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CHESSLIFE



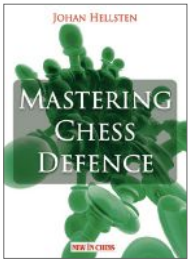
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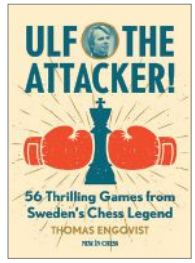


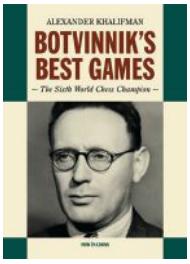
Mastering Chess Defence
Johan Hellsten

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

Ulf – The Attacker!
Thomas Enqvist

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



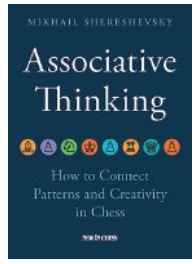


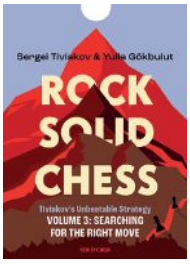
Botvinnik's Best Games
Alexander Khalifman

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

Associative Thinking
Mikhail Shereshevsky

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



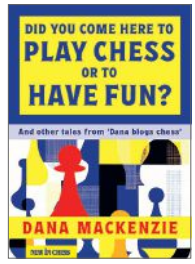


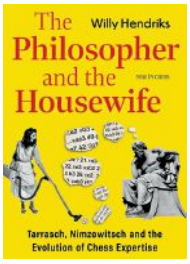
Rock Solid Chess - Volume 3
Sergey Tiviakov & Yulia Gokbulut

Choosing a move is an eternal dilemma for a chess player. How can we recognize the right solution in any position? How can we gain confidence in our decisions? Where do we direct our pieces and pawns? In ten chapters, Tiviakov explains clearly and uniquely how a single move can strengthen your position, weaken your opponent's position, or simply avoid trouble.

Did You Come Here to Play Chess or to Have Fun?
Dana Mackenzie

Dana Mackenzie celebrates the joy of chess – the ordinary, everyday chess we amateurs play. He has selected 40 of his favorite posts from his award-winning chess blog, including a diverse mix of stories, philosophical musings, chess improvement tips, and game analysis. In each story, the fun leaps off the page.



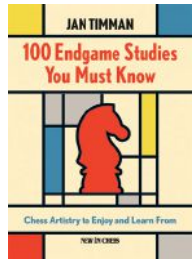


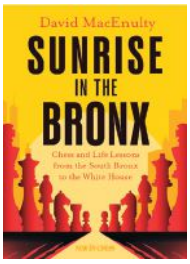
The Philosopher and the Housewife
Willy Hendriks

This is the fascinating story of the lifelong rivalry between the two most vain chess players in history: Siegbert Tarrasch and Aron Nimzowitsch. They clashed as personalities, players, and chess writers, both searching for the truth in chess but with very different perspectives. IM Willy Hendriks offers a fantastic and often highly entertaining look at this great controversy.

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.



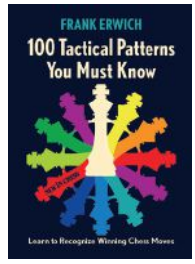


Chess and Life Lessons
David MacEnulty

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.



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ON THE **COVER**

With more than 4,500 players making the trip to Orlando, SuperNationals VIII was a tremendous success. With blitz, bughouse, and GM guests, you could almost forget that national championships were on the line. What's it like to battle for individual and team glory? Find out this month in IM Nico Chasin's cover story.

PHOTOGRAPH BY **BENNY SIBBETT**

PHOTO: ORLANDO EVENT PHOTOGRAPHY FOR US CHESS

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Grand Chess Tour is a circuit of international events, each demonstrating the highest level of organization for the world's best players. The legendary Garry Kasparov, one of the world's greatest ambassadors for chess, inspired the Grand Chess Tour and helped solidify the partnership between the organizers. For more information about the tour, please visit grandchesstour.org.

CHESSLIFE
September

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PHOTOS: COURTESY SLCC / OOTES (LIANG), GORZINSKI (HAIR), SUBJECT (BANTIGUE); HARTMANN (PRYOR), LLADA (CHASIN), KING (IGOR), O.E.P. (KID, SIGNS)

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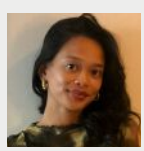
IM NICO CHASIN (Cover Story) is a 7-time National Scholastic Champion, a member of the All-America Chess team every year since 2016, the 2022 U.S. Cadet Champion, and the Bronze Medalist at the 2018 U12 World Cadet Championship, sharing the podium with D. Gukesh and Volodar Murzin. He graduated from Columbia Grammar & Preparatory School in June and will attend the University of Chicago in Fall 2026 after taking a gap year to concentrate exclusively on chess.



IM IGOR KHMELNITSKY (Coaches' Corner) is an experienced trainer and author with more than 35 years of playing and coaching experience. The author of the popular *Chess Exam* series of training books, you can find him online at *iamcoach.com*.



GM AWONDER LIANG (Grenke) was born in Madison, Wisconsin, in 2003, and has lived there his whole life. He graduated from the University of Chicago this spring and plans to continue his studies at Webster University. His recent highlights include cracking 2700 FIDE for the first time at the Chennai Masters in August.



IRENE BANTIGUE (First Moves) is a freelance journalist and M.S. student at Columbia Journalism School, specializing in arts, culture, and immigrant communities. Her article is an updated version of a piece that originally ran on her Substack, which can be seen at *substack.com/@irenebntg*.

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READING BETWEEN THE LINES

Chess and Literature

WORLD CHESS HALL OF FAME & GALLERIES

Missouri Arts Council

Financial assistance for this project has been provided by the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency.

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THROUGH **APRIL 12, 2026**

For centuries, writers have used chess as a way to tell remarkably varied stories, from narratives of players aspiring to the top levels of the game to battles with life and death as the stakes. The World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries' newest exhibition, *Reading Between the Lines: Chess and Literature*, features rare books, artwork, and artifacts related to novels, poetry, authors, and poets spanning the eighteenth century to the present. Highlights include a chess table and other artifacts owned by *The Queen's Gambit* author Walter Tevis, and J. Allen St. John's paintings illustrating the adventure story *The Chessmen of Mars*.

The World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries acknowledges Dr. Jeanne Cairns Sinquefield and Rex Sinquefield, whose generous support makes our exhibitions possible. The mission of the World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries is to educate visitors, fans, players, and scholars by preserving, exhibiting and interpreting the game of chess and its continuing cultural and artistic significance. The World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries admits people of any gender, race, color, nationality and ethnic origin. The World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries complies with the Internal Revenue Service's guidelines regarding publication of its non-discrimination policy in its brochures, catalogs, advertisements and otherwise making it known to the general community.

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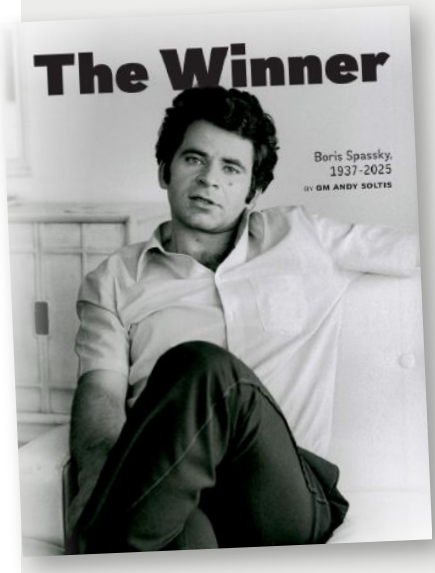
Alice Lee

"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."

COURTESY SLCC/LENNART OATES

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Some Input

I'm an old man, and I've been reading *Chess Life* for over 50 years.

I'm sure you are always looking for input, so here it is.

I like to read your magazine on the fly, so to speak, waiting on line at the supermarket, etc., and not sitting at a board.

Andy Soltis is always entertaining as was the Stuart Rachels story. The feature on Alan Trefler was particularly good. These are all articles you can read. Benjamin's "Endgame School" is great, and I wish there were more diagrams.

But I can't believe you are publishing blitz games and annotated games between 1800-rated 10-year-olds. Who wants that??? I'll repeat myself — I can't believe you are publishing blitz games!

And I was actually mad that when Spassky died you published a bunch of games without annotations. There was a diagram where Boris left a knight that was under attack by a pawn (I think it was on c6) … one of the greatest concepts of all time, and without any notes or explanation. When I saw that diagram, I was so disappointed that there wasn't commentary and explanation from a grandmaster.

There you go. I got it off my chest.

Gary Shure
Via email

John Hartmann responds:

I am indeed always looking for input. Thank you.

The tough thing about making a magazine is that you can't please everyone with everything. So I'm glad that you've found articles and authors in recent months that you've enjoyed.

But chess is not the same as it was 50 years ago, and part of our job as the official periodical of US Chess is to shine light on as much of American chess as possible. Scholastics and faster time controls weren't important 50 years ago, but both are critical parts of modern chess, and we'll continue to cover them.

Regarding the Spassky obit: A balance always has to be struck regarding quantity, quality, and time. In a perfect world, and with infinite page space, we could have gotten those games annotated. But I'm coming to believe that part of the function of print is curation; that is to say, it's the job of a print editor to sift through heaps of data and present what is essential.

We decided to give readers — many of whom who may never have seen a Spassky game! — as broad a slice of his genius as possible. And given our production cycle and the date Spassky passed, the alternative was to wait until he'd been gone nearly two months before mentioning him in the magazine. We didn't think that was ideal either. (And let me take this opportunity to say that GM Andy Soltis' fine obituary was even more impressive in view of the "time trouble" he was working under.) All in all, I think we did the 10th world champion justice in a most timely way.

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

A Sporting Chance

There's a move on to make chess a varsity sport in New York City's public high schools.

BY **IRENE BANTIGUE**

ON THE FIRST SATURDAY IN May, Eric Zheng arrives at M.S. 582, in East Williamsburg, at 7:30 a.m. A senior and captain of the chess team at Edward R. Murrow High School, Zheng isn't up early to compete. He's overseeing a tournament that gathers some 600 students of every skill and grade level — all vying for top spots in New York City's scholastic chess scene.

Already a respected tournament director at just 17, Zheng's journey with chess began in his earliest years. What started as simply following in his older brother's footsteps quickly grew into a personal passion.

Among the benefits of chess, he says, are a like-minded community of peers and a boost in analytical and pattern recognition skills. This enhanced capacity for critical thinking is especially important to him, as he plans to major in electrical engineering in college.

At the tournament, Zheng wears a bright yellow shirt bearing the logo of the event host, Chess in the Schools. Sporting glasses and a welcoming smile, he helps set up the chessboards, collect results, and guide players and parents throughout the sprawling middle school.

"And while you're here," he says, "you can watch other people play chess."

It's a fitting remark from the high schooler, who a week later traveled with his team to compete at SuperNationals VIII, in Orlando, Florida.



Murrow at the 2023 National High School Championship

PHOTO: COURTESY ELIOT WEISS

The only previous time Zheng attended SuperNationals was back in elementary school. He missed out on the event as a middle schooler in 2021, when it was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fortunately, money isn't a concern for Zheng. Murrow covers all associated costs — ranging from plane tickets and hotel rooms to entrance fees, which vary from $100 to $350 — ensuring that financial constraints don't prevent students from competing.

But Zheng understands that this is a rarity among high schools. He says some dropoff in participation among older students is just the natural process of trying out different sports, but that "what I've actually noticed the most is that a lot of the limitations for competitiveness are more financially based."

Zheng explains that his friends at Brooklyn Tech High School, which also boasts a strong chess team, recently attended the New York State High School Championship. However, they are often unable to attend national competitions due to a lack of funding.

As a result, many otherwise enthusiastic — and capable — high school players miss out on the full academic and social benefits that chess has afforded Zheng.

But some parents are spearheading a movement, hoping to reverse this trend.

Uplifting the Upper Grades

At the March meeting of the Citywide Council on High Schools, a group of volunteer parents who advocate for New York City's public high school students, Manhattan representative Benjamin Morden introduced a resolution breaking from the council's recent focus on topics such as standardized testing and guidelines around artificial intelligence: He called on Schools Chancellor Melissa Aviles-Ramos and the Public Schools Athletic League, which oversees interscholastic competition in New York City public high schools, to include chess as a sport.

"We can't forget that sports also make schools worth going to for students," said Morden, the father of three daughters who are competitive chess players.

He pointed to the game's rapid rise in popularity over the past six years, noting that chess now has an estimated 600 million players worldwide.

Morden went on to explain that while

around 1,800 elementary and middle school students registered for the 57th Annual New York State Scholastic Chess Championships, only about 200 students signed up for the high school equivalent.

This steep drop in tournament registration underscores the need for more competitive chess opportunities in the upper grades, he argued.

"It's normal because kids develop passions for other activities," he says in an interview via Zoom. "But I'm very convinced that many also drop off from chess because it's tough to continue with it individually."

While online platforms such as *Lichess.org* are useful for analyzing individual games, Morden explains, a team environment offers a more effective way to hone skills — while also helping chessplayers, like competitors in any other sport, to see failure as a chance to grow.

If the Public Schools Athletic League recognizes chess as a sport, it would create the opportunity for league play — potentially for both individual and school team championship recognition. Besides improving local scholastic competitions, Morden views this resolution as a means to foster critical thinking and enhance both student attendance and academic performance, among other benefits.

Competitive chess would be open to New York City's public high school students, and "championships inspire students to excel," Morden said.

Only one parent objected to the resolution. "I agree that chess is competitive and requires strategy," said Lisa Stowe, a council representative for Queens. "But I would offer that it's not a sport. If we're going to call chess a sport and have PSAL sponsor [it], then I think they should sponsor e-sports and video games."

Still, the resolution passed by a vote of 8-1. Like all CCHS resolutions, this one is nonbinding and won't directly affect school policy.

However, according to a dozen stakeholders in New York City's scholastic chess community interviewed for this story, it marks the first city-level effort of its kind — raising hopes that dedicated funding for the sport will soon follow.

Renewed Possibilities

In 1981, when Eliot Weiss founded the chess team at Edward R. Murrow — initially as an afterschool club — the high school had no varsity sports. Little did Weiss, then a newly minted math teacher, know that his chess team would become Murrow's closest thing to one.

At first, the team's progress was gradual; then, it took off. From its founding through 1988, Murrow steadily developed by competing in local tournaments. From 1992 through 1994, they achieved their first three-peat, winning both the state and national championships each year.

Today, Murrow's chess team boasts eight national titles and nearly 40 city and state trophies combined.

But behind the scenes, Weiss has had to show the same grit as his students to keep the program afloat. Before 2000, the chess team relied on donations from a range of supporters, including Weiss himself; Yoko Ono, whose 1966 artwork "Play it by Trust" features an oversized, all-white chess set symbolizing the futility of war; and the late former Brooklyn borough president Howard Golden.

Since then, an anonymous donor — known publicly only as Rita — has funded the entire team. She happened to hear about Murrow's financial needs for the national championships as she listened to 1010 WINS while riding in the back of a cab.

"Fortunately, I got money from many different private industries," Weiss says. "But never did I get a penny from New York City Public Schools, the Department of Education, or the chancellor."

When Weiss heard about the renewed push to recognize chess as a sport, he took the news "with a grain of salt."

"Everyone says yes" in terms of general support, he says. "But it's really just window dressing unless the city puts money into it."

Globally, interest in the game has surged. Between October 2020 and April 2022, *Chess.com* saw its monthly active users double from around 8 million to nearly 17 million. This boom was fueled in part by the release of the hit Netflix series *The Queen's Gambit*, which premiered that October. In February 2023, *Chess.com* reported that nearly 38 million games were played on its platform each day — almost triple the daily average from the previous year.

At the same time, New York City lost two major scholastic chess tournaments after the global pandemic: the Scholastic Championships and the annual Mayor's Cup.

Chess in the Schools — the nonprofit that organized the tournament Eric Zheng directed — had previously partnered with the city to host the Mayor's Cup, which ran from 2001 to 2018. In a Zoom interview, Shaun Smith, the organization's director of programs, said, "We actually got more of the high school kids who were not from [Chess in the Schools] to participate in the Mayor's Cup, because of the cachet it had," Smith says. "People really wanted to win [it]. There was something special about that."

But when in-person gatherings resumed after COVID-19, Smith noticed a shift: The city was now focusing less on activities such as chess and more on educational efforts, such as helping students recover from the socioemotional toll of lost classroom time.

Now, with the CCHS resolution, Smith sees renewed possibilities. "There may be a mandate to have the Mayor's Cup in chess," he says.

Though Smith shares some of Weiss's concerns about long-term support, he is optimistic about the growing push to recognize chess as a varsity sport. He stresses that its success will depend on engaging not only high school students, but also committed teachers and administrators.



Chess in the Schools' Brooklyn Chess Day

PHOTO: IRENE BANTIGUE

"The potential is there," Smith says. "There just needs to be follow-up."

'Crying Out'

Filmmaker Katie Dellamaggiore first discovered Murrow's chess team through a *New York Times* feature about one of its national champions, Shawn Martinez. Intrigued, Dellamaggiore dug deeper. But as her creative process unfolded, she ultimately focused on I.S. 318, the middle school where many future chess stars — including Martinez — got their start before moving on to Murrow.

The result was *Brooklyn Castle*, a 2012 documentary that followed five standout members of I.S. 318's powerhouse chess team. In the film, Assistant Principal John Galvin proudly dubbed the young team "The Yankees of Chess."

I.S. 318 is unique in that it offers chess as an elective. Elizabeth Spiegel, the school's full-time chess teacher since the early 2000s, can assign homework and grades, just like any other class.

Spiegel first heard about the PSAL resolution through a parent chat within the school community. "Having a robust tournament program is a prerequisite for having a competitive team," she says. "If you don't get to practice, you don't get better. I'm really excited, especially if it means [students] are going to have big tournaments."

Galvin emphasizes that expanding opportunities for high school chess players could have a positive — albeit indirect — impact on younger students. Recognition at the city level, he notes, is meaningful and motivating in itself.

"If we give high schools a path to creating a program [through PSAL]," he adds, "it might make becoming a competitive chess player a little clearer to kids."

The success of I.S. 318's chess team, as the documentary highlights, isn't just about winning tournaments — it also shows how the team overcame school budget cuts.

When asked how to ease the burden of sustaining chess programs at individual schools, Galvin pointed to a broader solution: The city needs to expand its commitment to after-school programming. He argues that schools and nonprofit providers should receive more direct funding to run their own programs.

"If New York City is one of the chess capitals in the world," Galvin says, "how does it not have a [public] high school chess league? It's crying out for it."

'The Infrastructure is Already There'

Two of *Brooklyn Castle*'s central figures, Alexis Paredes and Pobo Efekoro, remain involved in chess in different ways. Both express their support for the ongoing parent-led push to expand scholastic chess opportunities, noting how difficult it was to stay engaged with the game after entering high school.

"There are only positives that come from this," Paredes, 29, says about the resolution. "[Chess] gives students a whole new avenue to not only grow as players, but also as human beings."

After the film's release, Paredes went on to become a master, reaching a peak rating of 2205. Since April 2020, he has also served as the director of Brooklyn programs for Impact Coaching Network, which runs team-based chess at 40 elementary schools across New York City.

Paredes started at Townsend Harris High School in Queens, which didn't offer chess, before transferring to Edward R. Murrow for the next three years. Reflecting on his high school experiences, Paredes notes that designating chess as a sport could not only encourage older students to take it more seriously, but also spark greater interest among new players.

"They might feel a [stronger] sense of pride," he says. "Being able to represent a team bigger than yourself is always a sweet experience."

Pobo Efekoro, who was in seventh grade at the time of filming, is all too familiar with the joy of representing a team. Efekoro went on to become a Division I shotput athlete at the University of Virginia, earning All-American honors five times during his college career. Today, he works at Amazon and offers private chess coaching on the side.

To Efekoro, the ongoing push for chess to be included as a sport makes sense.

"The infrastructure is already there," he says. "Chess in the Schools has been running tournaments for high school students for years, so you don't need to reinvent the wheel. It's almost like the city formalizing something that, from a shadow perspective, has already existed."

Efekoro adds that when he got to Forest Hills High School, in Queens, his development as a chess player stalled due to the lack of an official program. He increasingly began to coach instead of playing, teaching on the weekends with his alma mater, I.S. 318.

"If I played more, could I have gotten expert?'" he says. "Probably. I lost about 10 to 15 tournaments a year because I wasn't playing somewhere with a high school program."

To those who question chess's legitimacy as a sport, the former college athlete offers this perspective: "I still get more frustrated losing a chess game than I did losing at shotput."

He adds that not enough people talk about how exhausting chess is. "My muscles aren't tired," Efekoro says, "but my mind is fatigued."

'Excited to Win'

Edward R. Murrow's chess team arrived at the convention center in Orlando — both the venue for SuperNationals VIII and their home for the next few days — in the early evening before holding an evening team practice. The first round was scheduled for 10 a.m. the following day.

Zheng typically plays chess for about 30 minutes a day. But to prepare for the tournament, he increased his practice time to one or two hours daily, playing more blitz — usually managing to complete around 20 games, with breaks.

"With chess, like any sport, you've got to warm up," he says. "If you go into soccer without jogging, you might hurt your legs. If you go into a chess game without playing blitz or solving other puzzles, you might miss some obvious things."

While Zheng prepared for his biggest tournament yet, many high schoolers stayed behind.

Benjamin Morden, who is advocating for chess to become a varsity sport, says that his two younger daughters remained in New York to study for back-to-back weeks of Advanced Placement exams. He adds that there have been no updates since the resolution passed.

"It's going to be a process," he says. "I don't know if the [various city elections] are impacting policy decisions, but for obvious reasons, it's always harder to make changes during these periods."

In the meantime, Zheng looked forward to participating in his first SuperNationals event in nearly eight years. (He placed 28th in the K-12 Under 1600 Section.)

"I'm excited to play against players who are a lot better than me and learn from my experiences," he says. "And I'm also excited to win."

On June 4, the Public Schools Athletic League added chess to its 2025 High School Summer Sports, Fitness, and Recreation Program; Morden was reelected to the Citywide Council on High Schools and seeks to extend this change for the next academic year.

Access to CHESS

Stories of recipients of US Chess Women's program grants

BY **JJ LANG** AND **DEVAUGHN CROXTON**

US CHESS women

LAST YEAR, US CHESS awarded 17 grants under the US Chess Women's program to nonprofit affiliate members for programs that support women and girls in their communities.

The grants, offered with the support of the Saint Louis Chess Club, were more than double the number awarded in 2023, and these are highlights, photos, and testimonials from just a few of last cycle's grant recipients, as well as from women and girls who benefitted from these programs and initiatives.

Let's go to a tournament!

Several of our grant recipients organized travel to state and national tournaments. Memorial Middle School (Harlingen, Texas) went to the KCF All-Girls National Chess Championships, in Chicago, using grant funding to cover expenses.

"I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to attend the All-Girls Nationals in Chicago and represent my school and community through chess, a game I've grown to love with all my heart. Walking into a room filled with hundreds of talented girls who share the same passion was both humbling and empowering. Each match challenged me to stay focused, think creatively, and believe in my abilities. I've spent countless hours practicing, studying openings, and learning from my losses, and this experience reminded me that the hard work is worth it. I'm especially thankful to my coach, parents, and teammates for their support. Competing here helped me grow not just as a chess player, but as a confident young woman."

— EMERY R.

Other grant recipients found that organizing regular club meetings and special guests for girls helped boost the number of girls who competed in local and state scholastics.

Having these tournament goals in mind, as well as the funding to ensure interested kids could travel to these tournaments, certainly proved to be a formula for success for many girls from Students Leading Educational Opportunities (SLEO) in St. Louis, MO.

As one parent of an SLEO student wrote, "SLEO's support shines like sunshine on every event, lighting up the chessboard of wisdom for more girls, allowing them to exercise their minds and courage in the game, gain precious friendship, and grow together."

Special Guests

Many grant recipients invited special guests to give lectures or simultaneous exhibitions (simuls) at their local club. SLEO, for instance, hosted a simul with GM Jeffery Xiong as well as a lecture with former Women's World Champion GM Tan Zhongyi.

The Massachusetts Chess Association made special guest lectures, simuls, and Q&A's highlights of its series of all-girls blitz tournaments hosted at the Boylston Chess Club in Boston, MA. Highlights included a simul with WGM Jennifer Yu, several lectures from GM Nadya Kosintseva, and lessons from both WIM Kateryna Odnorozhenko and WIM Prathiba Y Gounder.

"The Queen's Blitz Chess Series event organized for female players here in Boston is the first of its kind I attended in New England in the last 23 years.

"In a single day, players got to experience competitive games, lectures and simul chess by accomplished female players, puzzle-solving sessions with prizes, and socializing with other like-minded people.

"Goodies in the form of books and chess items, snacks and beverages encouraged kids and players to enjoy the whole experience even more!!

"I could bring my female students and daughter who enjoyed the sessions and were inspired watching other girls and titled players.



Learning at SLEO



WGM Jennfier Yu at the Boylston CC

ALL PHOTOS: COURTESY OF SUBJECTS

"I am thankful to US Chess, the Massachusetts Chess Association, WIM Kateryna Odnorozhenko and the team for bringing these series to New England female players. They were well organized and memorable events. Hope to see more 'all women' events in the future as well."

