as many local players as possible to attend.



PHOTO: COURTESY WCF

Our goal in hosting large-scale scholastic tournaments rated by both US Chess and the Northwest Scholastic Rating System (NWSRS) is to help the local base of scholastic chess players, especially beginners, to establish a US Chess rating.

WCF continues to support and promote chess for women and girls. Last April we hosted the inaugural Western States Regional Chess Championship for Women and Girls in Seattle with 40 players, including a special guest appearance by US Women's Chess Championship participant IM Megan Lee. Thanks to WCF board member WFM Chouchanik Airapetian, we were once again selected for a US Chess grant to support

women's and girls' chess, and we plan to run an even bigger and better event in 2025.

Each spring over the past two years, WCF has partnered with the Detective Cookie Chess Club to host the Detective Cookie Chess Classic. This unique tournament is hosted by Det. Denise "Cookie" Bouldin and her chess club, and includes a special appearance by the Seattle police chief, two regional deputies and police officers on horseback, as well as a free hot dog lunch courtesy of the Seattle Police Department. The events have been covered by several local media outlets and news channels.

WCF is committed to hosting quality events that benefit chess players of all ages,

levels, and backgrounds. We see huge potential and opportunity to grow chess on the local and national level and intend to keep working hard to ensure that the chess community continues to thrive and expand for many years to come.

For more information about WCF and its recent activities, please visit www.wachess.com. ♦

Editor's note: The Membership Appreciation Program (MAP) is a year-long membership drive that provides prizes and recognition for affiliates and members who sign up new or renewing US Chess members. Final standings for 2024 are being calculated as we go to press.

(MAP)

MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION PROGRAM

US Chess gratefully acknowledges the support of our our Affiliates and Members and offers congratulations to these 2023 MAP Winners.

PCT GAIN STANDINGS

State	Dec22	Dec23	PCT
AR	64	109	70.31
VT	194	269	38.66
HI	296	388	31.08
UT	688	894	29.94
KS	776	981	26.42
LA	674	823	22.11
OR	798	929	16.42
MI	1,971	2,280	15.68
MA	303	336	10.89
MN	1,131	1,243	9.90

Name	State	Count	Name	State	Count	Name	State	Count
Overall Affiliate Standings			State Chapter Affiliate Standings			Scholastic and Youth Membership Standings		
CONTINENTAL CHESS ASSOCIATION	NY	1,882	WASHINGTON CHESS FEDERATION	WA	242	CONTINENTAL CHESS ASSOCIATION	NY	955
PAPERCLIP PAIRINGS	TX	555	MINNESOTA STATE CHESS ASSOC.	MN	191	PAPERCLIP PAIRINGS	TX	554
BERKELEY CHESS SCHOOL	CA	372	MICHIGAN CHESS ASSOCIATION	MI	93	BERKELEY CHESS SCHOOL	CA	341
SAN DIEGO CHESS CLUB	CA	368	UTAH CHESS ASSOCIATION	UT	84	BAY AREA CHESS	CA	280
BAY AREA CHESS	CA	350	MASSACHUSETTS CHESS ASSOC.	MA	77	TEXAS CHESS CENTER	TX	265
TEXAS CHESS CENTER	TX	314	NEW JERSEY STATE CHESS FED.	NJ	68	BOCA RATON CHESS CLUB	FL	225
BOCA RATON CHESS CLUB	FL	282	MARYLAND CHESS ASSOCIATION	MD	66	CHESS CORE	TX	189
SAINT LOUIS CHESS CLUB	MO	251	FLORIDA CHESS ASSOCIATION	FL	57	TRI-STATE CHESS	NY	173
WASHINGTON CHESS FEDERATION	WA	242	VIRGINIA CHESS ASSOCIATION	VA	45	COPPELL CHESS CLUB	TX	167
CHESS CORE	TX	216	TENNESSEE CHESS ASSOCIATION	TN	31	WASHINGTON CHESS FEDERATION	WA	164
Small State Affiliate Standings			Adult Membership Standings			Member Standings		
OCEAN STATE CHESS ASSOCIATION	RI	97	CONTINENTAL CHESS ASSOCIATION	NY	927	AARON ARMANDO CARRILLO	TX	1
HARRISON COUNTY CHESS CLUB	WV	36	SAN DIEGO CHESS CLUB	CA	225	KELMAN PARKER GREENE	OK	1
WVSCA	WV	32	SAINT LOUIS CHESS CLUB	MO	212	MARCO A. RODRIGUEZ	OK	1
NEW HAMPSHIRE CHESS ASSOC.	NH	27	ROCHESTER CHESS CENTER	NY	131			
MAINE CHESS ASSOCIATION	ME	26	MARSHALL CHESS CLUB	NY	82			
KNIGHTS CHESS CLUB	NH	25	WASHINGTON CHESS FEDERATION	WA	78			
SOUTH DAKOTA CHESS ASSOC.	SD	24	CHESS PALACE	CA	74			
HAWAII CHESS FEDERATION	HI	22	BAY AREA CHESS	CA	70			
IDAHO CHESS ASSOCIATION	ID	20	DOWNRIVER CHESS CLUB	LA	70			
CHESS ROCKERZ (TIE)	NE	19	1000 GM	CA	69			
FARGO CHESS CLUB (TIE)	ND	19						

Nominating Committee Recommends Four Candidates in the 2025 Executive Board Election

THE US CHESS NOMINATING Committee (Committee) has completed its work for the 2025 US Chess Executive Board election. The Committee has qualified and recommends these four candidates to fill the four vacancies available in the upcoming 2025 Executive Board election (listed in alphabetical order):

Anand Dommalapati (Virginia)

Kevin Pryor (Florida)

John D. Rockefeller V (Maryland)

Daniel Serna (New Mexico)

The Nominating Committee, established by the US Chess Delegates in 2020, comprises six members elected by the Delegates at the Annual Delegates Meeting and two picked by the Executive Board shortly thereafter.

US Chess thanks the Nominating Committee for its dedication and exemplary work. Current members of the Committee include:

- David Grimaud, Chair (Delegate-appointed)
- Sophia Rohde, Vice Chair (Delegate-appointed)
- Kalanithi Bagley (Delegate-appointed)

- Richard Koepcke (Delegate-appointed)
- Michelle Martinez (Delegate-appointed)
- Daa'im Shabazz (Delegate-appointed)
- Hal Sprechman (Executive Board-appointed)
- Joy Bray (Executive Board-appointed)

On behalf of the Committee, Chair David Grimaud says, "We applaud the high quality of the candidates recommended above. They will bring a wealth of relevant experience to the Executive Board, and we are grateful to them for applying to and interviewing with the Nominating Committee."

Zhou Wins 2024 US Chess Grand Prix

CONGRATULATIONS TO GM JIANCHAO Zhou, who won his second consecutive US Chess Grand Prix with 699.529 tournament points.

GM Fidel Corrales Jimenez was second with 334.705 points, ahead of GM Awonder Liang in third with 198.633 points. Zhou bested his 2023 finish by over 130 tournament points, while Corrales finished as runner-up once again. Last year's third-place finisher, GM Mikhail Antipov, finished this year in fourth with 192.992 points, just behind Liang.

Zhou earns \$5,000 for his first-place finish, with Corrales taking home \$2,500 for second and Liang \$1,000 for third. The top 10 finishers for the 2024 Grand Prix are listed in the TLA section.

Tommy Kozlek won the 2024 Junior Grand Prix with 11,628 points over nine events. Congratulations, Tommy!

For more information about the US Chess Grand Prix, including prize structure and participation requirements, visit new.uschess.org/us-chess-grand-prix-program.



GM Jianchao Zhou



Hunter Hong (L) and Tommy Kozlek (R) at the 2024 NMS

2025 ANNUAL SAMFORD FELLOWSHIPS ANNOUNCED

THE FRANK P. SAMFORD JR. AND FRANK Samford III Chess Fellowships are pleased to announce the 39th consecutive annual awards. The Fellowships were created by the late Frank P. Samford Jr. of Birmingham, Alabama, to advance the game he loved by identifying and assisting the most promising young chess masters in the United States.

Since its inception in 1987 the Samford, under the leadership of Frank Samford III, has been successful in promoting the chess careers of more than three dozen young Americans, many of whom have gone on to become grandmasters, members of the U.S. Olympiad Chess Team and United States Chess Champions. Four members of the bronze medal-winning 2024 U.S. Women's Olympiad team are current or former Samford Fellows.

The 2025 Fellowships are open to American chessplayers who are under the age of 25 at the start of the Fellowship year, June 1,

and have been permanent residents of the U.S. since at least one year before that date. Leadership of the Fellowship program is provided by Frank P. Samford Jr.'s grandson Paul Samford, of Atlanta, Georgia, with the able help of Al Lawrence of the U.S. Chess Trust.

The 2025 Samford Chess Fellows will receive expense money to be used for training by leading chess coaches, chess books, computer equipment and other study materials, as well as opportunities to travel and compete in tournaments and matches at the highest levels. The total yearly value of the Fellowships (including training, study materials and tournament travel) is \$70,000. The Fellowships are given for a one-year term. Individuals may apply more than one year and are eligible for maximum funding up to \$82,000.

The 2025 Samford Fellows will be selected by the Samford Chess Fellowship Committee ("Committee"), consisting of Paul

Samford, GM Yuri Shulman, and IM John Donaldson. Each applicant, who can be of any gender, must be able to demonstrate talent, achievement, and commitment to chess. They must be willing to make the effort required to become a leading grandmaster and possible challenger for the world championship. For further details and an application form, write to:

John Donaldson, Secretary
Samford Chess Fellowship
1623½ Martin Luther King Junior Way
Berkeley, CA 94709
Or: imwjd@aol.com

Completed applications for the 2025 Fellowship must be received no later than May 15. The Committee expects to announce the winner by June 1. All decisions by the Committee will be final.

deMoss hired as Deputy Executive Director

US CHESS WELCOMES JACQUES DEMOSS as its new Deputy Executive Director.

A native of Lafayette, Louisiana, deMoss moved to Missouri almost 10 years ago and has made it his home along with his wife of 26 years, Melanie, and their son, Mason. Before joining US Chess, Jacques served as a litigation attorney, corporate general counsel, and nonprofit leader.

He's stationed in the St. Louis office and is responsible for the business side of US Chess, including budgeting and oversight of Communications/Publications, HR, Accounting, and member complaint functions.

Jacques holds a B.A. in economics/business management from the University of Louisiana-Lafayette and a J.D. from the Oklahoma City University School of Law. He has a passion for collaboration

and a history of successfully engaging multiple stakeholders and incorporating their input to achieve mission goals and financial objectives.

Beyond his professional endeavors, Jacques enjoys breeding and training Drahthaar hunting dogs, cooking, gardening, and keeping bees, and he's a certificated private pilot. He is admittedly a pretty poor chess player but is planning on working to improve his game. ♠

To learn more about US Chess staff and their roles, along with information on whom to contact for specific questions and concerns, please visit new.uschess.org/about/staff-2.



No Risk?

The art of calibrating danger

BY GM ANDY SOLTIS

N

EEDING A WIN IN THE FINAL round of the 2023 Sinquefeld Cup, Fabiano Caruana realized he had an ideal situation.

It wasn't just his endgame advantage but something masters cherish.

"There's absolutely no risk for White," he said. "Worst case [Black] equalizes somehow. Best case he's in serious danger."

FOR FIRST PLACE

GM Fabiano Caruana (2867)

GM Richard Rapport (2827)

Sinquefeld Cup (9), St. Louis,
11.30.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

The best case for Black might have been something like 25. ... Rc6 26 h3 Ngf6 27 Ne5 Rc7.

But the worst case soon became reality. Black collapsed after 25. ... Bh6? 26. Rc4 Bf8? 27. c6 f5 28. Neg5 Re8 29. Rb7 Ne7? 30. h3 Nf6 31. Nd4 and lost, giving Caruana first place in America's most prestigious international tournament for a record third time.

Grandmasters have been known to gamble — on things other than chess. At the board, among the ways they are better than other players is how they calibrate chess risk.

But like everyone else, they were astonished at how the 2023 world championship match ended: Ding Liren refused to repeat the position and take a draw as Black. Instead, he moved his rook into what looked like a fatal pin. But he went on to win.

"Self-pinning for immortality!" Magnus Carlsen tweeted about the move that made Carlsen a Great Predecessor.

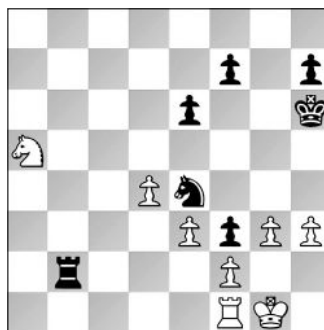
As much as masters praise such boldness, they prefer positions they call "no-risk." The problem? There is no such thing. That was the lesson of how the 2006 World Championship match began.

A DREAM SITUATION?

GM Vladimir Kramnik (2743)

GM Veselin Topalov (2813)

World Championship (1), Elista,
9.23.2006



BLACK TO MOVE

Black repeated the position with threats to win material: 37. ... Nd2 38. Rc1 Ne4 39. Rf1.

He could have continued to force matters with 39. ... Nd2. After White moved his attacked rook, he could reply 40. ... Ne4. This would prompt 41. Rf1, repeating the position in the diagram. Then 41. ... Nd2 could be followed by a claim of a draw by repetition.

Yet Black played for a win with 39. ...

f6. In the post-game press conference he explained, "I could play without risk. My position was objectively better."

"It is a dream situation for any chessplayer!" Topalov said. But it became a nightmare when he overlooked some moves later on and lost.

Chess risk is a human concept. We have a natural fear of grabbing that undefended enemy pawn. It's not that we see a refutation; it's that we sense we will have to find a series of "only" moves to get away with the pawn safely.

"You think 'Such and such a move can't be played. It is too scary for a human,'" Garry Kasparov said after his 2003 match with the engine Deep Junior.

But a computer does not have a sense of danger. "It makes as many 'only' moves as needed — 15, 20 ...," Kasparov said on the long-departed *WorldChessRating.com*.

Historically, one the sharpest differences among elite players is how many chances each one is willing to take. Bobby Fischer shunned the risks Mikhail Tal would take. Akiba Rubinstein refused to consider many of the moves Frank Marshall loved to play.

GM Bent Larsen underlined the difference when he explained his philosophy of risk to GM Tigran Petrosian.

"Take any three games. If I play them the way you do — correctly against strong masters — I will score one and a half points," he said.

"But if I play them as I do, then in one of the three I may be punished. But even then I will score two points out of three."

Here's an example of Larsen's thinking from early in his career.

GO FOR IT

Bent Larsen

Svend Hamann

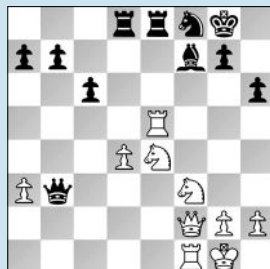
Danish Championship, Aarhus 1959

QUIZ FOR MARCH

INTERNATIONAL TOURN-
aments were first sponsored by wealthy patrons, then by companies ranging from banks, resorts and wineries to computer corporations. This year sees the 100th anniversary of the first one financed and organized by a government.

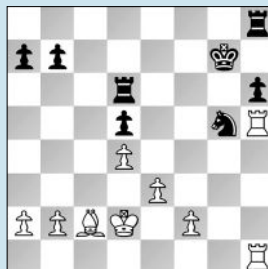
Moscow 1925 was designed by ambitious Soviet bureaucrats to see whether their players could compete with the best foreign players, like world champions Jose Capablanca and Emanuel Lasker. It was won by home-grown Yefim Bogolyubov. This month's quiz features six positions from Moscow 1925. In each diagram you are asked to find the fastest winning line of play. This will usually mean the forced win of a decisive amount of material. Solutions on page 63.

PROBLEM 1
Frank Marshall
Akiba Rubinstein



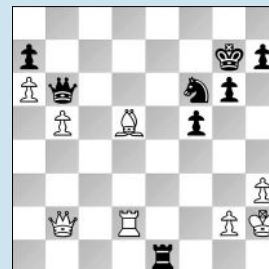
WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 2
Yefim Bogolyubov
Solomon Gotthilf



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 3
Grigory Levenfish
Peter Romanovsky



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 4
Carlos Torre Repetto
Friedrich (Fritz) Sämisch



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 5
Nikolay Zubarev
Frank Marshall



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 6
Akiba Rubinstein
Ilya Rabinovich



BLACK TO MOVE



WHITE TO MOVE

The position is so blocked that computers can't quickly find a "best" move. They consider 24. Qe2, 24. Ne1 and 24. h3.

White can spend a lot of time calculating 24. Nd5 Nxd5 25. cxd5 and potential knight sacrifices such as 25. ... Qb6 26. d4 cxd4 27. exd4 e4 28. Nxc5.

Larsen preferred **24. d4**. It sets traps such as 24. ... e4? 25 dxc5! or 24. ... Be6? 25 dxe5. The game went **24. ... cxd4 25. exd4 e4 26. Nd5 Nxd5 27. cxd5 Qd8! 28. Ne5!** and Larsen won in the complications.

But 24. d4!? is risky because Black might have found 24. ... Nxc4! and gotten a major

edge after 25. Qe2 cxd4 26. exd4 e4!.

Petrosian would never have played 24. d4. He often said he did not like to take chances. Yet throughout his life Petrosian loved a dice game.

It was the Armenian/Russian game of Nardy, which is very similar to backgammon. Petrosian learned how to play it before he knew how chess pieces moved. He was regarded as a highly skilled Nardy player.

Of course, there is a lot of risk in the roll of a pair of dice. But the odds of throwing a seven are knowable. The likelihood that your knight sacrifice will succeed is not.

Petrosian knew that two points out of three is better than one and a half. But he wasn't willing to take risks that are "ambiguous."

An economist named Daniel Ellsberg — better known for his role in the "Pentagon Papers" — coined the term "ambiguous aversion" for people who prefer risks they can quantify to risks that are incalculable. Each person has a different amount of ambiguous aversion.

This is something coaches and trainers have difficulty teaching. When GM Lev

Psakhis was a promising Russian junior, he was allowed to attend the school of the world's most famous teacher, former world champion Mikhail Botvinnik.

He didn't last long. Psakhis played a training game that began **1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nxe5 d6**.



WHITE TO MOVE

In this well-known position he tried the piece sacrifice **4. Nxf7!**. He won, but Botvinnik strongly disapproved: The amount of risk was unknowable.

He expelled Psakhis from the class. Humiliated, Psakhis had to settle for becoming one of the world's top 10 players. ♠

You Pin, I Win

A pinned piece has more potential than you might think.

BY **WGM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN**



LET'S CONTINUE OUR SERIES ON difficult-to-find moves covered by Emmanuel Neiman and Yochanan Afek in *Invisible Chess*

Moves with a look at pins and self-pins.

A pinned piece normally can't move, but that creates a potential blind spot in our calculation. We should make an effort to at least consider moves with a pinned piece. If a piece has been pinned for some time, that doesn't mean that will be the case forever. Sometimes we make this assumption and forget that the situation of a piece can change as the game progresses.

A few opening traps show that a pinned piece can in fact be capable of moving and capturing. The best known one is in the Queen's Gambit Declined, and it's one you should remember.

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bg5 Nbd7

Black does not want to commit the f8-bishop yet.

5. cxd5 exd5 6. Nxd5??

It looks like White can utilize the pin to capture the pawn, but ...



6. ... Nxd5!

Black ignores the pin; the tactics will work out in their favor.

7. Bxd8 Bb4+

White has to give back the queen.

8. Qd2 Bxd2+ 9. Kxd2 Kxd8

Black is left with an extra piece.

I recently learned about a lesser-known trap in the Scandinavian.

1. e4 d5 2. exd5 Qxd5 3. Nc3 Qa5 4. d4 c6 5. Nf3 Bg4 6. h3 Qh5?



7. hxg4

White simply ignores the pin.

7. ... Qxh1 8. Ne2

A backward knight move! (I should admit that 8. Ne4 works too.) The black queen will be trapped next move.

Self-pinning — moving our pieces into a pin on purpose — is generally undesirable; we don't normally want to limit our pieces. Of course, we cannot discuss self-pinning without first mentioning the most famous case in recent chess history: the final game

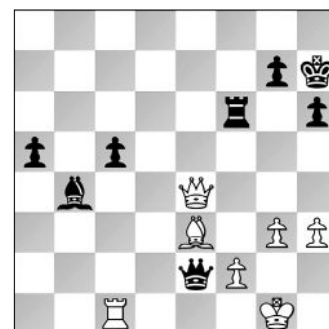
of the 2023 World Championship match between Ian Nepomniachtchi and Ding Liren. There we saw the “self-pin to immortality,” as Magnus Carlsen called it.

FOR THE TITLE

GM Ian Nepomniachtchi (2761)

GM Ding Liren (2829)

World Championship (18), Astana, 04.30.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

46. ... Rg6!?

After repeating the position once, Ding decides to keep the game going with this self-pin. It seemed as though Nepomniachtchi was mentally ready for a draw and was taken aback by the fact that the game will now continue. Objectively, the position is still fine for White, but now he has to mentally stay in the game and also find ways to deal with the passed a- and c-pawns.

47. Qf5

White would have been better off with 47. h4, as the c-pawn cannot move yet: 47. ... a4 48. Qf5 with the threat of h4-h5, going after

the pinned piece. After 48. ... Qg4 49. Qc2 a3 50. Rd1 the a-pawn is more advanced, but the permanent weakness of Black's king means Ding wouldn't be able to make much progress.

47. ... c4 48. h4?

White can escape by luring the pawn forward with 48. Qf4, preventing Black's idea. After 48. ... c3 White goes back with 49. Qf5 and compared to the game, there is no ... Qe2-d3 so Black no longer has an antidote to the pin.

48. ... Qd3!



After pinning himself, Ding manages to successfully unpin himself and also control the diagonal. Compared to the other lines, the black king is much safer because the black queen is now on the b1-h7 diagonal.

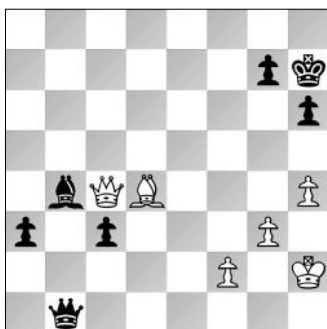
49. Qf3 Rf6 50. Qg4 c3

The pawns are now very dangerous as White doesn't have play against the black king. There are some adventures ahead as both players were under a minute, but Black was eventually triumphant.

51. Rd1 Qg6 52. Qc8 Rc6 53. Qa8 Rd6

The simplest way was 53. ... c2. After 54. Rd8 c1=Q+ 55. Bxc1 Rxc1+ 56. Kh2 Qc6 White doesn't have more than a check: 57. Rh8+ Kg6 and Black wins.

54. Rxd6 Qxd6 55. Qe4+ Qg6 56. Qc4 Qb1+ 57. Kh2 a4 58. Bd4 a3



59. Qc7?

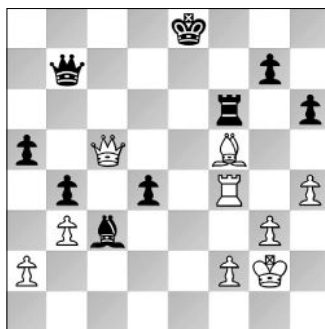
The final mistake. White could have escaped with 59. Bxg7!, although it's an extremely difficult line to calculate with no time on the clock. It's a perpetual check after 59. ... Kxg7 (59. ... a2 60. Bd4 and White can actually win!) 60. Qc7+ Kf6 61. Qc6+ Ke5 62. Qb5+ Kd4 63. Qb6+ Kc4 64. Qe6+.

59. ... Qg6 60. Qc4 c2 61. Be3 Bd6 62. Kg2 h5 63. Kf1 Be5 64. g4 hxg4 65. h5 Qf5 66. Qd5 g3 67. f4 a2 68. Qxa2 Bxf4, White resigned.

This wasn't the only time we saw a self-pin in a World Championship match.

A CLASSIC

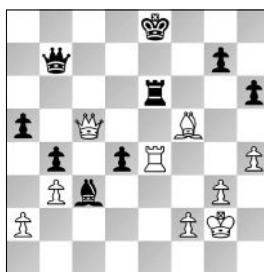
GM Anatoly Karpov (2720)
GM Garry Kasparov (2700)
World Championship (4), Moscow,
09.12.1985



WHITE TO MOVE

59. Re4+ Kf7

Black could have tried 59. ... Re6!?



POSITION AFTER 59. ... Re6

White has to find the tactical solution 60. Qc4!! leaving the rook *en prise*, but there is no good way to capture it: (a) 60. ... Rxe4 61. Qg8+ Ke7 62. Qxg7+ picks up the queen, and (b) 60. ... Qxe4+ 61. Bxe4 Rxe4 62. Qc6+ is equally hopeless for Black.

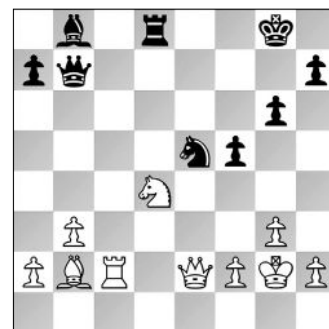
60. Qc4+ Kf8 61. Bh7 Rf7 62. Qe6 Qd7 63. Qe5, Black resigned.

White is threatening mate in two with Qe5-b8+, and if 63. ... Qd8 64. Qc5+ Re7 65. Bg6 d3 66. Rxe7 Qxe7 67. Qc8+.

Tactics supersede everything, so if self-pinning a piece works out tactically, then we shouldn't shy away from it.

STEP AWAY

GM Vassily Ivanchuk (2779)
GM Levon Aronian (2750)
Linares (13), 03.06.2009



31. Nc6!

A tactical way to trade pieces and open the diagonal of the b2-bishop.

31. ... Re8

If Black takes, White can maintain the self-pin with 31. ... Nxc6 32. Qe6+ Kf8 33. Rxc6! as there is no way to attack the rook. Meanwhile, the bishop is coming to a3 and Black doesn't have a good way of dealing with it. Black can't pile up on the pinned piece: 33. ... Rd6 34. Qc8+ and White breaks the pin and picks up a piece. White also wins after 33. ... Qf7 34. Ba3+ Kg7 35. Qxf7+ Kxf7 36. Bc5 by marching the pawns down the board.

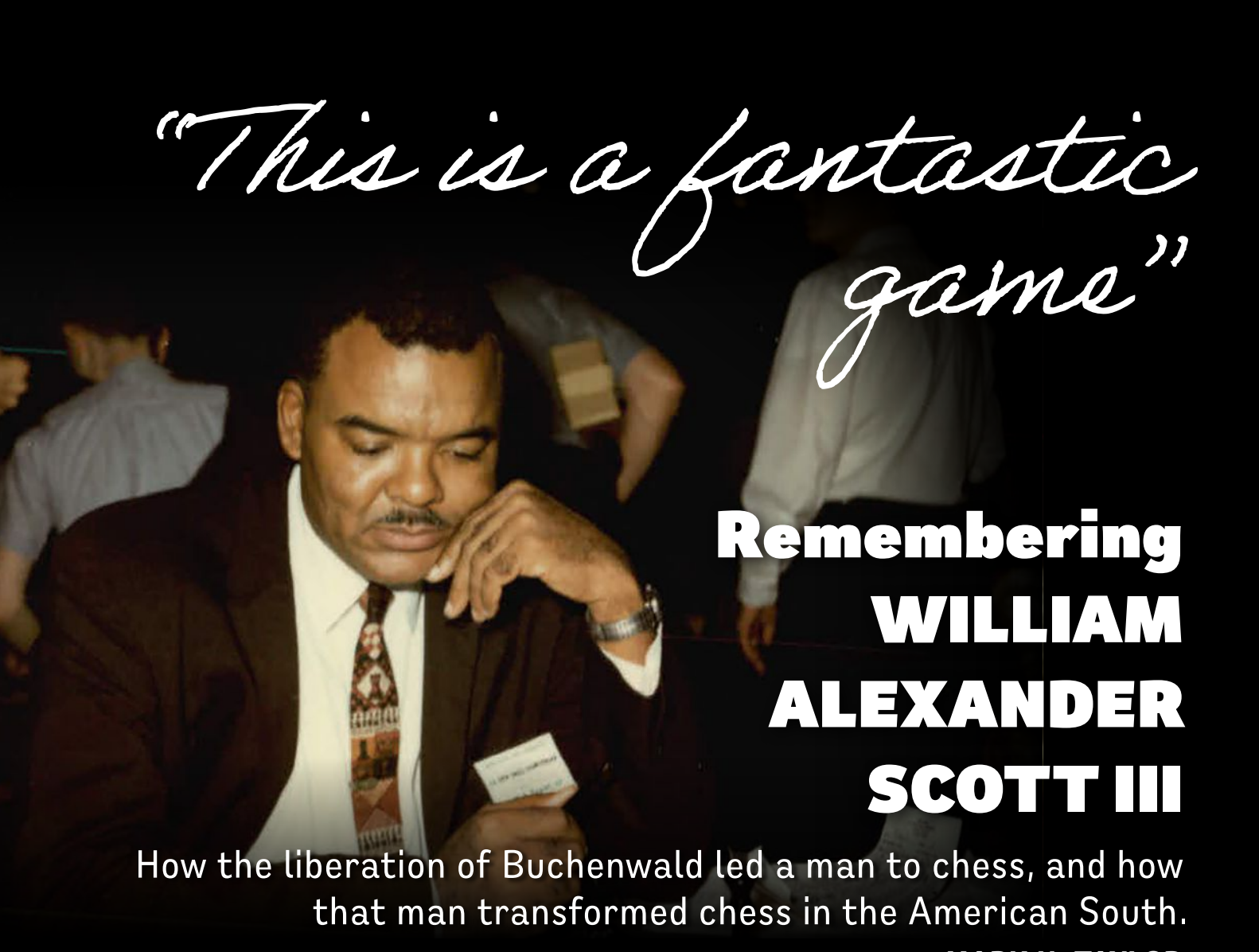
32. Kg1!