— KAVYASHREE MALLANNA, NH, US Chess expert, chess teacher, founder-director of Celestial Minds

"I have had the great pleasure of participating in each of the six Queens Blitz Series, organized by Ukrainian-American WIM Kateryna Odnorozhenko.

"The blitz tournaments themselves were a friendly environment for females of all ages to practice their skills.

"Kateryna also organized simultaneous exhibitions by GM Nadya Kosintseva (former Russian Olympiad team member) and WGM Jennifer Yu, two-time U.S. Women's Champion. They are truly impressive role models, and all participants enjoyed meeting them over the board.

"The events were female-only, with Elsie Smits acting as tournament director and male spectators banned from the playing room. The female energy was a refreshing change from typical chess events, and helped provide a welcoming environment to newcomers to the game.

"Kateryna paid great attention to detail to ensure everyone had a good experience, including organizing puzzle contests, providing instructive book prizes, arranging food for all participants, etc.

"I was particularly impressed by how the events attracted girls and women who had never played in rated events, as well as experienced players happy to get some extra practice.

"I am very grateful to Kateryna for organizing such fine events, and for the USCF sponsorship that made them possible."

— WCM NATASHA CHRISTIANSEN, Mass.

Chess … and more!

Many chess players have other hobbies! Sometimes, organizing a social event around chess *and* another pursuit is a way to encourage the chess-curious to stop by and provide an opportunity for chessplayers to build and strengthen friendships in a new context.

The annual Chess Girls Rock weekend hosted by Hampton Roads Chess Association has become something of an annual tradition, and it is a joy to watch this event grow. Plus, HRCA has taken the idea further, organizing a Ladies and Girls Paint Night as an early ice-breaker to provide some social time focused on creating chess art and chess bonds between the mothers and daughters who participated.

As one parent of an HRCA regular explains, the focus on community-building around chess does not come at the expense of prioritizing competitive chess. If anything, it's been the opposite:

"My daughter is the oldest of 3, with two little brothers. Her brothers are classic boys. Roughhousing, sports, wrestling and causing trouble. She stays clear, preferring her books and her Pokemon cards.

"If you asked me last year, I might have called her non-competitive and bookish. But then we found chess. All of a sudden, her competitive side emerged, and she started to care about winning. She's up at night on ChessKid bragging about the levels she unlocked. We're travelling all over the state competing in tournaments. We're pushing her out of her comfort zone and she's growing and improving every day.

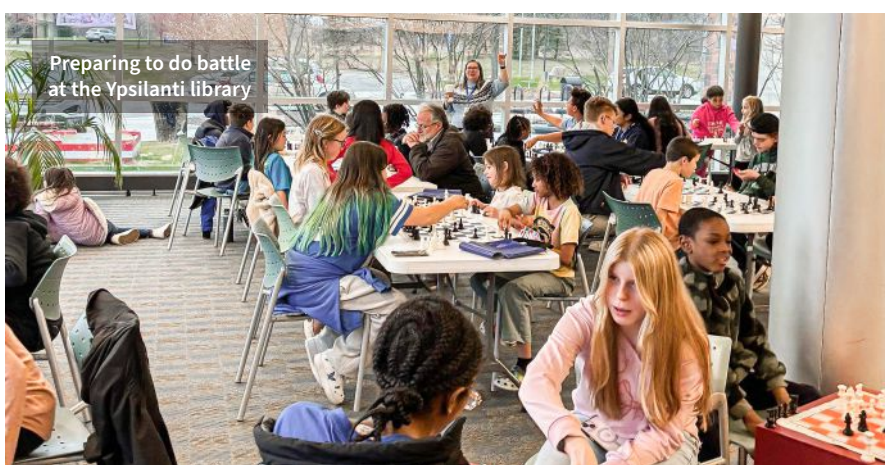
"Better yet, with Girls Club, she has something that's special and unique to her. No boys allowed. No brothers competing for attention. It's just her, her new friends, and the chess board.

"Chess is boy-dominated, and that can be an intimidating barrier to entry. But with HRCA's girl programming, our daughter had her own lane where she could learn in a comfortable environment, make new friends, and go on to checkmate the boys when tournament time came.



Memorial Middle on the move!





Preparing to do battle at the Ypsilanti library

"Big thank you to HRCA and the development and memories they've provided to my daughter."

A similar sentiment was mirrored by one self-described "chess-obsessed grandma," crediting the program's focus on a safe space for girls with unlocking the chess obsession gene in her granddaughter:

"My 6-year-old granddaughter has been through a lot in her young life and struggles to trust and to make friends. Being raised by her chess-obsessed grandma, she was introduced to the game very young, took an interest last summer, but then lost interest during the school year. Then she took part in the Girls Rock weekend as a camper along with her younger sister this year, and she was inspired to see all the girls playing chess and loved hanging out with them for three days. Now she's back on ChessKid working on her chess daily, and her little sister is always begging to play. I'm looking forward to getting them involved in our chess programs this coming school year."

— **Grandma / Guardian of Luna and Zara**

Mentorship

Not all of our grant recipients organized events exclusively for women and girls, but the Ypsilanti District Library, in Michigan, found that by centering mentorship opportunities for girls, their 25-week after-school program began with and retained roughly 50% female participation.

Older girls with experience playing chess were explicitly recruited to be role models for younger students, including serving as chess teachers for new players who joined the club during the year. This model was also adopted by SLEO in St. Louis, where 20 of the club's volunteers were female and, by the end of the school year, over half of the participants were girls.

This year we had four teens helping most weeks. Three served as volunteers; one young woman with more chess expertise worked as a paid intern funded by our US Chess grant. Volunteers created a welcoming environment, greeted younger participants, helped newcomers learn the basic moves, and played games as needed to make sure everyone had an opponent. In addition to these tasks, our intern helped set up the mini tournaments and assembled the chess book.

The chess club is a family affair for Skylar Smith, age 12. Her father was her first chess teacher, and her grandmother often brings her to the Wednesday evening meetings. Smith has been attending the club for only a few months, and she says she's come to enjoy the game. She says meeting new people and learning their playing styles is fun for her.

"It's nice that, after I lose or I win, I get to figure out what I did and how to do better," Smith says.

Skylar regularly attended the chess club and also went to Lansing to compete in March with her two sisters at the Michigan Junior. They look forward to being part of the club again next year.

Tournaments!

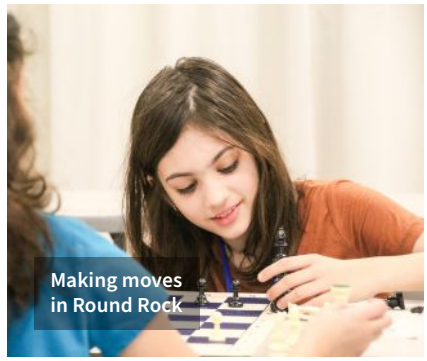
Organizing a tournament (or several) was one of the most popular uses of grant funds. Nothing captures the joy of chess like competing in a rated event. But the expenses of renting a playing hall, compensating staff, and offering prizes add up, especially for organizers looking to grow their events.

This is what happened with the Washington Chess Federation, whose 2025 Western States Regional Chess Championship for Girls and Women broke attendance records in style. As WFM Chouchanik Airapetian wrote, "[A]mazing awards were offered for each section along with a cash prize for categories including: Upset, Best Etiquette, Best Mother and Daughter Team, Kindness and Spreading Joy and Best Dressed awards. Next year the goal is to create a girls' or women's team award."

Other grant recipients were able to use grant funding to cover expenses such as membership or entry fees, such as in Ypsilanti.

"Because the library is free and welcomes everyone equally, we cannot charge an entry or membership fee to programs, limiting our ability to host rated tournaments," said Jodi Krahnke, the library's head of youth services.

"This year, thanks to US Chess funding, we purchased 34 US Chess memberships for regular participants, including 19 females. We hosted 6 mini-tournaments on the first week of the month that featured quick rated games where participants learned how to use chess clocks and other chess tournament etiquette." They also hosted a large tournament in April with trophies and pins for participants.



Making moves in Round Rock



STEM and chess go together at the Round Rock ICD



Don't let the smile fool you — these competitors are fierce!



It's a thumbs-up here!

National CHESS DAY

NATIONAL CHESS DAY IS SATURDAY, Oct. 11. For any event that includes "National Chess Day" in the event title and is held that day, US Chess is offering:

- A free email blast. Make sure that "National Chess Day" is part of your subject line. On the payment screen, select "No charge." Also, make sure the demographic you are sending this to is reasonable; generally, this will be local or regional. Do not send to the entire membership.
- Free rating fees. Use the payment code NCD2025FREE. This is case-sensitive.
- Free online TLA. Online TLAs are always free, of course, not just for National Chess Day. But we want to make sure you are aware of this option too as you promote your event. See "How to Create a TLA" at *new.uschess.org/information-new-members*.

Another way to celebrate National Chess Day is by making a gift to US Chess! What better way to celebrate National Chess Day than by sharing your passion and love for the game? Your donation will help ensure that the chess programs and events that you care so much about will continue for years to come and advance our mission to "empower people, enrich lives, and enhance communities through chess." To make a tax-deductible gift to US Chess, just click on DONATE at *uschess.org*, and choose the program or fund that you would like to support. Thank you for the impact you are making on so many lives, and for your commitment to US Chess!

Please direct any questions to John Hartmann at *john.hartmann@uschess.org*, and feel free to send him your best photos for possible use in *Chess Life, Chess Life Kids,* and *Chess Life Online*. On social media, use the hashtag *#NationalChessDay*.

Here's to a successful National Chess Day for all!

Executive Board Election Results



Standing, left to right: Anand Dommalapati, John Rockefeller, David Hater, John Fernandez, Kevin Pryor. Seated, left to right: Lakshmana "Vish" Viswanath, ED Ranae Bartlett, Daniel Serna, Leila D'Aquin.

THE CHIEF TELLER HAS REPORTED THE FOLLOWING RESULTS FOR THE 2025 US Chess Executive Board (EB) Election.

Anand Dommalapati	**1323**
John Rockefeller	**1318**
Kevin Pryor	**1309**
Daniel Serna	**1239**
Alan Kantor	**873**

The top four were elected to four-year terms on the EB which began at the conclusion of the 2025 Delegates' Meeting on August 2. Of 5,089 registered voters, 40% submitted a ballot in this election.

After the new members were seated, the following officers were selected:

President: Kevin Pryor
Vice President: John Fernandez
Vice President of Finance: Daniel Serna
Secretary: John Rockefeller

Serving as Members-at-Large are:

Anand Dommalapati
Leila D'Aquin
David Hater
Lakshmana "Vish" Viswanath

We congratulate the new board and look forward to their leadership in the upcoming term.

PHOTO: DAVID LLADA FOR US CHESS

The 2025 CJA Awards

US Chess once again took home the lion's share of awards at the 2025 Chess Journalists of America (CJA) meeting, held July 31 at the U.S. Open in Middleton, Wisconsin.

26 of the 79 awards went to our writers and creators, including a sweep in the "Top Three": Chess Journalist of the Year (Digital Editor JJ Lang), Top Story ("'This is a fantastic game:' Remembering William Alexander Scott III" by Mark N. Taylor), and Best Column ("Chess to Enjoy" by GM Andy Soltis).

Here is a full list of awards won by US Chess. For complete results, visit the CJA website at *chessjournalism.org*. Congratulations to all the honorees!

"TOP THREE"

CHESS JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR
JJ Lang

BEST STORY OF THE YEAR
Mark N. Taylor, "'This is a fantastic game:' Remembering William Alexander Scott III" (*Chess Life*, March 2025)

BEST COLUMN
Andy Soltis, "Chess to Enjoy"

PRINT

BEST HISTORICAL ARTICLE
Mark N. Taylor, "'This is a fantastic game:' Remembering William Alexander Scott III" (*Chess Life*, March 2025)

BEST ANALYSIS, HM
Robert Shlyakhtenko, "Nimzo Tabiya" (*Chess Life*, June / July 2024)

BEST REVIEW, HM
John Watson, "An Opening Book for the Computer Age" (*Chess Life*, April 2025)

BEST NATIONAL / INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT REPORT, HM
Carissa Yip, "Short of a Sweep, but Still Smooth" (*Chess Life*, February 2025)

BEST STATE / LOCAL TOURNAMENT REPORT
Davis Zong, "The Winter Hotspot" (*Chess Life*, May 2025)

VISUAL ARTS

BEST SINGLE CHESS PHOTO
David Llada

BEST PHOTOJOURNALISM ARTICLE
Caroline King / Natasha Roberts, "National Scholastics" (*Chess Life*, August 2024)

BEST ART
Natasha Roberts, "SN VIII logo"

BEST SINGLE CHESS MAGAZINE COVER, HM
Natasha Roberts, Rosie Woods (*Chess Life Kids*, October 2024)

BEST CARTOON
Nicolas Barrios, "Chess Adventures" (*Chess Life Kids*, October 2024)

ONLINE

BEST FEATURE ARTICLE
Davis Zong, "Chess Transcends Borders at FIDE World Corporate Chess Championship"

BEST NON-INSTRUCTIVE CHESS VIDEO, CO-WINNER
US Chess, "Relive the Magic of SN VIII"

BEST SINGLE PODCAST EPISODE
Bryan Tillis, "Susan Polgar"

BEST NATIONAL / INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT REPORT
JJ Lang, "Ju Wenjun Wins FIDE World Blitz in Tiebreakers, Carlsen and Nepo Split Title"

BEST NATIONAL / INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT REPORT, HM
Max Lu, "Festivities Galore at American Continental Championship as Two Americans Qualify for 2025 World Cup!"

BEST ANALYSIS
Alex Ostrovsky, "Norms Earned, Rating Thresholds Reached, and Gotham Dominance Highlight July NYC Norms Invitational"

BEST PERSONAL NARRATIVE (CO-WINNER)
Max Lu, "Festivities Galore at American Continental Championship as Two Americans Qualify for 2025 World Cup!"

BEST PODCAST, HM
DeVaughn Croxton, "One Move at a Time"

BEST TOURNAMENT / MATCH COVERAGE
Sabina Foisor, "Match Point"

JUNIOR

BEST PRINT ARTICLE BY A JUNIOR
Max Lu, "Ambassadors Abroad" (*Chess Life*, September 2024)

BEST PERSONAL NARRATIVE BY A JUNIOR
Max Lu, "Festivities Galore at American Continental Championship as Two Americans Qualify for 2025 World Cup!"

BEST PERSONAL NARRATIVE BY A JUNIOR, HM
Andy Woodward, "Achieving the Aim" (*Chess Life*, July 2024)

BEST ONLINE ARTICLE BY A JUNIOR
Max Lu, "Festivities Galore at American Continental Championship as Two Americans Qualify for 2025 World Cup!"

Positive or Negative?

What is your contempt setting?

BY **GM ANDY SOLTIS**

GRANDMASTER MOVES ARE often mysterious. But there's a subtle clue to some of their mysteries.

PLAYING IT OUT

GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov
GM Ding Liren
Wijk aan Zee (10), 01.25.2023



WHITE TO MOVE

The position is roughly even, according to computers. They suggest ho-hum moves such as 24. g3, 24. Qa3, 24. Qb4, 24. h4, or 24. a3, with little chance of upsetting the balance.

White chose **24. Kf1!?**. Can you think of any reason why?

Black responded **24. ... Bb5+.** This virtually forced **25. Kg1** because the alternatives lose; for example, 25. Ke1?? Qh2 threatening 26. ... Qg1+, and if 26. Kd2 Qf4!.

Black replied **25. ... Bc6**, repeating the position. White had a second chance to try one of the alternatives.

But he went **26. Kf1!?** again and the game ended with **26. ... Bb5+ 27. Kg1, draw**.

Not long ago, if White wanted to draw, he would have simply offered one in the diagram position. But today many international tournaments ban draws "by agreement."

This is intended to encourage "fighting chess." Yet in positions like this, there's not much of a way to fight. If the tournament rules bar you from saying "Draw?," you have to figure out a legal way to shake hands.

You might trade so many pieces and pawns that checkmate is physically impossible. Or you can try to conjure up a stalemate. (Good luck.)

By far the most common way to draw is by repeating a position three times, as the players did in this game. If the opportunity to repeat is not obvious, you can give your opponent a hint.

Hints are increasingly common in elite GM tournaments. If you were watching this game online, 24. Kf1 may have looked to you like a veiled offer of a draw.

What does it look like to a computer? If one could talk, it might say, "It's the move I would recommend — if I had a negative contempt setting."

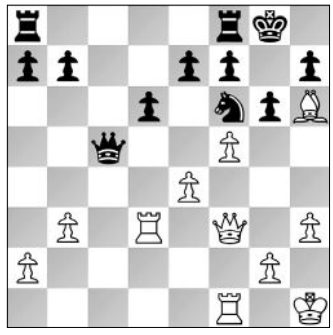
If you don't speak computer, this takes a little explanation: With most engines, you can steer the analysis of a position away from — or toward — a draw. You do it by adjusting the setting labeled "contempt."

A *negative* setting will prompt the computer to find a way to make a draw more likely, such as with 24. Kf1. On the other hand, with a *positive* setting, it will try to avoid a draw, even if it means recommending a move that is significantly weaker.

Why would you want an inferior move? Because you outrate your opponent and want to make it harder for him to draw. That may explain this:

DUBIOUS? OR NOT?

GM Boris Spassky
GM Bobby Fischer
World Ch (17), Reykjavik, 08.22.1972



BLACK TO MOVE

For years Bobby Fischer had shown some disrespect for his rivals. For example, in a 1963 *Chess Life* article, he annotated one of his games that began 1. Nf3 Nf6 2. g3 g6 3. Bg2 Bg7 4. 0-0 0-0 5. d3 d6 6. e4 c5 7. Nc3 Nc6 8. h3 Rb8 9. Be3 b5.

When his expert-rated opponent chose 10. e5, Bobby wrote, "Nine out of ten grandmasters, including Petrosian, Botvinnik, Keres and Smyslov, would have played this move — but it loses by force." He was exaggerating wildly, both about the move and about the players.

But in this diagram you might honestly say, "Nine out of ten GMs would have played 21. ... Rfc8." It avoids 22. Bxf8, puts the rook on its best square and prepares to demonstrate a clear Black advantage with 22. ... Qe5!.

Yet Fischer chose **21. ... Qe5?** and was worse after **22. Bxf8 Rxf8 23. Re3 Rc8**. A

QUIZ FOR SEPTEMBER

THE NAME BRESLAU LIVES on in old maps of Germany, in opening books that mention a Breslau variation, and in the history of great tournaments. Today, the Silesian city is named Wroclaw, but we celebrate the centenary of the tournament known as Breslau 1925 in this month's quiz.

It featured five of the world's top 10 players, each of whom enriched the way we play openings: Aron Nimzovich, Yefim Bogolyubov, Akiba Rubinstein, Richard Reti and Ernst Grünfeld. In these six positions from the tournament you are asked to find the fastest winning line of play, usually the forced win of a decisive amount of material. For solutions, see page 63.

PROBLEM 1
Siegbert Tarrasch
Bruno Moritz



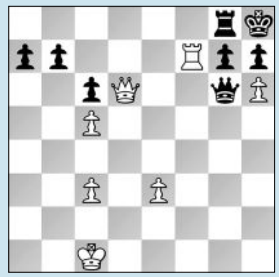
WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 2
Yefim Bogolyubov
Richard Reti



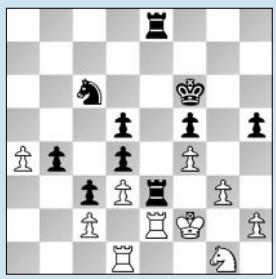
WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 3
Albert Becker
Siegbert Tarrasch



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 4
Max Blümich
Aron Nimzovich



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 5
Max Blümich
Albert Becker



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 6
Hermann von Gottschall
Albert Becker



BLACK TO MOVE

computer evaluation says the Exchange sacrifice cost Black the equivalent of about half a pawn.

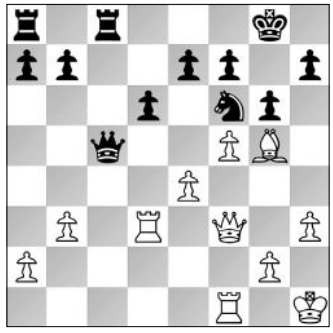
This was remarkably risky. Losing this game would have put the outcome of the match in some doubt. But Bobby managed to draw the endgame after **24. fxg6 hxg6 25. Qf4 Qxf4**. Twelve days later he clinched the match and was crowned the 11th official world champion.

Immediately afterward, the moves of the match were reviewed intensely. Some annotators tried hard to justify Fischer's sacrifice. They suggested 21. ... Rfc8 was the riskier move because of 22. fxg6 and 23. g4, for example. Computers laugh at that.

There is a more plausible explanation of 21. ... Qe5: Fischer was using his own version of positive contempt. He feared Spassky would have met 21. ... Rfc8! with 22. Bg5!.

(see diagram top of next column)

Then Black's best reply is most likely 22. ... Rf8!. Then White might have been able to repeat the position with 23. Bh6! Rfc8 24. Bg5!. In other words, Fischer wanted to win so much he went out of his way to avoid a draw.



WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

But did he really believe he could defeat the reigning world champion with a dubious move? I asked GM Larry Kaufman, the renowned computer authority.

The crude rule of thumb in contempt evaluation says that a pawn is worth 200 Elo points, he said. Fischer outrated Spassky by more than 100 points. "So that means he had about half a pawn 'contempt' in his mind," Kaufman said.

Fischer was so much better than everyone that he could afford even greater contempt. He probably could have given odds of a whole pawn in games against great GMs such as Mark Taimanov or Svetozar Gligoric, when he outrated them by about 200 points, Kaufman said.

There is irony in Bobby's 21. ... Qe5: If he relied on his internal contempt mechanism, it made more sense to set it *negative*, not positive. That is, he should have sought a draw, not avoid one.

Drawing was in his interest because the match was limited to 24 games. He held a three-point lead at the time, so each additional draw got him closer to the title.

Because of objections from Fischer and other top GMs, FIDE agreed to change the rules for future matches to prevent a player with a lead from running out the clock with draws.

Did that discourage draws? No; it had the opposite effect. It placed a higher priority on not-losing than on winning. It seemed to impose negative contempt on players. In the next world championship match, there were 21 draws, more than there had been in half a century.

What does all this talk about contempt mean when you are playing a game? After your next tournament, take a fresh look at games in which you were paired down. Did you play moves you would not have played against a stronger opponent? You may have your own contempt setting, without realizing it.

A Long-Term Investment

Positional Exchange sacrifices, Part 1

BY **WGM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN**

In my last column, we discussed tactical Exchange sacrifices with the promise that we'd move on to positional Exchange sacrifices next. It might sound intimidating — a high-level concept that only a strong grandmaster could understand. And to be honest, it is a difficult concept: Sacrificing material for long-term compensation, without being certain of the outcome, can be psychologically hard. As I began compiling material on this topic, it unintentionally turned into a three-part series. I want to take the time to explore each theme and example thoroughly to make this idea more accessible to players — including myself.

Entering the Endgame

I have personally struggled with Exchange sacrifices in my games. As a concrete player, sacrificing for some ambiguous compensation does not come naturally to me. One of the challenging aspects of positional sacrifices is being comfortable with being down material for a prolonged period of time without trying to immediately get it back. Another aspect is being comfortable with trading down into an endgame. A perfect example of this is my game against IM Anna Zatonskih from the 2024 US Women's Championship.

SAC AND TRADE

IM Anna Zatonskih (2366)
WGM Tatev Abrahamyan (2405)
U.S. Women's Ch (5), St. Louis, 10.16.2024



BLACK TO MOVE

28. ... Rxf4

Sacrificing the Exchange wasn't the difficult part.

29. Nxf4

In the game, I kept the queens on with 29. ... Rxf4. My decision paid off, but Anna had some defensive resources. Play continued 30. Qxe6+ Kh7 and here she erred with 31. Qxd5? (bringing the queen closer to the king with *31. Qe3 Rxh4 32. Qf2* would have kept the game level). The game finished 31. ... Rxh4 32. Qg2 Be4 33. Qxe4+ Rxe4 34. Bd3 Qg3+ 35. Kf1 Qf3+ 36. Kg1 Qxd3 and Anna resigned.

Trading the queens did not even occur to me. I thought her king was too weak, and so I should attack. But look at the position after trading queens:

29. ... Qxf4 30. Qxf4 Rxf4

Both the d- and h-pawns will fall, and once the h4-pawn falls, the g5-pawn likely won't survive either.

After the game, my second for the tournament, GM Josh Friedel, casually mentioned that trading the queens was the easiest path. I was really surprised; the thought didn't even occur to me during the game. Not surprisingly, the engine gives me a big edge after the queen trade.

Minor Piece, Major Impact

When consider the value of the pieces, we shouldn't be too attached to the assigned point value; we should dig deeper to see the relative value of each piece in the specific position and their long-term potential as well. A well-placed knight or a bishop in an open position can be much better than a rook.

Who better to prove this point than the king of Exchange sacrifices himself?

A CLASSIC EXAMPLE

GM Lev Polugaevsky (2625)
GM Tigran Petrosian (2605)
USSR Ch Final (13), Moscow, 04.21.1983



BLACK TO MOVE

19. ... Rxe3!

An easy decision for Petrosian. Black's position was already quite comfortable with the outpost for the knight on c5 and the bishop on the long diagonal.

20. fxe3 Nc5 21. Qc2 Re8



Let's summarize the position: Black is down

the Exchange. The white king is slightly worse than the black king. Black does have some pawn weaknesses, namely on d6 and b7, but the b7-pawn is forever defended by the knight and the d6-pawn is both hard to reach and easily defended by the bishop. The knight on c5 is a beautiful piece, defending the weak pawn and also controlling the b-file, the e4-square and the light-squared bishop. I don't think White can make the argument that his rook is better than this knight. It is also hard to foresee how the rooks can be improved, as there are no useful open files.

The presence of the opposite-colored bishops also favors Black. Most of White's pawns are on light squares, which restricts White's bishop, while its counterpart is enjoying a wide-open long diagonal as well as the possibility of targeting the weak e3-pawn. Black's play is simply much easier here.

22. Rf3 Bh6 23. Qc3 Qe7
Petrosian turns his attention to the major weakness in White's position.

24. Rb6??
A blunder that ends the game immediately. Of course, White didn't have to collapse like this, but blunders don't happen in a vacuum. Polugaevsky was under pressure and probably very unhappy with his position.

White has to give up the pawn with 24. Kh1. Hanging on to the pawn is impossible: 24. Kf2?? Ne4+.

24. ... Na4, White resigned.
Loss of material is inevitable: 25. Qb4 Nxb6 26. Qxb6 Bxe3+ 27. Qxe3 Qxe3+ 28. Rxe3 Rxe3 and no articles will be written about this material discrepancy! Black is simply winning here and will collect even more pawns.

Polugaevsky was probably expecting 24. ... Bxe3+, when his idea was probably to give the Exchange back with 25. Rxe3! Qxe3+ 26. Qxe3 Rxe3 27. Bf3 Ra3 28. Rxd6 Rxa2 29. Rd8+ Kg7 30. Rc8, when White has gone from up an Exchange to down a pawn, but in return he's managed to remove the anchor of the annoying knight and create a very dangerous passed pawn on d5.

In this example, Petrosian's minor pieces were better placed and had more control of the position, whereas Polugaevsky's rooks had no targets to attack and no way to improve.

The maestro demonstrates the power of a minor piece in yet another game.

A DOUBLE PLAY

IM Octavio Troianescu
GM Tigran Petrosian
Bucharest, 1953



BLACK TO MOVE

25. ... Rxe4! 26. Bxe4 Bxe4
Petrosian sacrifices the Exchange for the central pawn and the light-squared bishop. By eliminating the fianchettoed bishop, he will also expose the weakness of the white king.

27. Nc2 d5
Petrosian cements the bishop on the central square.

28. Nd4 b4!
Black continues with his idea of the minority attack. In theory, opening the position should favor White, as the rooks will become more useful as the files open. In reality, the opening of the position will only highlight the weakness of the white king and make the bishop pair even more powerful.

29. cxb4 axb4 30. a4 Qa7
Now that the d4-knight is no longer supported by a pawn, Black puts more pressure on it.

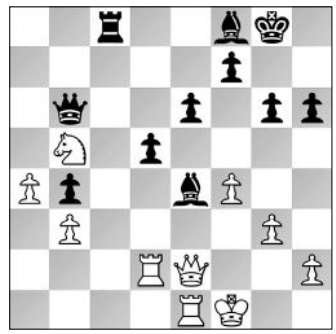
31. Qf2 Rc8
The hasty pawn grab 31. ... Qxa4? would run into a tactic: 32. Nxe6! utilizing the pin along the d-file. 32. ... Re8 (*32. ... fxe6? 33. Rxe4*) 33. Nc7 and now the black pawns are too weak.

32. b3 Bf8
Rerouting the bishop to c5.

33. Nb5 Qa6 34. Qe2 Qb6+ 35. Kf1

(see diagram top of next column)

35. ... Rc3!
What's better than one Exchange sacrifice?



POSITION AFTER 35. Kf1

Two Exchange sacrifices! The theme of sacrificing an Exchange on an outpost will be my topic in November.

36. Nxc3 bxc3 37. Rc2 Qxb3
The second Exchange sacrifice was more temporary in nature; White has no way of hanging on to the material.

38. Rec1 Bb4 39. g4 Bxc2 40. Rxc2 Qxa4
Black is up too much material — a bishop and three pawns for a rook. In this case, we can go back to counting points!

41. f5 exf5 42. gxf5 g5 43. h4 Bc5!
Once again exposing the weakness of the white king. Meanwhile, Black's king enjoys a safe home.

44. hxg5 Qf4+ 45. Ke1 Qg3+ 46. Kd1 Qg1+ 47. Qe1 Qxe1+ 48. Kxe1 hxg5
The endgame is completely hopeless for White.

49. Ke2 Bd4 50. Ra2 Kg7 51. Kd3 Be5 52. Ra5 Kf6 53. Rxd5 Kxf5 54. Ke3 f6 55. Rc5 Kg4 56. Rc4+ Kg3 57. Ke4 g4, White resigned.
This game has the same undertones as Petrosian's Exchange sacrifice against Clarke examined last month, where he removed the opponent's fianchettoed bishop, leaving the king exposed. Here, a similar pattern followed, but White's king did not come under the same type of attack. Instead, the weakness of the king proved to be a long-term issue as the dark-squared bishop joined the action and the white knight lost its anchor.

I hope these examples will inspire you to set aside the preconceived notions about piece values and put more emphasis on the relative value of each piece in every position. As you see, a minor piece can be just as good if not better than a rook. Next month, we will explore more examples of a minor piece dominating a rook.

The Tragedy of Charousek

Rudolf Charousek's star burned brightly, but not for long.

BY **BRUCE PANDOLFINI**

ONE HEARS LITTLE ABOUT THE Czech-born Hungarian Rudolf Charousek (1873-1900) these days, but in his short life he produced some memorable chess.

Remarkably, he didn't learn how to play until he was 16 years old. Ranked among the world's top 10 players in the 1890s, he beat various notable competitors, such as Emanuel Lasker, and it's also said he was the inspiration for a character in Gustav Meyrink's novel *The Golem*. Charousek's style could be described as crisp and solid, with a flair for explosive tactics. In this casual game contested against D. Hermann (White), Charousek's steady play results in a delightful finish.

TWO KNIGHTS DEFENSE (C55)

D. Hermann
Rudolf Charousek
Casual Game, Budapest 1896

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. Nc3



BLACK TO MOVE

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 **Nxe4**
The fork trick. You may accept ***full credit*** for 4. ... Bc5.

5. **Nxe4**
More attractive, though less good, is 5. Bxf7+ Kxf7 6. Nxe4 d5, when Black's central pawn mass outweighs the slight king insecurity. **

5. Par Score 4 **d5**
Black gets the piece back, in the process eliminating White's pawn center.

6. **Bxd5** **

6. Par Score 4 **Qxd5**

7. **Nc3**
White withdraws the knight, with a gain of time. **

7. Par Score 4 **Qd8**
You may accept ***full credit*** for either 7. ... Qd6 or 7. ... Qa5.

8. **0-0**
By castling, White gets ready for action along the e-file.**

8. Par Score 5 **Bd6**
Developing to secure the e-pawn, with eventual designs along the d6-h2 diagonal. You may accept ***full credit*** for either 8. ... Be7 or 8. ... Bc5.

9. **d3**
White continues his development. The move 9. d4 was OK. If 9. ... exd4, then 10. Re1+ or 10. Nb5, but not 10. Nxd4 Nxd4 11. Qxd4 Bxh2+ (***1 bonus point***). **

9. Par Score 5 **0-0**
Charousek has the more promising setup, with two bishops and a more active position.

10. **h3**
This prevents a pin on the f3-knight, but it also creates a potential target. More prudent was 10. Re1. **

10. Par Score 5 **f5**
The kingside attack begins.

11. **Re1**
White takes the e-file and aims to stop 11. ... e4. **

11. Par Score 5 **Bd7**
A patient but sound developing move. Charousek is content to nurse his edge along.

12. **Qe2**
Certainly fine, but more active was 12. Bg5. **

12. Par Score 6 **Qe8**
Black prepares to transfer the queen to the kingside. You may accept ***full credit*** for either 12. ... Nd4, attacking the queen, or 12. ... Be8, with the idea of shifting to h5.

13. **Be3**
Another try was 13. Nb5, hoping to trade down. **

13. Par Score 5 **Qg6**
Charousek's attack proceeds merrily along. The threat is 14. ... f4, followed by 15. ... Bxh3.

14. **Kh1**
By removing his king from the g-file, White temporarily safeguards h3. **

14. Par Score 6 **f4**
A natural continuation, opening more attacking routes toward the white king.

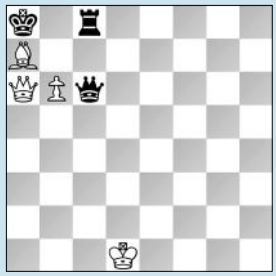
15. **Bd2****

ABCS OF CHESS

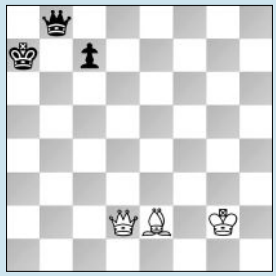
THESE PROBLEMS ARE all related to key positions in this month's game. In each case, White is to move. The answers can be found in Solutions on page 63.

SEPTEMBER EXERCISE: Throughout your chess life, you will encounter maxims, rules of thumb, and pieces of advice. Some of these can be useful, such as to castle early, though in many games one doesn't need to castle at all. Another would be to play for the center, or knights before bishops. While these generalities can have value, don't rely on them too much. If chess tells us anything, it's not to assume too much.

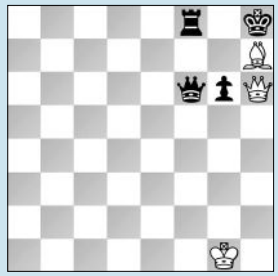
PROBLEM 1
Mating net



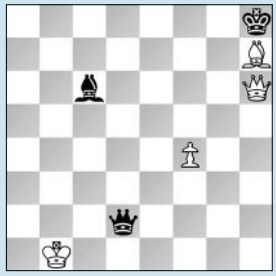
PROBLEM 2
Mating net



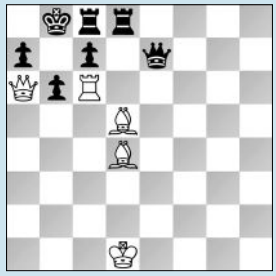
PROBLEM 3
Mating net



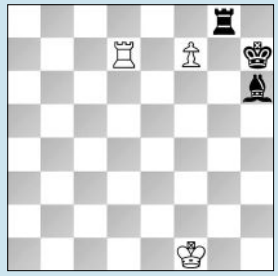
PROBLEM 4
Mating net



PROBLEM 5
Mating net



PROBLEM 6
Mating net



15. Par Score 5 Nd4
Black's assault is starting to break through. As the position opens, White must proceed with caution.

16. Nxd4
This exchange is a little risky for White. Safer was 16. Qd1. **

16. Par Score 4 exd4

17. Ne4 **

17. Par Score 5 f3
With this simple advance, White's kingside begins to crumble. Black suddenly has a winning advantage.

18. gxf3**

18. Par Score 4 Bxh3
Just like that, White's position looks hopeless.

19. Rg1 **
For the moment, White averts the threatened mate at g2. **

19. Par Score 5 Qh5
Now mate in one by discovery is threatened.

20. Rg5
White again deals with the immediate mate threat. **

20. Par Score 4 Qh4
Now the threat is to win White's queen with 21. ... Bf1.

21. Kg1
White gets off the line of discovery, but Charousek quickly takes care of that. **

21. Par Score 6 Bh2+
Take that! Of course, White can't capture the bishop safely; if 22. Kxh2, then 22. ... Bf1+ wins the queen. So ...

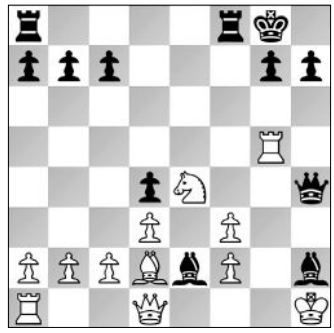
22. Kh1 **

22. Par Score 6 Bf1
Another ingenious bishop offering, which White also cannot safely accept.

23. Qd1
If 23. Qxf1 (or *23. Rxf1*) then 23. ... Bg3+ 24. Kg1 (or *24. Kg2*) 24. ... Qh2 mate (***1 bonus point***).

23. Par Score 6 Be2
This is not just brilliant; it's also truly funny. If White takes the bishop with 24. Qxe2, he obstructs e2, a needed escape square for the king. Add ***1 bonus point*** for seeing the conclusion: 24. ... Bg3+ 25. Kg1 (or *25. Kg2*) 25. ... Qh2+ 26. Kf1 Qh1 mate! Charousek's last three bishop moves were beautifully compelling.

24. White resigned.



POSITION AFTER 23. ... Be2

SOLITARE CHESS SCORING:

Total your score to determine your approximate rating below

Total Score	Approx. Rating
95+	2400+
81-95	2200-2399
66-80	2000-2199
51-65	1800-1999
36-50	1600-1799
21-35	1400-1599
06-20	1200-1399
00-05	under 1200

Exercise Program

Puzzles and ideas from a top trainer

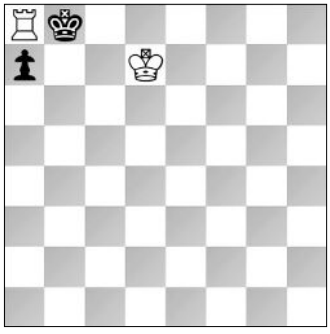
BY **IM IGOR KHMELNITSKY**

I RECENTLY RAN AN INVITATIONAL camp at Joshua Anderson's Tri-Bridges Chess Club for nine kids in the 1400-1800 range, consisting of at least three hours a day for five days of puzzles, exercises and blitz, putting my passion for teaching chess through active learning to the test.

Before the camp, I sent optional puzzle sheets to the participants as a preview of what they could expect. And we did lots of puzzles during the week! Most of the discussions and analyses were done without moving the pieces, aiming to enhance visualization and calculations, and every participant was fully engaged.

I gave the kids standard puzzles such as rook endgames or basic strategy, but I also surprised them with some fun logic puzzles and my favorites — what I call Igor's Doubles. After a couple of sessions, kids were creating their own modifications to puzzles to showcase their creative defensive ideas.

Here are a few examples of my favorite puzzles from the camp. Typically, we start the day with something fun, such as this:



Whose move is it? And what were White's and Black's last moves?

Answer: The black king is in check, so it is Black to move. The only way the rook could have gotten to a8 on the last move is by promotion after a capture. But what was captured? With a white pawn on b7, Black couldn't have moved the king. So the only piece that could have moved was one that went to a8 and was captured. That could only be a black knight, and it could only have come from c7 — otherwise, the white king would have been in check. So, **1. ... Nc7-a8** (or *1. ... Nc7xa8*) **2. b7xa8=R+** and we arrive at the diagram position.

Then we would move to something more serious. I showed the participants a thematic pawn ending that somehow keeps cropping up in my games on *Chess.com*. I even wrote an article on this endgame in *Chess Life* more than 20 years ago. Just a week before the camp, I had the opportunity to execute the idea again in an online blitz game.

TAKING A GAMBLE

id-in-disguise (2639)
IgorKhmelnitsky (2676)
Chess.com, 06.12.2025

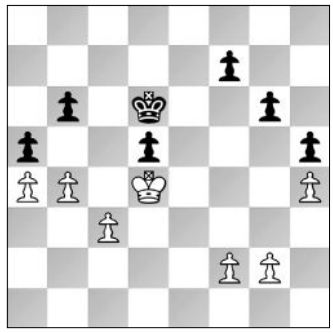


BLACK TO MOVE

Whose position do you prefer? What are some of the key points in assessing this position? Move candidates? Your move?

This position would be equal after the correct move, 25. ... Rd7. But I recognized the chance to transform the pawn structure into something I'd seen before, so I decided to gamble with **25. ... Nd5?! 26. Bxd5 Rxd5**. Now the engine says White is winning after 27. Re7+, but my gamble paid off when they played **27. Rxd5?**.

This is still equal, but White can be tempted into an active plan, bringing the king to d4 and creating an outside passed pawn. The game continued **27. ... cxd5 28. Kd4 Kd6 29. c3 b6 30. b4??**.



This is exactly what I was hoping for when I played 25. ... Nd5?!. White could still have drawn with 30. g3 f6 31. f3 f5 32. f4, but now it looks like White will get a passed a-pawn, divert Black's king, take the d5-pawn and then capture pawns on the kingside with an easy win. But actually it's Black who wins with the spectacular pawn break **30. ... b5!!**.

If 31. axb5 Black wins with 31. ... a4 32. c4 a3 33. c5+ Kd7. The game concluded **31. bxa5 bxa4 32. a6 Kc7, White resigned.**

We covered a number of strategic themes every day as well. Typically, I would present a position, give a few minutes and ask by show of hands on who liked White's position and who liked Black's. Then I let the kids take turns in discussing various elements they observed to support their decision. To keep everyone involved, each student could only bring up one element. Then we would do another show of hands after the discussion. Not surprisingly, the second vote was a lot more unified. Here's an example:

WHO YA GOT?

GM Yuri Averbakh
IM Semyon Furman
USSR 1960



WHITE TO MOVE

Black has just played 24. ... Bd6-a3. Whose side do you prefer? What are some of the key points in assessing this position? Move candidates? Your move?

The initial tally was about 7-2 in favor of Black. The activity of the black pieces was the #1 factor that everyone pointed out. The weak d5-pawn was mentioned, but for the majority, that was not enough to pick White. After some back-and-forth discussion, though the kids came to realize that the initiative is a temporary advantage and may not last; in addition to d5, Black has other weaknesses, including the king. Also, one of the proposed moves seems to shut down the c-file altogether.

Then we looked at what happened in the game: **25. Rxc6 bxc6** (not *25. ... Rxc6 26. Bxd5* and White is winning) **26. Bxa3 Qxa3 27. Rd4**, when White emerged with a small but steady advantage. I advised the kids to practice this position when they have time.

Of course, tactics and calculation were an integral part of the training, and for this I used what I like to call Igor's Chess Doubles, a concept that helps in improving visualization, calculations, threat recognition and defensive skills. I developed this years ago and regularly use it in my own training and in work with my students. Compare this position ...



... with this position:



It's Black's move in both cases. What is the difference between the two positions? Does it affect the outcome? Explain with variations.

Of course, everyone quickly spotted that the only difference in the position was the placement of the black a-pawn. Then came a moment of bewilderment — with pretty much 100% of the action on the kingside in general and around the white king specifically, why does it matter where Black's a-pawn is?

Kids were especially bewildered when they saw the winning idea: After **1. ... Qxh4 2. Qxh4** (Black wins after *2. Qxf7+ Kd8 3. Rg1 Bxg2*) **2. ... Rxg2+ 3. Rxg2 Rxg2+ 4. Kh1 Rg4+ 5. Kh2 Rxh4** and Black is up a bishop.

But the difference is huge — Black is winning in the second diagram, but in the first Black could even lose if they're not careful. I always ask students to check one "extra" move before concluding their calculation, and in this case, that "extra" move is **6. Kg3!**. With the pawn on a4, the black rook is trapped, and Black loses after 6. ... c4!? 7. Kxh4 cxd3 8. Kg5 Bf3 9. Kf4. With the pawn on a5, Black has 6. ... Ra4, keeping the extra piece.

Notice that Black isn't lost in the first diagram, though; they can take a perpetual with 5. ... Rg2+, or they could play something other than 1. ... Qxh4.

On the last day of the camp, we spent an hour and a half refreshing ourselves on the key positions from the previous four days. Then the camp concluded with a blitz tournament and pizza party, which were so much fun that we ran out of time and didn't do the puzzle competition we'd planned. So we sent the kids home with sheets full of puzzles to review and complete on their own.



IM Igor Khmelnitsky

PHOTO: CAROLINE KING FOR US CHESS

Magnus' Opus



The former champ indulges fans and autograph seekers

Magnus Carlsen's clean sweep of the Grenke Freestyle Open was one of the most dominant performances of our time. Here's how it felt to try to stand in his way.

BY **GM AWONDER LIANG**

THE GRENKE CHESS OPEN, billed as the world's largest chess festival, has long been one of the finest opens in the world. This year, the organizers implemented an audacious new concept: a Freestyle Chess Open, featuring the strongest players in the world. With just two months before the announcement, I had a hard time making travel plans, but in the end, I, along with four friends from the University of Chicago, made the trip to Karlsruhe, Germany. Little did we know the spectacle we were in for.

I entered with the intention of completing the classical tournament, of sitting idly among the greats but never crossing swords with them. But this year, the format of the Grenke Open had a twist: Players could switch from the Classical to the Freestyle section before Round 5, keeping their score from the first four rounds of the classical event.

I had decided beforehand to focus on the classical, and just a day before the event started, it was announced that players who switched would not be eligible for prize money or qualification into other stages of the Freestyle Tour. That certainly didn't encourage me to switch. But I started with an uninspiring 3½/4 in the Classical and was bedridden for every nongame hour of the day, and I debated seriously whether it was worth continuing. After encouragement from a friend in Chicago, I decided to have some fun for the rest of the event and make the leap.

By now you probably know that Magnus swept the field in the Freestyle Open with a 9/9 score; it's being debated as one of the best tournament results of all time. I was one of his unfortunate victims, and even now, I struggle to find the words to describe it.

In the 1970s, the Soviets watched Fischer dismantle the best players in the world for a record 20 wins in a row. I think back to Petrosian's description of America's greatest player: "He is a great chess player but no genius." (He would go on to lose his Candi-

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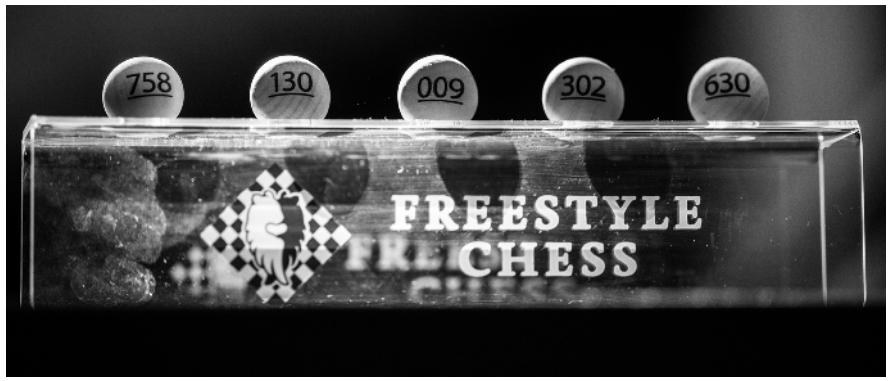
dates match with Fischer by 6½-2½.) I think I feel now what Fischer's opponents must have felt back then — his moves seemed so unimpressive on the magazine page, yet his presence was too great, even for a 3,000-person large conference hall.

Magnus's play was unimpressive, it must be said: His opponents collapsed seemingly at random, as he waltzed through the field without any real brilliancies.

I could make the same excuses that Fischer's opponents made — horrendous jet lag, the fact that Magnus had been playing Chess960 for a few years already, and that he was warmed up from the Paris Freestyle event. But I don't have any explanation for the way I played in my encounter with the greatest player I've ever seen.

I sat down across the board from Magnus Carlsen in a world of my own, calmer than I've ever felt. But then the game started, and he controlled everything. After just six moves, I blundered a small trick, leaving my pawn structure in tatters. When it felt like I was coming back, I would invariably miss a small detail here and there, leaving me back to my losing position. At one moment, I managed to claw the game back to a defensible state before throwing it all away.

Many before me have written about the so-called "Magnus effect," and I hesitate to think it real, because, like any chessplayer, my own ego prevents me from believing.







But sitting before Magnus for four hours is a different experience. For whatever reason, he had me glued to the seat from start to finish, a spectator of my own game. Yet even now, writing these words, I still have an unshakeable belief that even as great as he is, he is still only human.

Magnus had started his weekend in Germany with an impressive 5/5 while his compatriots were dropping half-points — GM Fabiano Caruana narrowly escaped a lost position against IM Bibisara Assubayeva in Round 2 before dropping a point to GM Etienne Bacrot the next round. GM Arjun Erigaisi was held to a draw by GM Cem Kaan Gökerkan, of Turkey, in Round 2, while GM Aravindh Chithambaram, the hottest player of the past year, fell to the Polish GM Maciej Klekowski.



GM Arjun Erigaisi



GM Fabiano Caruana

CHESS960, INITIAL POSITION 130

GM Arjun Erigaisi (2782)
GM Cem Kaan Gökerkan (2489)
Grenke Festival Freestyle Open (2), Karlsruhe, 04.18.2025



The Kg1/Rh1 pattern lends itself easily to 1. h4, which is indeed a fine starting move. Both sides seem to have fairly easy development — if White plays Ne1-f3, g2-g3, Bf1-g2, and 0-0, we would quickly have a normal position. But Erigaisi wants something more, and so the fireworks ensue.

1. c4!?
Initiating a sequence in which White will strike first in the center.

1. ... c5 2. b3 b6 3. d4!? cxd4 4. Qxd4
A surprising choice to me. We are taught that the queen shouldn't be developed this early! But it turns out not to be an issue, since White has a space advantage.

4. ... d5
A necessary strike — Black immediately equalizes the situation in the center. If 4. ... Nc6 5. Qd2 and White could continue with nice Maróczy Bind-style play.

5. Rd1 e6 6. e3 Nc6 7. Qb2
Black now maneuvers to combat White's severe pressure on the b2-g7 diagonal.

7. ... Be7 8. Nc3 Bf6 9. Qe2 Nd6!?
Initiating some fireworks, although the engine prefers the straight-up pawn sacrifice 9. ... 0-0 10. cxd5 exd5 11. Rxd5 Qe7! with good compensation due to the precarious position of the knight on c3.