The king simply steps out of the pin, and now it's the knight on e5 that is under attack as the rook on e8 is undefended.

32. ... Nf3+ 33. Qxf3 Re1+ 34. Kg2 Qb5 35. Rc4, Black resigned.

I hope these examples will help you keep an open mind in your future games and calculations, and help you to at least consider the option of moving a pinned piece. ♠

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



"This is a fantastic game"

Remembering **WILLIAM ALEXANDER SCOTT III**

How the liberation of Buchenwald led a man to chess, and how that man transformed chess in the American South.

BY **MARK N. TAYLOR**

W

WHEN WILLIAM A. SCOTT III arrived in Durham, North Carolina, to play in the 1950 Southern Chess Association (SCA)

Championship, the man who had invited him — US Chess Federation Vice President Marshall Southern, of Knoxville, Tennessee — met him with some bad news: Some SCA members from Florida and Scott's home state of Georgia were protesting his appearance after learning Scott was African American.

Southern had extended the invitation after Scott had played in a pair of Tennessee tournaments earlier in the year without incident. But Southern had clearly underestimated a deep vein of racism lodged within the SCA — the strongest chess organization in the segregated South. A segregationist faction, led by SCA Secretary Major John Broadus Holt, threatened to withdraw, and prevailed upon the host hotel to bar Scott from the premises, even though a majority of players, including all the younger

ones, voted to let Scott play. Neither Southern nor the host club took a stand for Scott.

Like every African American in the South, Scott knew that his appearance would be controversial, divisive, even potentially violent. Because of Jim Crow, he knew what could happen to Black persons who tried to cross the color line. So Scott withdrew, but his quest to integrate tournaments did not end there.

It is difficult to imagine today how much courage it took Scott to accept the invitation. No one would have blamed him if he had stuck to safer tournament venues, or kept to his all-Black Metropolitan Chess Club, in Atlanta. What led Scott to cross the color line again and again until chess organizations in the South desegregated? We can trace his motivation to an indelible experience in his past, one which has never been related in full.

William Alexander Scott III (1923–1992) was born in Johnson City, Tennessee, and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. His father founded the *Atlan-*

ta Daily World, the nation's oldest daily Black newspaper. The son got an early start, working as a newspaper delivery boy, cleaner, sports statistician, and photographer. In January 1943, while a student at Morehouse College, Scott was drafted into the U. S. Army, at first posted to Tuskegee, Alabama. In December, he joined 183rd Engineer Combat Battalion, and he was sent to the European Theatre in the summer of 1944. Just before he shipped out, he married his childhood sweetheart.

Scott was deployed to Luxemburg during the Battle of the Bulge as part of General Patton's 3rd Army. He worked in his battalion's Intelligence Section as a reconnaissance sergeant, photographer, camoufleur, and part-time historian. They pushed across Germany early in 1945 as the Axis forces retreated.

In an extensive interview with Kathy Solomon at Emory University in 1981, Scott recalled, "I remember the day — clear and sunny — riding in a convoy into Eisenach, Germany,

PHOTO: US CHESS ARCHIVES

on April 11, 1945, as World War II was ending, and a 3rd Army courier delivering a message to us to continue on to a concentration camp.” That was Buchenwald, and what the 22-year-old Scott saw that day changed him.

Although the battalion had been warned about conditions, Scott said, “We drove in, and I said, ‘Gosh, it’s not as bad as they say. It looks just like a regular prison.’” As they drove around, he soon realized he was wrong. “As a matter of fact, I ended up saying it was worse [than it had been described.] ... And I said, ‘There’s no way you could describe it.’” He began taking photographs as he confronted horror after horror that the silent survivors kept pointing out to him. Eventually, “I put my camera up after a while and I just stopped taking pictures.”

In one of the barracks, he said, “Some of the survivors, with their clothing torn and their body exposed, were kneeling on the ground playing chess out of some makeshift sets, and they were just oblivious, almost, to what was going on around them even. And I said, ‘Well, this is a fantastic game. ... This can keep your mind from going off the deep end, so to speak.’”

Later in the day, Scott and the 183rd moved out. In July, he was shipped to the Pacific Theatre, a deployment that started with 65 days at sea.

Scott’s mind kept going back to the Jewish prisoners he saw, so absorbed in their game they were hardly aware of the horror of the concentration camp. Scott had just learned to play a few months earlier in Luxemburg, and while at sea, “that’s when I really got involved” in the game, to counter tedium and troubled thoughts. Eventually, “I had begun to develop some feeling for it.”

After a few months in Okinawa, Scott took a ship back to the States. He recounted a conversation he had on board with a fellow Georgian, a white man who told him: “Look, Scott ... when we get back to Georgia, do you think you’re going to have your rights? You’re not going to have any rights unless you stand up and act like a man.” Scott remembered thinking, “Maybe he would kick me around if I let him. And this is what he was trying to tell me — that this has been part of the problem, that people have allowed themselves to be kicked around.”

When Scott took the risk of playing in the 1950 SCA Championship, he chose not to be kicked around. When he saw the controversy his presence created, he voluntarily withdrew. This was a gracious action, but also strategic. The majority of the players were already on his side, and in fact said they would not have the next tournament in any

city that would not accept Black participants. He realized that he had a winning position; there was no need to force it. He chose the path of patient nonviolence that would become the hallmark of Martin Luther King Jr.’s Civil Rights activity.

And his stance worked. News of Scott’s treatment traveled nationwide and chess clubs as far away as Los Angeles sent petitions in protest to US Chess. By the summer of 1951, the Southern Chess Association had split into two factions over the integration question. An integrated SCA championship tournament was held in Asheville, North Carolina; Scott finished 11th out of 22, scoring $4\frac{1}{2}/6$, and tied for first in the rapid transit division with $6/8$. While a minority of members held a segregated tournament in Tampa, Florida, members at the Asheville tournament passed a resolution approving Scott’s participation and decrying racism in chess. Because the integrationists were the larger group, younger, and included the best players, the segregationist faction soon died out.

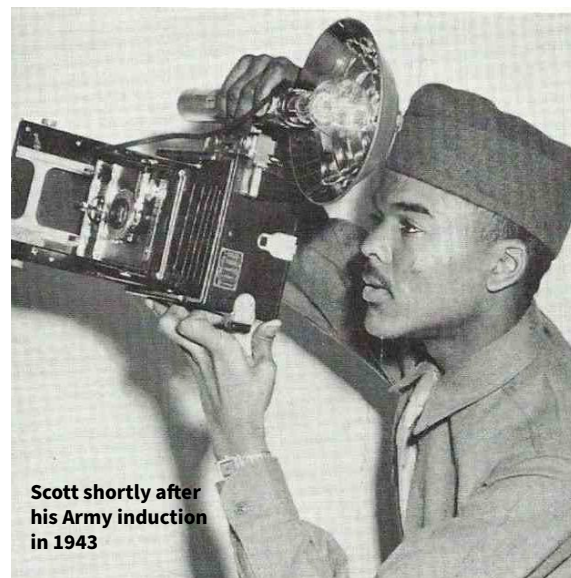
Scott continued to play in the South, scoring a string of positive results that stands as testament to his strength of spirit. He improved his play over the decade through correspondence chess as well as various regional tournaments, including the 1958 Florida Open, which he won. And all through it, he wrote chess articles and press releases for the *Atlanta Daily World*, making it possible to get some sense of how much chess activity was going on in Black Atlanta during the era of segregation — history that has been neglected by other periodicals.

At the same time, Scott, still a class player, also played in national tournaments. He attended the first of his many U.S. Opens, in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1951. The only Black person among 98 players, he finished with $6\frac{1}{2}/12$. He also played in the National Amateur Open in 1961, finishing 25 out of 140, and again in 1962, finishing sixth on tiebreaks out of 143.

In his own state, however, organizers of the Georgia Open declared it would continue to be “limited to white Georgia citizens only,” even though integrated tournaments were beginning to be held in other southern cities.

It wasn’t until March 1961 that Scott played in his first tournament in Georgia — the Atlanta Open, sponsored by the Atlanta Chess Club. The *Atlanta Daily World* reported that the club “in a meeting just before the start of the tournament last Friday voted better than 2 to 1 [to] open the competition to everyone regardless of race.” Scott scored $4\frac{1}{2}/6$.

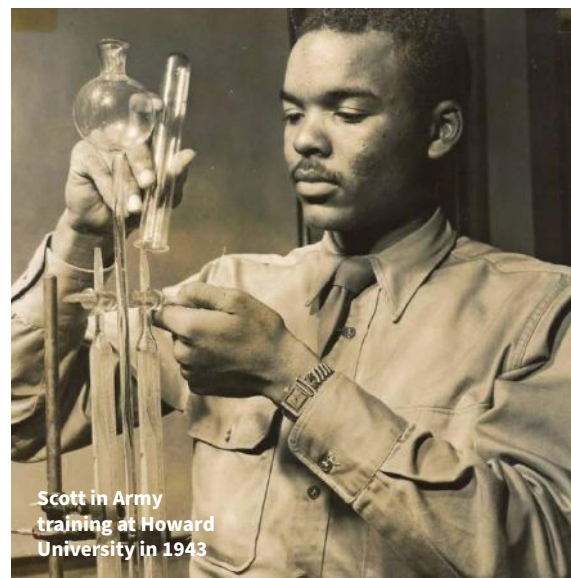
In 1963, the fully integrated Atlanta Chess Association elected Scott vice president. He



Scott shortly after his Army induction in 1943



Scott and Marian Willis Scott on their wedding day



Scott in Army training at Howard University in 1943

went on to serve two terms as president, 1965–1967.

Scott was indisputably one of the strongest players in the state, but racism in Georgia chess still dogged him. Scott and other Black chess players were barred from participating in the 1962 Georgia Closed Championship. “The failure of the Georgia Chess Association to accept us as participants is not understandable,” Scott wrote in the *Atlanta Daily World*,

in many roles: businessman, film critic, radio show host, photographer, coach, and historian for the Atlanta Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen. In 1987, Mayor Andrew Young asked Scott to serve on the planning committee for the city’s 150th anniversary. Governor Joe Frank Harris appointed Scott a charter member of the Georgia Commission on the Holocaust in 1981, and President George H. W. Bush appointed him to the United States

championship twice. He went on to win it five more times and become Spain’s first grandmaster. The headline in the *Daily World* reads “W.A. Scott Plays Spanish Chest Champion To Draw.”

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. c3 d6 5. d4 Bb6 6. 0-0 Qe7 7. Re1 Bg4 8. d5

Missing a chance for a big advantage with 8. Bb5 exd4 9. cxd4 Bxf3 10. Qxf3 Bxd4 11. e5.



Scott (L) and Leon Bass at Camp McCain in 1944

“in light of the opening of tournaments to all for such sports as tennis, roller skating, baseball and bowling in the Greater Atlanta area.” Scott contrasted this treatment with a Tennessee Chess Association invitational in Nashville, which he turned down so that he might play in the Georgia championship.

The following year, Georgia members voted to make the championship rated, which required them to follow the US Chess Federation’s non-discrimination policy. Perhaps as a commentary on his treatment, however, there is no record of Scott playing in a Georgia Closed Championship.

In 1963, Scott was the top Georgia finisher in the Georgia Open, in Columbus. The April 1963 Georgia Chess Association newsletter, however, failed to mention his name in their tournament report, only mentioning the overall tournament winner, Milan Momic, of Alabama.

In 1967, Scott was both the Atlanta Chess Club Champion and Speed Champion. In that year he also chaired the host committee for the 68th Annual U. S. Open Chess Championship tournament in Atlanta (where he placed 26th out of 168).

Scott passed away in 1992 after flourishing

Holocaust Memorial Council in 1991.

Chess and Civil Rights are only two facets of who W. A. Scott III was. And yet, chess is at the heart of what formed him and who he became.

In addition to Kathy Solomon’s interview with William A. Scott III (26 Nov 1981. Emory University, Atlanta, GA), information for this article was primarily drawn from periodicals: Atlanta Daily World, Chicago Defender, and Georgia Chess Letter.

SELECTED GAMES

BY RICK MASSIMO

GIUOCO PIANO (C53)

IM Arturo Pomar
William A. Scott III
Simultaneous exhibition, Atlanta,
04.17.1954

At the time of this game, Pomar was an international master and had won the Spanish

8. ... Nd8 9. h3 Bd7 10. Na3 a6 11. Nc2 h5 12. Be3 g6 13. Bxb6 cxb6 14. Qd2 b5 15. Bf1 h4



16. Ne3 Rc8 17. c4 f5 18. exf5 gxf5 19. cxb5 axb5 20. Nd4 Qf6 21. Nxb5 Nh6 22. Qb4 Nh7 23. Rac1 0-0 24. Rxc8 Bxc8 25. Rc1 f4 26. Rxc8 fxe3 27. fxe3 Nh6 28. Qe1 Nf5 29. Rc2 Nxe3 30. Rf2

White should just take: 30. Qxe3 and Black can’t try to win material with 30. ... Qxf1+ 31. Kh2 Qxb5 due to 32. Qg5+ Kh7 (32. ... Kf7 33. Rc7+) 33. Qxh4+ Kg6 34. Qg4+ Kh6 35. Rc3.

30. ... Nf5 31. Bd3 Qg5 32. Qe4 Qe3 33. Nxd6



White should have just traded off everything and gone into the endgame a pawn up. Now Scott gets his chance.

33. ... Qxf2+ 34. Kxf2 Nxd6+ 35. Qf3 Rxf3+ 36. Kxf3

"At this point Scott made a hasty move and lost a pawn and offered the champion a draw which he declined."

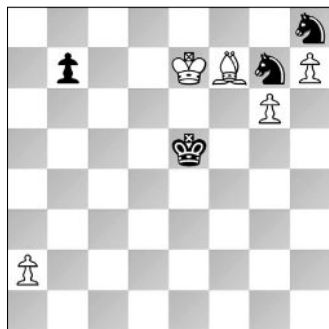
36. ... e4+ 37. Bxe4

The engine actually gives White a slight edge here.

37. ... Kg7 38. Kf4 Kf6 39. Bc2 N8f7 40. Kg4 Nc4 41. Kxh4 Nxb2 42. g4 Nc4 43. Kg3 Ne3 44. Bb3 Nf1+

Unnecessarily sidelining his knight.

45. Kf4 Nd2 46. h4 Nb1 47. g5+ Kg7 48. h5 Nc3 49. h6+ Kf8 50. Kf5 Nb5 51. Kf6 Nbd6 52. h7 Ne8+ 53. Kg6 Nh8+ 54. Kf5 Ke7 55. g6 Ng7+ 56. Kg5 Kd6 57. Bd1 Kxd5 58. Kf6 Ne8+ 59. Ke7 Ng7 60. Bb3+ Ke5 61. Bf7



White wins with *zugzwang* after 61. Kf8 Kf6 62. Bc2.

61. ... Nh5

There's a neat draw with 61. ... Nf5+ 62. Kd7 b5 63. Kc6 b4 64. Kc5 Kf6 65. Be8 Kg7 66. Kxb4 Ne7 67. a4 Nhxg6 68. Bxg6 Nxg6 69. a5 Ne7 70. Kb5 Nc8 71. Kc6 Kxh7 72. a6 Na7+ 73. Kb6 Nc8+ 74. Kb7 Nd6+ 75. Kb8 Nb5 76. Kb7 Kg6 77. Kb6 Nd6 and White can't make progress.

62. Kf8

White can still win with 62. a4 b6 63. Kd7 Kf6 64. Kc7

62. ... Kf6 63. Kg8 Ke7 64. Kxh8 Kf8 65.

Be6 b6 66. a3 Ng7 67. Bd7 Nh5, draw.

Source: *Atlanta Daily World*, April 20, 1954.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, SOZIN ATTACK (B86)

William A. Scott III

Ken Smith

U.S. Open, Omaha, 1959

Scott's opponent is the master Ken Smith, who ran *Chess Digest* magazine, was a prolific writer and publisher, and popularized the Morra Gambit to the extent that it became known as the Smith-Morra Gambit.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Bc4 e6 7. a4 Be7 8. 0-0 0-0 9. Be3 Qc7 10. Bd3 e5 11. Nf5 Bxf5 12. exf5 d5 13. Bg5 Rd8 14. Bxf6 Bxf6 15. Be2 Qc5 16. Qd2 Nc6 17. Rfd1 Nd4 18. Bf1 h6 19. Rab1 Rac8 20. Kh1 Rd7



21. Nxd5 Bg5 22. Ne3 Re7 23. Qd3

White can strike right away with 23. f6 Bxf6 24. c3 Nc6 25. b4 Qa7 26. b5 axb5 27. axb5 Nb8 (27. ... Nd8 28. Ra1 Qc5 29. Ra4 with the threat of 30. Rc4) 28. Nd5 Re6.

23. ... Bxe3 24. fxe3 Nc6 25. Qe4 Qb4 26. Bc4 Rec7 27. f6 Qf8 28. Rf1 Na5 29. Bd3 g6 30. h4

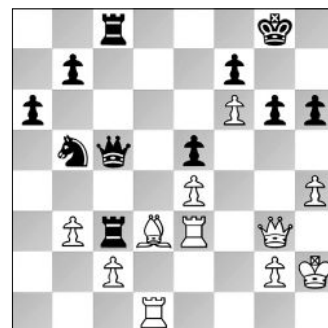
The prophylactic 30. b3, with Bd3-c4 coming up next, keeps a bigger advantage for White.

30. ... Nc4 31. Rf2 Qc5 32. Re2 Nd6 33. Qf3 Qb4 34. e4 Qxa4 35. b3 Qb4 36. Qg3 Qd4 37. Rd1 Rc3 38. Kh2 Qc5 39. Re3 Nb5?

(see diagram top of next column)

40. Bc4 Kf8 41. Rxc3 Nxc3 42. Qxc3 b5 43. Qd2, Black resigned.

Source: *Atlanta Daily World*, April 28, 1963.



POSITION AFTER 39. ... Nb5

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE (E56)

W. Burnett

William A. Scott III

Heart O'Dixie Open, Huntsville, Alabama, 05.30.1963

Scott wrote that a friend who lived in Huntsville told him the *Chess Life* announcement of the tournament, "which stated 'Open to All,' meant what it said. I received the same cordial reception as others during the tournament, including staying at the Motor Hotel, site of the Battle Royal. I later learned that several other motor facilities have been open to all for some time without restrictions in Huntsville." Huntsville was a major NASA testing site and home to the George C. Marshall Space Flight Center (which, Scott says, the players toured). NASA established lots of facilities in the South and actively recruited Black people to work in them. It would be a stretch to call the agency actively integrationist, but these moves were not a coincidence either.

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 d5 5. Bd3 0-0 6. Nf3 c5 7. 0-0 Nc6 8. a3 Ba5 9. dxc5 Bxc3 10. bxc3 Qa5 11. Qc2 dxc4 12. Bxc4 Qxc5 13. Ba2 Qh5 14. Bb2



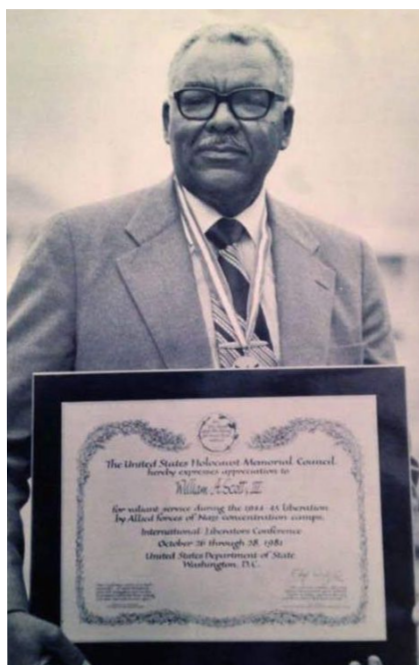
14. ... e5 15. e4 Bg4 16. Ne1 Be2 17. Nf3 Bxf3 18. gxf3 Qxf3 19. Rfe1 Rac8 20. Rad1 Nd4 21. Qd2 Qg4+ 22. Kh1 Nf3 23. Qe3 Qh3, White resigned.

Source: *Atlanta Daily World*, June 9, 1963.

Reporting on the Peach State Open in the February 1967 issue of *Chess Life*, GM William Lombardy passed along this anecdote, which made Scott's defeat of IM Sherwin all the more impressive. Lombardy placed first in the tournament with 5½/6. Scott finished in a three-way tie for second place with five points.

The big upset of the tournament came in the fifth round when Jim Sherwin unexpectedly collapsed under time pressure against Bill Scott. No one could have suspected that the president of the Atlanta Chess Association, an enthusiastic organizer, and able chess promoter, a chess patron, could also demonstrate similar versatility in over-the-board play. Something else makes Scott's win even more incredible.

During the course of the game, Sherwin observed that his opponent had disappeared! The clock had already been running some 40 minutes and Scott was nowhere to be found. Was he on special assignment for the newspaper of which he is editor? Not exactly. Scott later revealed that he had promised to drive his daughter to the airport. ("She's only a college freshman at Barnard," he said with fatherly concern.) He felt that this game would be a breeze for Sherwin and so he could safely make the trip to the airport, losing such valuable time. Needless to say, the round trip to the airport was sufficiently refreshing to spur him on to a splendid victory in what was a see-saw battle.



SICILIAN DEFENSE, ACCELERATED DRAGON (B37)

William A. Scott III

IM James Sherwin

Peach State Open, Atlanta, 1966

Annotations by GM William Lombardy and (in red) Rick Massimo

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. c4 g6

There are two other ways of equalizing against White's third move, either of which we prefer: (a) 3. ... e5 4. Nc3 d6 5. d3 f5, which position we judge at least equal for Black; (b) 3. ... e6 4. d4 cxd4 5. Nxd4 Nf6 6. Nc3 d6 7. Be2 Be7 8. Be3 0-0 9. f3 Qc7 10. Nc2 d5 11. cxd5 exd5 12. Nxd5 Nxd5 13. Qxd5 Rd8, with excellent play for the pawn.

4. d4 cxd4 5. Nxd4 Bg7 6. Nb3 d6 7. Be2 Nf6

With this Black accepts the inferior position. Frequently part of the psychology of the better player is to accept the worse position to keep matters complicated; however, in this case, such a procedure is not warranted, besides being too dangerous. Black's game is quite adequate after 7. ... Nh6 8. 0-0 0-0 9. Nc3 f5.

8. Nc3 0-0 9. Be3 Be6 10. f3 Nd7 11. Rc1 Na5 12. Nd2 Rc8 13. b3 Nc6 14. Ndb1

White has demonstrated remarkable refined judgment; witness his last few moves. He is well aware that Black's game is cramped, so he does not exchange knights at a5. He also has not rushed castling since other pieces had to be developed. He had perceived that an attack requires careful preparation, hence the restrained f2-f3. He also clearly understands that Black has accomplished nothing by his last series of moves, not even to the extent of better placing his pieces; he has in fact made moves which have permitted White further to solidify his position. Finally, White's last move prevents ... Nc6-d4.

14. ... Nc5 15. 0-0 Bd7

Incomprehensible under the circumstances. Black must find a way to gain some initiative, for if White is left to himself, his position can only improve. The obvious thrust for Black is 15. ... f5.

16. Rc2 Re8

Far too passive; 16. ... f5 is still open. A possible plan: eventually playing ... e7-e5 and posting the knight (on c5) on e6, where it will be poised to occupy d4.

17. Rd2



17. ... b6

The engine finds this slow. Today Black would generally play more forcefully with 17. ... Qa5 and ... Nc6-b4, eventually aiming for ... b7-b5 or ... f7-f5. On the next move, White could get started right away with 18. f4.

18. Kh1 a5

Apart from the devastating time pressure, Black should be able to hold his own despite White's slight edge; he should therefore not cede b5 for the use of White's knights.

19. a4 Qc7 20. Nb5 Qb8 21. N1c3 Nb4 22. Qb1 Bc6 23. Rfd1

If the reader is puzzled, he has good reason. This is an intricate positional struggle with White enjoying some pressure owing to his advantage in space; White's last move was actually a developing move!

23. ... Qa8 24. Nd4 Bd7

Black's still more or less OK after 24. ... Bb7 or 24. ... Ne6.

25. Ndb5

Could be a draw by reputation. Figuring the percentages, White at least might seem to be testing out his opponent's willingness to settle for the half point; Black will have none of that.

25. ... Qb7 26. Nd5 Nc6

Exchanging on d5 only gives White more scope since he undoubtedly intends to recapture with the c-pawn. The white light-squared bishop would then play an enormous role.

27. f4

Perhaps 27.g4 followed by f3-f4 accomplishes the same objective with less effort, occupying more space and immediately commencing a kingside attack.

27. ... f5 28. e5!

White sacs a pawn to make those doubled

Left: Scott with a certificate awarded by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council in 1981.

rooks count. This writer knows Black was short of time at this point; how short, he is not aware since he was battling the clock himself.

The engine says this is too fast. White can keep building with 28. Bf3, with ideas of taking on e7 and then d6, or switching over to the e-file.

28. ... dxe5 29. Nxb6 Qxb6 30. Rxd7 exf4 31. Bg1 Nb4

Black's last was careless; we believe the chances even now are about equal. In fact, Black's play can become quite dangerous: 31. ... Ne5 32. Ra7 Qc6 (threatening ... f4-f3) 33. Nd4 Qf6, threatening ... Qf6-h4 and/or ... Nc5-e4.

This is true as far as it goes, but the engine still likes White after 32. R7d5 Nf7 33. Bf3 e5 34. b4 axb4 35. Qxb4.

32. Bf3 Qb8 33. Bxc5

Most upsetting. Not only does the black e-pawn come under fire; in the bargain, Black must give up the Exchange to avoid the posting of both white rooks on the seventh rank via the capture of that fated pawn.

33. ... Rxc5 34. Rb7 Qe5

If 34. ... Qc8, then 35. Rdd7 makes Black frantic.

35. Re1 Qf6 36. Nc7 Rxc7

Or 36. ... Rc8 which can be convincingly countered by 37. Nd5.

37. Rxc7 e5 38. Bd5+



38. ... Nxd5?

This presents White with open lines which ordinarily he would not be able to attain without such cooperation. Black also loses time to churn the white kingside with his mobile pawn majority. Black gets shorter and shorter of time ...

The engine says Black is in fact slightly better after 38. ... Kh8, thanks to the central pawn mass. Giving White open lines and a passed pawn is indeed asking for trouble.

39. cxd5 e4 40. Qc2

Clearly, had Black not captured the bishop on d5, White would not so conveniently have been able to coordinate his major pieces. Black's pawn majority no longer poses a serious obstacle since the white d-pawn quickly generates threats of its own, for instance: 40. ... Qh4 41. Rd1 Be5 (White's still winning, but it's a bit more complicated, after 41. ... f3 42. d6 fxc2+ 43. Qxg2 Bf6 44. Qe2 Qh3 45. b4 e3 46. Re1 Kf8 47. d7 Re4) 42. Qc6 Kf8 43. d6 f3 44. Qxe8+ Kxe8 45. d7+ and the issue is decided.