10. cxd5 Ne7?

(see diagram top of next column)

11. Nb5
Missing his first direct win with 11. dxe6!!.



POSITION AFTER 10. ... Ne7

The point is 11. ... Bxc3 12. Bxc3 Rxc3 and now White wins with the almost-invisible tactic 13. Qd2! setting up two stunning pins. After 13. ... Nd5 (or *13. ... Rc6 14. Bb5*) 14. Bc4! Nxc4 15. Qxc3 White wins thanks to the sudden clearance of the d-file!

11. ... Nxb5 12. Bxf6 gxf6 13. Qxb5 Rc5 14. Qa4 f5
Black's aim here is to meet 15. Qxa7 with 15. ... Ra5 and otherwise prepare a recapture on d5. But this is too ambitious for the position. Black has some compensation after 14. ... Rxd5 15. Rxd5 Bxd5 16. Qxa7 Kg7 due to White's lack of development.

15. dxe6! Qxd1 16. Qe8+ Kg7



17. Qxf7+?
Missing Black's key defense.

After 17. Qxe7! it's a race to checkmate, but the two meatshields on e1 and f1 give White enough time:

(a) 17. ... Qxe1 18. Qxf7+ Kh6 19. Qf6+ Kh5 20. Qxh8 and Black will be mated first after 20. ... Rc1 21. Qxh7+ Kg5 22. f4+ Kg4 23. Qh3 mate;

(b) 17. ... Qd8 18. Qxf7+ Kh6 19. e7;

(c) 17. ... Rf8 18. Qg5+ Kh8 19. Qf6+ Kg8 20. h4! fxe6 21. Qxe6+ Kh8 22. Nd3 Rc6 23. Qe5+ Rcf6 24. Rh3! and all of White's pieces activate. Black's king will be too weak to stop the onslaught.

17. ... Kh6 18. Qxe7 Qd8!

Black brings back the queen for defense! Erigaisi surely thought he was winning, but now everything changes.

19. Qf7 Rc1 20. e7 Qd6! 21. e8=Q Rxe8 22. Qxe8 Rxe1 23. f3
Now this is the only move even to survive, but it's enough.

23. ... Bc6 24. Qg8 Bb5 25. Kf2 Qd2+ 26. Kg3 Bxf1 27. Qe6+ Kg7 28. Qe7+ Kg6 29. Qe6+ Kg7 30. Qe7+ Kg6 31. Qe6+, draw.

TURNING THE TABLES

IM Bibisara Assaubayeva (2494)
GM Fabiano Caruana (2776)
Grenke Festival Freestyle Open (2), Karlsruhe, 04.18.2025



BLACK TO MOVE

Bibisara has played a fine game, defending for some portion of the middlegame. But now Fabi loses his sense of danger — the brutal schedule of the Grenke festival makes that easy to do.

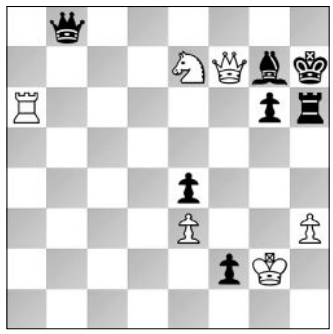
1. ... h5?!
There was a straightforward draw after 1. ... Qb8.

2. Ne7 Qb8 3. Qd5!
White takes over on the light squares; f7 is undefendable.

3. ... Rb6 4. Qxf7 h4 5. Qh5+ Rh6 6. Qf5+ g6 7. Qf7+ Bg7
White's queen maneuver has severely weakened Black's king, and Fabi's pieces are paralyzed to boot.

8. Rxa6?!
Allowing Black counterplay. There was a win with 8. Rc2 hxg3+ 9. fxg3 Qf8 10. Qe6 a5 11. Kg2 a4 12. h4 a3 13. Rf2 Qd8 14. Qf7 and White could win several ways here, including 14. ... Qa8 15. h5 gxh5 16. Qf5+ Kh8 17. Rc2!.

8. ... hxg3+ 9. Kg2 gxf2



10. Nf5??
White panics in time trouble and tries to simplify into a draw. But in fact, the win was still there with some accurate moves, starting with 10. Rf6!, since Black's rook is totally stuck: 10. ... Qa8 11. Rxf2 Qb8 12. Qe6 Qa8 13. h4 and once again the plan of h4-h5, responding to ... g6xh5 with Qe6-f5+ and Rf2-c2.

10. ... f1=Q+ 11. Kxf1 Qb5+, White resigned.

SMASHING ATTACK

GM Maciej Klekowski (2474)
GM Aravindh Chithambaram (2749)
Grenke Festival Freestyle Open (2), Karlsruhe, 04.18.2025



BLACK TO MOVE

1. ... Qxa2
It's close to a typical Hedgehog position, but where White has developed their kingside rook to g3 — the differences in Chess960! Black has achieved a breakout on the queenside, but now the game becomes sharp.

2. Nd6! Bxd6 3. Rxd6 Qb1+ 4. Rd1 Qf5?
Missing White's powerful rook invasion. He had to go for the equal endgame that arises after 4. ... Qe4 5. Qxe4 Bxe4 6. b4 Rc2.

5. Rd7!! Rf8 6. Bd3 Qxh5



POSITION AFTER 6. ... Qxh5

7. Rxg7!!
Every white piece is in the attack!

7. ... Rc1+ 8. Qxc1 Kxg7 9. Qe1 Rc8 10. Qg3+ Kf8 11. Bxf6, Black resigned.

Meanwhile, Carlsen was not to be denied as he won a short game against Bacrot, despite a moment where he could have been in serious trouble.

CHESS960, INITIAL POSITION 302

GM Etienne Bacrot (2633)
GM Magnus Carlsen (2837)
Grenke Festival Freestyle Open (4), Karlsruhe, 04.19.2025



The position is difficult to analyze. In my limited experience, the bishops being together normally signals a slightly larger advantage for White. The queen in the corner will be an issue, as it will be difficult to activate in the future, but perhaps White would look to play a2-a4-a5 or b2-b3 to do so. The natural castling choice is queenside, with ideas of f2-f3 and e2-e4 to open up both bishops. White's extra tempo could be quite useful here: The pieces seem centrally located, which should favor White.

1. d4!
The best move. White will set up naturally

with 0-0-0, after which both rooks will support the center pawn. Already, the situation is not easy for Magnus, since copying will lead to a tempo-down position where White can strike first.

If 1. e4 e5 2. 0-0-0 c5!? 3. Ng3 f6 the position would be pretty closed, and Black would have good control over the center.

1. … d5 2. Ng3 0-0-0 3. 0-0-0 f6!?
Black prepares … e7-e5, taking control of the center. It's too soon to play 3. … e5; after 4. dxe5 Rxe5 5. f4! Ree8 6. e4! White's pieces would enter the game with astonishing speed. If 6. … dxe4 7. b3 (or *7. Nc3*).

Magnus might not have wanted to play symmetrically with 3. … Ng6 4. e4 dxe4 5. Nxe4, although it would likely be close to equal after 5. … e5 6. dxe5 Rxd1+ 7. Rxd1 Nxe5.

4. e4! dxe4 5. Nxe4 Ng6!?
Preparing to open the position with … e7-e5.

It's still too soon for the immediate 5. … e5: After 6. dxe5 Rxd1+ 7. Rxd1 Rxe5 8. Nbc3 b6 9. g3 the absence of Black's kingside knight is felt.

6. Nbc3
A modest, simple developing move.

6. … e5 7. dxe5 Rxd1+ 8. Rxd1 Nxe5 9. f4!
Thanks to the first-move advantage, White manages to seize the initiative. Now g2-g3 is coming, after which Black's king will feel quite airy.

9. … Nc4



POSITION AFTER 9. … Nc4

10. a4?!
White wants to activate the queen, but this allows Black back into the game. Bacrot would be nearly winning after 10. g3!:

(a) The natural 10. … f5 falls to 11. Bh3 and Black will have to jettison the f5-pawn, since after 11. … g6 12. Nf6! Black loses even more material: 12. … Rd8 13. Rxd8+ Kxd8 14. Bg2 Bf7 15. Na4 Nd7 16. b3 Ncb6 17. Qd4.

(b) Play could go 10. … Be6 11. Re1! and astonishingly, Black is in a world of hurt due to the massive threat of Bf1xc4 followed by Ne4-d6+, along with Black's issues on the c8-h3 diagonal. 11. … b5 12. Nxb5 and White picks up a clean pawn.

10. … b6 11. g3
The same idea, but now White falls apart astonishingly quickly.

11. … f5 12. Bh3 Rxe4! 13. Bxf5+ Re6!
White just doesn't have enough firepower to continue the attack.



Bacrot gets one for the Instas before his game with Carlsen

14. Qa2?!
There was a better try in 14. Nb5, when after 14. … Kb7 15. b3 a6 16. Bxe6 Bxe6 17. bxc4 axb5 18. cxb5 Black's king position is still weak enough to give White good compensation against the two bishops.

14. … Qc6 15. Nb5 Kb7
Now Black's position has harmonized nicely, and all the tactics work out for Magnus.

16. Nd4 Qd5 17. Bxe6 Bxe6 18. b3
Desperation.

18. … Ba3+ 19. Kb1 Qh5! 20. Rd3 Qh3
A nice *petit combinaison* to finish the game. Black's queen started from a8, but now swings all the way around the board.

21. Rd1 Nd2+ 22. Ka1 Bb4 23. Qb2 Bg4 24. Rc1 Nf3 25. Nxf3 Bxf3 26. Qxg7 Nc6 27. Kb2 Bd2 28. Ra1 Qg2 29. Bd4 Be4 30. Bc3 Be3, White resigned.
There's no defense for the c2-pawn.

When I switched over to the Freestyle, I was immediately paired with the young Belgian grandmaster Daniel Dardha, and my blunders from the Classical event immediately carried over to the 960. But as the famous saying goes, chess is about making the second-to-last mistake.

CHESS960, INITIAL POSITION 630

GM Awonder Liang (2692)
GM Daniel Dardha (2650)
Grenke Festival Freestyle Open (5), Karlsruhe, 04.19.2025



This position is almost a mirror of traditional chess, except a rook and knight have been swapped. To this end, I thought of starting with 1. d4 (the equivalent of 1. e4 in "normal" chess), but I was scared of 1. … e5, as after 2. dxe5 Qxe5 the pawn on h2 would be under attack. Hence, the natural choice was

to play 1. e4, but Queen's Gambit-style play would be ill-advised, since the knight on h1 is unable to support the pawn structure. As a result, I, along with many others this round, chose to play a mirrored London, with Nh1-g3 to support the f5-square.

1. e4

But in fact, this was one of White's most dangerous of all the nine starting positions in this tournament. After 1. d4! e5 (*1. ... d5 2. e4! dxe4 3. Qxe4* and the queen gains an almost unassailable position) 2. d5!, as was played by Fabiano and a few others, White rapidly gains space and Black's knight on h8 is not available to contest the center. After 2. ... Bc5 3. e4 Ng6 4. Nc3 d6 5. g4 White attains a dominating position on the kingside and the center.

1. ... e5 2. Bc4 Ng6 3. d3 d6

3. ... Bc5!? 4. Bg5+ was one trick in this position, forcing a block on e7. After 4. ... Be7 5. Be3 Black cannot develop their bishop outside the pawn chain.

4. Nc3 Be6 5. Be3 Nc6 6. Ng3 Qd7 7. Nd5 Be7 8. Qd2 0-0

It was my first game in the 960 section, and I saw ghosts of an attack on the kingside. Not wanting to go into a long slog, I went all in.

9. 0-0-0?!

Strictly speaking, not the best move. The king is a little weak on the queenside, and I would likely have to spend another tempo on Kc1-b1.

9. ... Bd8 10. h4!? Nge7?!

Believing in my attack. Now I could have exploited Black's slow play with a simple expansion, but for whatever reason, I decided to go for glory.

Black could have played (a) 10. ... Nxh4; after 11. Rh1, with ideas such as Be3-g5, it looks dangerous, but it is mostly an illusion: 11. ... Ng6? 12. Rh2 would be too dangerous, but 11. ... f5! frees up the whole kingside and holds everything together for Black. Play could go 12. Bg5 f4 13. Bxh4 fxg3 with equality.

After (b) 10. ... Bxh4 my plan was 11. Ne2, with g2-g3 and f2-f4 coming up. Unfortunately, this fails to 11. ... Nce7 12. g3 c6! and White is just not in time. Instead I'd be better off going with 11. Nf5 Bxf5 12. exf5 Qxf5 13. Nxc7 with good compensation for the pawn.

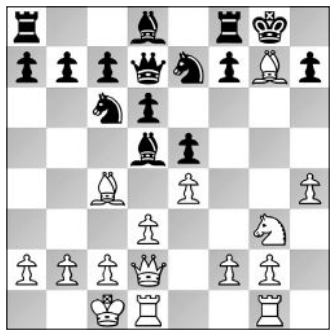
11. Bh6!?

Not a bad move objectively, but based on around four serious miscalculations. The threat is Ng3-h5, but after the more gradual 11. h5! f5 12. f4 Black's position is a bit cramped and White has a large advantage.

11. ... Bxd5

Not 11. ... Nxd5 12. exd5 gxh6 13. Qxh6 Bg4 14. dxc6 Qxc6 15. Nh5 and Black's weak kingside gives White an edge. If 11. ... f5 12. Nh5.

12. Bxg7??



I missed 12. exd5! Nd4 13. Bxg7 Kxg7 14. Nh5+ Kh8 15. Qh6 Qg4 16. Qxf8+ Ng8 17. Qxf7 Ne2+ 18. Kb1 Nxg1 19. Rxg1 Bxh4 20. Ng3 with a serious advantage for White — I'm about to take on c7 and Black's king is weak. I saw this line, but decided it was too mundane to play, so I made a classic mistake: making bad moves for fun.

12. ... Kxg7??

Losing instantly. It's better to be lucky than good!

Black wins easily after 12. ... Bxc4!. I didn't really even have a plan for this move — just blind hope. To wit:

(a) 13. Nh5 Ng6 14. Qh6 f6 15. Bxf8 Be6 and Black is winning;

(b) Black is way better after 13. Qh6 Qe6 14. Bxf8 Qxh6+ 15. Bxh6 Be6;

(c) If 13. Bxf8 Kxf8 14. Qh6+ Ke8 15. Qxh7 Qe6 16. dxc4 Qxc4 the h-pawn is too slow and White's king will be under fire momentarily.

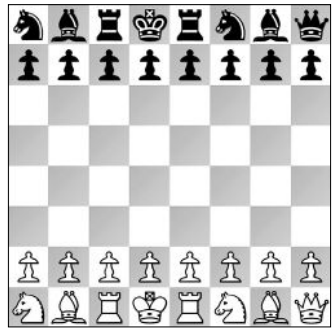
13. Nh5+ Kh8 14. Nf6, Black resigned.

The threats are Nf6xd7 and Qd2-h6.

After most games, I would try desperately to sleep as much as possible. But on this evening, I gathered with my Chicago friends for dinner at a local pub, where we all ordered schnitzel. By then, the pairings had all but become evident, but could it really be? It turned out it was: Suddenly I was the highest rated player on 4½/5, which meant I was due to face the king himself.

CHESS 960, INITIAL POSITION 380

GM Awonder Liang (2692)
GM Magnus Carlsen (2837)
Grenke Festival Freestyle Open (6), Karlsruhe, 04.20.2025



Not knowing how to prepare for this game, I picked 10 Chess960 positions to analyze, on the 1% chance that I would hit. Sadly, my gambler's mentality did not work out this time around (but then again, 99% of Chess960 analyzers quit before they win big). The position here is quite balanced, as both sides will castle queenside and prepare e2-e4 with d2-d4, leading to mass simplifications.

1. Nb3 c6 2. c3 g6 3. e4 e5 4. 0-0-0 0-0-0 5. d4 exd4 6. cxd4?

A huge mistake, and one played in around 10 seconds. How can I explain such a move? I am not sure, except that all of Magnus's opponents made similarly unexplainable blunders.

I saw 6. Nxd4 Ne6, realized Black was equal, and automatically made the other recapture instead. Black is indeed equal



GM Awonder Liang

after 7. f3 Nb6 8. Bc2 Nxd4 9. Bxd4 Be5, but both sides have healthy positions.

6. … f5!
The center is collapsing and … Bb8-f4+ is looming in all the variations.

7. e5?
Another bad response. Relatively best was 7. exf5 Rxe1 8. Rxe1 Bxb3 9. axb3 Qxd4, even though White's king becomes extremely weak with … Bb8-e5 in the air.

7. … Ne6!
Here my position was suddenly crumbling, and I started questioning all my life decisions. After … d7-d6, White will be forced to take, and the pawn on d4 will be extremely weak.

8. h3
I could limit the damage with 8. g3 d6 9. f4 Nxf4! 10. gxf4 Bd5, although White's queen is trapped in the corner.

8. … d6 9. Bh2 dxe5
9. … f4! was even stronger, not allowing the trade of White's bad bishop.

10. Bxe5 Bxe5 11. dxe5 Rxd1+ 12. Kxd1 Nb6 13. Qh2 h5!



Preparing to bring the queen to h6, and also ready to respond to f2-f4 with … h5-h4, undermining White's kingside. Now there are too many problems to deal with: the weak king, the e5-pawn, and the inactive white queen.

14. Qg3 Bf7 15. h4 Rd8+ 16. Kc1 Nc4 17. Bc2 Rd5 18. Qc3 Rxe5 19. Ne3 Nc7 20. Nxc4 Rxe1+ 21. Qxe1 Bxc4 22. Qe3 b6
Black is a clean pawn up, and in time pressure, the conversion was a little too easy.

23. Nd4 Qf6 24. Nf3?
Giving up a second pawn for no reason.

24. … Bxa2 25. Qe5 Qf7 26. Qd6 Qc4 27. Qxg6 Qf1+ 28. Bd1 Bb3, White resigned.

This is close to the top of the list of games in my life I would desperately like to take back.

It was then that I learned a simple truth about Freestyle Chess: It is a lovely game if I play White and do not play Magnus Carlsen! I felt so terribly about this game that I left without exchanging any words with my opponent and lost all motivation to continue the event. I played two lackluster games afterwards; in the first, I reached a similarly lost position after six moves, and in the second one I blundered in time trouble.

In the meanwhile, the tournament began to heat up seriously. One facet of the two-rounds-a-day format, as well as the brand-new opening positions, meant that we saw some games end remarkably quickly.

CHESS960, INITIAL POSITION 76

GM Sergei Movsesian (2591)
GM Vincent Keymer (2718)
Grenke Festival Freestyle Open (7), Karlsruhe, 04.20.2025

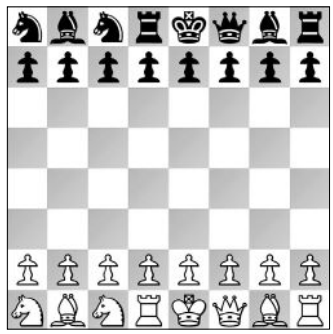


1. e4 e5 2. Nab3 f6 3. f4 exf4 4. Nd3 Nd6 5. Qxf4 c6 6. 0-0-0 0-0-0 7. Bc5 b6 8. Bf2?! Re8 9. e5? fxe5 10. Qa4? Bxb3 11. cxb3 e4 12. Rhf1 exd3 13. Bxd3 Nb7 14. Kb1 Qd6 15. Bf5 g6 16. Bh3 b5, White resigned.

Perhaps the game of the tournament was Carlsen's sensational battle against GM Parham Maghsoodloo. It is a testament to the spirit of the Iranian star that he eschewed several opportunities to stop Magnus' streak with a draw to go for glory — yet it was all in vain. Destiny was in the playing hall.

CHESS960, INITIAL POSITION 76

GM Magnus Carlsen (2837)
GM Parham Maghsoodloo (2684)
Grenke Festival Freestyle Open (7), Karlsruhe, 04.20.2025



1. c3
A subtle move, and perhaps an indicator of the direction of this game. Both players choose to keep maximal tension on the board, avoiding the direct paths. White prepares e2-e4, and on the other hand gives Black a wide variety of choices.

Several other games this round went 1. e4 f5!, when Black obtains some control over the light squares.

1. … e5 2. f4 exf4 3. Nd3
3. Qxf4 was perfectly fine, but Magnus prefers the less direct option.

3. … c6 4. 0-0-0 d5?
Parham gets into trouble early. Now Black will not be able to castle, as the c8-h3 diagonal is permanently weakened. Black is fine after 4. … Nd6 5. Nxf4 0-0-0 6. e4 f5.

5. Nb3 Nd6 6. Qxf4 Qe7
Black would run into a world of trouble after 6. … 0-0-0 7. Ndc5, with Bb1-f5+ coming. White wins material after 7. … Bc7 8. Rf1 Nb6 9. Ne6!.

7. Bc5 Nb6 8. Nd4 g6 9. Ne5 f6 10. Nexc6! bxc6 11. Nxc6 Qc7 12. Qe3+ Kd7 13. Nxd8 Qxd8
After just 13 moves, Magnus has a decent material advantage, and Black's king is totally weak. But Parham puts up incredible resistance from this point onward.

14. h4
14. Rhf1 Be6 15. Qd4! was more to the point. After 15. … f5 16. g4! fxg4 17. e4 Black's position would begin to fall apart.

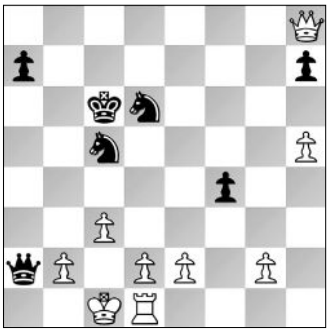
14. … Be6 15. h5 g5 16. Rhf1 Ndc4 17. Qf2 Na4
Now Black's knights begin to activate, and the position becomes a total mess.

18. Bf5?!
White was still winning with 18. e4! Naxb2 19. exd5 but the lines here are really quite messy.

18. … Bf4?! 19. Qd4?! Kc6
The position is volatile, but on each move, both sides avoid simplifications.

Black was much better after 19. … Nxc5!. After 20. Qxd5+ Nd6 21. Qxc5 Nxf5 22. e3 Qb6! 23. Qxb6 axb6 24. exf4 g4!, White's queenside pawns are too slow.

20. Bxe6 Nxc5 21. Rxf4 gxf4 22. Bxd5+ Qxd5 23. Qxf6+ Nd6 24. Qxh8 Qxa2



The dust has settled, and White still has a material advantage, but Black's counterplay against White's king is enough for a perpetual. Parham, however, continues fighting for tournament glory.

25. d4 Nb3+ 26. Kc2 Qa4 27. d5+ Kc5
Onward! But now the king gets caught in a mating net. After 27. … Kb7 28. Qxh7+ Kc8 Black would be able to make a perpetual.

28. Qxh7 Kb6 29. Qg6 Kc7 30. h6 Nd4+ 31. Kc1, Black lost on time.
White already has close to a decisive advantage: 31. Kc1 Qa1+ 32. Qb1 Nb3+ 33. Kc2 Qa4 34. Rd3! and White's king can run to avoid the checks, while the h6-pawn advances.

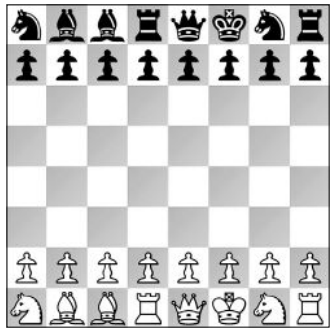
After Round 7, Magnus held a full point lead over his closest rivals. In Round 8, he ground down GM Rauf Mamedov in a long endgame, while Keymer crushed GM Andrey Esipenko, who had been on 6/7, thus clinching first place for Magnus with a round to spare.

CHESS960, INITIAL POSITION 228

GM Vincent Keymer (2718)
GM Andrey Esipenko (2696)
Grenke Festival Freestyle Open (8), Karlsruhe, 04.21.2025

(see diagram top of next column)

1. d4 d5 2. c3 c6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. Nb3 Nb6
Esipenko goes symmetrical, which is generally a decent strategy in 960. The position is



INITIAL POSITION

safe for both sides, as the only break, e2-e4 or … e7-e5, would lose the bishop pair.

5. 0-0 Nc4 6. Nc5 b6?!
Breaking the symmetry, but Keymer soon shows his class in this structure. Black had a good break available with 6. … e5!. White should respond with 7. e4 exd4 8. exd5 Nxd5 9. Qxe8+ Rxe8 10. Nxd4 and Black is completely fine.

7. Nd3 Bf5?!
An innocuous-looking move that Black wants to follow up by playing … h7-h6 and tucking the bishop on h7, but from here Keymer doesn't give the bishop a moment of rest.

8. b3 Nd6 9. Nfe5!
White prepares f2-f3 and e2-e4 with play on the kingside. Black hasn't even castled yet.

9. … c5 10. f3 cxd4 11. cxd4 h5
Stopping g2-g4, but spending yet another precious tempo.

Even so, White has a severe attack after 11. … 0-0 12. g4 Bg6 13. h4! If 13. … h6 14. Nxg6 fxg6 15. Ne5 would be a disastrous weakening for Black.

12. a4 Rc8 13. Bf4 a5
13. … 0-0 14. h3 would not solve Black's issues; g2-g4 is still coming.