40. ... Qe5 41. Qc4 Qd6

The queen is not a good blockader!

42. Rc6 Qb4 43. Qxb4, Black lost on time.

Black's flag fell at a time limit of 45 moves in two hours and a quarter. A disappointing game for Sherwin, who displayed a form far removed from his usual sparkling style; but at the same time quite a feather in Scott's cap!

Someone once remarked, "What a pity to lose such a game on time!" Black is quite lost, of course, at least for the reason noted in the comment to move 40.

Something's going to promote after 43. ... axb4 44. d6 Kf8 45. a5 Bd4 46. Rd1 Be3 47. a6.

Source: *Chess Life*, February 1967, page 28, originally in descriptive notation.

KING'S INDIAN ATTACK (A07)

Carl Blackwell

Walter Scott

Telephone blindfold game, 01.05.1956

Scott said his opponent, Carl Blackwell, was "a young California player" on an extended visit to family in Atlanta. This game was played over the telephone. Blackwell had a board and set in front of him; Scott did not.

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 d4 3. Bg2 c5 4. d3 Nc6 5. Bf4 f6 6. e4 e5 7. Bd2 Be6 8. 0-0 c4 9. a4 cxd3 10. cxd3 Bc5 11. Na3 Nge7 12. Ne1 0-0 13. f4 f5

(see diagram top of next column)

14. fxe5

It's a hard one to spot, but White is on top after the undoing move 14. Nf3! The least bad thing Black can do is give up the e5-pawn after 14. ... Kh8, because after 14. ... exf4 15. Ng5 comes (a) 15. ... Bd7 16. b4 and a big tactic is coming up on the light diagonal, or (b) 15. ... Bf7 16. Bxf4 a6 17. Nxf7 Rxf7 18. Nc4.

14. ... Nxe5 15. b4 Bd6 16. Nac2 Qd7 17. exf5 Nxf5



POSITION AFTER 13. ... f5

Now Black has the advantage.

18. Be4 Nc6 19. b5 Ne5 20. Qh5 g6 21. Qe2 Rae8 22. Nf3 Ng4 23. Ng5 Nxh2



The engine says it's not sound, but that's quite a move to play without sight of the board!

24. Qxh2 Nxg3 25. Rxf8+ Rxf8 26. Qg2 Bg4 27. Bxb7

The tables turn after 27. Bd5+ Kh8 28. Re1.

27. ... Ne2+ 28. Kh1 h6

No perpetual for Scott!

29. Bd5+

His courage is rewarded; this move won two moves ago, but that was because White could force exchanges on e6. That's not the case now.

29. ... Kg7 30. Be6 Bxe6

This is good enough, especially blindfolded, but 30. ... hxg5 was even better: if 31. Bxd7 Rh8+.

31. Nxe6+ Qxe6 32. Re1 Ng3+ 33. Qxg3 Rf1+

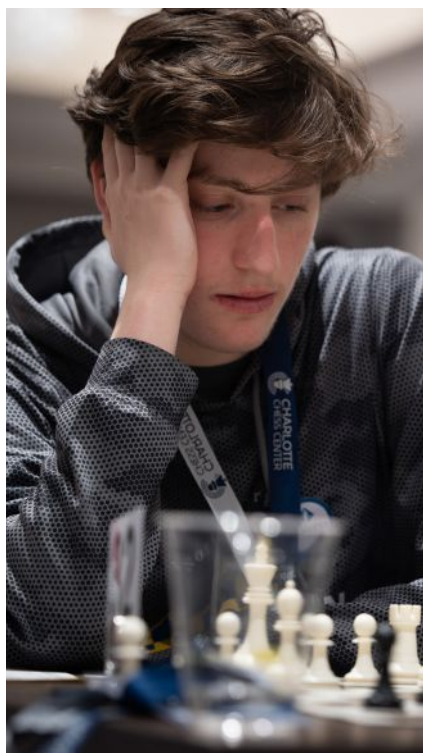
Black could also just sidestep with 33. ... Qd5+, but this is more accurate.

34. Kg2 Qd5+ 35. Kxf1 Bxg3 36. Re7+ Kf6 37. Rxa7 Qf3+, White resigned.

Source: *Atlanta Daily World*, March 17, 1963. ♠

A Masterful

Holiday



A week of
Thanksgiving,
norms, and
titles at the
U.S. Masters

BY **IM MARK HEIMANN**

"COME BACK A GRANDMASTER," my good friend Suzette told me before I left for the airport from her mom's house nearby, "or don't come back at all!"

I caught an Uber to the airport almost too late. As traffic backed up with loved ones and rideshare app drivers waiting to pick up weary travelers, I was still in the back seat 30 minutes before my redeye flight's takeoff, sweating like I had just blundered at least a good pawn. But I prayed, I ran, and I made my flight to Charlotte, North Carolina, and the U.S. Masters. My tournament roommates Rishabh and Aadit and I joined more than 200 master-level players for a very nontraditional Thanksgiving — all of us forsaking our turkey and cranberries,

our football games, and maybe our families to commit our holiday to some of the most challenging chess combat to be found in North America.

Headlining this year's edition was American super-grandmaster Fabiano Caruana, the world number two. He was looking to win the 2024 FIDE Circuit and punch a ticket to the Candidates Tournament, so he needed to score highly in strong open tournaments before the year's close. Meanwhile, with just shy of 100 international masters and grandmasters and a field representing 39 countries, many hopefuls, myself included, were vying for norms that would help us earn these coveted titles.

For some of these contenders, like IM Evan Park, the tournament would start with

a bang right out of the gate. Park began with a blistering 4/4 score, with wins over three grandmasters, including this convincing victory with black against veteran GM Emilio Cordova:

ENGLISH OPENING, SYMMETRICAL VARIATION (A34)

GM Emilio Cordova Daza (2607)

IM Evan Park (2484)

U.S. Masters (3), Charlotte, 11.28.2024

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 Nf6 3. Bg2 c5 4. c4 Nc6 5. cxd5 Nxd5 6. Nc3 Nc7



the e5-pawn, giving White a small initiative.

12. ... Be6 13. Ba1 Qd7 14. d3 Rad8

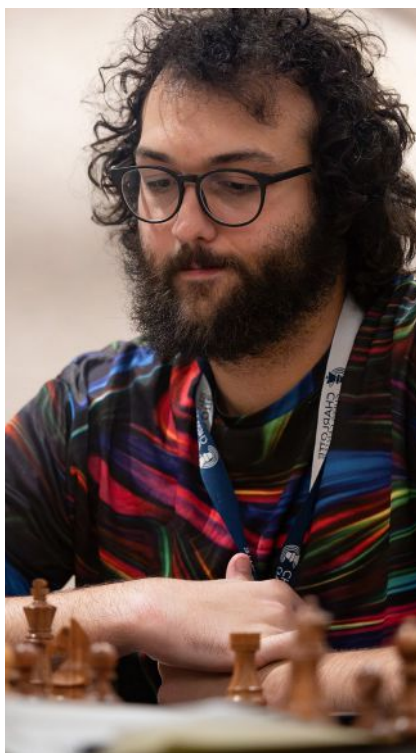
White's pieces are shuffling miserably on the first two ranks, while Black's pieces are placing themselves far more actively. And look at all that space!

27. Rbc1 Rd7?!

This gives White a chance, but it is hard to spot.

28. Nc4 b5

The six norm winners seen below, left to right: FM Avi Kaplan, IM Evan Park, IM Isik Can, IM Tianqi Wang, FM Gunnar Andersen, and IM Mark Heimann.



An ambitious opening from Black, who prepares ... e7-e5 to take a firm grip on the center with a reverse Maroczy bind setup. White in turn has to play actively to counter this, or else Black can easily take over the initiative.

7. b3 e5 8. Bb2 Be7 9. Rc1 f6 10. 0-0 0-0 11. Ne1 Bd7

(see diagram top of next column)

12. a3?!

White's first priority had to be chipping away at Black's grip on the center, but the plan to attack the c5-pawn with b2-b4 is too slow to arrange. Instead 12. Nd3! puts some pressure on c5 and also prepares 13. f4 to challenge

Black has completed his development while retaining his space advantage and his vise-like grip on d4.

15. Ne4 b6 16. Nf3?!

White could have gotten some counterplay with 16. b4, taking advantage of the fragility of the knight on c6. Now Black has a free hand to begin turning up the pressure.

16. ... Nb5 17. Bb2 Nbd4 18. Nxd4 Nxd4 19. Nd2 Kh8 20. Ba1 Bg4 21. Re1 Qe6 22. Rb1 a5

All White's pawn breaks have been firmly stopped.

23. f3 Bh5 24. Qc1 f5 25. e3 Nc6 26. Qc2 Bf6



29. Nb2

White misses his one chance to break out of passivity. Instead, after 29. Nb6! the far-flung knight is not lost due to a complicated string of tactics: 29. ... Rb7 30. Qxc5 Ne7 31. d4! exd4 32. Bxd4. Now after 32. ... Rfb8 the

knight looks to be falling, but White has 33. g4! Be8 34. f4! Rxb6 35. g5 regaining the piece, because 35. ... Bxd4? 36. exd4 skewers the black queen to the knight on e7.

29. ... Be7 30. Nd1 Bf7 31. f4 exf4 32. Qc3 Bf6 33. Qxc5 Ne7 34. Bxf6 gxf6 35. Qxb5 fxg3 36. hxc3 Qd6

Black has sacrificed a pawn, and his last queenside pawn may fall while the kingside pawns are crippled. White's long-term prospects are fine, but with his own shattered kingside it will be a challenge to make it that far.

37. Rf1 Rb8 38. Qxa5 Qxg3 39. Rf3 Qg5



Black has a powerful attack, and from here Park conducts it with great skill.

40. Rc2 Bxb3 41. Rd2 Rg8 42. Nb2 Bd5 43.

e4 Nc6 44. Qc3 Bxe4 45. Rff2 Ne5 46. Kf1 Bxg2+ 47. Rxg2 Ng4 48. Nc4 Qh4 49. Ke2 f4 50. Kd1 f3 51. Rxg4 Rxg4 52. Ne3 Rg8 53. Qc6 Qd4 54. Qxf3 Rdg7 55. Nc4 Rg3 56. Qf5 R3g5 57. Qf3 Rg3 58. Qf5 Qa1+ 59. Kc2 Rb8 60. Qf4 Qb1+ 61. Kc3 Qb3+ 62. Kd4 Rd8+ 63. Nd6 Qa4+, White resigned.

Meanwhile, most of the favorites were doing what they do, including Caruana himself, who smoothly defeated a strong IM in round 4:

TWO KNIGHTS DEFENSE (C55)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2871)

IM Isik Can (2545)

U.S. Masters (5), Charlotte, 11.29.2024

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 d5

An interesting move, immediately claiming central space. White gets quick pressure against the e-pawn, but modern theory shows that Black has enough activity to survive even if the pawn needs to be sacrificed.

5. exd5 Nxd5 6. 0-0 Be7 7. Re1 f6 8. a3

An interesting sideline, keeping more pieces on the board. It was possible to play more forcingly with 8. d4 Nb6 9. Bb5, but after 9. ... 0-0 10. Bxc6 bxc6, Black's bishop pair and lead in development affords enough

compensation for the pawn and the shattered queenside structure. Fabi likely wanted to avoid forcing lines where Isik no doubt had deep computer prep burning out to drawish positions.

8. ... Bg4 9. h3 Bh5 10. Nc3 Nb6 11. Ba2 Bf7 12. Bxf7+ Kxf7 13. Be3 Qd7 14. b4 Rhe8 15. Ne4 Rad8?



Up to this point, Black's slightly awkward king has not been a liability, and he has been able to complete development while maintaining a healthy stake in the center. However, while Black's king is still just slightly exposed, Fabi is able to launch a powerful attack. Safer was 15. ... Kg8, completing this castling "by hand."

16. b5 Na5



Hometown hero GM Daniel Naroditsky tied for first in Blitz



GM Fabiano Caruana

Black might have wanted to go 16. ... Nd4 rather than sideline his own knight like this, but this runs into 17. Neg5+ Kg8 (not 17. ... fxg5 18. Nxe5+) 18. Bxd4 exd4 19. Ne6 with complete domination.

17. Qb1

Simultaneously defending b5 while also entertaining thoughts of attacking along the weak a2-g8 diagonal. White is also threatening to play 18. Bd2, trapping the knight on a5. In the span of two moves White has gone from just a normal slight edge to an overwhelming position.

17. ... Nc8 18. Bd2 b6 19. Bxa5 bxa5 20. d4



Fabi mercilessly presses the attack. Having shattered Black's queenside and still not let the king move to safety on the kingside, now he cracks open the center to apply full-board pressure.

20. ... Kg8 21. dxe5 fxe5 22. Nxe5 Qd5 23. Nc6 Rd7 24. c4 Qf5 25. Qb3 Rf8 26. Ra2 Kh8 27. Rae2 Bc5 28. g4, Black resigned. There is no way to hold on to the bishop.

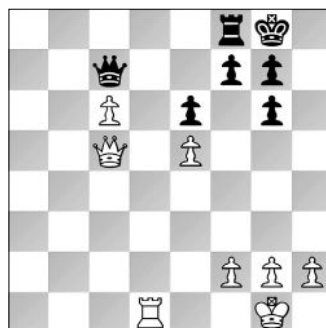
For some of us, the tournament started much more rockily. In just the second round, paired against a lower-rated but fast-improving junior from Russia, I found myself sweating like my Uber was running late to the airport as I struggled to save a hopeless endgame:

A GREAT ESCAPE

IM Isaak Parpiev (2440)

IM Mark Heimann (2534)

U.S. Masters (2), Charlotte, 11.28.2024



BLACK TO MOVE

Black's position is miserable. White has an extra passed pawn, in a dominating position on the sixth rank, with both his queen and rook actively placed as well. This objectively constitutes a winning advantage, but as long as there is life there is hope. With the c-pawn at least blocked, I decided to grovel as long as I could.

34. ... Rc8 35. g3 Qb8

Not 35. ... Qxc6?? 36. Rd8+, of course.

36. h4 Qb3 37. Rc1?!

White is still winning, but simply 37. Rd7! leaves Black unable to grovel much further. White controls the seventh rank, both attacking the kingside and facilitating the further advance of the c-pawn. Of course Black's queen is unable to cause trouble on the back rank.

37. ... Rc7 38. Qa5 Qb8 39. Kg2 Kh7 40.

Qc3 Qb5 41. Qc5 Qa6 42. Qc4 Qb6 43. Qe4 Kg8 44. Rc2 Qb5 45. g4!?

An aggressive solution. White seeks to create weaknesses on the kingside and open up the b1-h7 diagonal so that Black will face back-rank issues. While White is still winning, this does loosen his own position and gives Black the hope of eventual counterplay.

45. ... Qb1 46. f3 Qb6 47. h5 gxh5 48. gxh5 Qb7?

It was important to stay active with a move such as 48. ... Qb1!, when White's advantage is the lowest it has been since going a pawn up. Now Parpiev ties me down to the back rank and regains control.

49. Rd2 Qe8 50. Rd6 Qe7 51. Qf4 Kh7 52. Kh3 Qe8 53. Qe4+ Kh6

The king being flushed out like this certainly spells doom, but after 53. ... Kg8 the immediate 54. Qd3! finishes Black, as the threat of a back-rank invasion winning the queen or delivering mate cannot be prevented: 54. ... Rc8 55. c7!

54. Qf4+

White is still completely winning, but 54. Qe3+ finishes Black off even more quickly, as (a) 54. ... Kh7 can be met by 55. Qd3+ with the same decisive back-rank idea. Perhaps Parpiev was worried about (b) 54. ... g5, which I was planning to play, but after 55. hxg6+ e.p. Kxg6 56. Rd4, the rook drops back to finish off the naked black king.

54. ... Kh7 55. Qe3 f6

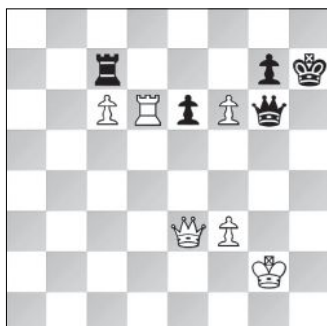
Although this should not be sufficient, it gives Black an interesting chance at counterplay, as now White starts losing pawns in front of his own king.

56. exf6 Qxh5+ 57. Kg2 Qg6+

(see diagram top of next page)

58. Kf2??

White is still winning, but the only way was 58. Kf1! Now the monstrous c6-pawn survives, because 58. ... Qb1+ can be met by 59. Qe1. In practice, as time gets low, it is



POSITION AFTER 57. ... Qg6+

certainly feasible that even a strong player like Parpiev could miss the difference between similar-looking king moves, highlighting the challenges in practical conversion compared to earlier positions where White had complete dominance.

58. ... Qc2+ 59. Rd2

The king and queen go round and round after 59. Kg3 Qg6+ 60. Kf2 (or 60. Kh2 Qc2+ 61. Kg1).

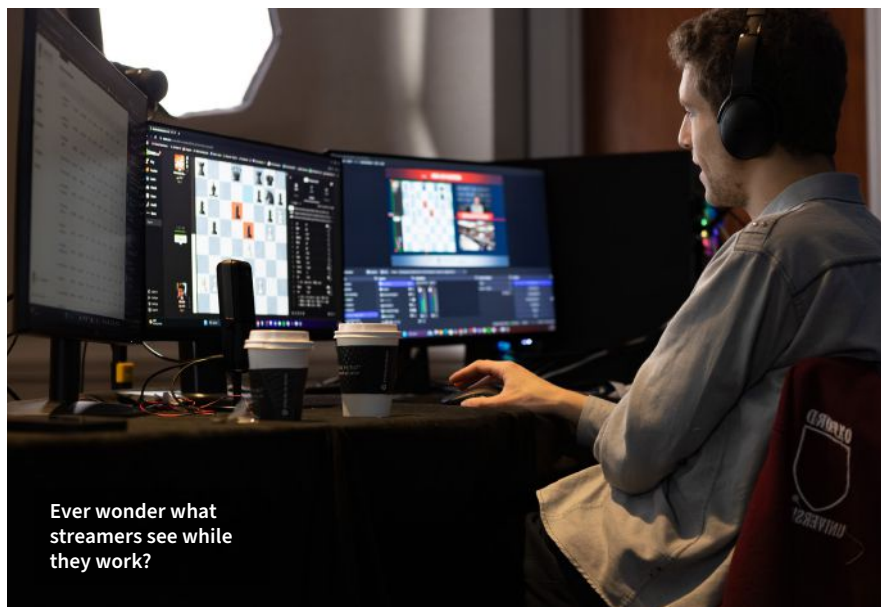
59. ... Qxc6

Black regains the pawn and White has no crushing checks. The position quickly burns out to a draw.

60. Qd3+ Kg8 61. Qg6 Qc5+ 62. Kg2 Qf8 63. Rb2 Rc8 64. Re2 Qxf6 65. Qxf6 gxf6 66. Rxe6 Kf7, draw.

Grovel I had to, but save the game I did. That game was on Thanksgiving, and it made me thankful that sometimes we all are given more than we deserve.

Black Friday came next, and I had Black



against the strong Ukrainian grandmaster Oleksandr Bortnyk. I knew he was capable of coming up with scintillating attacks, and he's a speed chess legend, so I could not afford to let him drag me into a time scramble.

I was not feeling optimistic, as this Instagram conversation the night before with my good friend and elite bench presser Taryn showed:

MARK: so clearly the real fun for both of us starts tomorrow (I say before the grandmaster I face as black cooks me tomorrow)
TARYN: I thought we established that cooking is fun

MARK: not when you're getting cooked
TARYN: Mark fin soup

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B40)

GM Oleksandr Bortnyk (2677)

IM Mark Heimann (2534)

U.S. Masters (4), Charlotte, 11.29.2024

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. Nc3 Nc6 4. g3 Qb6

Trying to stop White's d2-d4 push at the risk of putting the queen on an awkward square. Instead, a move like 4. ... d5 was probably more principled.

5. Bg2 d6 6. d3 Nf6 7. 0-0 Be7 8. Kh1 Rb8 9. Nd2 h5 10. h3 Qc7 11. f4 b5 12. a4 b4

It would have been safer to play 12. ... a6, but I underestimated the strength of Bortnyk's next few moves.

13. Nb5 Qd7 14. e5 dxe5 15. Nc4! a6 16. fxe5 axb5 17. axb5 Rxb5 18. exf6 gxf6 19. Ra8**19. ... Kf8?**

Engine analysis shows that Black maintains a decent position with 19. ... Qb7. "Self-pinning for immortality" might work for Ding Liren in the world championship, but it's



hard for a mere mortal like myself. White can win the queen with 20. Na5 Qxa8 21. Bxc6+ Qxc6+ 22. Nxc6, but after Black wins the knight with the pinning 22. ... Bb7, the light-square compensation is good for at least equality.

20. Bg5!

A beautiful tactical shot by Bortnyk. I went into full-on survival mode, trying desperately to avoid being turned into Mark fin soup.

20. ... f5

After 20. ... fxg5 White crashes through on f7 with 21. Qf3 Nd8 (after 21. ... f6 22. Qxc6 the trapped rook on b5 and pinned bishop on c8 will cost Black major material) 22. Ne5.

21. Bxc6?

Bortnyk had to switch to positional play with 21. Qf3, when he has no immediate win but overwhelming positional compensation for the pawn. All of Black's pieces are very stuck, while White is beautifully coordinated; the engine gives an overwhelming advantage for White. Instead Bortnyk tries to cash in, but I have just enough resources to hold everything together.

21. ... Qxc6+ 22. Qf3 Qd7 23. Ne5 Qc7 24. Rfa1

Perhaps Bortnyk had intended 24. Bf4, when the discovered attack looks dangerous, but after 24. ... Kg7, unpinning the bishop on c8, Black will assume the long diagonal by putting the bishop or the queen on b7 and have enough counterplay to survive. Having sacrificed a pawn and given Black an unopposed light-squared bishop, Bortnyk evidently felt a need to take more active measures.

24. ... Kg7 25. Rxc8 Rxc8 26. Qxh5



Bortnyk said afterwards that even here he was not worried, assuming he would have enough play against my exposed king to force at least a draw. But I have a defense ...

26. ... Qxe5 27. Bxe7 Kg8!

The only winning move, allowing the queen to come back and shield the black king.

28. Qh4 Qh8 29. Qg5+ Qg7 30. Qh4

White tries to force a repetition with the threat of Be7-f6, but I can zig-zag my queen to the light squares with tempo.

30. ... Qh7 31. Qg5+ Qg6 32. Qh4 Kg7

Now Black's king and queen patch up the holes in the kingside, and I knew I should be winning with care.

33. Bd6 Rb7 34. Kg2 Qh6 35. Qc4 Qe3 36. Qa6 Qe2+ 37. Kg1 Qf3 38. Be5+ Kg6 39. Rf1 Qd5 40. Bf4 c4 41. Re1 cxd3 42. Re5 Qc6 43. Qxd3 Rd7 44. Qe2 Qc4 45. h4 Qd4+

Probably just exchanging queens is the simplest, with an obviously winning endgame.

46. Kh2 Qc4

Now I realized I probably should just admit a slight mistake and go back to the safe route. Bortnyk tries to at least keep queens on, but it is not enough.

47. Qf2 Qxc2 48. Re2 b3 49. Kh3 Qd1 50. g4 fxg4+ 51. Kg3 Rc2 52. h5+ Kh7 53. Rxc2 bxc2, White resigned.

A Black Friday miracle! And it was not even the most sensational upset scored with the black pieces, as GM Nikolas Theodorou defeated Caruana to move himself into first place.

ENGLISH OPENING (A28)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2871)

GM Nikolas Theodorou (2694)

U.S. Masters (6), Charlotte, 11.30.2024

1. c4 Nf6 2. Nc3 e5 3. Nf3 Nc6 4. a3 d5 5. cxd5 Nxd5 6. Qc2 Nxc3 7. bxc3 Bd6 8. g3 0-0 9. Bg2 Qe7 10. d3 Bg4 11. h3 Bd7 12. 0-0 b6 13. e4 f6 14. d4 Qf7 15. Be3 Kh8 16. a4 Rad8 17. Rfe1 Na5 18. Nd2 Qh5 19. g4 Qf7 20. Qa2 Be6 21. d5 Bd7 22. Nc4 Nxc4 23. Qxc4 h5 24. Qe2 g6 25. gxh5 gxh5 26. Kh1 Rg8 27. Rg1 Qh7 28. Raf1 Rg4 29. f3 Rg3 30. h4 Rdg8 31. Kh2 Bc5 32. Bxc5 bxc5 33. Qf2 Qg6 34. a5 f5 35. exf5 Qxf5 36. Qxg3 Rxg3 37. Kxg3 Qf4+ 38. Kf2 Qd2+ 39. Kg3 Qf4+ 40. Kf2 Qxh4+ 41. Ke3 Qf4+



42. Kf2 Qd2+ 43. Kg3 h4+ 44. Kh2 Qf4+ 45. Kh1 h3 46. Rb1 Bf5 47. Rb8+ Kh7 48. Rf8 hxg2+ 49. Rxg2 Qc1+, White resigned.

As Fabi's tournament hit a slight speed bump, my own tournament was picking up steam. After surviving sketchy positions to draw two more grandmasters, I managed a win over another GM in a five-hour, 120-move endgame grind, culminating in a checkmate with bishop and knight. Going into the last day, I knew I had very real chances to score a GM norm.

But it would begin with one of the pairings that most terrified me: Black against Mikhail Antipov, one of the tournament's top seeds and a player with a renowned ability to grind out even the tiniest of advantages. Essaying the offbeat 2. b3!? in response to my French Defense, a combative Antipov sacrificed a pawn for some positional pressure, but was unable to press his advantage and eventually I was able to convert. Afterward, I sat at the board and buried my face in my hands, emotion suddenly overtaking me. I had secured a grandmaster norm, and with one game to go!

And what a game that would be. When the pairings came out, as one of the few players with 6½ out of 8 points who had just had Black, I was slated to face the final boss, Fabiano himself.

I showed up to the game in a chess-themed tank top gifted to me by my good friend Hamzah, much to the delight of the official commentator, GM Daniel Naroditsky, as well as GM Christian Chirila, Fabiano's C-Squared podcast co-host, who was also providing live commentary. Contrary to the widespread conjecture of the livestream viewers, this was not an intimidation tactic, but just a way for me to have fun and to be myself: embracing my dual identities as

weightlifter and woodpusher. Even more, my outfit was a conscious effort to ground myself, a reminder of all the support I carried with me as I headed into the toughest chess battle of my life. When I eventually got cold, I pulled on a shirt I got from Ravi, a guy who I had also become very close to.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, TAIMANOV VARIATION (B44)

IM Mark Heimann (2534)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2871)

U.S. Masters (9), Charlotte, 12.01.2024

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nc6 5. Bf4

I was not expecting a Taimanov Sicilian (Fabi later revealed that this was an improvisation, as he had expected 1. d4). I had nothing special prepared, so I played an offbeat line that has enjoyed a slight surge in popularity recently.

5. ... d6 6. Nxc6 bxc6 7. c4 Rb8 8. Qd2

Already a slight inaccuracy. Defending the e-pawn with 8. Qc2 was better.

8. ... Nf6

Black might have better punished my slightly imprecise queen placement with 8. ... e5 9. Bg3 f5, taking over the center.

9. Nc3 e5 10. Be3 Ng4 11. Bxa7 Rb7 12. Be3

Holding on to an extra pawn — an outside passed pawn, at that — but giving myself a weak pair of doubled pawns to face Black's bishop pair and powerful center. I also considered 12. h3, giving back the pawn to maintain greater structural integrity. While engine analysis shows this move was better, I decided to take the bigger risk and invite the material imbalance.

12. ... Nxe3 13. fxe3 Be7 14. b3 Be6 15. Bd3 Bh4+ 16. g3 Bg5 17. h4 Bh6



18. Be2!

In his live commentary on the C-squared podcast's YouTube channel, GM Christian Chirila was shocked to see this move, but GM Daniel Naroditsky, providing the official coverage, noted that it's the engine's top choice. A backward bishop move so soon after developing it seems counterintuitive, but the best way to stop Black's ... f7-f5 break is to prepare to clamp down on f5 with g3-g4.

18. ... Qb6 19. Kf2 Rd7 20. g4 g6 21. Rag1 0-0 22. Bf3?!

I should have been more consistent with my last move by playing 22. g5.