14. Rc1
Vincent waits for Black to castle.

14. … 0-0 15. h3! Rxc1 16. Qxc1

(see diagram top of next column)

Black's knights are restricted, with access to e4, c4, and b5 cut off. On the other hand, g2-g4, Kg1-h2, and Rf1-g1 are coming soon.

16. … b5 17. Nc6!
It is time to cash in the chips.



POSITION AFTER 16. Qxc1

17. … bxa4 18. bxa4 Nd7 19. Re1 Nb6 20. e4 Bh7
Black loses a piece after 20. … dxe4 21. fxe4 Bxe4 22. Nxb8 Qxb8 23. Rxe4, but the game continuation is even worse.

21. exd5 Nxd5 22. Qc5 Nxf4 23. Nxf4 e6 24. Nd5, Black resigned.
Because Nd5-e7+ and Qc5xh5 are coming. A dominant performance by Vincent, which all started with the small mistake 7. … Bf5.

All eyes were now on Carlsen for his final-round matchup against Keymer, and it did not disappoint.

CHESS960, INITIAL POSITION 140

GM Magnus Carlsen (2837)
GM Vincent Keymer (2718)
Grenke Festival Freestyle Open (9), Karlsruhe, 04.21.2025



GM Vincent Keymer



This position is centered mainly around the bishops — both sides want to open lines for them, but, for example, f2-f3 prevents the knight on e1 from developing. Magnus tries to solve the issue with a London-esque development of the g1-bishop to the h2-b8 diagonal.

1. d4 d5 2. Nb3

Sometimes I think the knight can be misplaced on b3, but here White's knight has good control over the c5-square.

2. ... f6 3. Nc5!?

An ambitious knight maneuver, utilizing the first-move advantage. Black can't play ... b7-b6 on account of Nc5-a6, so for now Black has to deal with the knight on c5.

3. ... Nd6 4. h4 a5 5. Bh2 b6 6. Ncd3

The engine prefers 6. Na6!, and after 6. ... Ba7 7. c3 White's knight on a6 controls Black's knight on a8.

6. ... c5 7. c3 c4 8. Nf4 b5 9. f3

White sets up in the center/kingside, while Black has gained a lot of space on the queenside. White's next move is going to be e2-e4, so Keymer understandably opens up the center. But now the position gets sharp.



Keymer scrutinizes his chances against Carlsen



9. ... e5 10. dxe5 fxe5 11. Nxd5 Qxh4 12. g4!

The only way to untangle the pin. White prepares Kf1-g2, with counterplay against the black queen. Not 12. 0-0 when the upcoming pin on the d-file would be unpleasant after 12. ... 0-0-0.

12. ... Ba7 13. e3 Qh6 14. Kg2 Qe6 15. e4 Nc7 16. Nc2 0-0-0 17. Nce3 Qe8 18. Qe2 Nxd5 19. Nxd5 h5 20. Bg3 Be6 21. g5 Rd7 22. Rcd1



Both sides are developing their pieces, and the position is at some kind of natural equilibrium. Black's e5-pawn and queenside can be targeted, but it is balanced out by White's inactive bishop on b1 and backward pawn on f3. Here, however, Magnus begins to outplay Vincent.

22. ... h4!? 23. Bxh4 Qd8 24. Qe1

Parrying Black's threat of 24. ... Rxh4.

24. ... Rh5

The engine claims 24. ... Bc5 25. Qg3 Qe8 is just equal, with both sides having such a jumble of pieces that neither side can improve.

25. Qg3 Nf5?

A bit of panic, but by this point there was no stopping Magnus. 25. ... Qe8! (defending e5) 26. Qxe5 Bh3+ was necessary, with an unclear position.

26. exf5! Rxd5 27. Rxd5 Bxd5 28. Qg4

With a clean extra pawn and more material coming, Magnus had no issues with his technique.

28. ... Bf7 29. g6 Qd2+ 30. Kh3 Rxh4+ 31. Qxh4 Bd5 32. Be4 Bxe4 33. Qxe4 Qh6+ 34. Kg2 Qg5+ 35. Qg4 Qd2+ 36. Kg3 Kc7 37. f6 Bf2+ 38. Kh3 Bc5 39. fxg7 Qh6+ 40. Kg2 Qd2+ 41. Kg3, Black resigned.

Magnus' historic 9/9 performance has never been seen at this rating level or in the classical format. A hearty congratulations to the 16th World (Classical) Champion!

STARTING OVER?

Editor's note: When we change the initial position of chess, what do we gain? What do we lose? We asked GM Awonder Liang for his thoughts on the variant that's getting more and more attention from the world's elite.

Chess960's main selling point is obvious: Opening theory is completely annihilated. With 960 possible start positions, memorizing theory becomes impossible. The strategic considerations are immense: From the start position, any number of plans are available; flank-pawn pushes such as h2-h4 and g2-g4 are common opening ideas. The knights can start in the corner, where they are quite restricted, or in the center, where they have to be moved in order to facilitate castling. The game becomes richer, much more a battle of pure intellect.

Yet I wouldn't quite count out the classic game we're all familiar with. I see many issues with Chess960, and I don't feel its benefits are as pronounced as its benefactors claim.

For starters, I feel that the lack of preparation will benefit top players much more, because they have endless boats of time to spend analyzing positions. Magnus has already had Chess960 training camps, and other top players are sparring frequently. Although 960 positions are a lot, there are already a lot of useful heuristics, and common themes pop up from position to position. Just an example: If White's king starts on either b1 or g1, then engines tend to rank a2-a4 or h2- h4 quite highly in the first few moves.

Carlsen scored 9½/10 with the white pieces in the Paris Freestyle event. In half of those games he attained a massive advantage — 1.00 or more, in engine terms — in the first 15 moves of the game, and in one, against Gukesh, he had an advantage of +2 just two moves in. Although this could be attributed to his superior skill in chess, he didn't showcase the same acumen with the black pieces, often getting worse or just equal positions. I think it quite probable that his experience with the game — he has played nearly every 960 event in the past two years — along with his team have given him consistent opportunities in the opening.

Moreover, the variant faces huge problems from a cultural and historical standpoint. It is hard to recall any important Chess960 games, and I would even struggle to set up the starting position for any game in any recent event. Even now, I remember the moments more than the matches themselves — Wesley So overcoming Magnus in 2019, or Kasparov battling it out in the 9LX in St. Louis. But the science of chess is destroyed: No longer are players standing on the shoulders of Polugaevsky and Timman, drawing inspiration from the recent battles of Abdusattorov and Gukesh. Even for an experienced fan such as myself, I don't have interest in the games themselves. Of the three pillars of chess — science, art, sport — Chess960 destroys the first two and promotes the third.



Above and right: the positions were chosen by shuffling balls with position numbers and then pulling them from a jar. Bingo anyone?



Even still, chess has needed reform for quite some time. As early as 1925, Capablanca believed that chess could be played out; in 1928, he reaffirmed his opinion that soon, top players would be able to "draw at will." And yet I feel quite optimistic about the future of chess, for many such "unbeatable" openings have come and gone throughout history: the Slav, the Queen's Gambit Declined, the Tarrasch. In the 1980s, it was the Petroff, and more recently, openings like the Berlin and Semi-Tarrasch. Looking at those games of the past, their openings look incredibly dated, and as deep and rich as they knew the game of chess to be, if I could go back in time to talk to the great players, I would let them know that this game we love still has more to offer. I would tell them, "I'm from the future. We're still good."

In 1970, U.S. Open director Bill Talbert debuted the tiebreaker system in tennis. Players complained about the added stress of playing a winner-take-all point, but Talbert had a simple response: "Players don't buy tickets." Today, Magnus Carlsen and Freestyle Chess co-founder Jan Buettner walk a similar, daring path. Although I remain cynical about the project, I wholeheartedly support the attempt — at the end of the day, more events leads to a healthier overall chess economy. The narratives, the historic moments, the great players we celebrate for their fighting spirit and fierce determination — we get all that, no matter what game we play. For that, I remain incredibly excited about the future of chess, no matter the starting position.

BEST FOR LAST







On winning individual and team titles at your last SuperNationals

BY **IM NICO CHASIN**

ADDITIONAL ANNOTATIONS BY **IM JOSEPH LEVINE**

ALL PHOTOS: DAVID LLADA, ORLANDO EVENT PHOTOGRAPHY, AND JOHN HARTMANN FOR US CHESS

WHAT MAKES the Supernationals so super? My first time traveling for chess was to this tournament in 2013, at age 6. The name piqued my curiosity: any relation to superheroes? Or the Super Bowl? Soon, I understood: Every four years, the SuperNationals tournament brings together thousands of players from elementary, middle, and high schools from across the U.S. School teams competed against others from their division rather than at the "normal" Nationals, where individuals and teams play only within their school grade. By bringing together all three divisions and providing for inter-grade play within divisions, the competition at SuperNationals becomes more tense, more robust, and even more fun.

It felt fitting to finish my scholastic chess career at SuperNationals, where I began, having gained 1700 rating points in the intervening 12 years. Playing for a team brings additional excitement, and New York City's Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School (now my alma mater) has been profoundly supportive of the time and travel I've put into my chess endeavors. As a player and as captain, I wanted to reciprocate that support to the very end.

SuperNationals comprises seven grueling rounds over three days. Competitive and more casual chessplayers alike battle it out with peers, hungry to win against the best school teams and players in the country. Even for players who have won national titles, having to play down every round and beat every opponent feels daunting. But I love these tournaments — they're among my few opportunities to compete as part of a team. While individual success always feels good, the team trophy can feel even more rewarding because we're all counting on one another to keep up the momentum.

Over my dozen years at the Nationals and SuperNationals, I've seen changes among the players. National scholastic championships were once an obligatory annual event for top juniors, regardless of whether they were playing for a school team. In recent years, the overall strength of scholastic players globally has grown exponentially. The current world champion, Gukesh Dommaraju, is just 18 — my age as well. Back in 2018, he and I shared the podium with Volodar Murzin at the World Cadet Championship in Spain. Gukesh, at that young age, had already abandoned school for chess, and Murzin followed shortly afterward. Since then, many of the top young U.S. players have begun homeschooling, allowing them to concentrate on professional-level international tournaments. For them, scholastic competitions hold little appeal, and lacking a school team reduces the incentive to play.

But Nationals and SuperNationals are enjoyable in a way that I wish everyone could experience. Sure, they're not FIDE-rated, and there's no money on the line. But in comparison with many international events, the tension and excitement in the air that first intoxicated me as a 6-year-old comes from the purely competitive aspect — no stakes other than to try to be the best! We all have the chance to try our hardest against all kinds of different personalities and approaches, familiar faces and young prodigies, feeling competitive without the high-stakes pressure of international rankings. Instead, we have teammates cheering one another on and lifting up one another after tough losses, and a collective energy surges through the tournament hotel and playing hall.

So I boarded a flight to Orlando and went on to the Orange County Convention Center, looking forward to my last SuperNationals and what I knew would be a long, exhausting, but special, weekend.

Many kids don't compete in the blitz and bughouse events held the day before the main tournament (maybe that's not by choice). But I always join these events, and this year's bughouse felt especially meaningful: I'd convinced my talented third-grade student, Ian Singh, to partner with me. Seeing his focus under pressure and winning the event together was a happy surprise for us both. When I also won the blitz with a score of 11/12, it felt like the weekend was off to a good start.

Now it was time for the main event. Many strong players were competing, including my teammate IM-elect Tanitoluwa (Tani) Adewumi and number-one seed GM Brewington Hardaway, another close friend and a former teammate from CGPS. One thing was certain: First place for any player was far from certain.

Chess players usually have pre-game rituals; mine is listening to music while walking into the playing hall — the same five songs on repeat. Drowning out the noise helps me center myself for the tournament's long time control (G/90 with a 10-second delay). Staying grounded is critical in a room with hundreds of other players, where the rows of boards seem to stretch to infinity. This year's tournament, like the bughouse, felt particularly important to me: I'd previously finished first in seven national championships, but I wanted to finish my scholastic competitions with a High School Section SuperNationals first-place medal, while also helping CGPS win its first SuperNationals team title.

All the top seeds start off playing 1900-range opponents. I kicked off my first round with a somewhat controversial opening: 1. a4. Playing a seemingly random move offsets my nerves because I'm forcing both of us to figure things out over the board, rather than following a set of book moves. It also adds a sense of excitement, although maybe people watching (specifically my parents) can get a little anxious in the first half-hour. Upsets are common on the top boards in early rounds, but this year, most top players won smoothly, apart from an occasional draw. I won that game easily, as well as my second.

BENONI DEFENSE (A62)

Jerry Yao (2122)
IM Nico Chasin (2532)
SuperNationals VIII K-12 Championship (2), 05.09.2025

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. g3
The point of this is so that in lines with ... Bf8-b4+ the response Nb1-d2 is more of a problem, but it allows Black to go for a sharp Benoni line.

3. ... c5 4. d5 exd5 5. cxd5 d6 6. Bg2 g6 7. Nc3 Bg7 8. Nf3 0-0 9. 0-0 Re8 10. Bf4 h6 11. Qc1
Boris Avrukh recommends this move, so I instantly knew my opponent was familiar with the positions, but I was banking that he would not have reviewed them as much as I have.

11. ... g5 12. Bd2
White also has 12. Be3 when Black can play 12. ... Nbd7 13. h4 Ng4 14. Bd2 f6 with the very powerful idea of re-routing the d7-knight to f7.



12. ... Bf5 13. h4 g4 14. Nh2 h5 15. Re1 Bg6 16. Nf1 Nbd7 17. Bh6



I was familiar with my moves up until here; some of the variations I knew included 17. Bg5 a6 18. a4 b6 and 17. Bf4 Ne5 18. Ne3 a6 19. a4 b6 20. Bxe5 Rxe5 21. Nc4 Re7 22. e4. But now Black has to make a decision: Do they want to allow the trade of dark-squared bishops or not? And if so, what waiting move should be made?

17. ... a6 18. a4 Ne5 19. Bxg7 Kxg7 20. Nd2 Qa5

I wanted to stop a4-a5, but 20. ... b6 would have been a more efficient way of doing it.

21. Nde4

White would be better off with 21. Ra3. I had forgotten about the idea of the rook lift, which prevents me putting my queen on b4. After 21. ... Rac8 22. Rd1 it's hard for me to make progress.

21. ... Nxe4 22. Nxe4 Bxe4 23. Bxe4 Ng6 24. Bxg6 fxg6 25. Qc3+?

My opponent was clearly just trying to trade off all the pieces but did not realize this endgame is close to lost.

25. ... Qxc3 26. bxc3 b5 27. Reb1



27. ... Kf6

The pawn sac is very powerful; I get quick activity and White's pawns will collapse.

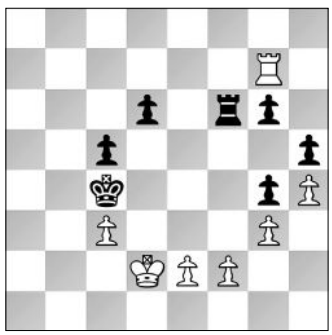
28. axb5

The better try was 28. f4 gxf3 *e.p.* 29. exf3 Ke5 30. Rd1 b4 31. cxb4 cxb4 32. a5 Rab8.

28. ... axb5 29. Rxa8 Rxa8 30. Rxb5 Ke5 31. Rb7 Kxd5 32. Rg7 Re8?

There was a much easier win with 32. ... Kc4 33. Rxg6 Rd8 34. Rg5 Kxc3 35. Rxh5 Kd2, but I was scared to give up so many pawns.

33. Kf1 Re6 34. Ke1 Kc4 35. Kd2 Rf6



36. f3

The crucial mistake. White instead should have just waited for me to take on f2 so he could take on g6; for example: 36. Rg8 d5 37. Rg7 Rxf2 (*37. ... Ra6 38. Rc7!*) 38. Rxg6 Rg2 39. Rh6 Rxg3 40. Rxh5 Rxc3 41. Rg5 Rg3 42. h5 d4 43. h6 Rh3 44. Rxg4 Rxh6 45. Re4 Ra6 46. Re5 Ra2+ 47. Kc1 Kb4 48. Kb1 Ra3 49. Kb2 Rh3 50. Re8 Rb3+ 51. Kc2 Ra3 52. Rb8+ Kc4 53. Re8 and it seems White holds on, albeit with some only moves. Now, though, I get an easily winning endgame that I converted without any problems.

36. ... gxf3 37. exf3 Rxf3 38. Rxg6 d5 39. g4

If White plays analogously to the previous drawing line with 39. Rh6 Rxg3 40. Rxh5 Rd3+ 41. Ke2 Rxc3, now Black has connected passed pawns and White's h-pawn is not well advanced enough to cause trouble. The rook will just come behind the pawn and White will not be able to do anything.

39. ... Rd3+ 40. Ke2 hxg4 41. Rxg4+ Kxc3 42. h5 d4 43. Rh4 Re3+ 44. Kd1 Re7 45. h6 Rh7 46. Rh2 d3 47. Ke1 Re7+ 48. Kd1 Ra7 49. Ke1 Ra1+ 50. Kf2 d2 51. h7 Ra8 52. Ke2 Re8+ 53. Kf2 d1=Q 54. h8=Q+ Rxh8 55. Rxh8 Qd4+, White resigned.

Overall, a clean game that had me in a good headspace for the rest of the event.

Day 2 is notoriously difficult. Approaching Round 3, anyone could still take control of the tournament. With games scheduled for 9 a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 6 p.m., and an unforgiving time control, one could hypothetically endure 12 hours hunched over the board. International tournaments, even scholastic ones, stick to a relatively leisurely one-round-per-day schedule. At SuperNationals, these tough days have become a rite of passage, testing stamina, strength, and resolve.

By checking in with teammates between rounds, we also navigate the complicated choreography of sleeping and eating under time pressure. At my first SuperNationals, in Nashville in 2013, I might have eaten only one full meal the entire tournament. But years of these events, not to mention growth, make players better at managing food and rest, while the magic of Instacart and DoorDash makes sustenance more reliable.

I had 3/3 by the end of the third round, and our team was doing great as well. Leading the CGPS charge were siblings FM Megan and Dominic Paragua. Dominic was a bit of a dark horse at around 2100, but he was undefeated and showed no signs of slowing down. Megan is a force to be reckoned with, and I expect that she will be one of the leading U.S. players in the coming years. But every good story requires a dramatic turn — a moment when everything isn't rainbows and unicorns, or, in this case, promoted pawns and forced mates. For us, that plot twist came in Round 4.

Our team came into the round in first place with 11½/12, and we were pulling away from the pack. I was paired against 2250-rated Anjaneya Rao, from Illinois, whom I'd beaten at last year's U.S. Masters. I knew that he liked to play sidelines, so I decided to play in the style of the University of Chicago great GM Awonder Liang, with the Modern Defense.

Big mistake. I got crushed. To make matters worse, Tani, our second-highest player, drew against the lower-rated Aiden Reiss. The Paragua siblings also both lost (Dominic's game was particularly heartbreaking, and you can see the endgame in GM Joel Benjamin's Endgame School column in the August *Chess Life*). Our team's score of ½/4 for the round unnerved us all. The team title and my individual first-place finish now seemed like distant dreams. Though 6/7 might sound like a strong score, it rarely wins a clear first-place medal.

We rallied back into contention in Round 5, showing the team's ability to fight back after painful losses. Though I played a shaky game against Abhiram Pothuri, a 15-year-old from our host state of Florida, my teammates and I found our necessary wins. Over the next two rounds, we moved ourselves back into striking distance of first.

The sixth round brought some surprising

upsets. IM Joseph Levine, a friend from Washington whom I have known from our years battling at Nationals, won convincingly against top seed Hardaway. While I was rooting for both players throughout the tense game, it was exciting to see an underdog prevail, as Joseph did.

CATALAN OPENING (E04)

GM Brewington Hardaway (2595)
IM Joseph Levine (2443)
SuperNationals VIII K-12 Championship (6), 05.11.2025
Annotations by IM Joseph Levine

Going into the round, Brew was at a perfect 5/5 while I had 4½/5.

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 Nf6 3. Bg2 c5 4. 0-0 Nc6 5. d4 e6 6. c4 dxc4 7. Qa4 Bd7
A common opening, but not one I've played much.

8. Qxc4 b5 9. Qd3 Rc8 10. dxc5 Bxc5 11. Nc3 h6
I was very worried about the bishop coming to g5 — for example, 11. … 0-0 12. Bg5 Be7 13. Rfd1 — so this felt logical. The b5-pawn is quite dangerous for White to take.

12. Rd1
12. Nxb5 0-0 leads to a playable position for both of us, but Brew has no reason to complicate the game when I'm in a must-win situation. And of course not 12. Qxb5?? Nb4.

12. … 0-0 13. Bf4
Now 13. Nxb5 is just bad for White: 13. … Nb4 14. Qb3 Qb6 15. Nbd4 a5.

13. … Nb4 14. Qd2 Qb6
I considered 14. … Nbd5 for a little while. The idea is to remove the defender of the e4-square to set up … Bc5xf2+. It's unclear after 15. Nxd5 Bxf2+ 16. Kf1 exd5 17. e3 g5, but White gets a moderate advantage after 15. Ne5 when the g2-bishop covers e4, preventing the capture on f2, and White's pieces are very active. One line is 15. … Nxf4 16. Qxf4, when it would be very difficult to escape the pin on the d-file and save the b-pawn.

15. e3 Bc6
It was also reasonable to play 15. … Rfd8, but I didn't want to allow too many trades after 16. Bd6.

16. Be5
Now 16. Bd6?? loses: 16. … Bxd6 17. Qxd6 Nc2 18. Rac1 Nxe3 19. fxe3 Qxe3+ 20. Kh1 Bxf3.










IM Joseph Levine


GM Brewington Hardaway

16. ... Ne4 17. Qe2 Nxc3 18. Bxc3 Be4 19. Ne5 Bxg2 20. Kxg2 Nd5 21. Bd4
Not 21. Nd7?? Qc6.

21. ... Bxd4 22. Rxd4 Qc7 23. Nf3 Qc2 24. Re1 Rc5



I remember looking at the clock here and realizing how far down on time I was. With just a 10-second delay and no increment, having just seven minutes to his 24 is a major problem. I decided to make intuitive, quick decisions for a while.

25. e4 Qxe2 26. Rxe2 Nb6 27. b3 Rfc8 28. Rdd2 Kf8 29. Nd4 a6
Since the last note, I've only spent 15 seconds, while he was down seven minutes.

30. f4 Ke7 31. Kf2 g6
Covering against any Nd4-f5+ tricks, like 31. ... Rd8?? 32. Nf5+ exf5 33. exf5+.

32. Nf3 Nd7 33. h3 Rc3 34. Nd4?!
Brew's position is tough to play. The computer recommends 34. e5 instead, and calls it equal after 34. ... Nb6 35. Rd6 Nd5 36. Rxa6 Rd3 37. Rd2, but it feels very wrong to give up the d5-square.

34. ... Nf6?!
I should have played 34. ... e5 35. Nf3 exf4 36. gxf4 Nf6 when White's pawns are very weak.

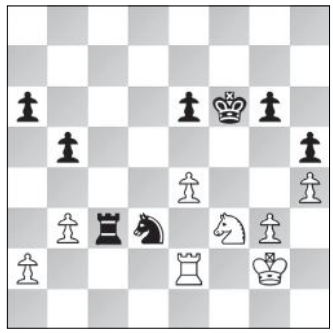
35. Re3 Rc1 36. f5?!
The clock situation is now nearly equal, primarily because my position has been much easier to play.

36. ... Nd7?!
Better was 36. ... e5! 37. Nf3 gxf5 38. exf5 e4.

37. fxe6 fxe6 38. Nf3 R8c2 39. Ree2 Rxd2 40. Rxd2 Nc5 41. Re2! Rc3 42. Ne5?! Kf6?!
I wanted to remove the knight right away, but the computer doesn't mind leaving it on e5 and playing 42. ... g5. From a practical standpoint, I think my decision is reasonable, especially since I have little time.

43. Ng4+ Kg7 44. Ne5 h5?! 45. Nf3 Kf6 46. h4?
The computer proclaims equality after 46. e5+! as the king has to retreat and White has no weaknesses. I can understand the idea after the fact, but it just feels very loose in practice.

46. ... Nd3+ 47. Kg2!



47. ... Nb4?
The best move was 47. ... Ne5 because the knight can then navigate to g4. From there, ... a6-a5-a4 makes White's position very uncomfortable, but it's probably still holdable. But not 48. Nxe5 Kxe5 and the rook endgame is winning.

48. Nd4?!
Again, 48. e5+ equalizes.

48. ... Rd3?! 49. Nf3 Rd1 50. a3 Nd3 51. Re3
Another chance for 51. e5+!. We're both under a minute at this point, and any move that isn't intuitive will not be played.

51. ... Ne5 52. Ng5?
Now, though, 52. Nxe5 Kxe5 53. Rc3 Kxe4 54. Rc6 is quite an easy draw because the rook is active. It's really difficult to believe in this idea in the moment, though: Most rook endgames are quite drawish, but giving up a pawn always feels like a mistake.

52. ... Rd2+ 53. Kg1? Rd3?
I have no idea why I didn't just play 53. ... Ra2. It's such a natural move and clearly best.

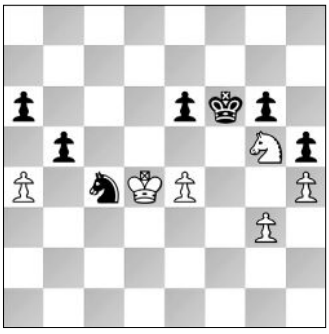
54. Rxd3 Nxd3 55. Kf1?
It's impossible to see the difference from afar, but White needed to play 55. Kg2 to cover f3. White's still in the game after 55. ... a5 56. Nf3 Nc5 57. Nd4 Ke5 58. Nc6+ Kxe4 59. Nxa5.

55. ... Ke5
Missing a win with 55. ... a5. We can see why

White's last move was a mistake after 56. Nf3 Nc5 57. Nd4 Ke5 58. Nc6+ Kxe4 59. Nxa5 Kf3.

56. Ke2??
White can still draw with 56. b4, sacrificing a pawn: 56. … Nb2 57. Ke2 Nc4 58. Kd3 Nxa3 59. Nf3+.

56. … Nc1+ 57. Ke3 Nxb3 58. Nf7+ Kf6 59. Ng5 Na5 60. Kd4 Nc4! 61. a4



61. … Nd2?
I assumed I was winning no matter what because my extra pawn would be a diversion — but surprisingly, I still had to be precise, and I wasn't.

The only winning move — and a clever one — was 61. … Na3!!. The point is that after 62. axb5 Nxb5+! White's king will have to travel another file over to pick up the outside passer, giving even more time to win on the kingside.

62. axb5 axb5 63. Nh7+!
Black's king must be forced back first: not 63. Kc5?? Ke5.

63. … Ke7 64. Ng5! Nf1
White holds after 64. … Kd6? 65. e5+.

65. Ke5?
A very understandable mistake with just seconds on the clock. Brew had to pick up the outside passer first with 65. Kc5! Nxg3 66. Kxb5 Kd6 67. Kc4 Ke5 68. Kd3 Kf4 69. Nxe6+ Kg4 70. Ke3 Kxh4 71. Kf3, when White holds quite easily. Surprisingly, 65. e5 works too: White should hold after 65. … Nxg3 66. Kc5 Nf5 67. Nf3 g5 68. Nxg5 Nxh4, although Black still has good chances in practice.

65. … b4! 66. Kd4 Nxg3 67. Nf3 Kf6 68. Ng5 Ne2+ 69. Kc4 Nf4 70. Nf3 Nh3 71. Kxb4 g5
The critical breakthrough.

72. Kc3 g4 73. Ne1 Ke5 74. Kd2 Kxe4
From here it's a matter of straightforward cleanup, even with just eight seconds on the clock.

JUNIOR TO SENIOR

BY **JOHN HARTMANN**

IT'S NOT OFTEN THAT I'M STARstruck anymore. (I think the last time was when I literally ran into the great Kant scholar Henry Allison at a philosophy conference in the early 2000s.) (*Assistant Editor's Note:* C'mon man.) So imagine my surprise, and embarrassment, when I wandered over to say hi to GM Joel Benjamin at SuperNationals and completely fell to pieces when he introduced me to his friend GM Ilya Gurevich.

Gurevich was one of the top American juniors when I was cutting my chess teeth in the late 1980s. After winning national scholastic and state championships, he became World Junior Champion in 1990 and a GM in 1993, and under the handle "Junior" he was one of the top players on the Internet Chess Club, one of my favorite haunts. His games and analysis were in *Chess Life*, *Inside Chess*, and *Chess Chow*, and I suspect that the reason I remember his key win over GM Alexei Shirov from the World Junior so well is that it was in the first *Informant* I bought with my own money.

Gurevich shifted away from competition in the mid-'90s to join the world of high finance, and his last rated event was the 2000 North American Open. To my knowledge he was done with chess. So how did he come to be analyzing games in the Hunter College Campus Schools team room?

Now 53, Gurevich told me that (as so often happens in life) "things come in threes." One reason for his being there was just a bit of chance: He still speaks from time to time with GM Hikaru Nakamura, whose stepfather, FM Sunil Weeramantry, founded the chess program at Hunter. Because Gurevich lives in Florida, and because he has helped Hunter out in the past, Nakamura was able to convince him to spend his weekend at SuperNationals in Orlando.

There was also the Yermo factor. Now working in the insurance world, Gurevich had heard about GM Alex Yermolinsky's serious health scare in Turkey — don't worry; he's going to be OK! — and reached out to some friends to get in touch with Yermo, rekindling connections and competitive sparks.

And then there was the World Rapid and Blitz Team Championships in London, scheduled for about a month after SuperNationals. IM Ali Mortazavi asked Gurevich to play on a team along with GM David Norwood and others, and he had accepted.

Gurevich told me that he was out of practice: "I play [online] once a week, I lose, and I quit! It's not just that I don't know the openings anymore, but my tactics are [terrible]!" He wanted to play without expectations in London, viewing the trip as a vacation for the family and a one-off tournament, but I clocked his wry grin when I told him, "That's what they all say."

As it turned out, Gurevich had a respectable result in London, picking up a few points in both the Rapid and Blitz, and hanging in with the likes of Abdusattorov ("I was better against Nodirbek!") and Keymer. Afterwards I asked him whether his desire to play had been reawakened: "It was … weird … I still don't know if I want to go through with it again."

Now that's a sentiment I'm very familiar with.



75. Ke2?! Nf4+ 76. Kf1 g3 77. Kg1 e5 78. Nc2 Kf3 79. Ne1+ Kg4 80. Kf1 e4 81. Kg1 Kxh4 82. Nc2 Kg4 83. Ne1?! h4 84. Nc2 h3 85. Ne3+ Kf3 86. Nf1 Ne2+ 87. Kh1 g2+ 88. Kh2
One final trap: 88. ... gxf1=Q?? stalemate.

88. ... g1=Q+, White resigned.

The section now had just three players at the top with 5½/6. With 5 points, I would play one of them — Kent Slate, from Virginia — while the other two, Levine and IM Eric Liu, faced off on Board 1. My opponent was also the top scorer for Thomas Jefferson High School, our team's closest competition for first place, making my game a must-win scenario, both for me and for the team.

I decided to make an unannounced visit to my mentor, GM Daniel Naroditsky, who was in the Charlotte Chess Center room. This opportunity to reflect and regroup must have brought good luck. When it finally came time to play, a tactical piece sac allowed me to win, and my teammates emerged victorious too.

By some miracle, Board 1 was also a draw, so I tied for first with six others. I chose to count it as a clean sweep for the event — bughouse, blitz, and classical — but my pride didn't feel individual: It encompassed Levine's first time winning, my student Ian's first SuperNationals, our team's unexpected recovery, and the almost superhuman energy that thousands of students from more than 40 states had channeled into this beautiful game.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, KAN VARIATION (B43)

IM Nico Chasin (2532)
Kent Slate (2323)
SuperNationals VIII K-12 Championship (7), 05.11.2025

I didn't have much to lose, so I wanted to be as aggressive as possible. I strayed from my normal Neo-Catalan setups and played something I am not as familiar with.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 a6 5. Nc3
The more testing moves are 5. Bd3 and 5. c4, but my opponent was a lifelong Kan player so I felt it would be wise to not go into the main lines.

5. ... b5 6. Bd3 Qb6 7. Nf3 Qc7 8. 0-0 Bb7 9. Re1 Bc5 10. Be3 Bxe3 11. Rxe3
This was where my theory ended. In the few minutes I had before the game, I only looked at 11. ... Nf6 here. Unfortunately, my opponent surprised me.

11. ... b4!?



With more time to prepare, obviously it would be a must to look at this move; it's the most forcing option. Here I decided to go for the most aggressive response, in typical Kan/Taimanov style.

12. Nd5?!
This by no means loses, but I did miss one detail far down in the variation that would have left Black with almost no problems. I could have gotten a very pleasant advantage with 12. Na4 Nc6 13. Rc1 Nf6 14. h3 d6 15. c3 bxc3 16. Rxc3. I've played the Taimanov my whole life, and this idea of Nc3-a4 and c2-c3 is very common. I was a bit disappointed not to realize how powerful it was here.

12. ... exd5 13. exd5+ Kf8 14. Qe1 Nf6 15. Qxb4+ d6 16. c4 Nbd7 17. Rae1
I had calculated this when I played 12. Nd5, but I completely overlooked Black's best here.

17. ... Re8?
After 17. ... Bxd5 18. cxd5 Nxd5 19. Qd4 (what I missed was *19. Qe4 N7f6*) 19. ... Nxe3 20. Rxe3 h5 21. h4 Rh6 White has some compensation, but it should not be enough for the Exchange.

TIME WILL TELL

BY **JOHN HARTMANN**

THERE'S A QUOTATION FLOATING around the interwebs about GM Awonder Liang: "You can give me all the time you like on my clock and I'm still going to lose on time. Ask me who the highest rated person to do so is, and I can unhesitatingly answer 'Grandmaster Awonder Liang.'"

I don't know exactly what that means, but we used this quote to promote Liang's appearance at SuperNationals on X / Twitter, telling potential simul-goers not to "miss a chance to beat Awonder on the clock at #SuperNationalsVIII."

Meet Sasha Chow, master of mindgames.

He brought a clock to the tandem simul against Liang and WGM Tatev Abrahamyan, even though the games weren't timed. I saw him fiddle with it whenever Awonder walked by. Tricky, tricky, tricky.

Did it work? No. But was it adorable? Absolutely.













TRAILBLAZER

BY **JOHN HARTMANN**

In 2009, WFM Abby Marshall became the first (and thus far only) female player to win the Denker Tournament of High School Champions. She wrote in the November 2009 issue of *Chess Life* about her victory, about some of the challenges she faced due to sexism, and about her hope that she wouldn't have to wait long for another girl to win the Denker.

Like the rest of us, she's still waiting. But she's also helping the next generation of young talent reach for the stars, as I learned when I met her in Orlando.

Marshall's coach in 2009 was IM John Watson, and as it happened, I had also just started working with him. We played some of the same openings, both under the influence of her first coach, NM Mark Morss, and with these connections I always kept an eye out for games by my "chessic cousin."

After capping her scholastic career in 2010 with a "bittersweet" National High School Championship and a learning experience at the U.S. Women's Championship, Marshall headed to Barnard College for college, graduating with honors in 2014. She started teaching chess with her friend Alanna Katz, and over the years has become one of New York's top instructors.

Recently Marshall has started work on a graduate degree in neuroscience at CUNY. Like a "typical chessplayer," she said, she has always been interested in how the brain works. She's playing rated chess as well, often at the Marshall (no relation) Chess Club, and has managed to keep up her playing strength while teaching — no mean feat.



18. Rxe8+ Nxe8 19. Qc3
My queen would actually be better placed on d2 in order to go to e3 and cause problems. For example, 19. Qd2 Nef6 20. Qe3 Qd8 (*20. ... Nc5 21. Bc2 a5 22. Nd4*) 21. Qf4 Nc5 22. Bc2 a5 23. Nd4.

19. ... Nef6 20. Nd4
Here I felt it would have been powerful for my opponent to set up a potential rook lift with 20. ... h5 followed by ... h5-h4.

20. ... Ne5 21. Nf5
Here my opponent had one more chance to take a slight advantage.

21. ... Nxd5
This was the move I was banking on. With my opponent down on the clock I felt this was exactly the dynamic position I would want.

Black was better off with 21. ... Nxd3 22. Qxd3 and now the move I missed was 22. ... Bc8! My knight will be kicked out and Black can consolidate.

22. Qd4 Nb4?
The computer claims 22. ... Ne7 23. Nxd6 Nxd3 24. Qxd3 Bc6 is equal, but I think White has much better practical chances, especially since we were playing with a 10-second delay and not a 30-second increment. Black would have a tough task trying to hold this. Another way to equality is 22. ... Nf6 23. Bf1 Nc6 24. Qxd6+ Qxd6 25. Nxd6 Ba8 26. c5 a5 27. Bc4 Nd8 28. Re3. It might have been a better chance, but it's definitely hard to find.


IM Eric Chang Liu

23. Bb1
Now White is winning — it is impossible to defend the d6-pawn, and Black's position collapses.

23. ... f6 24. Nxd6



While my opponent did not put up much resistance here, it is close to over anyway.

24. ... g5
He meant to play 24. ... Qe7 first, but it's still a win for White after 25. Kf1, and now either 25. ... g5 26. Qb6 Nbc6 27. Nxb7 or 25. ... Nbc6 26. Qc5 Nd8 27. Nxb7 Nxb7 28. Qc8+ Nd8 29. f4.

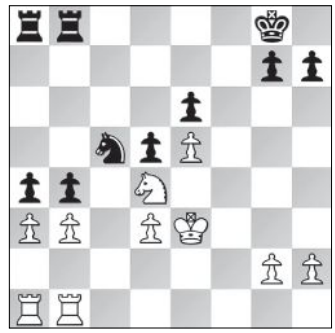
25. Rxe5 fxe5 26. Qxe5 Kg8 27. Qe8+ Kg7 28. Nf5+ Kf6 29. Qxh8+ Ke6 30. Qe8+, Black resigned.
A nice win to seal a tie for first, and first place for my team, in my final SuperNationals!

FRENCH DEFENSE, STEINITZ VARIATION (C11)

IM Eric Chang Liu (2436)
IM Joseph Levine (2443)
SuperNationals VIII K-12 Championship (7), 05.11.2025

Going into the last round, Eric and Joseph were the only two with 5½ other than Kent. This meant that if there was a decisive result on Board 1, none of us could catch the victor. Luckily for us, it looked like a peaceful French that would end quickly in a draw — until chaos ensued ...

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5 Nfd7 5. f4 c5 6. Nf3 Nc6 7. Be3 cxd4 8. Nxd4 Bc5 9. Qd2 0-0 10. 0-0-0 Bxd4 11. Bxd4 Qa5 12. Qe3 a6 13. Bd3 Nxd4 14. Qxd4 Qc5 15. Ne2 b5 16. Qxc5 Nxc5 17. Nd4 b4 18. Kd2 a5 19. b3 Ba6 20. Ra1 a4 21. Rhb1 f6 22. Ke3 fxe5 23. fxe5 Rfb8 24. a3 Bxd3 25. cxd3



Around here I thought Joseph was going to trade on b3 and bring about a very balanced endgame.

25. ... bxa3 26. b4
I'm sure everyone got nervous here. Clearly Joseph had overlooked some detail, because it was clear that here White was now pushing.

26. ... a2?
Played after a long think. Joseph is clearly trying to be able to leave the knight on c5 by disrupting the connection between White's rooks. Unfortunately, the b-pawn becomes a problem very quickly.

According to the engine, Black is still fine after 26. ... Nb3 — for example, 27. Nxb3 axb3 28. Rxb3 Ra4 29. b5 Kf7 30. Rbxa3 Rxa3 31. Rxa3 Rxb5.

27. Rxa2 Rb6 28. b5 Rab8 29. Rb4 Ra8 30. Nc6?!
If 30. Rb1 Rab8 31. Rc1 Nb3 32. Rc6 Nxd4 33. Kxd4 Rxb5 34. Rxa4 Re8 35. Raa6 Kf7 36. Rc7+ Re7 37. Rxe7+ Kxe7 38. Ra7+ Kf8 39. g4 and interestingly enough, this endgame is winning for White. If 39. ... Rb4+ 40. Kc5 Rxg4 41. Kd6 Rg6 42. Re7.

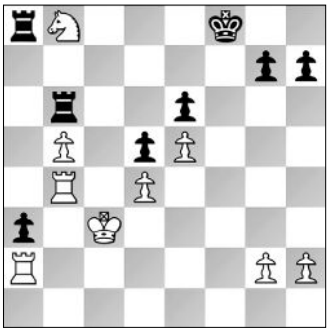
30. ... a3 31. Kd4 Nd7 32. Kc3 Rc8
With almost no time on the clock, Joseph has been displaying beautiful defensive skills — even after allowing unnecessary complications.

33. Kd2 Ra8 34. d4 Kf8 35. Kc3 Nb8 36. Nxb8

(see position top of next column)

36. ... Raxb8
After it seemed Joseph had clinched the





POSITION AFTER 36. Nxb8

draw, he takes with the wrong rook. With nine seconds on the clock he thought after White takes on a3 and Black takes on b5 it would be an easy draw, but actually White's king will get in.

37. Rxa3, draw.
Unfortunately, Eric did not recognize his chance and offered a draw here, resulting in a large seven-way tie for first place. The win was there with 37. ... Rxb5 38. Rxb5 Rxb5 and now 39. Rb3! is most likely the move that Eric missed. After 39. ... Ra5 40. Kb4 Ra7 41. Kc5 Kf7 42. g4 White wins.

In the hotel restaurant afterward, we unwound by playing quick games against friends, family, and random guests. Looking around, I could tell that my whole team felt elated. Even if we hadn't pulled off our respective and collective victories, SuperNationals would still have gifted us many unforeseen, unforgettable memories.

To relive SuperNationals VIII as it happened, including our original, same-day reporting and photography, visit our CLO *event site:* new.uschess.org/2025-scholastic-championships









SUPERNATIONALS VIII AT A GLANCE

MAY 8-11, 2025 | ORLANDO, FL

INDIVIDUAL CHAMPIONS

K-12 CHAMPIONSHIP: Joseph Levine (WA), Eric Chang Liu (TX), Brewington Hardaway (NY), Isaac Wang (CA), Nico Werner Chasin (NY), Tanitoluwa Adewumi (NY), William Safranek (NY), 6/7. **K-12 U1900**: Simon N Noah Mandl-Ciolec (NY), 6½. **K-12 U1600**: Jason Zhang (IN), Darek Rincon (TX), 6½. **K-12 U1200**: Matthew Gabriel Doughty (PA), 7. K-12 U800: Zakir Siddeeq Rasheed (MD), Gabriel Cabo (FL), 6½. **K-12 UNRATED**: Adrian David Bernier (PR), Daniel Kip Wallin (IL), Marcus Freemen Shen Wisner (FL), 6.

K-8 CHAMPIONSHIP: Nitesh Cherukuri (MD), 6½. **K-8 U1700**: Hillel Doron-Repa (NY), Julian N. Spedalieri (NY), 6. **K-8 U1400**: David West Culberson (TX), 6½. **K-8 U1100**: Charlie Doll (MN), 6½. **K-8 U900**: Emmi Gaskins (NY), 6½. **K-8 U700**: Jake Min-Hao Deng (GA), Patrick Richard Hayden (FL), 6½. **K-8 UNRATED**: Lucas Lee (DE), Nabil Nangalji (FL), 6.

K-6 CHAMPIONSHIP: Tariq Yue (PA), 6½. **K-6 U1400**: Alice Sirinides (NY), 6½. **K-6 U1200**: Carlo Feng (CA), Ron Wr Li (WA), 6½. K-6 U1000: Evelyn Crawford (FL), 7. **K-6 U800**: Ayush Ajanth (GA), Yi-En Pi Hu (WA), 6½. **K-6 U600**: Amogh Kalluro (FL), 7. **K-6 UNRATED**: Javier Leon Carcamo (NY), 7.

K-5 CHAMPIONSHIP: Sasha Milo Schaefer (NY), Vivan Prakash Mulay (FL), 6½.

K-3 CHAMPIONSHIP: Lukas LeBakken (VA), 7/7. **K-3 U1000**: Devansh Malhotra (PA), Arjun Yandra (VA), 6½. **K-3 U600**: Ethan Hu (AZ), 7.

K-1 CHAMPIONSHIP: Mehmet Yilanli (OH), 7. **K-1 U500 / UNRATED**: Henry Hu (NY), Lucas Liu (DE), 7.

TEAM WINNERS

K-12 CHAMPIONSHIP: Columbia Grammar & Prep (NY), 22 points. **K-12 U1900**: Thoams Jefferson HS (VA), 22. **K-12 U1600**: Achieve Early College HS (TX), 19½. **K-12 U1200**: Pocono Mountain East HS (PA), 25½. **K-12 U800**: PS 180 (NY), 19½. **K-12 UNRATED**: Dr. Michael M. Krop Senior HS (FL), 19.

K-8 CHAMPIONSHIP: Hunter College Campus School (NY), 18. **K-8 U1700**: I.S. 318 (NY), 20. **K-8 U1400**: Mandarin Immersion Magnet School (TX), 20½. **K-8 U1100**: Nicollet MS (MN), 22½. **K-8 U900**: East Side Community HS (NY), I.S. 318 (NY), 20½. **K-8 U700**: I.S. 318 (NY), 20½. **K-8 UNRATED**: Gulliver Prep (FL), 19½.

K-6 CHAMPIONSHIP: Speyer Legacy School (NY), 20½. **K-6 U1400**: Success Academy Hudson Yards (NY), 16. **K-6 U1200**: Oak Hall (FL), 17½. **K-6 U1000**: The Frazer School (FL), 18. K-6 U800: Trinity School (NY), 19½. **K-6 U600**: The Frazer School (FL), 19. K-6 Unrated: Auburndale ES (FL), 17.

K-5 CHAMPIONSHIP: P.S. 77 Lower Lab School (NY), Oak Hall (FL), 20.

K-3 CHAMPIONSHIP: Speyer Legacy School (NY), 20. **K-3 U1000**: PS 130 K The Parkside School (NY), 18. **K-3 U600**: Oak Hall (FL), 20½.

K-1 CHAMPIONSHIP: Trinity School (NY), 19½. **K-1 U500 / UNRATED**: Collegiate School (NY), 21.

For a complete list of individual and team winners, visit *www.uschess.org/results/2025/sn8*

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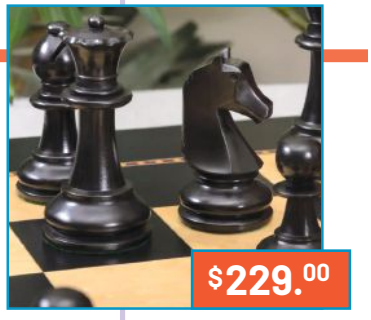
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CHAMPIONSHIP FORM

GAMES FROM THE **SUPERNATIONALS VIII** K-6, K-8, AND K-12 WINNERS

ANALYSIS BY **TARIQ YUE, NITESH CHERUKURI, IM ERIC CHANG LIU, FM TANITOLUWA ADEWUMI, FM ISAAC WANG,** AND **GM BREWINGTON HARDAWAY**

OUR COVERAGE OF SUPERNationals VIII continues with annotated games by winners from the K-6, K-8, and K-12 sections. Games from the winners of the K-1, K-3, and K-5 sections are in the August issue of *Chess Life Kids*, available in print and online.

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E97)

Tariq Yue (2255)
Derek Zhang (2002)
SuperNationals VIII K-6 Championship (4), 05.10.2025
Annotations by Tariq Yue

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. Be2 0-0 6. Nf3 e5 7. 0-0 Nc6 8. d5 Ne7 9. b4
White decides to go for the Bayonet Attack. Another main option is 9. Ne1 Nd7 10. Be3 f5 11. f3 f4 12. Bf2.

9. ... a5 10. bxa5
White decides to take on a5, instead of playing 10. Ba3 axb4 11. Bxb4. This way I'll gain a tempo on the rook after Nf3-d2-b3.

10. ... Rxa5 11. a4
The idea of the Bayonet Attack with b4xa5 is to play a2-a4-a5, then c4-c5 if possible.

11. ... Ne8
Black goes for ... f7-f5, the main idea of the King's Indian, but the knight would be better placed on d7, where it also defends against White's c4-c5 breakthrough. After 11. ... Nd7 12. Nd2 Nc5 13. Nb3 Nxb3 14. Qxb3 White's only slightly better.

12. Nd2 Ra8
Black anticipates White's Nd2-b3.

13. Nb3 c5
To stop White from pushing to c5.

14. dxc6 *e.p.*
Looking to keep the queenside open for an attack.

14. ... bxc6 15. a5
Pushing the strong passed pawn and preparing to route the c3-knight to a4 and b6.

15. ... f5
Black carries on with his attack.

16. Na4
White gives up a very strong central pawn to get the knight to b6.

16. ... fxe4 17. Nb6



17. ... Rb8
A mistake. Black needs to block the a-pawn with 17. ... Ra7, and after 18. Nxc8 Qxc8 19. Be3 Black can use his pawn mass in the center with ... d6-d5-d4.

18. c5
Defending the b6-knight and freeing the a-pawn.

18. ... d5
This is like a last resort, planning to sacrifice the Exchange on a8 and then roll the pawns in the center.

19. a6 Be6
Sacrificing the bishop on a6 was better, because now the black queen will be stuck on a8.

20. a7 Ra8 21. Bg5
Pinning the knight on e7 means White can move the major pieces to the kingside faster. Taking immediately wastes a tempo, but even so 21. Nxa8 Qxa8 22. Bb2 is more than enough to win.

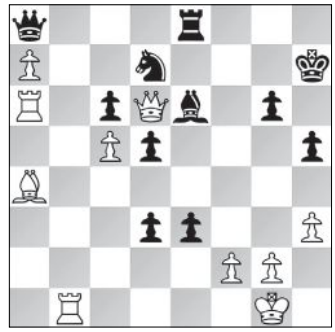
21. ... Bf6
Blocking with the knight would have been more accurate; you don't want to trade your g7-bishop.

22. Bxf6 Nxf6 23. Nxa8 Qxa8 24. Qc2 Nf5
This is a good try. Black still has a strong center, and trading knights on d4 would help him.

25. Rfb1 Nd4 26. Nxd4 exd4 27. Qb2 d3 28. Bd1
Preparing Ra1-a6 and Bd1-a4.

28. ... Nd7 29. Qb4 h5 30. h3 Ne5 31. Qb8
Stepping into the gap that the knight left when it moved to e5.

31. ... Nd7 32. Qd6 Re8 33. Ra6 Kh7 34. Ba4 e3



I think this is a good try, but fortunately for me it's way too slow.