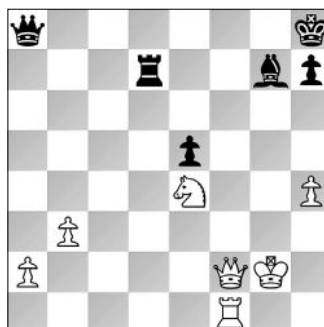
22. ... Bg7 23. Kg2 f5 24. gxf5 gxf5 25. exf5 Bxf5 26. Be4

Up to this point I was playing reasonably quickly and was somewhat ahead on the clock. Fabi later noted that he knew there was no way I could have calculated everything in such a complex position, but that even so it was unnerving to face this kind of quick and confident play. This was a deliberate choice on my part: I knew I couldn't out-calculate Fabi, who excels in calculation even relative to his peers. My one possible advantage was the psychological dynamic: I had already secured my main goal of a GM norm, whereas he needed to win to secure FIDE Circuit points and likely felt a lot more pressure. Of course I was the heavy underdog either way, so I thought I would try to make the most of that slim chance.

26. ... d5

Black has achieved the ... f7-f5 break that opens powerful attacking lines on the kingside, and now 26. ... Be6! would have given him a near-decisive attack (though not without some complex tactics that Fabi said in a post-game interview even he couldn't fully calculate). Instead, this move lets me simplify my way back to equality.

27. Bxf5 Rxf5 28. Rf1 Rxf1 29. Rxf1 Qd8 30. cxd5 cxd5 31. Qf2 Kh8 32. e4 dxe4 33. Nxe4 Qa8



34. Re1

The critical move of the game. My original intention was 34. Qf3, which gives back the pawn on a2 but keeps White's pieces active; between that and the reduced material, the game almost certainly burns out to a draw. Even Fabi said afterwards that he was about ready to acquiesce to a draw had I played this move. After further thought, however, I couldn't find a tactical refutation to holding onto my extra pawn and decided, bravely but perhaps foolhardily, to try to make it through the minefield and win.

Right before the game, a friend of mine told me a story about GM David Smerdon drawing World Champion Magnus Carlsen. After the game, Smerdon was told, "Congratulations on drawing Magnus; you're a legend for the day. But if you had beaten him, you would have been a legend for a lifetime." For better or worse, that quote stuck with me.

34. ... Rd4 35. Qe2 Bh6 36. Kg1 Bf4 37. Qg2 Rd7 38. Ng5 Qa5

Now all of Black's pieces have come to active posts. The engine still calls it equal, but the position is quite dangerous for White.

39. Rf1??

Finally I make the fatal blunder.

39. ... h6

I saw 39. ... Qa7+ 40. Kh1 Rd2?? 41. Nf7+ Qxf7 42. Qxd2, winning the Exchange. As Daniel Naroditsky said on the stream when showing this line, "A beautiful idea ... but Fabi wasn't born yesterday!" After the text move, the knight can't move due to the pinning 40. ... Rg7.

40. Qc6 Qa7+

Defending the rook with tempo and enabling the capture of the knight. There is no perpetual and I am simply lost.

41. Kh1 hgx5 42. Qh6+ Kg8 43. Qg6+ Kf8 44. Qxg5 Qa8+ 45. Qg2 Qd8 46. Qg4 Rg7 47. Qf5+ Kg8 48. Qh3 Rg3 49. Rg1 Qd5+ 50. Kh2 Rg7+, White resigned.

Chef Caruana finally served up the Mark fin soup. As Theodorou had ended the tournament with a series of draws while Fabiano rebounded with wins, Fabi's efforts netted him the coveted first-place tournament finish and precious points on the FIDE Circuit. Indeed, this would eventually lead to his circuit victory and qualification to the 2026 candidates.

Meanwhile, the tournament was studded with many other success stories. Turkish IM Isik Can, already having two of the three re-

quired grandmaster norms and the required rating of 2500, secured his final norm to clinch the title. Meanwhile, North Carolina local IM Tianqi “Steve” Wang secured his first GM norm with a 6/9 score, being paired up eight(!) out of nine games.

In an incredible series of late-tournament heroics, IM Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova, first board for the most recent U.S. Women’s Olympiad team, turned around a slow start to the tournament by beating three grandmasters in a row. Although she fell just short of a GM norm, she pocketed several thousand dollars from a few prizes: a share of third place overall, the top-scoring female player, and the top finisher rated under 2500.

CARO-KANN DEFENSE, ADVANCE VARIATION (B12)

GM David Brodsky (2638)

IM Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova (2472)

U.S. Masters (8), Charlotte, 12.01.2024

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 c5 4. c3 Nc6 5. Be2 Bf5 6. Nf3 e6 7. 0-0 h6 8. Be3 Qb6 9. Nbd2 a6 10. Qa4 g5!?

Ambitious play by Begim.

11. dxc5

It would have been more accurate to follow the classic advice of meeting a thrust on the flank with play in the center by playing 11. c4 cxd4 12. Nxd4.

11. ... Bxc5 12. Nd4

It probably would have been better to trade with 12. Bxc5 Qxc5.

12. ... Bxd4 13. cxd4 Qxb2 14. Rfc1 Nge7 15. Bh5 b5 16. Qd1 Nxd4?

Up to this point Begim’s pawn grab is approved by the engine, but with this misstep she allows Brodsky a powerful attack.

17. Ne4! Ndc6 18. Nd6+ Kd7 19. Nxf7 Rhf8 20. Bc5 g4 21. a4 b4



22. a5?

This move throws away all of White’s advantage. Instead, 22. Nd6! gives White a winning edge.

22. ... Rab8 23. Bxe7 Nxe7 24. Qa4+?

This appears to win an Exchange, but with Black’s pieces so active the tactics do not work out.

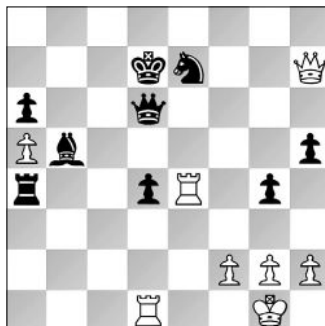
24. ... Rb5 25. Nd6 Bd3

The pressure on f2 does not allow White to so easily win the Exchange.

26. Bf7 Qxe5 27. Nxb5 Bxb5 28. Bxe6+ Qxe6

Now Black is up material and in the driver’s seat, though with the king so exposed it is tricky to convert.

29. Qxb4 h5 30. Qc5 Rc8 31. Qa7+ Kd8 32. Re1 Qd6 33. Rad1 Rc4 34. Qa8+ Kd7 35. Qh8 d4 36. Qh7 Ra4 37. Re4



Good defense by Brodsky, along with a few inaccuracies by Begim, has restored the game to dynamic equality. Indeed, Begim offers a repetition.

37. ... Bc6 38. Re2 Bb5 39. Re4 Bc6 40.

Re2 Bb5 41. Red2

A brave decision to spurn the repetition, but letting the powerful d-pawn lodge itself so far into White’s position was a fatal mistake. From here on, Begim takes over.

41. ... d3 42. Qxh5 Rd4 43. h3 gxh3 44. Qxh3+ Qe6 45. Qf3 Nd5 46. Rc1 Re4 47. Rxd3 Bxd3 48. Qxd3 Re1+ 49. Rxe1 Qxe1+ 50. Kh2 Qxa5 51. Qf5+ Kd6 52. f4 Qe1 53. Qf8+ Qe7 54. Qb8+ Qc7 55. Qf8+ Kc6 56. Qa8+ Qb7 57. Qe8+ Qd7 58. Qa8+ Kb5 59. Qb8+ Kc4 60. Qe5 Qh7+ 61. Kg1 Qa7+ 62. Kh2 Qe3 63. Qa1 Qxf4+ 64. g3 Qd2+ 65. Kh3 a5 66. Qa4+ Qb4 67. Qa2+ Kc5 68. Qf2+ Kb5 69. Qe2+ Qc4 70. Qe8+ Kb4 71. Qb8+ Qb5 72. Qf8+ Qc5 73. Qb8+ Kc4 74. Qe8 Kb3 75. Qe1 Qc8+ 76. Kh2 Qh8+ 77. Kg2 Qc3 78. Qe6 Qc4, White resigned.

After the tournament, an unexpected Venmo payment registered on my phone. It was Taryn, sending me \$25, or 2,500 cents, one for each rating point required to become a grandmaster. “Eat some real food before St. Louis,” she told me.

Indeed the job was not done and my trip was not over, as I and many other players were headed the very next day to the elite Saint Louis Masters, where Fabiano also was slated to seek a tournament victory that would aid his Candidates chances. How that tournament went is another story, but suffice it to say that my friend Suzette and her mom let me come back for the car that I left at their place.

For them, and for all my friends and loved ones who had my back as I went into each of these 64-square battles, I am most thankful following this incredible Thanksgiving run. ♠

2024 U.S. MASTERS AT A GLANCE

NOV. 27 - DEC. 1, 2024 | CHARLOTTE, N.C.

WINNERS

1ST: GM Fabiano Caruana, 8/9. **2ND:** GM Nikolas Theodorou, 7½. **3RD-5TH:** GM Grigoriy Oparin, GM Illia Nyzhnyk, IM Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova, 7.

CLASS PRIZES

U2500: IM Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova, 7. **U2350:** IM Mark Plotkin, 6½. **U2200:** WGM Dina Belenkaya, FM Dylan Tang, 5½. **TOP WOMAN:** IM Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova, 7. **TOP SENIOR:** GM Alex Fishbein, IM Oladapo Olutola Adu, 5.

NORMS

GM: IM Isik Can, IM Mark Heimann, IM Evan Park, IM Tianqi Wang. **IM:** FM Avi Kaplan, Gunnar Andersen.

No Laughing Matter

FM Avi Kaplan goes toe-to-toe with GM Aryan Tari.

BY JJ LANG



Over the years I've seen multiple games where FM Avi Kaplan was chortling at the board during complex positions, including several

where he defeated me in the days before he reached his current strength. I can only imagine how he struggled to stifle laughter in this battle with the Norwegian number three.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B90)

GM Aryan Tari (2469)

FM Avi Kaplan (2379)

U.S. Masters (4), Charlotte, 11.29.2024

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6
5. Nc3 a6 6. Bd3 g6 7. f3 Bg7 8. Be3 0-0 9.
Qd2 h5 10. 0-0-0 Nc6 11. h4 Bd7 12. Nxc6
bxc6 13. Bc4 Qa5 14. Bh6 Rab8 15. Bb3
Rfc8 16. Rhe1 Bh8 17. e5 dxe5



White's trendy 6. Bd3 against Black's Najdorf has led to a version of a "Dragodorf" where Black argues that the d3-bishop is misplaced, and that enticing it there was well worth the tempo spent on ... a7-a6. Play becomes quite Dragon-esque now. The kings are camped on opposite sides. White fights to open up the kingside to catch up to Black's imposing play along the b-file.

18. Qg5?!

Trading queens with 18. Ne4 was better than allowing Black to maintain attacking

chances.

18. ... Bf5

Black defends the g6-pawn (as the f7-pawn is pinned by the b3-bishop) while pressuring the c2-pawn.

19. g4?!

Huge if true. The bishop has no safe squares on the b1-h7 diagonal, so any bishop move would lose the g6-pawn and, with it, the game. But Black does not have to move the bishop!

White needed to play 19. Qd2, but it's an admission of guilt!

19. ... hxg4 20. h5

20. fxg4 Nxg4 was the point, as 21. h5 Bf6 kindly asks White's queen to step away from the kingside.

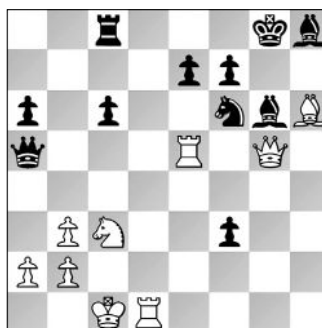
20. ... Rxb3

That's one way to unpin the f7-pawn! Note that 20. ... Nxh5 also worked after 21. fxg4 Bf6 22. Qe3 Bxg4.

21. hxg6 Bxg6

Here 21. ... fxg6 was more accurate, as 22. cxb3 gxf3 does not give White Re1xe5 — the f5-bishop interferes with White's queen!

22. cxb3 gxf3 23. Rxe5



Material is equal, but White's king should be sweating after ...

23. ... Qc7!

Improving communication with the rest of her majesty's forces.

24. Rf5 Qh2

What a fantastic position. The f5-rook is pinned by the pinned g6-bishop due to mate threats from a piece that sat on a5 just two turns ago. Madness!

25. Rd2 Qh1+ 26. Rd1 Qh3 27. Rf4 Nh7?!

Clearly best was 27. ... f2!, as now 28. Rxf2 allows 28. ... Ng4 forking the f2-rook and h6-bishop! Black has a winning material advantage after 29. Ne4 Qxh6.

28. Qh4

White hurries a second piece to cover the f2-square.

28. ... Qg2 29. Rd2 Qg1+ 30. Nd1

Avoiding 30. Rd1?? Qe3+ 31. Rd2 Bxc3!.

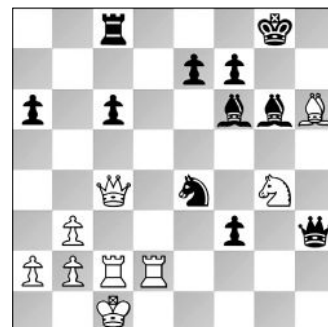
30. ... Qc5+ 31. Rc4 Qf5 32. Rcc2

At least White has prevented mate!

32. ... Bf6

Black continues to improve his forces.

33. Qc4 Ng5 34. Ne3 Qh3 35. Ng4 Ne4



Black's knight is now an imposing force, and Kaplan is closing in on the kill.

36. Nxf6+ exf6 37. Rh2 Qg3 38. Qf1 Rd8?

The fastest win was 38. ... Nc5 39. Rh3 (or 39. Rxc5 Qxh2) 39. ... Nd3+ 40. Kd2 (40. Kb1

GM Aryan Tari stares down the camera



is met by 40. ... Qe1+ 41. Qxe1 Nxe1) 40. ... Qe5!, as 41. Rxf3 Nb4 gives Black an irresistible attack.

39. Rh3

This might be the first resource the entire game that Kaplan did not anticipate correctly.

39. ... Qe5 40. Rxf3

The f3-pawn falls just in time, and with it some of Black's most pressing threats.

40. ... Nc5 41. Re2 Qh5 42. Bd2



42. ... Nd3+ 43. Rxd3?

This is losing, because, believe it or not,

White had to give up the b2-pawn in order to have sufficient king safety. Only the incredible 43. Kd1!! Nxb2+ 44. Kc1 Nd3+ 45. Rxd3 Rxd3 46. Qe1 gives White hope, due to the opposite-colored bishops and the ineffectiveness of Black's f-pawns.

43. ... Rxd3 44. Qf2

White's king is dead in the water after 44. Qe1 Qf5 45. Kd1 Rd5 46. Re8+ Kg7. For instance, 47. Re3 Qc2+ 48. Ke2 Bh5+ and the bishop drops.

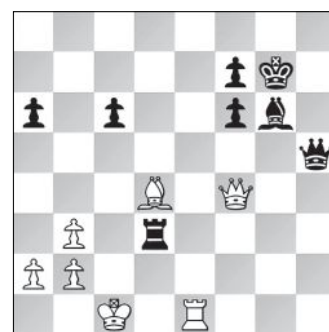
44. ... Kg7?!

Black could have instead forced the attack through with some spectacular geometric maneuvering that is not possible to expect from anybody with a minute left on their clock: 44. ... Rf3 45. Qd4 Rf1+ 46. Re1 Qf5 47. Kd1 Rf2! forces significant material loss to prevent ... Qf5-b1 mate.

45. Be3 Qh1+

As an improvement, the engine gives 45. ... Qh3 46. Re1 a5!! preventing b3-b4 and keeping White's king cut off from the b2-square.

46. Re1 Qd5 47. Qf4 Qh5 48. Bd4, draw.



It's true that a GM who offers a draw against a much lower-rated player is almost certainly convinced they are lost. But it's not always clear that the opponent has found the win — perhaps they are bluffing, or the position is just too complex to solve. In any event, here the GM was wise to offer. After 48. ... Rf3 49. Bxf6+ Kh7 Black wins; lacking a forced mate along the back rank, White cannot save the f6-bishop! For instance, 50. Qg5 allows 50. ... Rxf6!! (an easy move to overlook with a minute on the clock while trying to avoid being mated) 51. Qxf6 Qh6+! 52. Kd1 Bh5+ and the queen is lost. A wild game, and despite leaving a half-point on the table, likely one Kaplan will remember. ♠



THE AMERICAN CUP ★ 2025

MARCH 15 - 24

WATCH LIVE: USCHESSCHAMPS | YOUTUBE | TWITCH

OPEN FIELD

GM Levon Aronian
GM Fabiano Caruana
GM Leinier Dominguez
GM Abhimanyu Mishra
GM Hikaru Nakamura
GM Ray Robson
GM Sam Sevian
GM Wesley So

WOMEN'S FIELD

WGM Tatev Abrahamyan
WGM Thalia Cervantes
GM Irina Krush
IM Alice Lee
WGM Atousa Pourkashian
IM Nazi Paikidze
IM Carissa Yip
IM Anna Zatonskih

CHAMPIONSHIP BRACKET BONUS \$15,000
TOTAL PRIZE FUND \$250,000

CHAMPIONSHIP BRACKET BONUS \$9,000
TOTAL PRIZE FUND \$150,000

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Champions Showdown

-The Kings-

MARCH 4 - 6

DAILY ROUNDS AT 12:00 PM

WATCH LIVE: USCHESSCHAMPS | YOUTUBE | TWITCH

THE FIELD:

GM LEVON ARONIAN, GM FABIANO CARUANA,
GM LEINIER DOMINGUEZ, GM HIKARU NAKAMURA
GM RAY ROBSON, GM WESLEY SO

WATCHING THE **FABIANO** **TRAIN**



The view from
second place at
the 2024 U.S.
Championship

BY **GM AWONDER LIANG**



FOR ME, THE U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP represents one of a very few opportunities to meet the best players in the world. After missing qualification by a month on the rating list, I eked out a spot in the 2024 Championship, in St. Louis, by winning a tiebreaker against GM Mikhail Antipov at the U.S. Open.

This being my fifth U.S. Championship, I had some idea of the level of preparation needed for this event, and none of the time to do it. Nevertheless, I prepared an ambitious battle plan to fight against those in the field who were either married with kids, or who were kids themselves.

Among the scariest competitors included GMs Fabiano Caruana, Wesley So, and Hans Niemann, all of whom had very clearly been working and studying for thousands of hours in the past months. The first round did not disappoint — even though the round ended with six draws, the clash between Hans and Fabiano was intense. Fabiano ended up victorious in the event, but he could easily have started with a loss.

GIUOCO PIANO (C50)

GM Hans Niemann (2818)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2857)

**U.S. Championship (1), St. Louis,
10.11.2024**

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. 0-0 d6 5. c3 Bb6 6. d3 h6 7. Re1 Qf6

A sort of funny line that Fabi likes.

8. b4 Nge7 9. a4 a5 10. b5 Nd8 11. Be3 Ne6 12. Nbd2 Nf4 13. d4 Bg4 14. h3 Bh5 15. Bf1 0-0?



It would have been more to the point to play 15. ... g5 16. g3 0-0-0, with a complicated position. Now Black's pieces get bunched up on the kingside.

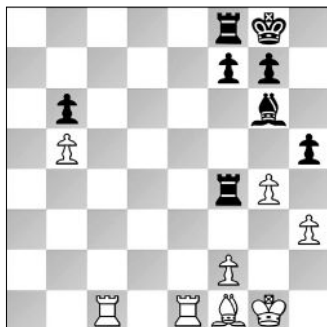
16. Rc1 Ne6 17. g4 Bg6 18. Nxe5?

Letting Fabi off the hook. White can threaten to squish Black's position with 18. h4!. If (a) 18. ... exd4 19. cxd4 and White just steamrolls through the center, because 19. ... Nxd4 loses a piece to 20. Nxd4 Bxd4 21. g5 Qe5 22. Nc4, and if instead (b) 18. ... Nf4 19. Kh2! Bh7 20. g5 Qg6 21. Bxf4 exf4 22. Bh3 is no fun for Black.

18. ... dxe5 19. dxe5 Qxe5 20. Nf3 Qxe4 21. Bxb6 Rad8!

A nice intermezzo to save the game.

22. Nd4 Qf4 23. Bxa5 b6 24. Bb4 Nxd4 25. cxd4 Rxd4 26. Qe2 Rxb4 27. Qxe7 Rxa4 28. Qxc7 h5 29. Qxf4 Rxf4



The smoke has cleared and White is marginally better due to the weakness on b6. But Fabiano, ever the professional, manages to save the game without too many difficulties.

30. gxh5 Bxh5 31. Rc6 Rb8 32. Re7 Kf8 33. Ra7 Re4 34. Kg2 Re7 35. Ra6 Reb7 36. Kg3 f6 37. Bg2 Be8 38. Re6 Bd7 39. Bxb7 Bxe6 40. Bc6 Kf7 41. Ra7+ Kg6 42. Re7 Bc4 43. h4 Kh6 44. f3 Bd3 45. Rd7 Bf5 46. Rd6 Bc2 47. Bd5 Bd3 48. Bf7 Bf1 49. Kf2 Rf8 50. Kxf1 Rxf7 51. Kf2 Kh5 52. Kg3 Rb7 53. Rd5+ Kh6 54. Kg4 Rc7 55. Rd6 Rc4+ 56. f4 Rb4 57. Rxb6 g6 58. Rxf6 Rxb5 59. Re6 Ra5 60. Re5 Ra1 61. f5 gxf5+ 62. Rxf5 Ra4+ 63. Rf4 Rxf4+ 64. Kxf4 Kh5 65. Kg3 Kh6 66. Kg4 Kh7 67. Kg5 Kh8 68. Kg6 Kg8 69. h5 Kh8 70. h6 Kg8 71. h7+ Kh8 72. Kh6, draw.

For my part, nothing matches the nervousness of starting an event. I try to dry my sweaty palms on my pants before the handshake. I try to quell the butterflies by taking deep breaths and closing my eyes. In the darkness, I try to remember the preparation I did before the game.

Unfortunately, I spent most of the evening and morning before the first round playing *League of Legends*, forgetting most of my preparation (that I hadn't done). But Caïssa smiled me on that first day, and I steered the game into perpetual check. Game 1 done!

The tournament really started to heat up in round 3, with Caruana defeating GM Ray Robson in a positional game where Ray simply lost the thread.

TAKING OVER

GM Ray Robson (2768)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2857)

U.S. Championship (3), St. Louis, 10.13.2024



WHITE TO MOVE

White has a nice position here, with more active pieces. Maybe it was a better idea to play slowly; Ray loses the thread over the next couple of moves.

17. Ne5

White could keep a safe, small edge after 17. Re1 Bxd3 18. Qxd3 Bf6 19. Ra1 Re8, with breaks of a2-a4 or e3-e4 in the cards.

17. ... Qc8 18. e4

This plan feels correct, since White's pieces are so active; it would be my first intuition as well. However, Black has everything covered.

18. ... dxe4 19. Bxe4 Bxe4 20. Nxe4 f6!

Otherwise Rb1-c1 would collapse Black's position. Now everything holds together.

21. Nf3 a5 22. a3?

Now Black takes over. If Ray had realized the state of things, he surely would have found 22. a4! blasting open the position and simplifying. Play could go 22. ... Bxb4 (22. ... Nxa4 23. bxa5 Rxa5 24. d5! and White takes a small initiative) 23. axb5 cxb5 24. Bd6 Bxd6 25. Nxd6 Qd7 26. Rxb5 Qxd6 27. Qb3+ with equality.

22. ... axb4 23. axb4 Nd5 24. Nc5 Re8 25. Qc2 Ra3 26. Rfc1 Qf5

(see diagram top of next column)

Over the last few moves Black has become more active, and White's position is about to



POSITION AFTER 26. ... Qf5

fall apart. The bishop on h2 does remarkably little, and the pawns on b4 and d4 are falling.

27. Qxf5 Nxf5 28. Rb3 Rea8 29. g4 Bxc5 30. Rxa3 Rxa3 31. Rxc5 Rxf3 32. gxf5 Rc3 The rest is technique.

33. fxc6 hxc6 34. Bd6 Rc4 35. Kg2 Kf7 36. Kf3 Ke6 37. Bf8 Kd7 38. Ke4 Rxb4 39. Rc1 Rb3 40. Rg1 Ke6 41. Rxc6 Kf7, White resigned.

The always-electric Hans decimated GM Leiner Dominguez in the game of the tournament. I had taken a short draw against Hans in the previous round and was pleased that I had avoided the devastation that he was capable of inflicting.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

GM Hans Niemann (2818)

GM Leinier Dominguez Perez (2806)

U.S. Championship (3), St. Louis, 10.13.2024

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. 0-0 Nf6 5. d3 d6 6. c3 0-0 7. Re1 a5 8. h3 h6 9. Nbd2 Be6 10. Bb5 Bb6 11. Nc4 Bc5 12. Ba4 Bxc4 13. dxc4 Nh5!?



An interesting idea, preventing kingside expansion plans such as g2-g3 followed by Kg1-g2.

14. g4!?

White immediately sharpens the game, trying to punish Black's ambitious maneuver. Objectively, however, Black stands completely fine. One alternative is 14. a3 Qf6 15. Rf1 Ng3 16. Bxc6 bxc6 17. b4 with some complications.

14. ... Nf6 15. g5 hxg5 16. Bxg5 Qc8?!

The typical 16. ... Qe7! 17. Kh2 Nd8! 18. Rg1 Ne6 19. Qd2 c6 20. Rg2 g6 21. Rag1 Kh7 would have been very strong. In contrast with later positions where the knight is on g6, Black gains relatively more space on the kingside and hits the white bishop on g5.

17. Kh2! Nh7?!

Now White takes over. Black was better off with 17. ... Qe6, delaying Re1-g1 and forcing White to spend another tempo on defending the e4-pawn. But not 17. ... Bxf2 because 18. Re2 Bc5 19. Bxf6 gxf6 20. Rg2+ would be devastating.

18. Rg1 Qe6 19. Rg2 Ne7

Black's last chance to change the trajectory of the game was 19. ... Nxg5 20. Nxg5 Qh6, trying to free up some space. White has a dangerous attack after 21. Bxc6 bxc6 22. Qg4, but it's still manageable.

20. Bd2 Ng6 21. Qe2



Black cannot improve his position on the kingside, while White can. A disaster scenario for Leinier.

21. ... Qf6 22. Rg4 c6 23. Rag1 Kh8 24. Bc2 Bb6 25. R1g2 Bd8 26. c5!

Black's king is getting hunted down.

26. ... dxc5 27. h4 c4 28. h5 Ne7 29. Rxc7 Rg8 30. R7g3 b5 31. Ng5 Nxg5 32. Bxg5 Qe6 33. Qf3 Nc8 34. Bf6+ Bxf6 35. Rxc8+ Kh7 36. Re8, Black resigned.

A nice finish to a fine attack.

For my part, I managed to grind down GM Levon Aronian in 97 moves — the longest game of the event, and a game with so

many errors and inaccuracies that I will leave the annotations as a useful exercise to the reader. But what chess gives it just as easily takes away, and I was stunned by Ray in the following round.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B90)

GM Awonder Liang (2755)

GM Ray Robson (2768)

U.S. Championship (4), St. Louis, 10.14.2024

In hindsight it may have been more prudent to play it safe this early in the event, but I was feeling ambitious — a dangerous attitude against Ray.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6

5. Nc3 a6 6. h3 e5 7. Nb3 Be6 8. Qf3!?

An interesting idea. White's concept is to keep the c1-bishop flexible.

8. ... Be7 9. Bd2 0-0 10. 0-0-0 b5?!

Black's best is probably 10. ... Nc6!?, with long lines afterwards.

11. Nd5 Nxd5 12. exd5 Bc8



A new move to me, and one I didn't check. I was expecting 12. ... Bd7 13. Ba5, which is reasonable for both sides.

13. Ba5?!

I wanted to shut down all counterplay on the queenside, and I was still quite confident here. But this turns out to be too slow. White is better off after 13. Kb1. White naturally wants to play Nb3-a5, and the pawn sacrifice 13. ... a5 14. Bxb5 a4 15. Nc1 Qb6 16. Qe2 doesn't work.

13. ... Qe8 14. Kb1 f5 15. Bb4 Nd7 16. Na5 Nf6

Around here, I had the sense that my position was overwhelming, as I had played all the natural moves, so it must be time to look for ways to push the position to a critical state. In reality, Black is totally fine.



GM Hans Niemann



GM Leinier Dominguez Perez



GM Ray Robson

17. Qa3?!

Too ambitious. I could have played 17. g3 Bd8 18. Bg2, an interesting way for White to control the e4-square. The position is around equal, at any rate.

17. ... Ne4 18. Rg1 Nxf2 19. Re1 Ne4 20. Bd3 Rf6 21. g4

With a massive time advantage, complete confidence in my position, and all my pieces entering the attack, it felt as if the end was in sight.

21. ... Ng5 22. Bxf5

It was necessary to drop back with 22. Be2 fxg4 23. hxg4 Bd7, with a horrid but still defensible position for White.

22. ... Bxf5 23. gxf5 Rxf5 24. Nc6 Nf3 25. Rgf1 e4

It was around here I realized something had gone not quite according to plan.

26. Rxe4 Nd2+ 27. Bxd2 Rxf1+ 28. Be1 Bh4, White resigned.

As it turned out, the end was near after all. If 29. Rxe8+ Rxe8 30. c3 Re2! and mate soon.

Handling losses is always the hardest part of chess. After analyzing the game with Ray across the street at the Saint Louis Chess Club, he graciously allowed me to play a couple of blitz games against him. Unfortunately, I lost every game we played there as well, and so I returned to the Chase Hotel winless for the day, with a miserable rest day ahead.

I drowned myself in carbs at the local Italian restaurant, and my friend IM Carissa Yip consoled me as I rambled incoherently. We hit the hotel bar; I made a longshot bet on Carissa to sweep the women's section and found myself woken up on the lobby couch at around 1 a.m. by the receptionist. I retreated to my room, woke up again at 5 a.m. and worked on homework for the rest of the day.

Anyway, the other participants in the tournament were chugging along. Fabiano went on a tear, winning an exquisite fourth win in a row, this time against his second, GM Grigoriy Oparin.

RESTRICTION

GM Fabiano Caruana (2857)

GM Grigoriy Oparin (2730)

U.S. Championship (6), St. Louis, 10.17.2024



WHITE TO MOVE

Black is completely tied down, but it still seems holdable. White cannot attack with 27. Bg4 because of the c4-pawn. Although White has a “bad” bishop, Black’s knight is similarly bad, reduced to the defense of pawns. In this endgame, Fabi masterfully controls Black’s knight, not allowing it to get to any active squares.

27. Rc1 h5 28. g3 Kg7 29. h4 Rff7 30. Kg2 Rf6 31. Bf3 Rff7 32. Be2 Rf6 33. Ra1 Rff7

Black could have gotten immediate counterplay and an easier game with 33. ... Rcf7! After 34. Rf1 Rxf1 35. Bxf1 Kh6 36. Kg1 g5 37. hxg5+ Kxg5 38. Bh3 Rc7 Black is just in time to liquidate the kingside and hold.

34. Rf3 Rxf3 35. Kxf3 Ne7 36. Rb1 Rb7 37. Ke3 Ng8

The knight is looking to get to c5 via f6 and d7, so Fabi quickly stops it by breaking the kingside.

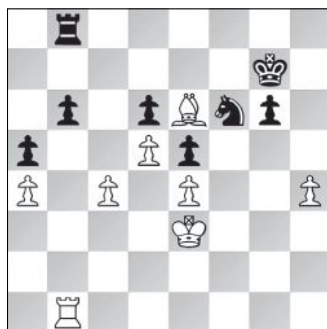


Is there ever a party
in Saint Louis without
some blitz?



GM Grigoriy
Oparin

38. g4 hxg4 39. Bxg4 Nf6 40. Be6 Rb8



Black is threatening to bring the rook to h8 and take the h-pawn, so White has only one chance to press an advantage. And — Fabi being Fabi — he takes it!

41. c5! dxc5 42. d6 Rh8?

Black still had a miraculous engine-like defense: After 42. ... Kf8, threatening ... Nf6-h5-f4, comes 43. Kd3 Kg7! 44. Rb2 (if 44. d7 Nxd7 45. Bxd7 Rd8; White wants to go 44. Kc4 heading for d5 immediately, but it runs into 44. ... Nxe4 45. Kd5 Nc3+) 44. ... c4+!! clearing away the square for the knight! Now:

(a) 45. Kxc4 Nxe4 46. Kd5 Nc3+ 47. Kc6 (47. Kxe5 Nxa4) 47. ... Nxa4 48. Rf2 Nc5, and Black will go ... Kg7-h6-h5 and White will soon run out of pawns.

(b) 45. Bxc4 Kh6 46. Be6 Re8! saves a tempo in the future. After 47. Bd5 Rd8 48. Rxb6 Kh5 49. Kc4 Kxh4 50. Kb5 g5 somehow Black is just in time, although it is still very complicated.

43. d7 Rd8 44. Rxb6 Kf8 45. Bc4 Kg7 46.

Bb5! Kf7

Black is totally paralyzed: 46. ... Nxd7 47. Rd6 wins.

47. Rc6 Nxd7 48. Bc4+ Ke7 49. Re6+ Kf7

50. Rxe5+ Kf8 51. Re6 Rb8 52. Bb5 Rb7

53. Rxb6 Ne5 54. Rg5, Black resigned.

An astounding game in terms of the restriction of the black knight.

Inspired by Fabi's game, I decided I would also take a crack at beating Oparin, and while much of the game is once again too embarrassing to be published, the end was quite nice.

CRASHING THROUGH

GM Grigoriy Oparin (2730)

GM Awonder Liang (2755)

U.S. Championship (7), St. Louis,
10.18.2024



BLACK TO MOVE

23. ... Nge7 24. f4?

White looks to gain some counterplay, but this is actually more weakening. Black is slightly better after 24. Nf3 Ra8 25. Bb5 f6, but it is nothing too special.

24. ... exf4 25. Bxf4 Ra8 26. Bc2 Ng6 27.

Be3 Ra3

Black is coming in, and now the d3-pawn is weak.

28. Nf3 Qa5 29. Nd2

White defends the queenside against ideas such as ... b4-b3 and ... Ra3-a2, but I was quite proud of finding the following concept.

29. ... Nh4!

Launching an attack on the white king!

30. Nb3 Qh5 31. Bd1 Qg6 32. Kh2 Ne5 33. Nc1

White's position was hopeless anyway, but now it tactically falls apart.

33. ... Rxd3! 34. Qf2

White can't take: 34. Nxd3 Nxd3 and after the queen moves, I take the rook and White can't take back because of mate on g2.

34. ... Qxe4 35. Bg5 Rxh3+! 36. Kg1

There's no salvation in 36. gxf3 Nxf3+ 37. Bxf3 Nxf3+.

36. ... Qxg2+ 37. Qxg2 Nxg2 38. Kxg2 hxg5

39. c5 Rc3, White resigned.

In the meanwhile, Levon, who had been struggling so far, swindled together a nice win against GM Sam Shankland that I just have to show.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, DRAGON VARIATION (B72)

GM Levon Aronian (2814)

GM Sam Shankland (2745)

U.S. Championship (5), St. Louis,
10.16.2024

1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3. Nge2 g6 4. d4 cxd4 5. Nxd4 Bg7 6. Be3 Nf6 7. Bc4 0-0 8. Bb3 d6 9. h3 Na5 10. 0-0 b6 11. Re1 Bb7 12. Qd3 Rc8 13. Rad1 Nxb3 14. axb3 a6 15. b4 Qc7 16. b5 a5 17. Bg5 Rfe8 18. Qe3 Qc4 19. Bh6 Bh8 20. Rd3 Qb4 21. Bg5



It's not really been clear what Levon has been trying to accomplish in the past few moves, and White's queenside is verging on collapse. However, here Shankland runs into more of the bad luck that followed him throughout the event.

21. ... Rc4?!

Falling for a devilish trick. Black had numerous powerful options, but strongest of all was 21. ... h6! with an incredible deflection of the white bishop. After 22. Bxh6 Nd7 Black threatens to win everything with ... Nd7-e5-c4. After 23. Nc6 Bxc6 24. bxc6 Rxc6 White will lose more material, as 25. Nd5 is met by 25. ... Qxb2.

Black could also have played 21. ... h5

creating space on the kingside. And 21. ... Nd7 22. Nc6 Bxc6 23. bxc6 Nc5 24. Nd5 Qxb2 is good for a slight edge too.

22. Nf5 gxf5?

Missing a key detail down the road and getting immediately checkmated. Black could play 22. ... Rc5 with a very complicated position, or 22. ... Qc5 23. Qxc5 Rxc5 24. e5 dxe5 25. Nxe7+ Kf8 26. Bxf6 Bxf6 27. Ned5 Bd8 with equality.

23. Bh6 Nxe4 24. Nxe4



GM Sam
Shankland



GM Levon
Aronian



24. ... Be5

Shankland surely missed that 24. ... f4 fails to 25. Qg3+!! fxg3 26. Rxg3+ Bg7 27. Nf6+ and mate next turn.

25. Nxd6!

The knight on d6 is immune and attacks four black pieces, which is just not a good sign.

25. ... f6

Mate is coming up after 25. ... exd6 26. Qg5+ Kh8 27. Qg7+ Bxg7 28. Rxe8+.

26. Nxc4 Qxc4 27. f4 Kh8 28. fxe5 Rg8 29. Rd2, Black resigned.

By this point in the event, things had clarified, with Fabi in the clear lead at +3, your author a half-point behind at +2, and a batch of players at +1 or on an even score.

My battle against Fabiano came in Round 9. The main event of the day, however, was the pre-round betting on the fireworks in the women's section, where Carissa was threatening to win the Fischer Prize for a sweep. I already had bet \$100 with Sam, and closed a bet with Wesley just before the bell was rung for the start of the round. My actual game turned out to be a battle between my desire to fall asleep and Fabiano's desire to embarrass me by getting into a worse position and forcing me to play chess. I quickly found a way to simplify the position and promptly conked out in my hotel room.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2857)

GM Awonder Liang (2755)

U.S. Championship (9), St. Louis,
10.21.2024

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. 0-0 Nf6 5. d3 d6 6. c3 Bb6 7. Nbd2 0-0 8. Bb3 Ne7 9. Nc4 Ng6 10. Re1 Re8

(see diagram top of next column)

11. d4?!



POSITION AFTER 10. ... Re8

I'm not sure what the concept here was. In interviews, Fabi later said that he thought the game position was interesting, although I feel perhaps he had confused some lines. These are the main alternatives:

(a) It's unclear but balanced after 11. Ng5!? Re7 12. d4 exd4 13. cxd4 h6 14. Nxf7 Rxf7 15. Nxb6 axb6 16. Bxf7+ Kxf7 17. f4;

(b) The main line is 11. Bc2 c6 12. Nxb6 Qxb6 (12. ... axb6 is also interesting), and play can be somewhat forcing or more slow, depending on White's choice.

11. ... exd4 12. Nxb6 axb6 13. cxd4 Nxe4 14. Bxf7+ Kxf7 15. Rxe4 Rxe4

It might have been even more interesting to play 15. ... h6, but that's far too subtle for me.

16. Ng5+ Kg8 17. Nxe4 Qe7 18. Nc3 Qf7

Black's concept is to play around the light squares here with ... Bc8-e6 or ... Ng6-e7.

19. d5!?

Fabi tries gaining control over the center, but now Black develops very quickly.

19. ... Bd7 20. Qd4 Qf5 21. Be3 Ne5



22. Qe4?!

Strictly speaking, kind of a bad move. But I was mentally prepared to equalize and make a draw, so now I groaned as I realized that I would have to pretend to calculate and squeeze my better position. The game would end quickly after 22. b3 Re8 23. Rf1.

22. ... Qxe4 23. Nxe4 Ra5 24. Nc3 b5 25. b4 Ra3 26. Bd2 c5?!

Missing a key detail. After 26. ... Kf7 White's passive position would mean a real torture for him — but also for me.

27. dxc6 e.p. bxc6 28. Ne4 Nc4 29. Bf4!

Now White has some activity and is totally fine.

29. ... Rd3 30. f3 Bf5 31. Ng3 Bg6 32. a4 bxa4 33. Rxa4 Rd1+ 34. Kf2 Nb2 35. Ra8+ Kf7 36. Ne4 Bxe4 37. fxe4 Rd4 38. Rc8 Rxb4 39. Bxd6 Rxe4 40. Rxc6 Nd3+ 41. Kf3 Ne5+ 42. Bxe5 Rxe5 43. Kf4 Re2 44. Kf3 Re5 45. Kf4 Re2 46. Kf3 Re5, draw.

After drawing with So in the penultimate round, I was set up for a final-round game with Leinier. I was a half-point behind Fabiano, who had white against Shankland. I asked Wesley for advice — should I play it safe and secure second place? He kindly gave his thoughts: Go for it!

LONDON SYSTEM (BY TRANS-POSITION) (A00)

GM Awonder Liang (2755)

GM Leinier Dominguez Perez (2806)
US Championship (11), St. Louis,
10.23.2024

1. a3

An opening choice primarily driven by the narrowness of my opponent's repertoire.

1. ... d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. d4 e6 4. Bf4 c5 5. e3 Qb6

Not a choice I had expected. Now I was also on my own.

6. Nc3

A bit of a nervous move; I wanted to keep some tension in the position. It would have been safer to play 6. dxc5 Bxc5 7. b4 Bd6 8. Bxd6 Qxd6 9. c4, but Black should equalize without too many issues.

6. ... Bd7 7. Rb1 Nc6 8. dxc5 Bxc5 9. Bd3

Truth be told, I was such a wreck that I considered 9. Nb5 before realizing 9. ... e5! is almost game over for White.

9. ... Be7?!

A very subtle mistake, but now Black has some issues with space. It turns out the bishop on f4 cuts off Black's position, and it becomes hard for Leinier to develop.

Stronger was 9. ... Nh5! 10. Bg5 h6 11. Bh4 Be7 12. Bxe7 Nxe7 13. 0-0 Bc6 when Black

can bring the queen to c7 and work for ... e6-e5 with good play.

10. 0-0 0-0 11. b4



Black's position is already difficult.

11. ... Rfc8

After the game, we discussed some of the following variations: 11. ... Rac8 12. Na4 Qd8 13. Nc5 Bxc5 14. bxc5 and here we agreed Black has a hard time:

(a) If 14. ... Na5 15. Bd6 Re8 16. Ne5 b6 17. Qf3 with the threat of Bd3xh7+!.

(b) I can't remember whether we found 14. ... Re8! at the time, but White still has pressure after 15. Ne5 Nxe5 16. Bxe5 Bc6 17. f4.

12. e4! Nd4?!

It looks unnatural to play 12. ... Nb8, but it was the best.

13. Nxd4 Rxc3 14. e5

Now the position has simplified favorably for White.

14. ... Ne8 15. Be3 Qd8 16. Ra1 g6 17. Bd2 Rcc8 18. a4 Ng7 19. g4 f6 20. f4 Qb6 21. c3 a5

For some reason, I spent most of my time calculating 21. ... fxe5 22. fxe5 Bxb4 23. Rb1 a5 when White wins with almost every legal move.

22. b5 Rf8 23. Qe2 Bc5 24. Be3 Qc7 25. Bd2?

I missed the direct 25. Nb3! I was too afraid to change the nature of the position, but given the time difference and tournament situation, I should've looked to strike. After 25. ... Be7 (25. ... Bxe3+ 26. Qxe3 Qxc3 27. Nc5 and Black's position falls apart) 26. Bd4 f5 27. g5 Rfc8 28. Qe3 White's winning.

25. ... Qb6 26. Qe3 Rf7 27. Rae1 Raf8 28. h3 f5 29. Kg2 Rc8 30. Qf2 Qd8 31. Be3 Qf8

Here I thought I would shuffle until the time control.

32. Qd2 b6 33. Rc1 Be8 34. Bf2

I was mostly looking in the direction of the queenside and Nd4-b3 plans. But instead 34. gxf5! Nxf5 35. Bxf5 exf5 36. Rf3 Qe7 37. Rg3 Rg7 38. h4 was more correct, with a likely winning advantage.

34. ... Rfc7 35. Rc2 Bf7 36. Rfc1 Ba3 37. Ra1 Bc5 38. Rh1 Be8 39. Be2 Bf7 40. Bg3 Be8 41. Qd3

I made the time control, so I went to get a couple of snacks, only to come back to the board and be met with ...



41. ... g5

... at which I immediately understood my position was lost. I spent the rest of my time mostly trying, and failing, to compose myself at the board.

42. Rf1 Bg6 43. Qd2 Bxd4 44. Qxd4 fxg4 45. Rcc1 Be4+ 46. Kh2 Nf5 47. Qxb6 Nxb3 48. Qxe6+ Kh8 49. Kxg3 gxf4+, White resigned.



I couldn't help myself — I cried after the game. We analyzed together at the chess club, and I couldn't hold back my tears as we were playing through the opening moves. Maybe I wouldn't have cried if I had won as well: the emotions throughout the event, the sleepless nights before and during, all coming down to one singular moment — it's a lot. But it's the reason I play, and part of me was relieved that I did cry, because it affirmed to me that I cared, and the only thing worse than losing is not caring.

But as we started analyzing, I started smiling again, and GM Abhimanyu Mishra and Wesley later joined in. I endured a little bit of teasing for my opening choice; I dared them all to equalize against it (for the record, they couldn't), and I knew things were OK. It's part of being young and learning and growing, and hopefully I'll be back better next year.

It all didn't end up mattering anyway, since Fabiano ended up converting his better position into a win.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B95)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2857)

GM Sam Shankland (2745)

US Championship (11), St. Louis, 10.23.2024

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Bg5 e6

Given my tournament situation, I wasn't the most pleased to see this opening choice, but

I have to give props to Sam for his fighting spirit.

7. Qf3 h6 8. Bd2 Qb6 9. Nb3 Qc7 10. a4 b6 11. Bd3 Bb7 12. 0-0 Nbd7 13. Rae1 Be7 14. Kh1 h5!?



An extremely fighting move, signaling intentions to keep the king in the center for some time. Black would have been fine after 14. ... d5 15. exd5 Nxd5 16. Nxd5 Bxd5 17. Qh3 Bc4.

15. Bg5 h4

Now Black is committed to this closed structure. The last chance to go for something simpler was 15. ... Ne5, although it is a huge mess after either 16. Qh3 (or 16. Qe2 d5 17. Bf4 g5!?) 16. ... d5 17. Bxf6 Bxf6 18. exd5 Nxd3 19. cxd3 Bxc3 20. bxc3 Bxd5.

16. h3 Rh5 17. Bf4 Ne5 18. Qd1 Rh8 19. Qd2

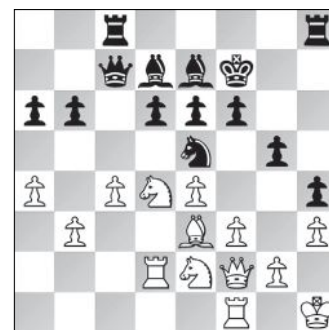
Black has good space on the kingside but also long-term weaknesses there, and he has a hard time coordinating his pieces.

Over the next moves, we see Sam continuing his ambitious plan, while Fabiano tries to provoke more weaknesses.

19. ... Nfd7 20. Bg5 f6 21. Be3 Nc4 22. Bxc4 Qxc4 23. f3 Rc8 24. Qf2 Qc7 25. Rd1 Kf7 26. Rd2 Bc6 27. Nd4 Ne5

Black was better off preventing the Maróczy setup with 27. ... Bb7.

28. b3! g5 29. Nce2 Bd7 30. c4



Black's position is quite difficult, since the f3-f4 break is a constant threat.

30. ... Qb7 31. Nc3 Ng6 32. Rfd1 Rc7 33. Nde2

Finally preparing f3-f4, but now the position becomes sharp. It might have been better to play 33. Ra2 Rcc8 34. Nde2, in order to react to a future ... b7-b5 with an eventual Ra2-a7.

33. ... b5 34. cxb5 axb5 35. Bb6 Rc6 36. a5 Rb8 37. Qe3 Rxb6! 38. axb6 Qxb6 39. Nd4 b4 40. Na4 Qa7

The position has changed radically — Black has the bishop pair and is looking to prevent the invasion of the white rooks. The position is about dynamically balanced, since White's knights are misplaced.

41. Nb2 Nf4 42. Nd3 Rc8?



Missing White's next sequence. Black could keep the structure intact with 42. ... Nh5! 43. Kh2 Rc8, since Black gets good counterplay after 44. f4 gxf4 45. Nxf4 Rc3.



How to respond to 1. a3? Dominguez Perez thinks while Liang wanders.

GM YOO EJECTED, SUSPENDED

THE OPEN SECTION OF THE U.S.

Championship lost a player after Round 5, when GM Christopher Yoo was ejected from the tournament.

Organizers and arbiter IA Chris Bird took the action after Yoo struck a videographer while leaving the tournament hall after a loss to eventual champion GM Fabiano Caruana. Yoo's results from Rounds 1 through 5 were annulled, and players scheduled to face Yoo in Rounds 6 through 11 received byes in

lieu of their games.

Yoo's father, Young-Kyu Yoo, said in a statement at the time that the grandmaster apologized for his actions, adding in part that "Contrary to what some have suggested, the videographer did nothing to provoke Christopher" and that "Christopher offers no excuses for his behavior."

Young-Kyu Yoo later posted on Facebook a statement from his son, saying in part that "I am really sorry for what I did. It was a serious mistake. ... I am very sad for what I did and I hope the videographer is OK. I know that it's not acceptable to do what I did. I accept the consequences for my actions."

Yoo has been suspended from US Chess until mid-November and will be on probation until five years after that. He was a minor at the time, so his name does not appear on the US Chess list of sanctioned members, but his father told *Chess.com* that the punishment was "tough but fair."

Yoo's father added that the now 18-year-old grandmaster had resumed playing online events in November. "They're a source of joy for him right now," Young-Kyu Yoo said. "We hope people don't begrudge him that joy, but we understand that it will be hard for some to forgive."

43. Nxf4 gxf4 44. Qe1! e5 45. Nf5

And Black's position crumbles; the rest is a matter of technique.



45. ... Bxf5 46. exf5 Qd7 47. Qe4 Kg7 48. Rd5 Kh6 49. Qxb4 Qxf5 50. Qb7 Bf8 51. b4 Rc3 52. Qa8 Rc8 53. Qa7 Rc3 54. Qf2 Kh5 55. b5 Qc8 56. Qb2 Qc4 57. Qb1 Kh6 58. b6 Rb3 59. Qf5 Kg7 60. Ra5, Black resigned.

In the end, the main story of the Championship was the Fabiano train — he ran up a tremendous score and could have done even better; he missed a win against Levon. I finished in a six-way tie for 2nd-7th, with Ray taking second on tiebreak by most wins. I joke with my friends back home — "I can't believe I tied for second with a bunch of schmucks" — but it was one of the most

fun runs I've had in a while. It wasn't really close, but then, it kind of was.

Thanks to Kapil for helping me with differential equations, Carissa for the lobby yap sessions, Dan for the Chipotle I never picked up, Nick and Shiva and everyone in Chicago. Thanks to everyone in the club: Karen and Enrique, Chris, Lennart, and Jordan for the beer and company before the games. Josh and Denes for being a fun commentary team, Illia for giving me tips on my League gameplay. And most of all, thanks to my parents for their support throughout the event. I don't know when the next time will be, but I hope it's not too far away. ♠

2024 U.S. Championship

SAINT LOUIS, OCTOBER 11-24, 2024

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
1	GM Fabiano Caruana	2857	*	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	7/10
2	GM Samuel Sevian	2763	½	*	0	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	5½/10
3	GM Leinier Dominguez Perez	2806	½	1	*	0	0	½	1	½	½	½	1	5½/10
4	GM Hans Moke Niemann	2818	½	½	1	*	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	5½/10
5	GM Ray Robson	2768	0	0	1	1	*	½	1	½	0	½	1	5½/10
6	GM Levon Aronian	2814	½	½	½	½	½	*	0	½	1	1	½	5½/10
7	GM Awonder Liang	2755	½	½	0	½	0	1	*	½	½	1	1	5½/10
8	GM Wesley So	2810	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	5/10
9	GM Sam Shankland	2745	0	0	½	½	1	0	½	½	*	½	½	4/10
10	GM Grigoriy Oparin	2730	0	½	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	*	½	3½/10
11	GM Abhimanyu Mishra	2714	0	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	*	2½/10



2024 World Senior CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

Shabalov strikes again in Senior

BY **FM DOUG ECKERT** ■ ADDITIONAL ANNOTATIONS BY **JJ LANG**

A

AMERICAN GM ALEX-
ander Shabalov built
on his gold medal-win-
ning World Senior

Team performance by winning the 2024 World Senior Championship, held Nov. 17-29 in Porto Santo, Portugal.

Shabalov hung with the leaders throughout the event in the 50+ section, but trailed Polish GM Mikhail Krasenkow by a half-point going into the final round. Krasenkow drew, while Shabalov won with the black pieces against his World Senior teammate GM Gregory Kaidanov to draw even with 8½/11 and take the title on tiebreaks. Israeli GM Victor Mikhalevski began the last round tied with Shabalov behind Krasenkow, but drew quick-

ly to round out the podium in third with 8.

Shabalov becomes only the second American, after GM Larry Kaufman in 2008, to win the World Senior.

This was a strong event with 15 GMs and 13 IMs in a starting field of 80. Other American players competing in this section were IM William Paschall, FM Doug Eckert, Vladimir Bugayev and Serge Bondar. Kaidanov was eligible for the 65+ section — in fact he would have been the top-rated player — but decided the 50+ section was more interesting for him.

German GM Rainier Knaak won the 65+ section, which boasted eight GMs in the field of 89 players. He also scored 8½/11; Israeli IM Alexander Mikhalevski, Victor's older brother, took second on tiebreaks over

Slovakian GM Lubomir Ftacnik, both with 8.

American players competing in this section were IM Tim Taylor, FM Gregory Markzon, Michael Gilbert, Leonid Bondar, and Lester Van Meter. Taylor tied for 5th with 7½; Van Meter and Gregory Markzon both ended with 6. Lester gained a remarkable 84 FIDE rating points while Gregory picked up 43.

The women's event was consolidated into a single tournament with 33 players. Israeli IM Masha Kilnova won the 50+ title on tiebreak over French IM Silvia Alexieva, again with 8½, with Spanish WGM Tatyana Grabuzova placing third with 8.

German WIM Brigitte Burchardt took the 65+ title on tiebreaks over 83-year-old former Women's World Champion GM Nona

Gaprindashvili and Russian WGM Tatyana Bogumil, all with 6/11. No American women played in this event.

Porto Santo is a small island of 16 square miles and a population of just over 5,000. The playing site was an all-inclusive resort directly on the beach. Shorts, short-sleeved shirts and an ocean warm enough to swim in were the order of the day.

The resort was mid-tier with the food generally being OK, but it was hard to beat the climate and overall playing atmosphere: one round a day, well organized, great location and an opportunity to meet chess enthusiasts from around the world and play for the love of the game. Unlike many events these days, most of the players take time to analyze afterwards and meet a new friend. The organizers had analysis boards set up at the beachside café. Analyzing outside in the evening with decent food available and without having to worry about playing until 3 p.m. the next day was a welcome change from two-game-a-day American Swisses.



ENGLISH OPENING (A13)

FM Doug Eckert (2154)

IM Fred Berend (2246)

World Senior 50+ Ch (6), Porto Santo, 11.22.2024

I scored 3½/4 against IMs in this event. This game was the second of three wins.

1. c4 Nf6 2. g3 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. Bg2 dxc4 5. Qa4+ Nbd7 6. Qxc4 c5 7. Qc2 Bd6 8. d4 0-0 9. 0-0 a6 10. Nc3 Qc7 11. dxc5 Nxc5



12. Be3?

As it is unclear where to best place the bishop, White should instead develop with Rf1-d1 — the rook belongs on this square. For example, 12. Rd1! Bd7?! (12. ... Nce4 13. Be3 Nxc3 14. Qxc3 Qxc3 15. bxc3 Bc7 16. Rab1 is nice for White) 13. Rxd6 Qxd6 14. b4 leaves

White well ahead.

12. ... Nce4?

Black has equality after 12. ... Bd7 13. Rac1 Bc6.

13. Rac1?

Again it was better to play 13. Rfd1! transposing to the note to move 12.