35. fxe3 Bxh3 36. Bxc6
White's still winning after 36. gxh3 Qd8 37. a8=Q Qg5+, but there's no need to allow this kind of activity.

36. ... Qd8 37. Bxd7 Bxg2 38. Qxg6+ Kh8 39. Qh6+ Kg8 40. Rg6+ Kf7 41. Qg7 mate.

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E90)

Nitesh Cherukuri (2296)
FM Bryan Enming Lin (2410)
Supernationals VIII K-8 Championship (7), 05.11.2025
Annotations by Nitesh Cherukuri

It's the last round; Bryan has 6 out of 6, and I have 5½. I have White in a must-win situation: Whoever wins this game will emerge as the National Middle School Champion.

I had about an hour to prepare for this game. I have been playing 1. e4 my whole life, but Bryan plays the solid 1. ... e5 against it, and I quickly realized that it would be hard to win. I also knew that against 1. d4, he plays the aggressive King's Indian Defense. Although I have no experience playing against it from the white side, I play it myself as Black, so I thought this would be a risk worth taking, and it was.

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. h3
I prepared this line because Bryan had played against it in this tournament and in previous ones, so I was ready for his response.

5. ... 0-0
Bryan played 5. ... Nbd7 in the first round, and he sensed that I prepared something against it. Play could go 6. Be3 e5 7. d5 Nc5 8. Qc2 a5 9. g4 and I liked these types of dynamic positions, where I have good chances of winning. The game move, 5. ... 0-0, is still the main line, but it's not usually what Bryan plays. The thing about these King's Indian positions, though, is that the ideas are usually quite similar, so he knew what to do.

6. Be3 c5 7. Nf3 Qa5
The main move here is 7. ... cxd4, and I was prepared to play a Maróczy Bind structure with 8. Nxd4 Nc6 9. Be2.

8. Qd2
I quickly realized this was a mistake; the better move is 8. Bd3. If he goes for the same idea as in the game, it's not so good: 8. ... Nc6 9. d5 Nd4 (or *9. ... Nb4 10. Be2 Nxe4 11. Nxe4 Bxb2 12. 0-0 Bxa1 13. Qxa1* when White is clearly better with two pieces for the rook) 10. Nxd4 cxd4 11. Bxd4 and I am just up a pawn.

8. ... Nc6 9. d5 Nd4 10. 0-0-0



AFTER 10. 0-0-0

I knew I was slightly worse here, but knowing Bryan's aggressive style, I knew that there would be complications, and more chances for Bryan to spoil his position.

If I try to win a pawn with 10. Nxd4, I will immediately lose it because I don't have enough defenders of the e4-pawn. This is why 8. Bd3 was so much stronger. After 10. ... cxd4 11. Bxd4 (if *11. Qxd4 Nxe4 12. Qxe4 Bxc3+ 13. bxc3 Qxc3+*) 11. ... Nxe4 12. Nxe4 (if *12. Qe3 Bxd4 13. Qxd4 Nxc3 14. Qxc3 Qxc3+ 15. bxc3* there is no chance White will ever win this position) 12. ... Qxd2+ 13. Kxd2 Bxd4 is close to winning for Black.

10. ... b5
I thought Black was slightly better after 10. ... Nxf3 11. gxf3 b5 12. cxb5 a6.

11. cxb5 a6
As soon as he played this move, I knew it was a mistake. He completely underestimated the safety of my king.

12. Bxd4 cxd4 13. Nxd4 axb5 14. Bxb5 Ba6 15. Nc6 Qc7
Another interesting move here is 15. ... Nxe4 when after 16. Nxa5 Nxd2 17. Bc6 Bxc3 18. bxc3 Ne4 19. Bxa8 Rxa8 I thought Black would have some compensation, but I still evaluated this position as better for me.

16. a4
A nice move that is also seen in the Benko Gambit. Black was threatening to take on b5, but this move creates a shield if that does happen.

16. ... Nd7
16. ... Bxb5 17. axb5 is total domination. Black cannot attack my king here at all: My strong knight on c6 prevents the f8-rook from going to b8, or any pieces from going to a5 or a7. The knight on c3 defends the a2- and a4-squares, and the pawn on b5 defends the a6-square. Knowing that taking on b5 is completely losing, Bryan



Tariq Yue



Nitesh Cherukuri

PHOTOS: DAVID LLADA (YUE), ORLANDO EVENT PHOTOGRAPHY (CHERUKURI)



IM Eric Chang Liu



FM Tanitoluwa Adewumi

tries to create complications and reroute his knight.

17. Qe3
Putting my queen on a more active square.

17. ... Ne5 18. Kb1
Moving my king out of the eye of the queen, so my pieces become more mobile.

18. ... Nxc6 19. Bxc6 Bb7
This is a mistake because it allows me get my knight to b5 and create another shield. White's much better after 19. ... Rab8 20. Nb5; instead, Black should play 19. ... Rfb8 20. Nb5 and now either 20. ... Bxb5 21. axb5 Qa5 22. Qb3 or 20. ... Qa5 21. Bxa8 Rxa8 (the engine thinks *21. ... Qxa4 22. Bc6 Bxb5 23. Rd2* is equal, but I evaluated this as winning for me) 22. Qa3.

20. Nb5 Qb8 21. Qb3 Bxc6 22. dxc6
Now I have a strong pawn on c6.

22. ... Qb6 23. Rc1 Qxf2 24. c7 Qxg2 25. Na7
I calculated this to be winning.

25. ... Bxb2
Bryan tries one last trick.

If 25. ... Qxe4+ 26. Qc2 Qxc2+ 27. Rxc2 Rxa7 28. c8=Q Rxc8 29. Rxc8+ Bf8 30. Rhc1 Rxa4 31. Re8 f5 32. Rcc8 and now I win the bishop too. And 25. ... Rxa7 26. c8=Q Rxc8 27. Rxc8+ Bf8 28. Re1 is winning as well.

26. Qc2
But I was ready. If I naively just take the bishop, it's perpetual check after 26. Qxb2 Qxe4+ 27. Qc2 (Black wins after *27. Rc2 Rxa7;* or *27. Ka2 Qxa4+*) 27. ... Qb4+ 28. Qb2 Qe4+ 29. Qc2 Qb4+ 30. Qb2.

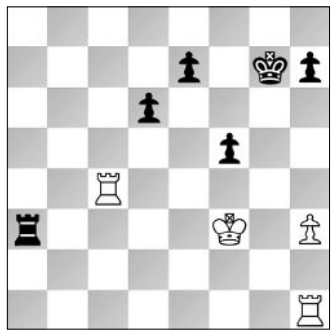
26. ... Qf3 27. Kxb2 Rxa7 28. c8=Q Rxc8 29. Qxc8+ Kg7 30. Qc3+
Now I trade off the queens to get into a tricky but winning endgame.

30. ... Qxc3+ 31. Kxc3 Rxa4 32. Kd3 f5 33. exf5 gxf5 34. Rc4 Ra3+
Now comes a series of checks.

35. Ke2 Ra2+ 36. Kf3 Ra3+

(see diagram top of next column)

I actually did not like these moves for him, because I would have had to go to h4 nonetheless, so he is just giving me what I want. He could have used this time to push his pawns, which I thought would have been more threatening.



POSITION AFTER 36. ... Ra3+

37. Kf2
He was probably hoping I might not think and play the natural 37. Kf4??, which would turn the tables: 37. ... Kf6 and mate is unstoppable now.

37. ... Ra2+ 38. Kg3 Kf6 39. Rc7 Ra3+ 40. Kh4 Rd3 41. Re1 e5 42. Rxh7
I win the h7-pawn, and now I can push my passer as well.

42. ... f4 43. Rh5 Ke6 44. Rg5 Kf6 45. Reg1 Ke6 46. Kg4 Kd5 47. h4 Rd2 48. Rh1 Ke4 49. h5 Rg2+ 50. Kh4 Rc2 51. h6 Rc8 52. h7 Rh8 53. Kg4 f3 54. Rg8 Rxh7 55. Rxh7 f2 56. Rf7 f1=N 57. Rxf1 Kd5, and Black resigned.

RUY LOPEZ, STEINITZ DEFENSE DEFERRED (C79)

Ethan Liu (2214)
IM Eric Chang Liu (2436)
SuperNationals VIII K-12 Championship (4), 05.10.2025
Annotations by Eric Chang Liu

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. 0-0 d6
I decided to play this line because it can be quite tricky for White if they don't know how to play against it.

6. Re1 Bd7 7. c3 g6 8. d4 Bg7 9. Nbd2 exd4 10. cxd4 0-0



PHOTOS: ORLANDO EVENT PHOTOGRAPHY (LIU), DAVID LLADA (ADEWUMI)

This is actually quite simple to play for Black. The plan is ... b7-b5, ... Bd7-g4, and ... Nf6-h5, all targeting the d4-pawn.

11. Nf1
A standard move in Ruy Lopez and Italian positions — White wants to put his knight on g3. But here, that would accomplish almost nothing, since the g6-pawn controls f5 and h5.

11. ... b5 12. Bb3
The automatic move is 12. Bc2?!, but Black is already slightly better here by following the plan: Attack the d-pawn! After 12. ... Bg4 13. Be3 comes 13. ... Nh5! threatening to take on f3, forcing White to double his pawns. If 14. Ng3 Qf6 with ... Bg4xf3 next and a great position for Black.

12. ... Bg4
White's center seems to be only a burden.

13. Be3 Na5!
Be careful! The reason 12. Bb3 was better than 12. Bc2 is 13. ... Nh5?? 14. Bd5, winning for White.

14. Bc2?!
An inaccuracy, which shows how tricky White's position is if they don't know the theory. The best move is 14. h3, but Black has already equalized anyway: 14. ... Bxf3 15. Qxf3 Nxb3 16. axb3 Qe7 and Black has a simple position.

14. ... Nd7
Now both ... Na5-c4 and ... c7-c5 are ideas for Black.

15. N1d2
I was happy to face this move, since now I didn't need to decide between the two options.

15. ... c5 16. dxc5 dxc5
Black is already better here. My pieces are much more active, and it's hard for White to untangle.

17. Rb1 Qc7
I've got ... Na5-c6-d4 coming up, and my rooks are headed to e8 and d8. Black's position is really easy to play.

18. Qe2 Nc6
Also threatening to go to b4, which White seems to have missed.

19. h3 Nb4 20. hxg4?
My idea was 20. Bb3? Bxf3 21. Nxf3 c4, when Black is simply winning. The best move is 20. Bd1, but White's position is horrible anyway: 20. ... Bxf3 21. Nxf3 Nxa2 wins a pawn.

20. ... Nxc2 21. Rec1 Nxe3 22. Qxe3 c4



During the game I knew I was better here, but the engine says Black is winning already. The rest was quite simple.

23. Rc2 Rfe8
23. ... Nc5?? 24. Nxc4! actually blows the advantage for Black.

24. g5 Rad8 25. Nh2
I missed this idea, but fortunately, it isn't quite critical.

25. ... Ne5 26. Kh1 Nc6 27. a3 Rd3 28. Qe2 Qf4 29. Nhf3 Nd4 30. Nxd4 Bxd4 31. b3 Bxf2 32. Nf3 Rxb3!
The tactics work out for Black.

33. Rxb3 cxb3 34. Rc3 Bg3 35. Rxb3 Rxe4 36. Qd1 Re1+ 37. Nxe1, and White resigned.
I was about to play 37. ... Qf1 mate, but he resigned instead.

ENGLISH OPENING (A28)

Amudan Mangudi (2140)
FM Tanitoluwa Adewumi (2460)
SuperNationals VIII K-12 Championship (2), 05.09.2025
Annotations by Tanitoluwa Adewumi

1. c4 e5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. e3 d5 5. cxd5 Nxd5 6. Bb5 Nxc3 7. bxc3 Bd7 8. d4 Bd6 9. 0-0 0-0 10. Bb2?!
I was surprised by this; now I have some initiative.

10. ... e4 11. Nd2
If 11. Bxc6 Bxc6 12. Nd2 Qh4 13. g3 Qh3, I have better-placed pieces and the bishop pair.

11. ... Qg5! 12. Bxc6 Bxc6 13. c4 Qh6 14. h3 Rae8 15. d5 Bd7



My pieces are placed well and ready to attack!

16. Re1 Bxh3! 17. gxh3 Qxh3 18. Nf1 f5
With ... f5-f4 incoming! White is defenseless.

19. c5 f4 20. exf4 Bxf4 21. Re3
Black wins after 21. Qb3 Qg4+ 22. Ng3 (it's the same thing after *22. Kh1 e3* — White's kingside is in shambles) 22. ... e3.

21. ... Bxe3 22. Nxe3



22. ... Rxf2!! 23. Kxf2 Rf8+ 24. Ke1 Qxe3+ 25. Qe2 Qg3+ 26. Kd1 Rf2 27. Qxe4 Qg1+ 28. Qe1 Qg4+ 29. Kc1 Qf4+ 30. Kd1 Qa4+ 31. Kc1 Qc2 mate.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT ACCEPTED (D23)

FM Isaac Wang (2457)
Max Mottola (2251)
SuperNationals VIII K-12 Championship (6), 05.11.2025
Annotations by Isaac Wang

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Nf3 dxc4
I did not expect Mottola to play this; he didn't have any published games with it. I was debating whether to play 5. e4 or 5. Qa4+, but I had had some trouble in the past with 5. e4.

5. Qa4+ Nc6 6. Qxc4 Nb4 7. Qb3 c5 8. dxc5 Bxc5
I completely forgot the moves in this line and my opponent was moving very quickly, so I just tried playing normal developing


FM Isaac Wang


GM Brewington Hardaway

chess. My plan was to get an imbalanced position where he would also be out of prep.

9. Bg5 0-0 10. e3 Nd3+ 11. Bxd3 Qxd3 12. Bxf6 gxf6



The position here is equal according to the engine, but there are many imbalances, which I was hoping for — for example, the doubled f-pawns could cause his king to be vulnerable in the long term. The minor-piece imbalance makes the position very interesting and could also make evaluating moves more difficult for the both of us. My opponent also started to think more around this part of the game, which was exactly what I wanted.

13. Rd1 Qa6 14. a3 b6 15. Ng1 Bb7 16. Nge2 Bc6 17. 0-0 Qb7 18. Qc4 Kh8

We both spent quite a lot of time on the past couple of moves and maneuvered our pieces to better squares. It looks like he is going to attack my king with ideas like ... Rf8-g8, accentuating the queen-bishop battery on the diagonal. However, I was able to generate my own attack. Around here is where I believe the momentum totally shifted.

19. Qf4 Be7 20. f3 b5 21. Ng3?!

The best line was 21. Ne4 Bxe4 22. fxe4 b4 23. Ng3 bxa3 24. bxa3 Rg8 25. e5 f5 26. e4 Bg5 27. Qf3 f4 28. Ne2 Qb2 29. Kh1 Rab8 30. Nxf4! Bxf4 31. Rf2 Qxe5 32. Qxf4 Qxf4 33. Rxf4, but I was trying to play for a win so keeping pieces on the board was crucial.

21. ... b4?!

The position is difficult for both of us to play. However, I still thought it was easier for me due to the attacking chances and Black's weak f-pawn, which my knights can easily target. My opponent on every move will have a lot to calculate and many threats to watch out for. This is why 21. ... Qb8 is a strong move. If White chooses to avoid a queen exchange, Black can bring the queen to the strong square on e5. For example, 22. Qh4 Qe5 23. Kf2 Rab8 24. Rd4 Qg5 25. Qh5 Qxh5 26. Nxh5 f5 and Black is slightly better.

22. Nce4 Qb8?

It's too late for this now because my knights are active. Black could still have equalized with 22. ... Bxe4 23. Nxe4 bxa3 24. bxa3 Kg7.

23. Qh6?

This lets Black trade off a pair of minor pieces. Black is basically in *zugzwang* after 23. Nd6!. White has the threat of Ng3-h5 and all the tactics are working out. Black's best line is 23. ... Rg8 (*23. ... e5 24. Qh6* wins easily) 24. Nxf7+ Kg7 25. Nd6 Kh8 26. axb4, but it's just completely lost. There are too many weaknesses and White is up two clean pawns.

23. ... Bxe4 24. Nxe4



24. ... Qe5?

There was still a very tricky engine defense with 24. ... Rg8! 25. Rd7 (Black equalizes after *25. Nxf6 Rg7 26. axb4 Qe5 27. Ne4 Qxb2 28. g3 Qxb4*) 25. ... Rg6 26. Qh4 Qe8 27. Rfd1 Rc8 28. axb4 Rc1! 29. Rxc1 Qxd7 30. Qe1 Rg8, but even here White is playing for two results. It just shows how difficult Black's position is to play.

25. Rd7 Bd8??

My opponent was probably feeling a lot of pressure, as his position went from very pleasant and totally equal to losing so fast. Best here is 25. ... f5, but White's winning after 26. Rxe7 fxe4 27. fxe4 Qg7 28. Qh5! bxa3 29. bxa3 Qc3 30. Qf3. I think my opponent originally planned to play 25. ... Rfe8 but must have realized that I had 26. Rxe7! Rxe7 27. Nxf6 Qf5 28. Nxh7! Qg6 29. Qh4! threatening 30. Nf8+ and 30. Qxe7.

26. Qxf8 mate.

RETI OPENING (A06)

Anshul Shetty (2196)
GM Brewington Hardaway (2595)
SuperNationals VIII K-12 Championship (3), 05.10.2025
Annotations by Brewington Hardaway

1. Nf3 d5 2. b3 c5 3. e3 f6

PHOTOS: JOHN HARTMANN

This was likely a surprise for my opponent; it's not a very common move.

4. d4 cxd4 5. exd4 Nc6 6. Bb2 Bg4 7. Be2 e6 8. 0-0 Bd6 9. c4 Nge7 10. h3 Bh5 11. Nfd2?!
During the game I already felt I was better here; White is trying to put pressure on the queenside, but it is too slow.

11. ... Bf7
This is Black's ideal setup, and the real point of playing ... f7-f6 early on. Now we will try to get the ... e6-e5 push in.

12. a3 0-0 13. c5 Bc7 14. b4 a6 15. Nb3 e5 16. dxe5 fxe5
Black has the better pieces and two pawns controlling the center.

17. Nc3 Ng6 18. b5 axb5 19. Nxb5 Bb8 20. Bc1 Qf6 21. Bh5 d4?

(see diagram top of next column)

I was moving too quickly and forgot about White's next move, taking advantage of the fact that I let go control of the e4-square.

22. Nd2!
Now White is back in the game.



POSITION AFTER 21. ... d4

22. ... Qe7 23. Qc2??
A natural move stopping ... e5-e4 — or does it? After 23. Ne4 Bd5 24. Bg5 Qe6 25. Bg4 Qf7 26. Nbd6 Bxd6 27. Nxd6 Qc7 28. Rb1 Black is a bit better thanks to White's weak pawns on c5 and a3 and my strong bishop and central pawns, but thanks to White's knight on d6 it's still a three-result game.

23. ... e4!
Opening lines for my b8-bishop is crucial, and White cannot take my pawn!

24. Nd6
After 24. Nxe4 d3! 25. Qxd3 Qe5 White cannot stop all three threats, and there's another fork after 24. Qxe4 Qxc5 25. Bxg6 Bxg6 26. Qe6+ Bf7 27. Qe2 d3 28. Qxd3 Qe5.

24. ... Qe5 25. Bg4 Bxd6 26. cxd6 d3 27. Qb2 Nd4 28. Rb1 Bd5 29. Re1 Nf4 30. Nf1



30. ... Nxg2!!
The most efficient finish.

31. Be3
If 31. Kxg2 e3+ 32. f3 Rxf3 and mate is not far away.

31. ... Nf3+ 32. Bxf3 Nxe1, White resigned.
Besides my one mistake with 21. ... d4, this was a fairly smooth game out of the opening with some flashy tactics in the middlegame. ♦



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Fischer's Foes

Two more rivals of Bobby Fischer have passed in 2025.

BY **GM JOEL BENJAMIN**

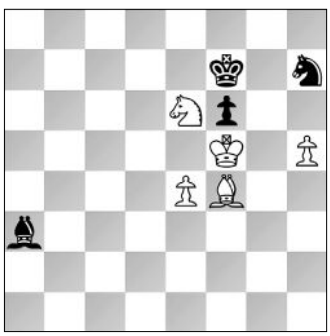
THIS YEAR BEGAN WITH THE death of the iconic Fischer foe Boris Spassky. We have since seen another two lesser, but still legendary, lights pass away — Czech grandmaster Vlastimil Hort and Icelandic GM Fridrik Olafsson. This month we will take a taste of their endgame prowess.

Hort, who left us in May, was a big, gregarious man with a great passion for chess. Born a year after the American champion, Hort teamed with Fischer at the USSR versus Rest of the World match in 1970 and then played Bobby in the Palma de Mallorca Interzonal the same year. I was fortunate to know Hort during his long career, battling him to a draw in the 1992 Olympiad after he defected to West Germany in 1985.

Hort could play long games, as we see in our first example.

FEW PAWNS, NO PROBLEM

GM Vlastimil Hort
Jan Ambroz
Trencianske (3), Teplice, 11.19.1979



BLACK TO MOVE

91. ... Bb4?

Hort has been probing in this minor piece ending for 56 moves! Black finally cracks; 91. ... Nf8! was good for a draw.

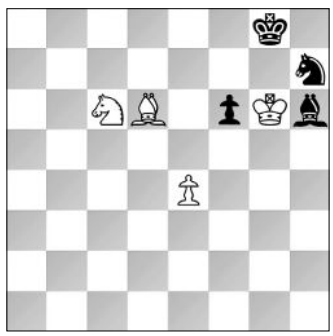
92. Nd8+

Now White's king penetrates to g6, the beginning of the end.

92. ... Kg7 93. h6+ Kg8 94. Kg6 Bc3

If 94. ... Nf8+ 95. Kxf6 and White should be able to win prosaically with two extra pawns.

95. Bd6 Bd2 96. Nc6 Bxh6



The noose tightens after 96. ... Bg5 97. Ne7+ Kh8 98. Kf7 or 96. ... Ng5 97. Ne7+ Kh8 (*97. ... Kf8 98. Nd5+* and *99. Nxf6+*) 98. e5 Nh7 99. exf6 Nf8+ 100. Kf7 Bxh6 101. Ng6+ Nxg6 102. Kxg6 Bd2 103. f7 Bh6 104. Be5+ etc. So Black takes his shot.

97. Ne7+!

97. Kxh6? Ng5 eliminates White's final pawn and draws.

97. ... Kh8

If 97. ... Kf8 98. Nd5+ Ke8 99. Kxh6 wins.

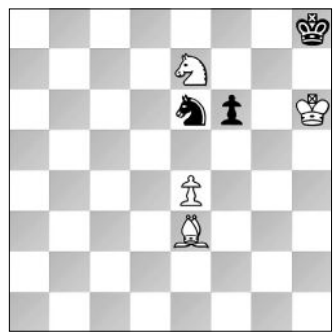
98. Kxh6 Ng5

Black can win the last pawn here, too, but it won't save him.

99. Bc5 Ne6

Or 99. ... Nxe4 100. Bd4! and mate next.

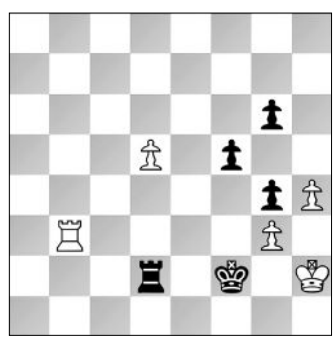
100. Be3, Black resigned.



It's an easy win after 100. ... Nd4 101. Kg6.

TRICKIER THAN IT LOOKS

Giancarlo Franzoni (2255)
GM Vlastimil Hort (2575)
Biel, 07.1981



BLACK TO MOVE

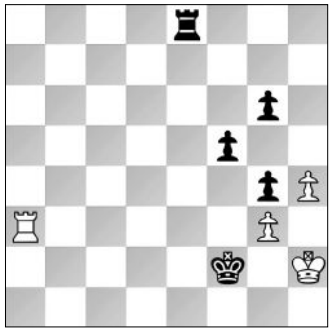
Black's position looks promising, but it will take some accuracy to bring in the point.

56. ... Kf1+!

Not 56. ... Rxd5? 57. Rb4! with a fortress.

57. Kh1 Rxd5 58. Rb1+ Kf2 59. Kh2 Re5 60. Rb3 Re3 61. Rb4 Re4!
Again Black has to keep the rook from getting to f4.

62. Rb3 Re8! 63. Ra3

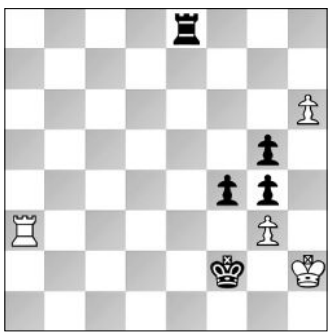


White waits, as 63. Rb2+ Kf3 64. Rb3+ Re3 and 65. ... Re2+ decides.

63. ... g5! 64. h5
After 64. Ra2+ Re2 65. Rxe2+ Kxe2 66. hxg5 Kf2 67. g6 f4 only Black will get a queen.

64. ... f4
This wins but requires problem-like precision; 64. ... Re2! 65. h6 Kf1+ 66. Kh1 Re6 was simpler.

65. h6



65. ... Ra8!!
Only this continuation works! Black must shorten the distance between the white rook and the black king. It's only a draw after 65. ... Re6? 66. Ra2+ Kf3 67. Ra3+ Ke4 (*67. ... Ke2 68. Ra2+ Kd3 69. Ra3+ Kc2 70. h7 Rh6+ 71. Kg1 Rxh7 72. Ra4 Rf7 73. Ra5* is also equal) 68. Ra4+ Kf5 69. Ra5+ Kg6 70. h7.