13. ... Nxc3 14. bxc3!?

The alternative 14. Qxc3 Qxc3 15. Rxc3 Nd5 16. Rb3 Nxe3 17. Rxe3 gives Black the bishop pair and leaves White devoid of chances. Instead, by accepting a weak c-pawn, I open the b-file and get better piece activity.

14. ... Bd7 15. c4 Rac8 16. Qb3 Bc6 17.

Rfd1 Qe7?!

Imprecise. There was still equality to be had after 17. ... Nd7.

18. c5 Bb8 19. Bg5 Ba7?

Now Black gets into real trouble. My opponent saw the correct 19. ... h6 20. Bxf6 Qxf6 21. Nd4 Bxg2 22. Kxg2, with equality, but thought that 19. ... Ba7? won material and the game. He missed my 26th move.

20. Ne5



20. ... Bxg2 21. Kxg2 Rxc5 22. Rd7

I worked to calculate this at the board, but at some point, humans can't calculate it all. This move feels right: Black's queen is cut off on e8, the rook on f8 is trapped, and suddenly the black king is light on effective defenders.

22. ... Qe8 23. Bxf6 Rxc1

If 23. ... gxf6 White continues 24. Ng4 Kg7 (worse is 24. ... Qxd7 25. Nxf6+) 25. Qb2 e5 (or 25. ... Rf5 26. Rcc7 with e2-e4 coming) 26. Qd2 and Black is lost.

24. Qf3 Bb8

Black also loses after 24. ... gxf6 25. Qxf6 Rc4 26. Re7 Qd8 27. Nxf7.

25. Qg4 g6



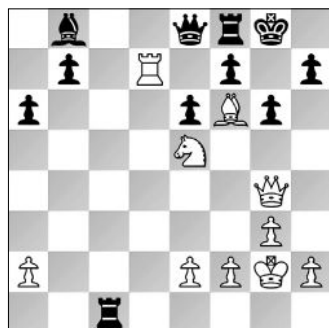
GM Alexander Shabalov



FM Doug Eckert



GM Nona Gaprindashvili

**26. Nxg6!, Black resigned.**

This is a nice example of a candidate move that has to be identified from far away. It may not be so obvious at first, but the position required a forcing move as Black is threatening to consolidate with ... Bb8xe5. Always look at all checks, captures and threats! The g6-pawn is protected twice, but both captures have drawbacks. For the record: 26. Nxg6 and now (a) 26. ... hxg6 27. Qh4 lets White mate on h8 next; (b) 26. ... fxg6 27. Rg7+ Kh8 28. Rxh7+ Kxh7 29. Qh4+ Kg8 30. Qh8+ Kf7 31. Qg7 mate; or (c) 26. ... Rc4 and either 27. Ne7 mate or 27. Nf4 mate.

After some thought, my opponent resigned and graciously went over the game with me. Then it was off to dinner with my new friend!

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE, SÄMISCH VARIATION (E26)

FM Gregory Markzon (2057)

FM Terry P D Chapman (2273)

World Senior 50+ Ch (5), Porto Santo, 11.21.2024

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 c5 5. a3 Bxc3+ 6. bxc3 Nc6 7. Bd3 b6 8. Ne2 Na5?!

I'd prefer simply 8. ... 0-0.

9. e4 Ba6?!

Thematic, but this gives White all the chances. Safer was 9. ... d6 when White has a small advantage.

10. e5 Ng8 11. Ng3 f5?!**12. Bxf5!**

Now White begins a remarkable series of forcing moves. This game is of interest for anyone who plays the White side of the Sämisch Variation.

12. ... exf5 13. Nxf5 Nxc4 14. Qf3

Stockfish evaluates this position as +3.8, even though White's down a piece for a pawn and has only developed two pieces! Black's problem is that his queen cannot easily get to the kingside, while his remaining pieces are ineffective and difficult to bring into play. Fantastic judgment by Markzon! Now he plays a string of accurate moves and never lets his advantage slip.

14. ... d6 15. e6 Qc8 16. 0-0 Qb7 17. Nxg7+ Kd8 18. Bg5+ Kc7 19. Qg3 h6 20. Bh4 Rf8 21. Rfe1 Kc6?! 22. e7 Nxe7 23. Rxe7 Qb8 24. Qg4?! Bc8? 25. d5+ Kxd5?!, Black resigned.

Resigning before White can deliver mate with 26. Qe4. 25. ... Kb5 is mate in 24!

CARO-KANN DEFENSE, ADVANCE VARIATION (B12)

GM Alexander Shabalov (2447)

GM Roman Ovetchkin (2483)

World Senior 50+ Ch (10), Porto Santo, 11.27.2024

Annotations by JJ Lang

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 Bf5 4. Nf3 e6 5. Be2 Ne7 6. 0-0 Nc8 7. a4 a5 8. Na3 Be7 9. h3 0-0 10. c3 Bg6 11. Be3 Nd7 12. Ne1 f6 13. f4 fxe5 14. fxe5 Rxf1+ 15. Bxf1 Bg5 16. Bf2 Nf8 17. Nf3 Be7 18. Nc2 Qb6 19. Qc1 Be4 20. Nd2 Bg6 21. Ne1 c5 22. Nef3 Na7 23. Kh1 Rc8 24. dxc5 Bxc5 25. Bxc5 Qxc5 26. Nd4 Nc6 27. N2f3 Be4 28. Qd2 Nxd4 29. Nxd4 Qc7 30. Re1 Qxe5 31. Bd3 Ng6 32. Nf3

**32. ... Qf4?!**

Black makes an oversight in his calculation.

33. Bxe4! dxe4

White is doing well after 33. ... Qxd2 34.

Nxd2 dxe4 35. Rxe4 Kf7 36. Nc4 Ra8 37. Kh2, but this is preferable to what happened in the game.

34. Qd7!

The key finesse. After the queen trade Black gets enough counterplay to hold the balance: 34. Qxf4? Nxf4 35. Rxe4 Nd3! was what Black was relying on to regain material, as the passive 36. Re2 allows 36. ... Nc5 with equality.

34. ... Rc6

Or 34. ... Rf8 35. Qxe6+ Kh8 36. Qxe4 when White emerges a pawn up and Black has no meaningful counterplay.

35. Qxb7

White wins back the pawn with tempo on the c6-rook, and the e4-pawn falls next.

35. ... Rc4 36. Nd4 Qd6

Avoiding 36. ... Rxa4 37. Nxe6 Qf6 38. Qb3.

37. Qa8+ Nf8 38. Rf1 h6 39. Qe8, Black resigned.

White was still winning after the more direct 39. Nxe6?! Qxe6 40. Qxf8+ Kh7 41. Rf7 Qe5 when White has to find either 42. Rf5! or 42. Re7! to stop a quick ... e4-e3 from swindling a draw. But 39. Qe8 removed even this glimmer of counterplay.

SLAV DEFENSE, CHEBANENKO VARIATION (D10)

GM Gregory Kaidanov (2534)

GM Alexander Shabalov (2447)

World Senior 50+ Ch (11), Porto Santo, 11.28.2024

Annotations by JJ Lang

A final-round matchup between teammates and countrymen often ends in an early handshake, but at 7½/10, Shabalov was (along with GM Victor Mikhalevski) just a half-point back of leader GM Michal Krasenkow. Meanwhile Kaidanov (at 6½/10) could conceivably grab a share of second place with a win. Only a win would do for both players!

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e3 a6

The Chebanenko Slav has become a more regular guest at high-level competition over the past few years. Playing both ... c7-c6 and ... a7-a6 weakens the dark squares and further delays Black's development, but there's logic to it! Black not only threatens ... d5xc4 with a better-prepared ... b7-b5, but more importantly prepares ... Bc8-f5/g4 without fear of attacks on the b7-pawn, which can

now defend itself via ... b7-b5. The a8-rook also enjoys quick development via ... Ra8-a7 in many variations.

5. Qc2

White attempts to limit the development of Black's light-squared bishop by covering the f5-square and removing ideas of the pin behind ... Bc8-g4.

5. ... g6

Having not played ... e7-e6 yet, Black is happy to develop the dark-squared bishop to the long diagonal while reinforcing the f5-square for the light-squared bishop.

6. Bd3 Bg7 7. Nf3 0-0 8. 0-0

We are still following one of the main lines of the Chebanenko, and this position has been reached more than 300 times in the Lichess database.

8. ... b5!?

Shabalov is playing as he must in a game both players badly want to win. This might have been a bit of improvisation, as well, as Shabalov spent 10 minutes on it.

It's perfectly sound and has higher win rates for both colors than 8. ... Bg4, which has been played about four times as much as Shabalov's choice but has a much higher draw rate.

9. b3

White wants to keep the tension on the light squares, and Bc1-a3 can be a useful way of developing the dark-squared bishop now.

9. ... Nbd7



White should be a bit better after simple moves such as Bc1-b2 or Rf1-d1, as Black's multiple queenside pawn pushes leave him behind in development and struggling to make either ... c6-c5 or ... e7-e5 work. The light-squared bishop is not horrific, as ... e7-e6 has not hemmed it in yet, but it's far from being an active participant in the game.

10. e4!?

The result of Kaidanov's first think of the game. This opening of the center is a bit premature. Black easily punches back with ... e7-e5, improving the flow of the d7-knight and g7-bishop. While not the most popular move here, this is actually the first game in the database in which White has lost, although alternatives also score fantastically for White. Here 10. Rd1 is a possibility, while both 10. Bb2 and 10. h3 have been tried by Caruana with success:

The most logical move is 10. Bb2, connecting the rooks while pressuring the e5-

square indirectly. Here 10. ... Bb7 is almost universally played, but after Rf1-d1, White's score is tremendous. Both 10. ... dxc4 and 10. ... bxc4 remain underexplored alternatives, and it's likely that Kaidanov was concerned about Shabalov's counterplay in one of those lines. After 11. Rfd1 Rc8 12. c5! Black's light squares now begin to look silly, and White can play for the squeeze. Perhaps Kaidanov did not think this sort of slow, closed position offered him the best practical winning chances, but I find that harder to believe considering the sort of blueprints Caruana has left for playing this position: 12. ... Re8?! (12. ... e5! is Black's last chance to activate) 13. h3 Qc7 14. Ne2 a5 15. a3 Ra8 16. b4 Ra7 17. a4! bxa4 18. Rxa4 Rea8 19. Rda1 Bc8 20. b5 cxb5 21. Bxb5 gave White a great position in Caruana – Rakesh, Gibraltar Masters 2017.

The clever waiting move 10. h3!? discourages Black from trading queenside pawns, as the light-squared bishop loses access to a key square. 10. ... Bb7 11. c5 Ne8 Again, enjoy an excellent "squeeze" from Caruana: 12. Bb2 Nc7 13. b4 a5 14. a3 Ne6 15. Nd2 Qc7 16. f4 axb4 17. axb4 Rxa1 18. Rxa1 Ra8 19. Rxa8+ Bxa8 20. Nf3 Bb7 21. g4 Bc8 22. Bc1 Nf6 23. Qa2 h6 24. Ne5 and White went on to win in Caruana – Kamsky, Tashkent FIDE Grand Prix 2012.

10. ... dxc4!

The proper capture. It is of course tempting to capture the e-pawn on autopilot, rather than leave White with pawns on both the d4- and e4-squares. But, of course, Shaba-



L to R: GMs Krasenkow, Shabalov, and Mikhalevski

lov is not “leaving” White’s pawn on the d4-square at all!

After 10. ... dxe4!?, White’s lead in development is only accentuated by a trade of pieces because the opening of the center greatly improves the scope of White’s light-squared bishop and f1-rook: 11. Nxe4 Nxe4 12. Bxe4 Bb7 13. Re1.

11. bxc4 e5

Black’s point, although even the more complex 11. ... c5!? was apparently good for Black.

12. Rd1

The first new move of the game, although timestamps suggest the players were both out of book.

The massive complications after 12. cxb5 favor Black with best play, but the following game fragment from 2007 suggests how difficult it is to find “best play” in such a tense and dynamic position. 12. ... cxb5? (Black should have tried 12. ... exd4! 13. bxc6 dxc3 14. cxd7 Nxd7 15. Be3 Qc7 with a slight advantage) 13. Bg5? h6?! 14. Bh4 exd4 15. Ne2 Qb6 16. Nxd4 g5 17. Bg3 g4 18. e5 Nd5?? (18. ... Nh5! leaves Black well ahead) 19. Be4 Bb7 20. Bxd5 Bxd5 21. Nf5 gxf3 22. Ne7+ Kh8 23. Nxd5 and White was better in Grabliauskas – Kuehn, European Cup 2007.

12. ... exd4 13. Nxd4

Black’s dark-squared bishop is unleashed, and the missing d4-pawn also means Black’s light-squared bishop will be well-placed after with ... Bc8-b7.

13. ... Bb7

Black should have fine development here, although the engine argues the c6-pawn did not even need to be defended!

The engine suggestion is 13. ... Ng4!. The d4-knight is loose, and while the c6-pawn hangs as well, Black can counterattack on the h2-b8 diagonal: 14. Nxc6 Qc7 15. Ne7+. White saves the knight with a check, but 15. ... Kh8 16. g3 Qc5! gives Black the initiative, since 17. Ned5 Nde5 sees the second black knight enter the attack while the light-squared bishop will enjoy the express lane to the h3-square.

14. Rb1 Qc7 15. Nf3 Rfe8

The half-open e-file gives Black great attacking chances against the e4-pawn.

16. Ba3 Ne5

Suddenly, it’s White’s c3-knight and d3-bishop that are struggling to find relevance in this position.

17. Be2 Rad8

With the better minor pieces established, Black contests the d-file.

18. Rxd8 Rxd8



19. Rd1?!

While Black does currently claim the d-file, this seems to play into Shabalov’s plans, as his minor pieces’ superiority will only be more pronounced without even the potential of a white rook to counterbalance their coordination. White’s position is difficult to play, but there were some sharp ideas behind 19. Nxe5!? Qxe5 20. Bb2 with the intention of pushing e4-e5 after the queen moves. For instance, 20. ... Qe7 21. e5!? at least forces Black to play lively and a bit riskily with 21. ... Nd7! 22. f4 g5! to claim an advantage, as 21. ... Qxe5!? 22. Nxb5 splits Black’s pawns

and gives White better chances of drawing the endgame after 22. ... Qe4 23. Qxe4 Nxe4 24. Bxg7 Kxg7 25. Nd4 Rxd4 26. Rxb7 a5 27. g3. Recall, however, that a draw was not the preferred outcome for either player!

19. ... Rxd1+ 20. Qxd1

The engine insists that 20. Nxd1 Nxf3+ 21. gxf3 was White’s best configuration, but the reasons elude your annotator.

20. ... Nfd7

It was also promising to play 20. ... Nxf3+ 21. Bxf3 Nd7.

21. Qb3 Nb6

We see Black’s reason for keeping the e5-knight on the board: The d7-knight wanted to come to the queenside rather than replace its fallen comrade after ... Ne5xf3+.

22. cxb5 cxb5

Black’s final minor piece has entered the party!

23. Bb4?

Immediately, White falters by failing to appreciate just how much pressure Black has on the e4-pawn. It was necessary to try 23. Nd5! to blunt the light-squared bishop. Black is still better after 23. ... Nxd5 24. exd5, but now there’s a hard choice to make: 24. ... Nc4! is the most clarifying path, but 25. Bxc4 Qxc4 26. Qxc4 bxc4 27. d6! dares Black to “prove” they can win the bishop endgame after 27. ... Bxf3!? (27. ... Bc6 28. Bc5 Bb5 29. Nd4 is a bit better for Black) as 28. d7 Bf6 29. gxf3 Bd8 could stay within White’s drawing margin.

23. ... Nc6!

The c3-knight and, by extension the e4-pawn, are very vulnerable now.

24. Bc5 Na5! 25. Bxb6

There’s nothing better, as the a5-knight will be defended perfectly well after 25. Qa3 Nbc4.

25. ... Qxb6

Rather than trade queens, Black sees that the pressure on the c3-knight, e4-pawn, and perhaps now even the f2-pawn will be too much for White to handle.

26. Qb4 Nc6 27. Qa3

Or 27. Qb3 Nd4! 28. Nxd4 Qxd4 29. Nd5 Qxe4.

27. ... Nd4

With the black queen unprotected, there was no reason to try to make ... b5-b4 work.



GM Gregory Kaidanov

Instead, Black further demonstrates how overloaded White's knight is.

28. Bd1 Nxf3+ 29. Bxf3 Qd4!

Finally, the e4-pawn crumbles!

30. Nd1 Bxe4



Black is only up one pawn, but the d1-knight is ill-equipped to fight against Black's two-versus-one queenside majority. Plus, the a-pawn promotes on a dark square!

31. g3

Most stubborn per the engine was 31. Ne3 Qa1+ 32. Nf1 Bf8 33. Qb3 (33. Qxa6?? is met by 33. ... Bd3) 33. ... Bxf3 34. gxf3 Qe5, but Black is still a pawn up with a better struc-

ture and constant play against the h2-pawn to serve as a lovely "second weakness" alongside the queenside majority.

31. ... Qd3

The queen trade is forced and the endgame is winning for Black. Shabalov's play is

flawless from this point forward.

32. Qxd3 Bxd3 33. Ne3 Bd4 34. Nd5 a5 35. Ne7+ Kg7 36. Nc6 Bc3 37. Bd5 a4 38. Kg2 b4 39. Kf3 Bb5 40. Na7 Bd7 41. Ke3 b3 42. axb3 a3 43. b4 Bxb4 44. Kd4, and White resigned. ♠



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READY

The Black Death

Joseph Henry Blackburne was a swashbuckling player from the 19th century.

BY **BRUCE PANDOLFINI**

IN TODAY'S AI- AND ENGINE-driven chess world, replete with nuance and precision play at the top, defense is so exact and deep that we almost never see surprising checkmates in the opening and early middlegame, even with blitz and other fast time controls. But this was not so 150 years ago, during the game's more Romantic period, when both players might take risks to produce brilliancy and art.

One such exponent of this school of play was Joseph Henry Blackburne (1841-1924), who for 20 years or so was among the world's best players. Sporting the nickname "the Black Death," he often concluded his many tournament, match, and exhibition games with fireworks, no matter how he got there, and sometimes the results were scintillating.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

Alexander Steinkuehler
Joseph Blackburne
London 1863

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. c3



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. **

4. **Par Score 6** **Nf6**

Black develops with counterattack against the White center. You may accept **full credit** for 4. ... Qe7, though it's not in Blackburne's style.

5. **d4**

White follows through on establishing a classical pawn center. **

5. **Par Score 4** **exd4**

6. **cx d4**

For the moment, White has the center and threatens the c5-bishop. **

6. **Par Score 4** **Bb4+**

Saving the bishop with a gain of time.

7. **Bd2**

White declines to play the then-popular 7. Nc3, which is adequately answered by 7. ... Nxe4 (though it can get complicated). **

7. **Par Score 5** **Bxd2+**

Playable was 7. ... Nxe4 (followed by 8. Bxb4 Nxb4 9. Bxf7+, for example). The text is typical and sounder.

8. **Nfxd2**

This is a mistake. The best response is 8. Nbx d2. I recall being a "wall boy" for the game Mednis-Fischer at the 1963 U.S. Chess Championship (where Fischer went 11-0). That game continued 8. Nbx d2 Nxe4 9. Qe2 d5 10. Nxe4 0-0. **

8. **Par Score 5** **Nxd4**

A perfectly good pawn to take.

9. **0-0**

Neither this move nor the alternative 9. Nc3 offer enough for the lost center pawn. **

9. **Par Score 5** **d6**

Black stops 10. e5, but you may accept **full credit** for 9. ... 0-0.

10. **Nb3**

As a rule, it should be the stronger side seeking trades. **

10. **Par Score 5** **Nxb3**

Naturally, Black is willing to simplify.

11. **Qxb3**

White recaptures with a threat to f7. **

11. **Par Score 6** **0-0**

Castling, of course, copes with the threat while getting the king to safety.

12. **Re1**

A better way to protect the e-pawn was 12. Nc3, with possibly Ra1-d1 to follow. **

12. **Par Score 5** **Nh5**

Blackburne plays for a kingside attack. You may accept **full credit** for 12. ... c6, which threatens 13. ... b5 and, if the White bishop retreats, maybe 14. ... Be6.

13. **e5**

It made more sense to play 13. Nc3, clearing the home rank. **

13. **Par Score 5** **Qg5**

What was a somewhat boring game now begins to take a more tactical turn. You may accept **full credit** if you went with 13. ... dxe5.

14. **exd6**

Consistent with White's play, this opens the file for the e1-rook. **

ABCS OF CHESS

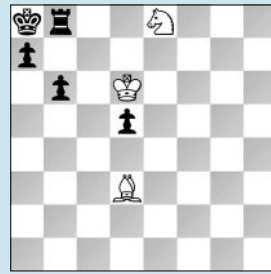
THESE PROBLEMS ARE ALL related to key positions in this month's game. In each case, White is to move. The answers can be found in Solutions on page 63.

MARCH EXERCISE:

Consider a checklist of steps to consult while training. For example, when you begin to analyze a position, you'll want to know who's on the move, the material situation, what threats there may be, and targets to pursue. When playing, you might not articulate the list in your mind. But by doing so regularly in practice sessions, it can all become intuitive. Instead of consciously going through it during play, you simply play in accordance with it.

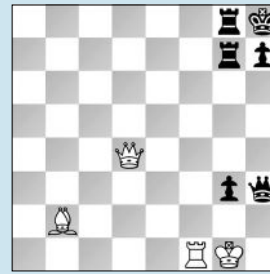
PROBLEM 1

Mating net



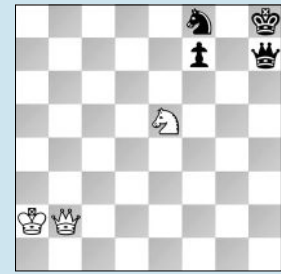
PROBLEM 2

Mating net



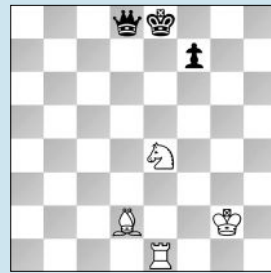
PROBLEM 3

Mating net



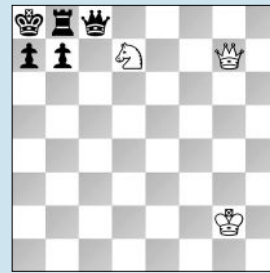
PROBLEM 4

Mating net



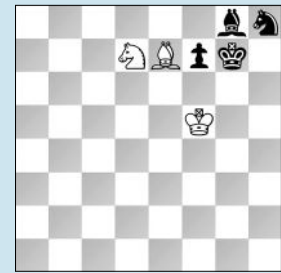
PROBLEM 5

Mating net



PROBLEM 6

Mating net



14. Par Score 5 Nf4

Mate is the obvious threat, but with correct defense (15. Qg3), White should be OK.

15. Bxf7+

Did we mention the year was 1863? This works only if Black falls for 15. ... Rxf7?? 16. Re8 mate. **

15. Par Score 3 Kh8

Now the shoe with the hole in it is on the other foot. If White plays 16. Qg3, then 16. ... Ne2+ wins the queen (if 17. Rxe2, then 17. ... Qc1+).

16. g3

White is constrained to weaken his kingside light squares. Ultimately, that enables the possibility of a fantastic conclusion. **

16. Par Score 5 cxd6

Accept **full credit** if you played 16. ... Nh3+, which is a little more to the point.

17. Nc3

White finally clears the home rank, but it's a little late. **

17. Par Score 5 Nh3+

We knew this check was coming.

18. Kg2

White keeps f2 guarded, but it doesn't help. **

18. Par Score 5 Qf6

Now both f2 and f7 are menaced — White is in trouble. Accept **full credit** for 18. ... Qf5.

19. Bd5

This saves the bishop, but fortunately allows a fabulous finish. Better was 19. f3, though Black is still winning. **

19. Par Score 5 Qxf2+

20. Kh1

**

20. Par Score 9 Qg1+

Now this is an extraordinary sacrifice! The queen must be taken by the rook.

21. Rxf2

**

21. Par Score 7 Nf2+

Once again, White has only one move.

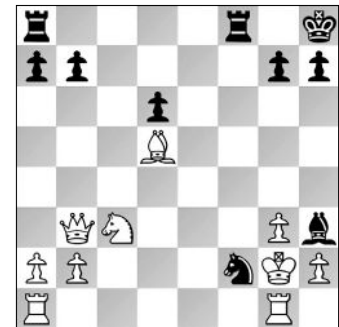
22. Kg2

**

22. Par Score 6 Bh3 mate!

(see diagram top of next column)

It might not have been the best-played game (it was OK), but the finish is absolutely memorable! Thank you, Mr. Blackburne, for bequeathing chess players such a special present. ♠



POSITION AFTER 22. ... Bh3 MATE

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

Blitz Finishes

Deep dives into blitz endgames can reveal incredible possibilities.

BY **GM JOEL BENJAMIN**

B

LITZ CHESS CAN PRODUCE heart-stopping finishes, as many of us saw up close and personal at the World Blitz

Championship in New York City. Endgames were actually the culmination of many high-level blitz events in 2024. With Magnus Carlsen enthusiastically advocating for faster time controls, elite players are having to tackle complex problems with seconds on their clock. Many endgames demand precise calculation, so we should watch with sympathy and understanding for the missed opportunities in this month's selection of games.

CIRCLE ROUTE

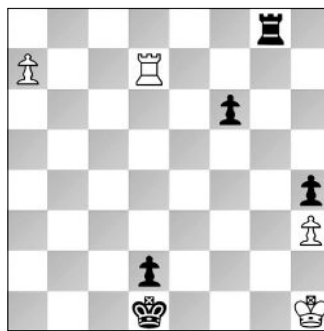
KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E91)

GM Magnus Carlsen (2832)

GM Alireza Firouzja (2767)

SpeedChess Final (2), Paris, 09.08.2024

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 d6 4. e4 Bg7 5. Nf3 0-0 6. Be2 e5 7. 0-0 h6 8. dxe5 dxe5 9. Qxd8 Rxd8 10. Be3 Bg4 11. Rfd1 Nc6 12. h3 Bxf3 13. Bxf3 Nd4 14. Bxd4 exd4 15. Nd5 c6 16. Nxf6+ Bxf6 17. Be2 g5 18. Bd3 Be5 19. g3 Kf8 20. Rf1 Ke7 21. f4 gxf4 22. gxf4 Rg8+ 23. Kh2 Bc7 24. Rf3 Rg7 25. Rg1 Rag8 26. Rxg7 Rxg7 27. c5 f6 28. b4 b6 29. Bc2 bxc5 30. bxc5 h5 31. Ba4 Kd7 32. Kh1 h4 33. Bd1 Ba5 34. Ra3 Bc7 35. Bg4+ Ke8 36. Rxa7 d3 37. Ra8+ Ke7 38. Ra7 Rxg4 39. Rxc7+ Kd8 40. Rxc6 Rg7 41. Rb6 Kc7 42. Rb1 Kc6 43. Rd1 Rg3 44. a4 Kxc5 45. a5 Kd4 46. a6 Kxe4 47. a7 Rg8 48. Re1+ Kxf4 49. Re7 d2 50. Rd7 Ke3 51. Re7+ Kf2 52. Rd7 Ke2 53. Re7+ Kd1 54. Rd7



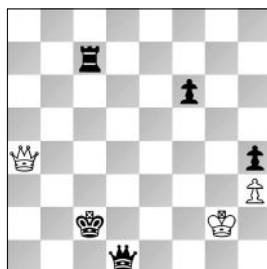
Carlsen's last move was actually a critical error — White needed to get his king off the back rank with 54. Kh2.

54. ... Rc8?

It's rather subtle for chess on the increment, but Firouzja's move doesn't create a threat. 54. ... Re8! was correct, as we shall soon see.

55. Rc7?

A draw was available with 55. Kg2! Kc2 56. Rc7+ Rxc7 57. a8=Q d1=Q 58. Qa4+.



POSITION AFTER 58. Qa4+

The queen checks on squares that do not allow a block. There's no escape!

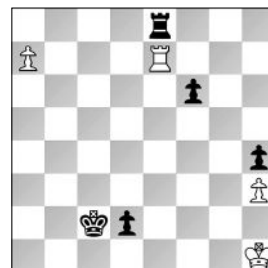
55. ... Re8!

Now Black is back to winning, though maybe not in the way you might think.

56. Re7 Ra8?

My first thought was that Black could win with 56. ... Rxe7 57. a8=Q Ke1, but 58. Qa5 stymies Black's plans for a fresh queen. White has many drawing options after that, but the most aesthetic line is 58. ... f5 59. Kg2 Re3 60. Qxf5! Now 60. ... Rg3+ 61. Kh2 d1=Q 62. Qf2+ Kxf2 produces stalemate, while 61. ... Re2+ 61. Kg1 d1=Q 62. Qa5+ Rd2 63. Qe5+ Qe2 64. Qa1+ Rd1 65. Qa5+ ends in perpetual check.

There is, however, a simple win for Black — the king rotates around to the winning square with 56. ... Kc2!.



POSITION AFTER 56. ... Kc2

Black wins after 57. Rc7+ (or 57. Rxe8 d1=Q+ 58. Kh2 Qd6+ and Black picks off the rook or the a-pawn) 57... Kd3 58. Rd7+ Ke2.

57. Kg2 Kc2 58. Rc7+ Kd3 59. Rd7+ Ke3 60. Re7+ Kf4 61. Rd7 Rxa7 62. Rxd2 Ra3 63. Rd4+ Kg5 64. Rg4+ Kh5 65. Rf4 Rg3+ 66. Kh2 Kg5 67. Ra4 f5 68. Ra8 Rb3 69. Ra4 Re3 70. Rb4 Re4 71. Rb2 Kf4 72. Kg2 Rd4 73. Ra2 Ke5 74. Ra5+ Ke4 75. Ra2 Rd3 76. Rb2 Ke3, and Black won.

The game ends here in victory for Black, likely on time, as White is holding.

The next two games are from the Tata Steel Blitz, both involving GM Daniil Dubov. One game he could have lost but drew, and another he could have drawn but lost!

THE RIGHT SQUARE

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE (E21)

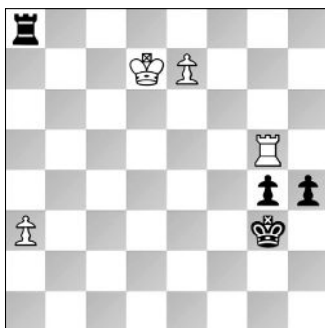
GM Vidit Santosh Gujrathi (2739)

GM Daniil Dubov (2693)

Tata Steel India Blitz (6), Kolkata, 11.16.2024

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 Nc6 4. Nc3 Bb4 5. Bd2 0-0 6. a3 Bxc3 7. Bxc3 Ne4 8. Qc2 Nxc3 9. Qxc3 d6 10. d5 Ne7 11. dxe6 Bxe6 12. e3 h6 13. Be2 c5 14. 0-0 Qc7 15. Rac1

b6 16. h3 d5 17. cxd5 Nxd5 18. Qe5 Rac8 19. Rfd1 Nf6 20. Ba6 Qxe5 21. Nxe5 Rc7 22. b4 Re8 23. bxc5 bxc5 24. Nd3 Bb3 25. Rd2 c4 26. Nb4 Re5 27. Rd4 c3 28. Rd3 Rec5 29. Rd8+ Kh7 30. Bd3+ g6 31. Na6 Rc8 32. Nxc5 Rxd8 33. Rxc3 Bd5 34. Na6 Ne8 35. Nb4 Bb7 36. Rc5 Kg7 37. Ra5 Ra8 38. Bb5 Nd6 39. Bd3 g5 40. f3 Kf6 41. Kf2 Ke7 42. g4 Kf6 43. Kg3 Re8 44. e4 Re5 45. Rxa7 Rc5 46. Ba6 Bxe4 47. fxe4 Rc3+ 48. Bd3 Ke5 49. Kf3 Nc4 50. Re7+ Kf6 51. Ra7 Ne5+ 52. Ke3 Rb3 53. Kd4 Nf3+ 54. Ke3 Ne5 55. Ra6+ Kg7 56. Kd4 Nf3+ 57. Kd5 Ng1 58. Ra7 Nxh3 59. Bc4 Rf3 60. Kc5 Nf2 61. e5 Kg6 62. Bd5 Rf4 63. Nc6 Nxc4 64. Kd6 h5 65. Nd8 Rd4 66. Nxf7 Ne3 67. Nh8+ Kf5 68. Rf7+ Kg4 69. e6 Rxd5+ 70. Kc6 Re5 71. Kd6 Nc4+ 72. Kd7 Re3 73. Ng6 Nb6+ 74. Kd6 h4 75. Ne5+ Kg3 76. Rf8 Rc3 77. Rf5 g4 78. Rg5 Nc4+ 79. Nxc4 Rxc4 80. e7 Rc8 81. Kd7 Ra8



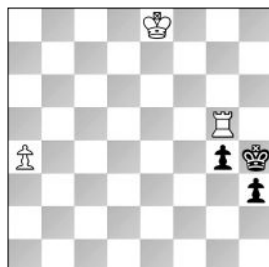
Vidit was likely exhausted from struggling to win with an extra piece he won 35 moves ago, and is now faced with a whole lot of messy calculating.

82. Ra5?

Trying to postpone a decision, but only in the current construction can White win by queening the pawn with 82. e8=Q! Rxe8 83. Kxe8 h3 84. a4. Two moves are pertinent.

(a) After 84. ... h2 85. Rh5 Kg2 86. a5 g3 87. a6 Kg1 (87. ... h1=Q 88. Rxb1 Kxb1 89. a7 g2 90. a8=Q is a routine win) 88. a7 g2 89. a8=Q h1=Q 90. Qa7+ Kf1 91. Rf5+ the rook and queen force mate;

(b) 84. ... Kh4 and now:



POSITION AFTER 84. ... Kh4

The only place for the rook that leads to a win is 85. Rg7!! The key is, White will need to be able to hide the king from checks: 85. ... g3 86. a5 g2 87. a6 h2 88. ... g1=Q (Black runs out of checks after 88. ... g1=Q 89. Rh7+ Kg3 90. a8=Q Qe3+ 91. Kf7 Qb3+ 92. Kg7 Qc3+ 93. Kg8 Qc4+ 94. Kh8) 89. a8=Q Qe1+ 90. Kf8 g1=Q (90. ... Qf2+ 91. Kg8 g1=Q 92. Qe4+ loses faster) 91. Qd8+ Kh3 92. Qd7+ Kh4 (92. ... Kh2 93. Rh7+ Kg3 94. Qh3+ Kf4 95. Rf7+ chases the king across the board to its doom) 93. Rh7+ Kg5 94. Qd5+ Kg4 (94. ... Kf4 95. Rf7+ is a faster mate) 95. Qh5+ Kg3 96. Qh3+ Kf4 97. Rf7+ and we see the same mating pattern for White.

82. ... Rg8?

Dubov allows Vidit to correct his error. Black holds after 82. ... Rh8 83. Rh5 Ra8 84. e8=Q Rxe8 85. Kxe8 h3 86. a4 Kh2 87. a5 g3 88. a6 g2 89. Rg5 g1=Q 90. Rxb1 Kxb1 91. a7 h2 with a textbook draw. For that matter, 82. ... Rxa5 83. e8=Q Rxa3 is also good enough for the half-point.

The players agreed to a draw after repeating their blunders.

83. Rg5 Ra8 84. Ra5 Rg8 85. Rg5 Ra8 86. Ra5 Rg8, draw.

YOUR TURN!

SICILIAN DEFENSE, MOSCOW VARIATION (B52)

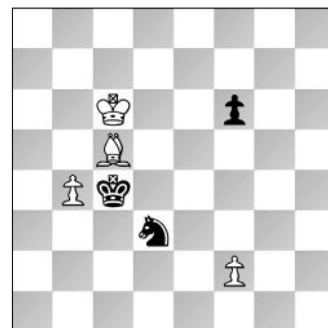
GM Pragganandhaa Rameshbabu (2737)

GM Daniil Dubov (2693)

Tata Steel India Blitz (8), Kolkata, 11.16.2024

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. Bb5+ Bd7 4. Bxd7+ Qxd7 5. 0-0 Nc6 6. d3 e6 7. c4 Be7 8. d4 cxd4 9. Nxd4 Bf6 10. Be3 Nge7 11. Nc3 0-0 12. Rc1 Rfd8 13. b3 Rac8 14. h3 h6 15. Re1 d5 16. exd5 exd5 17. cxd5 Nxd5 18. Nxd5 Bxd4 19. Bxd4 Qxd5 20. Be3 Qxd1 21. Rxd1 f6 22. g4 Kf7 23. Kg2 Ke6 24. Re1 Kf7 25. Rd1 Ke6 26. Kg3 Rxd1 27. Rxd1 Rc7 28. h4 Nb4 29. Bxa7 Nxa2 30. Rd3 Rc3 31. Rxc3 Nxc3 32. Kf4 Nd5+ 33. Ke4 Nc3+ 34. Kd3 Nd5 35. Kd4 h5 36. gxh5 Nf4 37. h6 gxh6 38. Ke4 Nh5 39. Be3 Ng7 40. Bxh6 Nf5 41. Bf4 Nxe4 42. Kd4 Nf5+ 43. Kc5 Kd7 44. Bh2 Ne7 45. Bg3 Ng6 46. Bh2 Ne7 47. Bf4 Ng6 48. Bg3 Nf8 49. Kd5 Ne6 50. Bd6 Ng5 51. Bh2 Ne6 52. Bg3 Ng7 53. Bh4 Ke7 54. Kc5 Nf5 55. Bg3 Kd7 56. Bf4 Ne7 57. Bd2 Ng6 58. Bc3

Ke6 59. Kb6 Nf4 60. Kxb7 Nd3 61. Bd4 Kd5 62. Ba7 Nc1 63. b4 Kc4 64. Bc5 Nd3 65. Kc6



Dubov has made some questionable decisions in an ending that looked pretty dead drawn for a long time. Now he goes decisively wrong, by miscalculation or despair — take your pick.

65. ... Nxf2??

The knight cannot be taken because White will run out of pawns. But ...

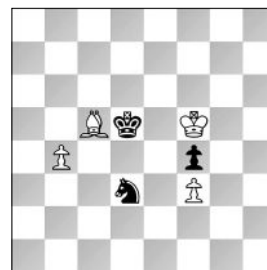
66. b5

The last pawn is unstoppable.

66. ... Ne4 67. Bf8 Ng5 68. b6 Ne6 69. Be7 Nd4+ 70. Kc7 Kd5 71. b7 Nc6 72. Bxf6 Kc5 73. Be7+ Kd5 74. Bf8, Black resigned.

This looks clear enough. But it transpires that Black has a remarkable draw from the diagram after 65. ... Ne5+ 66. Kd6 Nd3. It seems the knight should be dominated by the bishop, but some rather fluky tactics keep Black afloat.

After 67. f3 (67. Ke6 Nxf2) 67. ... f5 68. Ke6 f4 69. Kf5 Kd5:



POSITION AFTER 69. ... Kd5

White would win if he could put Black on move, but there is no way to do so. White cannot move the bishop without exposing it to a knight fork.

The twin variations 70. Bf8 Ne5 71. Kxf4 Ng6+ and 70. Be7 Ne5 71. Kxf4 Ng6+ are aesthetic or frustrating, depending on your side of the table! ♡

CHESS LIFE AND CHESS LIFE KIDS

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articles by
Coakley,
McGrew, Thybo
Translations
and **puzzles**



CHESS JOURNALISTS OF AMERICA

BEST FEATURE

BEST INSTRUCTION

2024

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MAKE → YOUR → MOVE

BY **FM CARSTEN HANSEN**

THIS MONTH'S PUZZLES ARE TAKEN FROM GAMES PLAYED AT THE World Rapid Championships, held in New York City last December.

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

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

TACTIC 1.



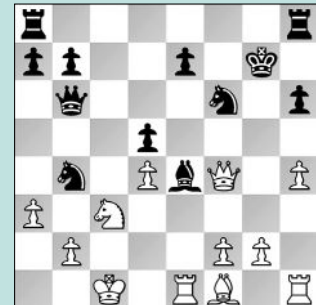
BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 2.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 3.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 4.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 5.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 6.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 7.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 8.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 9.



WHITE TO MOVE

Position 1: INSUFFICIENT DEFENDERS

Position 2: OPEN SPACES

Position 3: OPEN THE DOOR

Position 4: PUNCH THE FACE

Position 5: BACK AND FORTH

Position 6: STAB THE RIGHT PLACE

Position 7: PREPARATION TO KILL

Position 8: DEEP DIVING

Position 9: MOUNTING THREATS

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

2025 KCF All-Girls National Championships

APRIL 4-6, 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.knights.org/> **TLA ID:** 45885

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • UNIOR GRAND PRIX

SuperNationals VIII

MAY 8-11, 2025, FLORIDA

Event site: Orange County Convention Center - West Concourse **Address:** 9800 International Drive, Orlando, FL 32819 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** Y **Organizer:** US Chess Federation **Email:** nationalevents@uschess.org **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <http://www.uschess.org/tournaments/2025/sn8> **TLA ID:** 47674

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

2025 National Open

JUNE 4-8, 2025, NEVADA

Event site: Flamingo Las Vegas Hotel & Casino **Address:** 3555 S Las Vegas Blvd, Las Vegas NV 89109, Las Vegas, NV 89109 **Overall prize fund:** \$125,000 **GP Points:** 200 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** Y **Organizer:** Vegas Chess Festivals **Email:** vegashess@gmail.com **Phone:** 702-930-9550 **Website:** <https://vegashessfestival.com> **TLA ID:** 47460

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

2025 U.S. Women's Open

JUNE 4-5, 2025, NEVADA

Event site: Flamingo Las Vegas Hotel & Casino **Address:** 3555 S Las Vegas Blvd, Las Vegas NV 89109, Las Vegas, NV 89109 **Overall prize fund:** \$3,500 **GP Points:** 50 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** Y **Organizer:** Vegas Chess Festivals **Email:** vegashess@gmail.com **Phone:** 702-930-9550 **Website:** <https://vegashessfestival.com> **TLA ID:** 47460

vegashess@gmail.com **Phone:** 702-930-9550 **Website:** <https://vegashessfestival.com> **TLA ID:** 47549

Grand Prix

The Grand Prix point totals reflect all rated event information as of Dec. 31, 2024, for the 2024 Grand Prix.

FINAL 2024 GRAND PRIX STANDINGS

Congratulations to the 2024 Grand Prix Champion
GM JIANCHAO ZHOU

	Name	State/Ctry	Pts
1.	GM JIANCHAO ZHOU	MA	699.53
2.	GM FIDEL CORRALES JIMENEZ	CA	334.71
3.	GM AWONDER LIANG	WI	198.66
4.	GM MIKHAIL ANTIPOV	MO	192.99
5.	IM JOHN BRYANT	CA	164.78
6.	GM ARMAN MIKAELIAN	CA	159.06
7.	GM JOHN MICHAEL BURKE	NJ	150.95
8.	GM ALEXANDER FISHBEIN	TN	139.07
9.	EMANUEL CARTER	NC	136.00
10.	GM BRIAN ESCALANTE	MO	121.71

2024 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 2025. For information visit new.uschess.org/us-chess-grand-prix-program

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-tour.com **TLA ID:** 46246

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-tour.com **TLA ID:** 45892

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

10th annual Western Class Blitz Championships

MARCH 8, 2025, CALIFORNIA, S.

Event site: Hilton Hotel Orange County Airport **Address:** 18800 MacArthur Blvd, Irvine, CA 92612 **Overall prize fund:** \$500 **GP Points:** 10 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N
Organizer: Continental Chess **Email:** director@chess.us **Phone:** n/a **Website:** chess-tour.com **TLA ID:** 47202

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

Delaware State Open Championship

MARCH 8-9, 2025, DELAWARE

Event site: Ramada Inn **Address:** 260 Chapman Road, Newark, DE 19702 **Overall prize fund:** \$4,000 **GP Points:** 20 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N
Organizer: CDelaware Chess Association **Email:** connect@delawarechess-society.org **Phone:** 302-593-3752 **Website:** <http://delawarechessassociation.org> **TLA ID:** 47382

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

2nd Annual Dragon Knight St. Patrick's Grand Prix

MARCH 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:** 47399

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-tour.com **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-tour.com **TLA ID:** 46238

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Pennsylvania Quick Chess Championship

MARCH 28, 2025, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg Hershey **Address:** 4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111 **Overall prize fund:** \$750 **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://pscfchess.org/pscholasticchamp> **TLA ID:** 47340

GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

2025 Arpad Elo Open

MARCH 29-30, 2025, WISCONSIN

Event site: Holiday Inn Madison at The American Center **Address:** 5109 West Terrace Drive, Madison, WI 53718 **Overall prize fund:** \$1,400 **GP Points:** 6 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N
Organizer: Mike Nietman **Email:** mike.nietman@charter.net **Phone:** 608-467-8510 (before 3/29) **Website:** <https://www.wisconsinchess.org> **TLA ID:** 48185

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Ira Lee Riddle Memorial Pennsylvania State Championship & Pennsylvania Collegiate Championship

MARCH 29-30, 2025, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg Hershey **Address:** 4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111 **Overall prize fund:** \$1,875 **GP Points:** 10 **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://pscfchess.org/pscholasticchamp> **TLA ID:** 47341

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Big April Dragon Knight Grand Prix

APRIL 5, 2025, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall prize fund:** \$1,124 **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:** 48221

GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

4th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Saturday Action Chess

APRIL 5, 2025, CALIFORNIA

Event site: UC Davis Conference Center **Address:** 550 Alumni Lane, Davis, CA 95616 **Overall prize fund:** \$750 **GP Points:** 15 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N
Organizer: Sosnick Chess & Davis Chess Club **Email:** michael@dpawn.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <https://sosnickchess.com> **TLA ID:** 48189

GRAND PRIX

4th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Sunday Rapid Chess

APRIL 6, 2025, CALIFORNIA

Event site: UC Davis Conference Center **Address:** 550 Alumni Lane, Davis, CA 95616 **Overall prize fund:** \$750 **GP Points:** 15 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N
Organizer: Sosnick Chess & Davis Chess Club **Email:** michael@dpawn.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <https://sosnickchess.com> **TLA ID:** 48193

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Slow Art Day Grand Prix

APRIL 12, 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:** 48218

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 PA State Game/29 Championship - West

APRIL 12, 2025, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: O'Hara Student Center, Univ. of Pittsburgh **Address:** 4024 O'Hara St., Pittsburgh, PA 15213 **Overall prize fund:** \$690 **GP Points:** 6 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** N
Organizer: Tom M Martinak **Email:** martinak_tom_m@hotmail.com **Phone:** 412-908-0286 **Website:** <http://www.pscfchess.org/clearinghouse> **TLA ID:** 46821

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

33rd Massachusetts G/60 Championship

APRIL 13, 2025, MASSACHUSETTS

Event site: Westford Regency Inn & Conference Center **Address:** 219 Littleton Rd., Westford MA 01886 **Overall prize fund:** \$3,000 **GP Points:** 15 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N

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.

Organizer: Massachusetts Chess Association **Email:** info@masschess.org **Phone:** 603-891-2484 (day of the tournament call 603-557-1732) **Website:** <http://www.masschess.org> **TLAID:** 48202

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 **TLAID:** 46241

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

6th Colonial Open

APRIL 17-20, 2025, VIRGINIA

Event site: Executive Conference and Training Center **Address:** 22685 Holiday Park Dr Ste 60, Sterling, VA 20166 **Overall prize fund:** \$10,000 **GP Points:** 50 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Anand Dommalapati **Email:** co2025@capitalareachess.com **Phone:** 1-703-627-5314 **Website:** <https://www.capitalareachess.com/ColonialOpen> **TLAID:** 47162

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> **TLAID:** 46828

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Phillip O'Neal Taylor Georgia State Championship

APRIL 25-27, 2025, GEORGIA

Event site: DoubleTree by Hilton Atlanta Perimeter **Address:** 4386 Chamblee Dunwoody Road,

Atlanta, GA 30341 **Overall prize fund:** \$10,000 **GP Points:** 80 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Thad Rogers **Email:** thadrogers@gmail.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <https://www.georgiachess.org/> **TLAID:** 48245

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Remembering Susan Kantor!

APRIL 26, 2025, ILLINOIS

Event site: Rock Springs Rotary Nature Center **Address:** 1428 East 3rd Street, O'Fallon, Illinois 62269 **Overall prize fund:** \$2,000 **GP Points:** 20 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Alan Kantor **Email:** lkarakantor@yahoo.com **Phone:** (931) 200-9038 **Website:** n/a **TLAID:** 48368

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

5th annual Niagara Falls Open

MAY 2-4, 2025, NEW YORK

Event site: Sheraton Niagara Falls Hotel **Address:** 300 3rd St, Niagara Falls NY 14303 **Overall prize fund:** \$10,000 **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 **TLAID:** 47243

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> **TLAID:** 46260

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

12th Cherry Blossom Classic

MAY 22-26, 2025, VIRGINIA

Event site: Executive Conference and Training Center **Address:** 22685 Holiday Park Dr, Ste 60, Sterling, VA 20166

Overall prize fund: \$27,000 **GP Points:** 200 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Anand Dommalapati **Email:** cbc2025@capitalareachess.com **Phone:** 1-703-627-5314 **Website:** <https://www.capitalareachess.com/CherryBlossomevent/spacecoastopen> **TLAID:** 47970

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND 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 **TLAID:** 46255

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

33rd Annual Eastern Class Championships

JUNE 6-8, 2025, CONNECTICUT

Event site: Sheraton Hartford Hotel At Bradley International Airport **Address:** 1 Bradley Airport (visible at airport entrance), Windsor Locks CT 06096 **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 **TLAID:** 47565

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

18th Continental Chess Cleveland Open

JUNE 13-15, 2025, OHIO

Event site: Crowne Plaza Cleveland Airport Hotel **Address:** 7230 Engle Road, Middleburg Heights OH 44130 **Overall prize fund:** \$15,000 **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 **TLAID:** 48167

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 **TLAID:** 46651

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

19th annual Philadelphia Open

JUNE 27-29, 2025, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown **Address:** 201 N 17th Street, Philadelphia PA 19103 **Overall prize fund:** \$15,000 **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 **TLAID:** 47567

GRAND PRIX

3rd Annual Independence Day Open

JULY 2-6, 2025, VIRGINIA

Event site: Washington Dulles Airport Marriott **Address:** 45020 Aviation Dr, Dulles, VA 20166 **Overall prize fund:** \$10,500 **GP Points:** 80 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Atlantic Chess Association **Email:** director@atlanticchessassociation.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** n/a **TLAID:** 47912

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND 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 **TLAID:** 46655

GRAND PRIX

12th Annual Washington International

AUGUST 9-13, 2025, MARYLAND

Event site: Rockville Hilton **Address:** 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852 **Overall prize fund:** \$45,725 **GP Points:** 150 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Michael W

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, 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.

Regan Email: mregan@stsci.edu Phone: 4104195130
Website: <https://mdchess.com> TLA ID: 47444

Regional

ALABAMA

MARCH 7-9, 2025

22nd annual Southern Class Championships (FL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

ALASKA

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

AMER. SAMOA

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

ARIZONA

MARCH 7-9, 2025

32nd annual Western Class Championships (CA-S)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

JUNE 4-8, 2025

2025 National Open (NV)

See National Events.

ARKANSAS

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 26, 2025

Remembering Susan Kantor! (IL)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

CALIFORNIA

MARCH 7-9, 2025

32nd annual Western Class Championships (CA-S)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 8, 2025

10th annual Western Class Blitz Championship (CA-S)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 5, 2025

4th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Saturday Action Chess (CA-N)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 6, 2025

4th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Sunday Rapid Chess (CA-N)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 19, 2025

10th Annual USC Invitational Chess Tournament

Event site: University of Southern California Address: Tutor Campus Center 350 / 351 / 352 Combo (Franklin Suite), 3607 Trousdale Pkwy., Los Angeles, CA 90089 Overall prize fund: see online TLA GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Ben Eubanks Email: iben.eubanks@alummi.usc.edu Phone: (310) 968-4459 Website: n/a TLA ID: 47676

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 4-8, 2025

2025 National Open (NV)

See National Events.

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.

AUGUST 9-13, 2025

12th Annual Washington International (MD)

See Grand Prix.

COLORADO

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

CONNECTICUT

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.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

JUNE 6-8, 2025

33rd Annual Eastern Class Championships (CT)

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.

AUGUST 9-13, 2025

12th Annual Washington International (MD)

See Grand Prix.

34th annual CHICAGO OPEN

May 22-26, 23-26, 24-26 or 25-26, 2025 Memorial Day weekend- see chessevents.us
8 sections, prizes \$100,000 unconditionally guaranteed!
Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel, Wheeling IL - Free GM lectures and game analysis!

Open section, 5/22-26, 9 rounds, 40/80, SD/30; d30.
U2300 through U1300 sections: 5/23-26 or 24-26: 7 rounds, 40/80, SD/30; d30 (3-day option, rds 1-2 G/60, d10). All merge & play for same prizes within the section.

Under 1000 Section, 5/25-26: 7 rounds, G/60, d10.
Open: \$10000-5000-2500-1300-1000-800-600-500-400-400, clear or tiebreak first \$300 bonus, top FIDE U2400/unr \$2000-1000. FIDE rated, GM and IM norms possible.

U2300, U2100, U1900, U1700 Sections: Each \$5000-2500-1200-800-600-500-400-300-300-300. U2300 & U2100 sections are FIDE rated.

U1500: \$4000-2000-1000-700-500-400-300-300-300-300
U1300: \$3000-1500-1000-700-500-400-300-300-300-300.

U1000: \$1500-800-600-400-300-200-200-100-100-100
FIDE ratings used for Open, May official USCF for others (In U2300 & below, unofficial USCF or USCF Online Regular ratings usually used if otherwise unrated; **cannot play** below USCF Online Regular rating - 100 points).

If any post-event Regular OTB or Regular Online rating posted 5/21/24-5/21/25, or current Regular Online rating, is more than 40 pts over section maximum, prize limit \$800.

Under 26 games prize limit as of May list: U1000 \$500, U1300 \$1000, U1500 \$1500, U1700 \$2000, U1900 \$2500.

Unrated prize limits: U1000 \$200, U1300 \$300, U1500 \$400, U1700 \$600, U1900 \$800, U2100 \$1200.

Mixed Doubles: \$2000-1000-500-400-300.

Entry fee: \$207 at chessaction.com by 3/21, \$227 by 5/21, \$250 online or at site until 1 hour before round 1. \$500 more for US players to play Open Section if U2300/Unr USCF & U2100/Unr FIDE, Senior 65/up in U1300 & above, \$100 less, Online EF \$5 less to ICA members (il-chess.org). Titled entry: see chessevents.us. Refunds, \$15 service charge.

Under 1000 Section: \$97 at chessaction.com by 5/21, \$120 online or at site until 9 am 5/25.

Open titled minimum prizes: see chessevents.us.

5-day schedule (Open only): enter Thu to 6 pm, rds Thu 7 pm, Fri 1 & 7, Sat 11 & 5, Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 4.

4-day schedule (U2300 to U1300): enter Fri to 6, rds Fri 7, Sat 11 & 5, Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 4. No 4-Day Open.

3-day schedule (U2300 to U1300): enter Sat to 10 am, rds Sat 11, 2 & 5; Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 4. No 3-Day Open.

2-day schedule (U1000 Section only): enter Sun to 9 am, rds Sun 10, 1, 4, 7, Mon 10, 1 & 4.

1/2-pt byes: limit 3 (2 last 4 rds); must commit before rd 3.

Hotel rates: 1-4/room \$138, see chessevents.us (or 800-937-8461, 847-777-6500), reserve by 5/8, may sell out before.

USCF membership required, see chessevents.us.

Bring set, board, clock if possible- none supplied. No cellphone possession during play (in bag near table OK). See chessevents.us for more rules, details and prize restrictions.

Enter online: chessaction.com. No mail entries.

\$2500 guaranteed blitz tournament, Sunday 10 pm.

DELAWARE

MARCH 23, 2025

68th Annual South Jersey Open (NJ)

See New Jersey.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

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.

DIST. OF COLUMBIA

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

FLORIDA

MARCH 7-9, 2025

22nd annual Southern Class Championships (FL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 8, 2025

Milan Vukadinov Memorial

Event site: Saint Petersburg Chess Club **Address:** 540 4th Avenue N., Saint Petersburg, FL 33701 **Overall prize fund:** \$1,200 **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Terry Coulombe **Email:** coulom1@gmail.com **Phone:** 8134803106 **Website:** n/a **TLA ID:** 47455

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

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.

AUGUST 9-13, 2025

12th Annual Washington International (MD)

See Grand Prix.

GEORGIA

MARCH 7-9, 2025

22nd annual Southern Class Championships (FL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 14-15, 2025

4th Annual Bolivar Morales Memorial Winterville Chess Club Championships

Event site: Winterville Cultural Center **Address:** 371 North Church Street, Winterville, GA 30683 **Overall prize fund:** see online **TLA GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Tomas Ramirez **Email:** tram110@verizon.net **Phone:** 401-440-7416 **Website:** <https://www.wintervillecenter.com/> **TLA ID:** 47400

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 25-27, 2025

2025 Phillip O'Neal Taylor Georgia State Championship (GA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 2-4, 2025

30th Space Coast Open Chess Festival (FL)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

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.

GUAM

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

HAWAII

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

IDAHO

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

JUNE 4-8, 2025

2025 National Open (NV)

See National Events.

ILLINOIS

MARCH 21-23, 2025

29th annual Mid-America Open (MO)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 29, 2025

Springfield March Checkmate Open

Event site: Southern View Village Hall **Address:** 3410 South 5th St., Springfield, IL 62703 **Overall prize fund:** \$400 **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** David Long **Email:** coulom1@gmail.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <http://www.springfieldchessclub.com> **TLA ID:** 46934

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 26, 2025

Remembering Susan Kantor! (IL)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

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.

AUGUST 9-13, 2025

12th Annual Washington International (MD)

See Grand Prix.

INDIANA

MARCH 21-23, 2025

29th annual Mid-America Open (MO)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 26, 2025

Remembering Susan Kantor! (IL)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

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

MARCH 29-30, 2025

2025 Sioux Falls City Chess Championship

Event site: HyVee Grocery Store **Address:** 3000 S Minnesota Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57105 **Overall prize fund:** \$475 **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** South Dakota Chess Association **Email:** gryschst@hotmail.com **Phone:** 6054004116 **Website:** <https://sdchess.org/> **TLA ID:** 47850

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 26, 2025

Remembering Susan Kantor! (IL)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

KANSAS

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

KENTUCKY

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

LOUISIANA

MARCH 29-30, 2025

The 2025 Louisiana Pro - Am

Event site: New Marigny Theater **Address:** 2301 Marais St, New Orleans, LA 70117 **Overall prize fund:** \$1,500 **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Downriver

Chess & Louisiana Chess Association **Email:** info@downriverchess.com **Phone:** 202.656.9754 **Website:** <https://www.downriverchess.com/> **TLA ID:** 47286

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 26, 2025

(Chess Hound's) USCF Online Rated Event

Event site: Chess.com **Address:** Chess.com **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** K.Bush **Email:** bloodhoundchessclub@gmail.com **Phone:** 2252692829 **Website:** <https://bloodhoundchessclub.com> **TLA ID:** 47743

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAINE

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

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, signup 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. UMBBC is a perennial top-10 contender for the collegiate national chess championship.

MARCH 8-9, 2025

Delaware State Open Championship (DE)

See Grand Prix.

MARCH 23, 2025

68th Annual South Jersey Open (NJ)

See New Jersey.

APRIL 16-20, 2025

The Princeton Open (NJ)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

JUNE 26-30, 2025

18th annual Philadelphia International (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-29, 2025

19th annual Philadelphia Open (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 1, 2025-WEEKLY ON SUNDAY, TUESDAY, AND SATURDAY

FMCA

Event site: Clock Tower Center, Future Masters Chess Academy **Address:** 200 Homer Avenue, Mezzanine Level, Suite 200. Ashland, MA 01721-1716 **Overall**

prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Future Masters Chess Academy Email: info@FutureChessMasters.com Phone: (508)622-5388 Website: <https://futurechessmasters.com/> TLA ID: 47199

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 New York or chessevents.us.

APRIL 13, 2025

32nd Massachusetts G/60 Championship(MA)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 18, 2025

Greater Baystate Spring Classic
Event site: Northampton Center For the Arts - Flex Room Address: 33 Hawley Street, Northampton, MA 01060 Overall prize fund: \$3,675 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Greater Baystate Chess Email: greater.baystate.chess@gmail.com Phone: 4133560303 Website: <https://www.greaterbaystatechess.com> TLA ID: 47586

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 6-8, 2025

33rd Annual Eastern Class Championships (CT)
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

19th annual Philadelphia Open (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.

AUGUST 9-13, 2025

12th Annual Washington International (MD)
See Grand Prix.

◆ MICHIGAN

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 29-30, 2025

2025 Michigan Junior Championships
Event site: Lansing Center Address: 333 E Michigan Ave, Lansing, MI, 48933 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Michigan Chess Association Email: jeffchess64@gmail.com Phone: 810-955-7271 Website: <https://www.michess.org> TLA ID: 47566

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 26, 2025

Remembering Susan Kantor! (IL)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 13-15, 2025

18th Continental Chess Cleveland Open (OH)
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

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

◆ MISSISSIPPI

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

APRIL 5-6, 2025

2025 Mississippi Senior State Championship
Event site: Nissan Training Center Address: 300 Nissan Dr., Gate 1, Canton, MS 39046 Overall prize fund: \$350 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Mississippi Chess Association Email: mark@mcachess.org Phone: 615-631-3876 Website: <http://www.mcachess.org> TLA ID: 47442

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

◆ MISSOURI

MARCH 21-23, 2025

29th annual Mid-America Open (MO)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 26, 2025

Remembering Susan Kantor! (IL)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

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.

◆ MONTANA

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

◆ NEBRASKA

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

◆ NEVADA

MARCH 7-9, 2025

32nd annual Western Class Championships (CA-S)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 5, 2025

4th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Saturday Action Chess (CA-N)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 6, 2025

4th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Sunday Rapid Chess (CA-N)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

◆ NEW HAMPSHIRE

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

◆ NEW JERSEY

JANUARY 18, 2025-WEEKLY ON SATURDAY

New Jersey Chess Club Morristown Quads
Event site: Morristown Masonic Center Address: 39 Maple Ave, Morristown, NJ 07960 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Vince Alize Email: info@njchess.club Phone: 9087987185 Website: <https://www.njchess.club> TLA ID: 47396

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 8-9, 2025

Delaware State Open Championship (DE)
See Grand Prix.

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.

MARCH 23, 2025

68th Annual South Jersey Open
Event site: South Jersey Innovation Center Address: 498 Kings Hwy N, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034 Overall prize fund: \$3,100 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dov Gorman Email: dov@incntr.com Phone: 703-989-6867 Website: <https://incntr.com/tournaments/> TLA ID: 48222

MARCH 29, 2025

Hamilton Chess Club Quads

Event site: Switlik Park Pavilion Address: Fisher Place/Joe Dimaggio Drive, Hamilton, NJ 08610 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Edward Sytnik Email: edmendou@aol.com Phone: 6097582326 Website: <https://hamiltonchessclub.com> TLA ID: 47746

APRIL 16-20, 2025

The Princeton Open (NJ)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 2-4, 2025

5th annual Niagara Falls Open (NY)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 2-4, 2025

30th Space Coast Open Chess Festival (FL)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 6-8, 2025

33rd Annual Eastern Class Championships (CT)
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

19th annual Philadelphia Open (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.

AUGUST 9-13, 2025

12th Annual Washington International (MD)
See Grand Prix.

◆ NEW MEXICO

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 4-8, 2025

2025 National Open (NV)
See National Events.

◆ NEW YORK

JANUARY 18, 2025-WEEKLY ON SATURDAY

New Jersey Chess Club Morristown Quads (NJ)
See New Jersey.

MARCH 8-9, 2025

Delaware State Open Championship (DE)
See Grand Prix.

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-tour.com **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-tour.com **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.

MARCH 23, 2025

68th Annual South Jersey Open (NJ)
See New Jersey.

APRIL 16-20, 2025

The Princeton Open (NJ)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 2-4, 2025

5th annual Niagara Falls Open (NY)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 2-4, 2025

30th Space Coast Open Chess Festival (FL)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 6-8, 2025

33rd Annual Eastern Class Championships (CT)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 13-15, 2025

18th Continental Chess Cleveland Open (OH)
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

19th annual Philadelphia Open (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.

AUGUST 9-13, 2025

12th Annual Washington International (MD)
See Grand Prix.

📍 NORTH CAROLINA

MARCH 15, 2025

2nd Annual Dragon Knight St. Patrick's Grand Prix (NC)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 5, 2025

Big April Dragon Knight Grand Prix (NC)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 12, 2025

Dragon Knight Slow Art Day Grand Prix (NC)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 2-4, 2025

30th Space Coast Open Chess Festival (FL)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
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.

📍 NORTH DAKOTA

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

📍 NO. MARIANA ISL.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

📍 OHIO

MARCH 21-23, 2025

29th annual Mid-America Open (MO)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

APRIL 26-27, 2025

2025 Ohio Elementary, Middle, and High School Championships
Event site: The Wellington School **Address:** 3650 Reed Road, Columbus OH 43220 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** Y **Organizer:** Katherine Lin **Email:** info@columbuschessacademy.org **Phone:** 6147467682 **Website:** <https://www.columbuschessacademy.org> **TLA ID:** 47528

MAY 2-4, 2025

5th annual Niagara Falls Open (NY)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 13-15, 2025

18th Continental Chess Cleveland Open (OH)
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

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

📍 OREGON

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 4-8, 2025

2025 National Open (NV)
See National Events.

📍 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 18, 2025-WEEKLY ON SATURDAY

New Jersey Chess Club Morristown Quads (NJ)
See New Jersey.

MARCH 8-9, 2025

Delaware State Open Championship (DE)
See Grand Prix.

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.

MARCH 23, 2025

68th Annual South Jersey Open (NJ)
See New Jersey.

MARCH 28, 2025

2025 Pennsylvania Quick Chess Championship (PA)
See Grand Prix.

HERITAGE EVENT • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 29-30, 2025

2025 Pennsylvania State Scholastic Championships

Event site: Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg Hershey **Address:** 4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **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://psfchess.org/pascholasticchamp/> **TLA ID:** 47342

HERITAGE EVENT • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 29-30, 2025

2025 Ira Lee Riddle Memorial Pennsylvania State Championship & Pennsylvania Collegiate Championship (PA)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 16-20, 2025

The Princeton Open (NJ)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 2-4, 2025

5th annual Niagara Falls Open (NY)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 2-4, 2025

30th Space Coast Open Chess Festival (FL)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 13-15, 2025

18th Continental Chess Cleveland Open (OH)
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

19th annual Philadelphia Open (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNIOR GR AND 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-tour.com **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.

AUGUST 9-13, 2025

12th Annual Washington International (MD)
See Grand Prix.

📍 PUERTO RICO

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

📍 RHODE ISLAND

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

📍 SOUTH CAROLINA

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 2-4, 2025

30th Space Coast Open Chess Festival (FL)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

📍 SOUTH DAKOTA

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

📍 TENNESSEE

MARCH 21-23, 2025

29th annual Mid-America Open (MO)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 26, 2025

Remembering Susan Kantor! (IL)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
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.

TEXAS

FEBRUARY 16, 2025

**9th annual Southwest Class Blitz
Championship (TX)**
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 21-23, 2025

29th annual Mid-America Open (MO)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

34th annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 4-8, 2025

2025 National Open (NV)
See National Events.

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.

AUGUST 9-13, 2025

**12th Annual Washington International
(MD)**
See Grand Prix.

U.S. MIN. OUT. ISL.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

UTAH

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 4-8, 2025

2025 National Open (NV)
See National Events.

VERMONT

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.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

VIRGIN ISL., U.S.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

VIRGINIA

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 7, 2025

**2025 Virginia Scholastic & College BLITZ
Championships**
Event site: Monticello High School Address: 1400
Independence Way, Charlottesville, VA 22902 Overall
prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Hand-
icap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organiz-
er: Mike Hoffpauir, NTD/IA Email: mhoffpauir@aol.com
Phone: 757-846-4805 Website: https://www.vachess.
org TLA ID: 47698

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 8, 2025

**2025 Virginia College Chess
Championships**
Event site: Monticello High School Address: 1400
Independence Way, Charlottesville, VA 22902 Overall
prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Hand-
icap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organiz-
er: Mike Hoffpauir, NTD/IA Email: mhoffpauir@aol.com
Phone: 757-846-4805 Website: https://www.vachess.
org TLA ID: 47699

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 8-9, 2025

**2025 Virginia Scholastic Chess
Championships**
Event site: Monticello High School Address: 1400
Independence Way, Charlottesville, VA 22902 Overall
prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Hand-
icap accessible: Y Residency restriction: Y Organiz-
er: Mike Hoffpauir, NTD/IA Email: mhoffpauir@aol.com
Phone: 757-846-4805 Website: https://www.vachess.
org TLA ID: 47701

MARCH 8-9, 2025

Delaware State Open Championship (DE)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic
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

19th annual Philadelphia Open (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.

AUGUST 9-13, 2025

**12th Annual Washington International
(MD)**
See Grand Prix.

WASHINGTON

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 4-8, 2025

2025 National Open (NV)
See National Events.

WEST VIRGINIA

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

WISCONSIN

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 26, 2025

Remembering Susan Kantor! (IL)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

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.

WYOMING

APRIL 17-20, 2025

6th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-26, 2025

12th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

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US CHESS



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Apr 18-20 & Apr 19-20 (3-day & 2-day schedules)

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www.chesstour.com

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www.playmorechess.com

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www.kingregistration.com

Manasota Chess Center

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www.manasotachess.org

Marshall Chess Club

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212-477-3716
www.marshallchessclub.org

New York State Chess Association

New York, NY
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www.nysca.net

Ocean State Chess Association

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401-212-1335
www.oceanstatechess.com

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www.saintlouischessclub.org

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www.sandiegochessclub.org

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www.wachess.com

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CDA Collin County Chess Club (TX)

www.coramdeoacademy.org/chess

Chess Core (TX)

ChessCore@yahoo.com

ChessPalace (CA)

www.chesspalace.com

Downriver Chess Club (LA)

www.downriverchess.com

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www.evangelchurch.me

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www.littlehouseofchess.org

Michigan Chess Association (MI)

www.michess.org

Rochester Chess Center (NY)

www.chessset.com

Sparta Chess Club (NJ)

www.spartachessclub.org

Texas Chess Center (TX)

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CORRESPONDENCE CHESS

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7-Player Championship Events

2025 Golden Knights (Postal) | 2025 Electronic Knights

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as single round robin, groupings based on order entries received. Players start in Preliminary round and qualify for Semi-final and then Final rounds based on scores in previous round. **ENTRY FEE:** \$35 per entry. Players can enter up to a maximum of 10 times per event. **PRIZES:** Prize fund of \$2300 based on 200 entries. \$15 correspondence chess gift certificate to players knocked out in Preliminary round.

7-Player Round Robins

Victor Palciauskas Tournament (ICCF Server)

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as single round robin, groupings based on ratings. **ENTRY FEE:** \$5 per entry. **PRIZES:** 1st place receives a signed certificate.

4-Player Quads

John W. Collins Memorial (Postal) | Walter Muir E-Quads (ICCF Server)

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as double round robin, groupings based on ratings. **ENTRY FEE:** \$10 per entry. **PRIZES:** 1st place receives \$25 correspondence chess gift certificate and signed certificate.

2-Player Matches (Postal or Email)

FORMAT: Players play either 2, 4, or 6 games against the same opponent. Selecting multiple options may facilitate faster pairings. Pairings based on ratings or players may name their own opponent. **ENTRY FEE:** \$5 per entry. **PRIZES:** None.

Two ways to enter:

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- Postal events are open only to US Chess members who reside on the contiguous USA, Alaska, Hawaii or have an APO/ FPO postal address.
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- For events with groupings based on ratings, the following rating classes will be used:
 - o Class A: 1800 and above
 - o Class B: 1500-1999
 - o Class C: 1200-1699
 - o Class D: 1399 and below
- If you do not have an existing correspondence rating, please estimate your playing strength when submitting your entry.
- Correspondence chess gift certificate prizes can be used on correspondence chess entries only. They cannot be used for membership renewals or at US Chess Sales.

Online entry and payment by credit card is available at new.uschess.org/correspondence-chess

Name _____ USCHESSID# _____ Est. Rating _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ E-mail _____

☐ Golden Knights EF: \$35 ☐ Palciauskas ICCF EF: \$5 ☐ Muir ICCF Quad EF: \$10 2-player matches, EF: \$5 per entry, see above for options

☐ Electronic Knights EF: \$35 ☐ Collins Quad EF: \$10 Postal Match: 2 ☐ 4 ☐ 6 ☐ Email Match: 2 ☐ 4 ☐ 6 ☐

☐ Check here if you do not wish to have an opponent who is incarcerated (note that this may slow down your assignment).

Make checks payable to US CHESS and mail to: US Chess Correspondence Chess, PO Box 775308, St. Louis, MO 63177

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US CHESS

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PAGE 11 CHESS TO ENJOY

PROBLEM 1. 24. Nfd2! Qa2 25. Nc3!, Black resigned (25. ... Qxa3 26. Qxf7+). **PROBLEM 2.** Fastest is **29. Rg1**, threatening 30. f4. Black tried **29. ... Rg6** (because if 30. Bxg6 Nf3!) but resigned after 30. Kd1. **PROBLEM 3.** Surprisingly, neither 47. ... Qd6+ nor 47. ... Qc7+ wins after 48. g3. But 47. ... Qg1+ 48. Kg3 g5! and ... f5-f4+ does. **PROBLEM 4. 18. Rxe6!** If 18. ... fxe6 19. Qg6+ Kh8 20. Qh7 mate. The game went **18. ... Nxe6 19. Nf5+ Kg8 20. Nxe6+**, Black resigned. If 20. ... Kg7 21. Nf5+ Kg8 22. Nxe7+ and mates. **PROBLEM 5.** Take extra credit after **34. ... g5!** if you saw 35. Bg1 Bxf4 36. Bxh2 loses to 36. ... Rh8!. White resigned here. **PROBLEM 6. 31. ... b4!** threatens ... Ba6-e2 as well as ... b4xa3. One finish is 32. Ng5 Rxg2+! 33. Kxg2 Rc2+ and 34. ... Bxd5!.

PAGE 49 ABCS OF CHESS

PROBLEM 1. Mating net: Black is mated in 2: **1. Nc7+ Kb7 2. Ba6 mate.** **PROBLEM 2. Mating net:** Black loses in 2: **1. Qxg7+ Rxg7 2. Rf8 mate.** **PROBLEM 3. Mating net:** White has a 2-move mate: **1. Ng6+ Kg8 2. Ne7 mate.** **PROBLEM 4. Mating net:** White mates in 2: **1. Nf6+ Kf8 2. Bh6 mate.** **PROBLEM 5. Mating net:** Black is finished in 2: **1. Nb6+ axb6 2. Qa1 mate.** **PROBLEM 6. Mating net:** White mates in 2: **1. Bf8+ Kh7 2. Nf6 mate.**

PAGE 53 MAKE YOUR MOVE

TACTIC 1. 30. ... Qxc1!, White resigned. After 31. Qxc1 Rxc3 followed by ... Rc1, the battle is over. Bala-bayeva – Kaliakhmet, World Rapid Women, New York 2024. **TACTIC 2. 21. ... Qd5! 22. gxf4** White must take the knight to stop mate on g2; if 22. Ne3 the queen is hanging. **22. ... Rg6+ 23. Kf1 Qg2+ 24. Ke2 Qxf2+ 25. Kd3** Or 25. Kd1 Rd8+ 26. Nd6 Rxd6+ 27. exd6 Rxd6+ and White will get mated in a few moves. **25. ... Rd8+ 26. Nd6 Rxd6+ 27. exd6 Rxd6+ 28. Ke4 Qg2+ 29. Qf3 Qc2+ 30. Ke5 Re6 mate.** Kiolbasa – Mkrtchyan, World Rapid Women, New York 2024. **TACTIC 3. 19. ... Na2+, White resigned.** Black's attack irresistibly breaks through; e.g., 19. ... Na2+ 20. Nxa2 (or 20. Kd1 Qb3+) 20. ... Rhc8+ 21. Nc3 Rxc3+ 22. bxc3 Qb1+ 23. Kd2 Qc2+ 24. Ke3 Qxc3+ with mate. Indjic – Tsaruk, World Rapid, New York 2024. **TACTIC 4. 22. Nf6+! Bxf6** Or 22. ... gxf6 23. exf6 Bd8 24. Qf3 Kh7 25. Qe4+ Kh8 26. Qf4 Kh7 27. Be4+. **23. exf6 Rfd8** Unfortunately, Black cannot close the kingside with 23. ... g6 on account of 24. Qe3 Kh7 25. Bc1 g5 26. Be4+ Kh8 27. Qf3 Qd8 28. Bxg5 and it is game over for Black. **24. fxe7 Ne7** Also, 24. ... Nc7 25. Qf6 wins for White. **25. Qf6 Ng6 26. Be4 Qxb3 27. Bxg6 fxe6 28. Qxe6+ Rf7 29. Qe8+, Black resigned.** Javakhishvili – Sevckova, World Rapid Women, New York 2024. **TACTIC 5. 17. ... Qg3!** A standard ploy for mating a king. **18. hxe4** 18. Ne7+ Kh8 19. hxe4 Nxe4 merely transposes. **18. ... Nxe4 19. Ne7+ Kh8 20. Bxg7+ Kxg7 21. Nh5+ gxe5 22. Qg5+ Kh8 23. Qxe5** White has managed to stop the mate on h2, but the attack is not over yet. **23. ... Ne3 24. Rg1** Or 24. Qh2 Qxh2+ 25. Kxh2 Rc7 and Black wins the Exchange with

a decisive advantage. **24. ... Rc5 25. e5** After 25. Nf5 Bxf5 26. exf5 Nxd1 27. Rxd1 Rg8, Black also wins. **25. ... Qg7** Parrying White's mating threat and continuing the attack. **26. Rde1 Rxe5 27. Qh4 Re8** Also 27. ... f5 does the job. **28. Rxe3 Rxe3 29. Rf1 Re5 30. Rf2 Rg5, White resigned.** Sindarov – Nepomniachtchi, World Rapid, New York 2024. **TACTIC 6. 23. Nf5! gxf5** Or 23. ... Bf8 24. Rg1 Ra7 25. Raf1 Rf7 26. Qe2 and White has a decisive advantage, as White's attack will continue to intensify while Black will struggle with what to do with the queen without losing too much material. **24. exf5 Nd4** Or 24. ... Ng7 25. Rxe7 Qxf5 26. Qh4 with a large advantage for White. **25. Rxe7 Bxf5** White also wins after 25. ... Nxf5 26. Bd2 Qg6 27. Nf4, as well as after 25. ... Qxf5 26. Bxd4 cxd4 27. Nf4. **26. Rg1** 26. Ne3 is possibly even stronger. **26. ... Bg4 27. h3 Kf8 28. Rxe7 Qf5 29. Qh4 Kg8 30. Nf4, Black resigned.** He will either lose the queen or get mated, e.g., 30. Nf4 Qxh7 31. Rxe4+ Kh8 32. Qxf6+. Cheparinov – Moroni Jr., World Rapid, New York 2024. **TACTIC 7. 21. ... Rc8!** Capturing on f2 is less effective, e.g., 21. ... Nxf2 22. Bxc5 Rc8 23. Nd4 R8xc5 24. Rg1 when Black is obviously better, but White can still fight. After the text move, however, Black wins convincingly. **22. Bxc5** Or 22. Be2 Rc1+! 23. Rxc1 Nd3+ 24. Bxd3 Rxc1+ and Black wins. **22. ... R8xc5 23. Bd3**

Black also wins after 23. Nd4 Rc1+ 24. Rxc1 Rxc1+ 25. Ke2 Rb1. **23. ... Rc1+ 24. Ke2 Rxb1 25. Rxb1 Bg4! 26. b4 axb3 e.p., White resigned.** Black's knight is coming to either c3 or g5. Corrales Jimenez – Erigaisi, World Rapid, New York 2024. **TACTIC 8. 20. Qf3!** The queen is on the way to h7 and there is nothing Black can do to stop it. **20. ... Qd7** The alternatives are no better; for instance, 20. ... Bh6 is met by 21. Nxe6!, or 20. ... Kf8 is met by 21. Qh1 b5 22. Qh7 Rad8 23. Nf3 (threatening Bf4-h6) 23. ... Rxd3 24. Nh4 and, in both cases, White is winning. **21. Qh1 Rd8 22. Qh7+ Kf8 23. Nh3** Again, the idea is Bf4-h6, but the knight also has another job ... **23. ... f6 24. Bh6 Bxh6 25. Qxh6+ Kf7 26. Qh7+ Kf8 27. Nf4, Black resigned.** Abdusattorov – Rakhmanov, World Rapid, New York 2024. **TACTIC 9. 25. Bxb7** White has a good alternative in 25. Nxe6, and now: (a) 25. ... Qxe6 26. Bxb7 Nxb7 27. Nd5 Be7 28. h6, and we have transposed to the game continuation; (b) 25. ... Qxg6 26. hxe6 Bxg2 27. Nxd8 Bh3 28. Nf7 winning, and (c) 25. ... Nxe6 26. Qxf5 g6 27. Qxf8+ Qxf8 28. Nxf8 Kxf8 29. Bxb7 Nxb7 30. Nd5 and White has a won game. **25. ... Nxb7 26. Nxe6 Qxe6** Or 26. ... Rd7 27. Nd5 Qxg6+ 28. hxe6 Re8 29. Nxf8 Kxf8 30. Bxf6 gxf6 31. Nxf6 and White wins. **27. Nd5 Be7 28. h6 Qf7 29. Nxf6+, Black resigned.** Theodorou – Meier, World Rapid, New York 2024.

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MY BEST MOVE

SOFIA DOROSHENKO

STUDENT AND
CHESS WRESTLER



OUR FAMILY PHOTO ALBUM HAS a picture of a 3-year-old me, pushing my king's pawn towards my grandfather. Before I could speak, my mother recalls, he would try to teach me how to move the pieces.

Sometimes we strolled along Lake Michigan with the snow-saturated wind biting at our faces. There he once he offered me a cut-out puzzle — one of the many in his pocket from the *Ukrainian Village* newspaper. I blinked the tears away from my eyes, straining to understand the mate in four. The position was a jumble, and nothing was obvious. He offered me a dollar if I could solve it, and I sat late into the evening with it until my grandmother confiscated it. We had little time together before his passing, and after that, I didn't have access to chess until high school.

I wandered into the chess club after the swimming season ended. The club captain offered to play; of course, it ended badly. What was once interest became obsession, and I was hooked. After wrestling, between classes, and while on the bus, there was never a free moment when I wasn't watching or playing chess. In time I became the club captain, and our team won its first conference tournament.

This doesn't mean that the nerves ever left me. Recently, I was playing in a big Minnesota tournament. Before even shaking my opponent's hand, I anxiously mumbled "I can't lose" to myself over and over again. He opened with 1. d4, and I responded with the Tarrasch Defense. We reached the following position.

(see diagram top of next column)

With 14. ... e5, I intended to get my trapped light-squared bishop into the game. He responded with 15. f4, asking whether I would trade pawns or push my e-pawn. I considered this position for 20 minutes in horror, because my choices to either open



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Before I could speak, my mother recalls, he would try to teach me how to move the pieces.



BLACK TO MOVE

up the f-file for his rook, placing immense pressure on my knight, or push, which loses a pawn after 15. ... e4 16. Nxc5 Qxc5 17. Bxf6 gxf6 18. Bxe4.

This was **MY BEST MOVE!** In the end I decided that sacrificing that pawn was better than activating all of his pieces, so I bravely pushed the pawn.

This turned out to be the only move that gives Black a small advantage. The key point

is that it opened up the e-file. Immediately, I played 18. ... Re8 with tempo, looking to eventually double my rooks. After 19. Qd3 Bh3 appears to be losing a second pawn due to 20. Bxh7+, but after the simple 20. ... Kg7, White's rook is still attacked; if it moves, his bishop will be trapped after Black's ... f6-f5.

Instead White played 20. Rf2, and I responded with 20. ... f5, kicking away the bishop. After 21. Bd5 Re3 I brought my a8-rook to the e-file and ultimately crashed through with ... d4-d3.

My best move was not a flashy sacrifice, but a case where I had to find the right move when all options seemed disastrous. White got an extra pawn, but he was positionally stuck, and I eventually won the game. ♠

You can read archival copies of "My Best Move" on uschess.org, click on "Chess Life Magazine," and then "Archives."

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