66. Rb3
If 66. Rxa8 fxg3+ 67. Kh1 g2+ 68. Kh2 g1=Q mate.

66. ... Ra6 67. Rb2+ Ke3 68. Rb3+ Ke2 69. Rb2+ Kd3 70. Rb5
70. Rb3+ Kc4 illustrates the virtues of Black's 65th move.

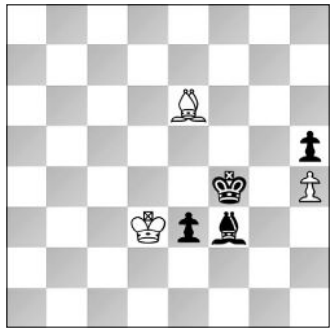
The best try is 70. Rb4 Rxh6+ 71. Kg1 f3 72. Rb3+ Kc4 73. Ra3 Rh3 74. Ra4+ Kd3 75. Rxg4 Ke3 76. Rxg5 f2+ 77. Kg2 Rh2+ 78. Kxh2 f1=Q when White does not have a fortress but Black has to play accurately to prevent one.

70. ... Rxh6+ 71. Kg1 Ke3
71. ... Rh3 is a bit tighter, as White can play 72. Rb3+ along the lines of the previous note.

72. Rxg5 Kf3!
Not 72. ... f3? 73. Re5+ drawing.

73. gxf4 Ra6, White resigned.
Black will mate or queen the g-pawn.

RIGHT ROOK PAWN
Meindert Van der Linde (2250)
GM Vlastimil Hort (2545)
Utrecht Open (4), 1986



BLACK TO MOVE

Black could win prosaically with 64. ... Bc6 65. Bc4 (*65. Ke2 Bb5+ 66. Ke1 Kg3* or *65. Bf7 Bb5+ Kc3 Kg4*) 65. ... Kf3 66. Bf7 Kf2 67. Bxh5 Bf3 and queens, but Hort goes a different route.

64. ... Bg4!?
Now White should try 65. Bxg4 hxg4 66. h5 g3 (*66. ... Kf3* also wins) 67. h6 g2 68. h7 g1=Q 69. h8=Q with an unquestionably winning queen ending for Black, though it is a bit more difficult than Stockfish 17's score of +80!

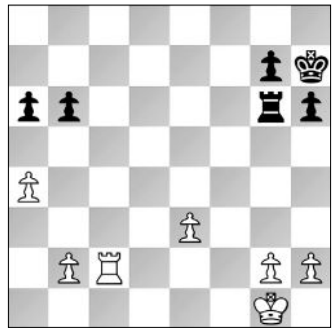
65. Bd5 e2 66. Kd2 Kg3 67. Ke1 Kxh4 68. Kf2 Kh3 69. Bg2+ Kh2 70. Bd5 h4 71. Bc6 h3 72. Bd5
It looks like Black is boxed in, but he has an elegant solution.

72. ... e1=Q+! 73. Kxe1 Kg1 74. Bc6 h2 75. Bd5 Bh3 76. Bh1 Bg2, White resigned.

Olafsson, who died in April, was a decade older than Hort and Fischer. He hit it big on the international stage at the same time as the teenaged Bobby.

Olafsson, like Fischer, did not do well in the 1959 Candidates Tournament, but he did defeat future champion Tigran Petrosian twice — both in endgames..

CUTS LIKE A KNIFE
GM Fridrik Olafsson
GM Tigran Petrosian
Candidates Tournament Bled/Zagreb/ Belgrade (8), 09.18.1959



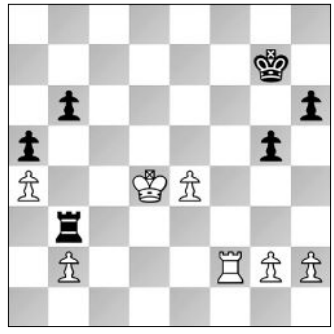
BLACK TO MOVE

The queens have just come off the board and now Black has only one chance to get it right.

39. ... Rd6?
After 39. ... Rg4! 40. b3 Rb4 41. Rc3 a5 42. Kf2 Kg6 43. Ke2 Kf5 44. Kd3 h5 45. Kc2 Rg4 46. g3 h4 Black almost certainly has enough counterplay to draw.

40. Kf2 Rd3
It's similar after 40. ... Rd1 41. Ke2 Ra1 42. Kd3 Rxa4 43. e4 Kg8 44. Rf2.

41. Kf3 Rb3 42. Ke4 a5 43. Kd4 g5 44. e4 Kg7 45. Rf2!

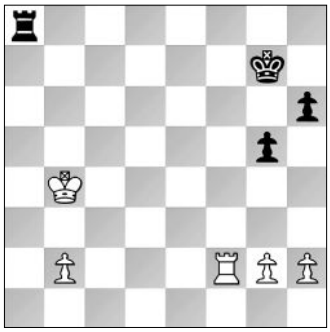


With the Black king cut off, the e-pawn flies up the board.

45. … Rb4+ 46. Kd5 Rxa4 47. e5 Ra1 48. e6 b5 49. e7 Rd1+ 50. Kc6 Re1 51. Kxb5
Olafsson could also opt for the "Lucena method" with 51. Kd7 Rd1+ 52. Ke8 a4 53. Rf7+ Kg8 54. Rf5 b4 55. Ra5, etc.

51. … Re5+ 52. Ka4 Rxe7 53. Kxa5 Ra7+ 54. Kb4
54. Kb6 Ra2 would be annoying.

54. … Ra8
The rook gets extra checking distance. 54. … Rb7+ 55. Kc5 Rc7+ 56. Kb6 is simple.



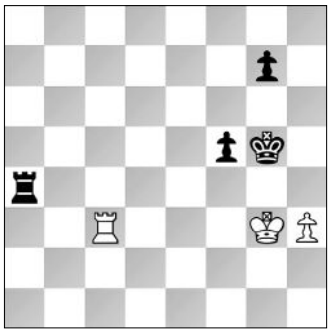
55. b3!
A nice little move enabling the rook to go behind the passed pawn.

55. … h5 56. Kc5 Rc8+ 57. Kd6 Rd8+ 58. Kc6 Rc8+ 59. Kd7 Rc1 60. Rb2 Rh1 61. b4 Rxh2 62. b5 Rh1 63. b6 Rd1+ 64. Ke6 Rd8 65. b7 Rb8 66. Kf5!, Black resigned.
White will grab both kingside pawns and the game along with them.

The second win was something of a swindle, as Petrosian erred in a theoretically drawn endgame.

IT AIN'T OVER 'TIL IT'S OVER

GM Tigran Petrosian
GM Fridrik Olafsson
Candidates Tournament Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade (15), 10.03.1959



WHITE TO MOVE

64. Rc8
This, one of several drawing moves, was queried in the tournament bulletin, while the recommendation 64. Rb3? f4+ 65. Kg2 Kh4 actually loses, as the h-pawn will ultimately drop.

64. … Ra3+ 65. Kg2 Kf4 66. Rc4+ Ke3 67. Kg3
67. h4 looks a bit easier; e.g., 67. … f4 68. Rc7 Ke2 69. Rc2+.

67. … g5



68. h4??
Petrosian's legendary patience fails him, perhaps (as suggested by the editors of *The Chess Saga of Fridrik Olafsson*) due to exhaustion.

Most rook moves suffice to draw, including 68. Rb4 Rd3 (*68. … Ke2+ 69. Kg2*) 69. Ra4 Ke2+ 70. Kg2 f4 71. Ra2+ Rd2 (or *71. … Ke3 72. Rb2* and Black cannot make progress) 72. Rxd2+ (*72. Ra3* also works) 72. … Kxd2 73. Kf3 Ke1 74. h4 gxh4 75. Kxf4 and the h-pawn goes, too.

68. … Kd3!
Petrosian was hoping for 68. … f4+ 69. Kg4 f3 (or *69. … gxh4 70. Rxf4*) 70. hxg5 f2 71. Rc1! and the g-pawn evens the score. Now Olafsson wins instructively.

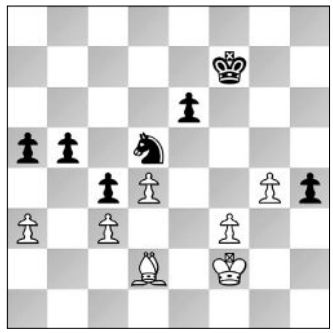
69. Rb4 Kc3! 70. Rb8 Kd4+ 71. Kg2 g4 72. h5 Rh3 73. Rh8 Ke5! 74. h6 Kf6
Or 74. … Kf4 75. h7 Rh6 76. Kg1 g3 77. Kg2 Rh4 78. Kg1 Rh2 with a lethal *zugzwang*.

75. Rf8+ Kg6 76. Rg8+ Kxh6, White resigned.
If 77. Rh8+ Kg5 78. Rxh3 gxh3+ 79. Kxh3 Kf4 and the pawn will get through.

Olafsson, who served as FIDE president from 1978 to 1982, was mostly retired from chess when I arrived on the scene. I remember him as a mentor for the incredible crop of Icelandic grandmasters in my generation.

NIMBLE KNIGHT

Roberto Luis Debarnot (2420)
GM Fridrik Olafsson (2550)
Lanzarote (1), 05.07.1974

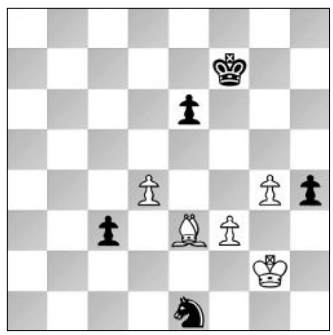


BLACK TO MOVE

35. … b4
The only winning try.

36. cxb4 axb4 37. axb4 c3 38. Bc1?
White has to give up the bishop right away: 38. Bxc3 Nxc3 39. Kg2 Ne2 (if *39. … Nd5 40. Kh3 Nxb4 41. f4* and Black runs out of pawns) 40. Kh3! (*40. b5? Nf4+ 41. Kf2 Ke7 42. Ke3 h3* and wins) 40. … Nxd4 41. f4! Ne2 42. f5 e5 43. b5 Nf4+ 44. Kxh4 Nd5 45. g5 e4 46. Kg3 and Black cannot make progress.

38. … Nxb4 39. Kg2 Nd3 40. Be3 Ne1+!



White only reckoned with 40. … c2 41. f4 with a draw as in the previous note.

41. Kf2 Nc2 42. Bg5 h3 43. Kg3 Nxd4 44. Kxh3 Nxf3 45. Be3 c2 46. Kg3 Ne5
Now it is safe to go get the bishop.

47. Kf4 Nd3+ 48. Ke4 c1=Q 49. Bxc1 Nxc1 50. g5 Ke7 51. Kd4 Ne2+ 52. Ke5, and White resigned.
Moving the knight to f5 is the simplest win.

As a child of the Fischer boom, it behooves me to ensure that my childhood heroes are remembered.

MAKE YOUR MOVE

BY **FM CARSTEN HANSEN**

THIS MONTH'S PUZZLES ARE TAKEN FROM GAMES PLAYED at the Cairns Cup, held in St. Louis in June. Some of the puzzles may seem a little trickier than usual; that's because they are! Take your time and don't get discouraged if you fail to solve them right away.

The puzzles start from 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.

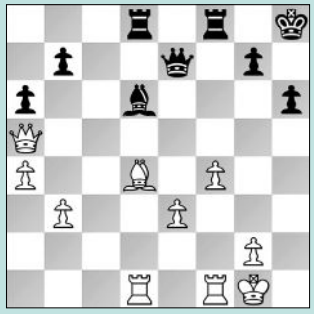
Try first to solve the puzzle before reading the text at the bottom of the page. If unsuccessful, play through the solution, but return to the puzzle in one or two weeks to see if you can now solve it. That way you gradually expand your tactical vision, and it will be more likely that you will spot tactics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

TACTIC 1.



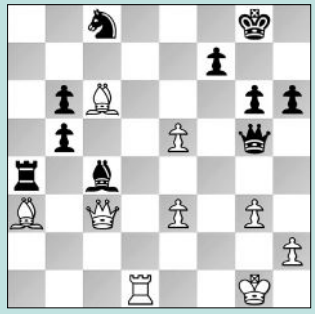
WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 2.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 3.



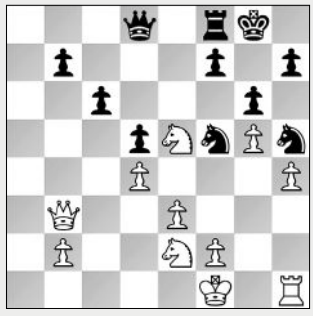
WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 4.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 5.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 6.



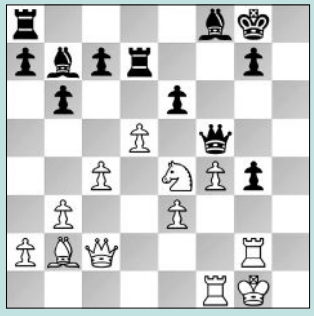
WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 7.



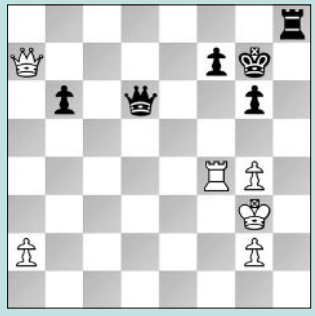
BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 8.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 9.



BLACK TO MOVE

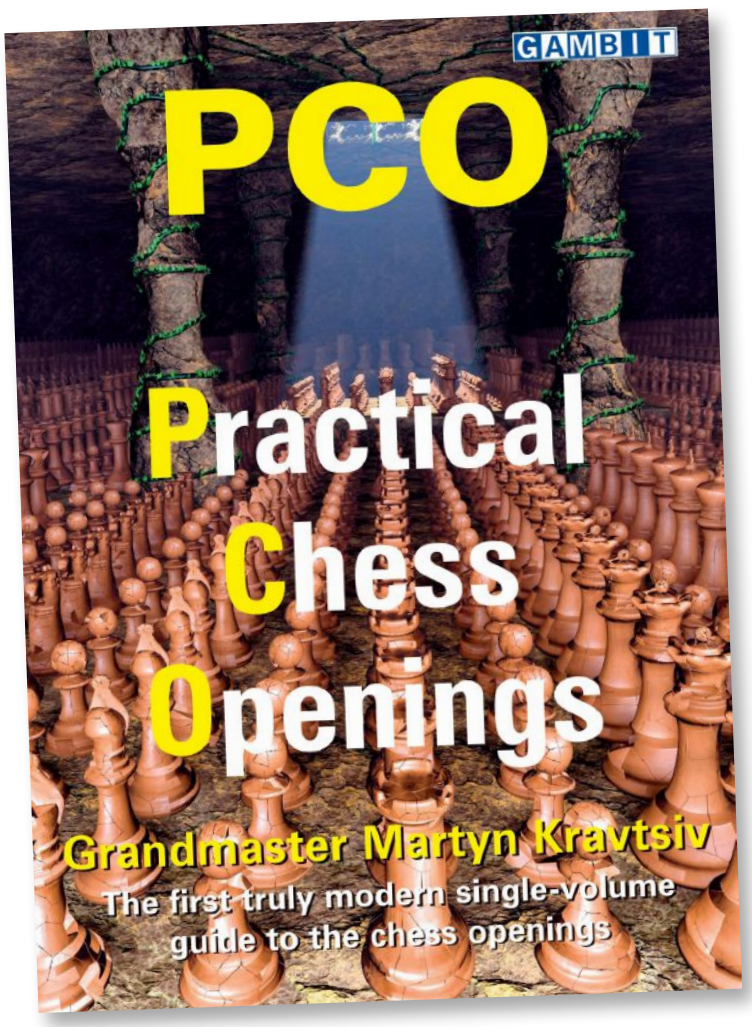
Position 1: HOT DIAGONAL
Position 2: THE ONE-TWO PUNCH
Position 3: LINE CLEARANCE
Position 4: POWER THROUGH
Position 5: OPEN THE FAUCET
Position 6: INVITATION TO DANCE
Position 7: THE WEAKEST SPOT
Position 8: POWER UP TO BREAK THROUGH
Position 9: UNEXPECTED ATTACKER

All in One

GM Martyn Kravtsiv reinvigorates an old tradition in a modern way.

BY **IM JOHN WATSON**

GM MARTYN KRAVTsiv's *Practical Chess Openings* is subtitled "The first truly modern single-volume guide to the chess openings." Whatever "truly modern" means, it's the first such attempt in many years, and a very welcome project.



My generation grew up with *Modern Chess Openings* (MCO), the first edition of which came out in 1911, the last (15th) edition nearly 100 years later in 2008. We also appreciated flawed but dedicated works such as Horowitz's *Chess Openings: Theory and Practice*. As time went on, other prominent one-volume opening encyclopedias included *Batsford Chess Openings* (BCO) and Gambit's *Nunn's Chess Openings* (NCO). But eventually this format was superseded — first by the multi-volume *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings* (ECO), then by massive databases which could be rapidly searched, organized, and updated. For verbal guidance by masters, players began to turn to specialized books on individual openings or electronic products with similarly specialized content.

Kravtsiv's *PCO* is not encyclopedic in the sense the works cited above tried to be. The entire breadth of opening theory is indeed covered, but Kravtsiv selects variations within each opening to focus on, making practical decisions based on his view of what's most relevant for the contemporary player. As he says in the introduction, "Of course, it is impossible to examine each of the openings in great detail in a single book, so the emphasis is on the most popular openings and variations *in current practice*." Given the impossibility of completeness, this is the perfect compromise, especially when coupled with a significant amount of verbal explanation.

On the other hand, Kravtsiv sometimes uses criteria other than popularity or current usefulness to select variations. For example, he gives us seven pages of analysis on the King's Gambit, which is played in about 0.15% of all games in a database of games from the past year, and only eight pages on the King's Indian, which was played more than 20 times as often, and by much higher-rated players on average. Among popular modern openings, Kravtsiv's treatment of the Catalan covers 25 pages (and is superb), while he devotes about 15 pages each to the French and Caro-Kann, both played four to five times as often as the Catalan. There's no need for the coverage to be strictly "balanced," of course, and on the positive side, it's fun to learn about areas in which the author has special interest and insight.

Kravtsiv is very good about explaining why he doesn't think an opening is worth playing. Sometimes his objection is more practical than theoretical — exactly the sort of advice an engine won't give you. He takes into account how much extra work an opening requires, for example, and whether the reward is worth it. If a variation results in a draw at best, or can easily go wrong if the opponent plays a novelty, he is careful to note that. This type of advice is central to the book's appeal.

Who will benefit from *Practical Chess Openings*? That's not immediately obvious. So many young players today are used to studying and practicing their openings on electronic devices, and many will be addicted to the ease of working with databases and engines. I don't think that's going to change, nor should it, but what's often missing is an outside voice who can put into words the factors players need to take into consideration when preparing and playing an opening.

It's doubtless true that some players won't relate to the slower pace of playing over moves from a book, but with the numbers of chessplayers expanding rapidly, I'm sure there are students of all types out there,

including ones who absorb lessons better by playing moves out on a board and associating verbal ideas with the moves they are making. Indeed, I've heard numerous teachers suggest that players should incorporate study at a physical board with their lessons. In any case, if that doesn't appeal, you can purchase *PCO* as an e-book or an app-book (see below).

For himself, Kravtsiv says: "In my opinion, the book will be useful for players ranging from those new to competitive chess all the way up to those aspiring to international titles, especially to gain some familiarity with new openings, and to help in choosing variations to study in more depth." He describes how for each opening variation, there is a conclusion which "contains a summary and practical recommendations: I explain how promising the variation is (objectively) and if it is best suited to those seeking positional combat or tactical warfare, and whether it is more appropriate for blitz or rapid chess than games with a longer time limit."

I spent a lot of time browsing through this book and was often surprised to learn something brand new in variations that I hadn't looked at for some time. For example, some years ago I used to know a fair amount of Alekhine Defense theory, but I ran into the following recent idea, which arguably overturns decades of theory; in fact, *PCO*'s very short section contains promising ideas for both colors:

1. e4 Nf6 2. e5 Nd5 3. d4 d6 4. c4
Kravtsiv also gives a limited but competent overview of 4. Nf3 and the Four Pawns Attack, 4. c4 Nb6 5. f4.

4. ... Nb6 5. exd6 cxd6 6. Nc3 g6 7. Be3
Here 7. h3 is Kravtsiv's main line, when he gives one short piece of analysis, but a highly relevant one: 7. ... Bg7 8. Nf3 0-0 9. Be2 Nc6 10. 0-0 Bf5 and now the modern solution (of which I was also unaware!) ...



POSITION AFTER 10. ... Bf5

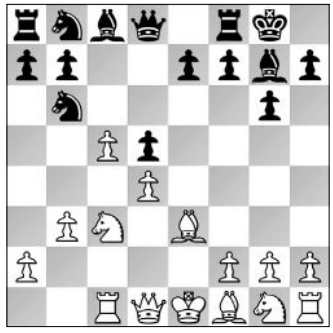
11. d5! Na5 12. Nd4 Naxc4 13. a4!, leaving it up to the reader to confirm that this is indeed a favorable position.

This is a great example of how he saves space (and the reader's time) by bypassing masses of complex theoretical variations. At the same time, anyone playing Black will benefit from the following important idea:

7. ... Bg7 8. Rc1 0-0 9. b3
This is the Voronezh Variation, which has given Black problems for 30 years. During that time it has been the most frequently recommended line for White against the Alekhine in books and digital products.

9. ... d5!
Kravtsiv mentions this recent and important idea for Black. The moves 9. ... e5, 9. ... Bf5, and 9. ... Nc6 are still being played much more often, but all of them have drawbacks.

10. c5



What now?

10. ... Nc6!!
The point. But did he forget that his knight was attacked?

11. cxb6
11. Nf3 Bg4 12. cxb6 e5 transposes to 12 Nf3.

11. ... e5



A full piece down, Black has a shocking amount of counterplay. *PCO* stops here; here's a little analysis to whet your appetite:

12. Nge2
12. Nb5 exd4 13. Nxd4 transposes, and 12. Nf3 Bg4 threatens to win the piece back; for example, 13. Ne2 Bxf3 14. gxf3 exd4 15. Nxd4?! (*15. Bf4 Qf6! 16. Bg2 Rae8 17. Bg3 d3! 18. Qxd3 Nd4*) 15. ... Nxd4 16. Bxd4 Qe7+! 17. Be2 Qb4+ and Black regains the material with a small advantage.

Here 12. dxe5 d4 13. Nb5 dxe3 14. Qxd8 Rxd8 15. Nc7 Be6! (*15. ... Rb8? 16. Rxc6!*) 16. Rxc6 bxc6 17. Nxa8 Rxa8 18. b7 Rb8 19. Ba6 exf2+ 20. Kxf2 Bxe5 is effectively equal due to the strength of the bishop pair.

12. ... exd4 13. Nxd4 Bxd4 14. Bxd4 Qh4 15. Bc5
If 15. Ne2 axb6 16. Rc2 Bg4, while 15. Nb5 Re8+ 16. Be2 Bg4! 17. g3 Qh3 leads to equality after 18. Rc2 Qg2 19. Rf1 Rxe2+ 20. Rxe2 Bxe2 21. Qxe2 a6.

15. ... Re8+ 16. Be2 axb6 17. Bxb6
The engine prefers 17. g3, although after lengthy analysis I've found that Black always maintains awkward pressure and doesn't stand worse.

17. ... d4 18. 0-0 dxc3
In this position, a very recent game went:

19. a4?
19. Rxc3 Qb4 20. Re3 Re6! is equal.

19. ... Qb4 20. Be3 Bf5
Black's activity and passed c-pawn gave him a clear advantage in Leniart – Janeczko, Warsaw 2025.

Practical Chess Openings offers the traditional advantages of the book format: depth of coverage combined with ample instructive explanations. You can browse through it by picking out topics of interest while sitting at ease in a chair, or use it as a reference while studying at your computer. Alternatively, *PCO* is available inexpensively as either a Kindle e-book or an app-book (in the latter case, the reader uses Gambit Chess Studio to play through the moves, plug in an analytical engine, jump between chapters, etc.).

Thanks to Gambit Publications for reviving this traditional format and infusing it with new ideas. Graham Burgess has only improved as an editor over the years, and his translation reads seamlessly. I enjoyed both the style and content of *Practical Chess Openings*, and will be curious to see how the chess world responds. ♦

Kravtsiv, Martyn. Practical Chess Openings. *Gambit Publications 2025. 544 pp. ISBN 978-1805041047, $34.*

TOURNAMENT LIFE ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

new.uschess.org/national-events-calendar

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

Nationals

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 National G/30 and G/60 Championship

SEPTEMBER 27-28, 2025 — IA **TLA# 49959**

Site: Holiday Inn & Suites@ Ameristar **Address:** 2202 River Road, Council Bluffs, IA 51501 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Seetharaman Renganathan • *chessrockerz@gmail.com* • *www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100089563144798*

Grand Prix

The Grand Prix point totals reflect all rated event information as of August 19, 2025, for the 2025 Grand Prix. These standings are updated regularly, but should be considered unofficial. Visit www.uschess.org/datapage/GP-standings.php for up-to-date information.

2025 US CHESS GRAND PRIX STANDINGS

	Name	State/Ctry	Pts
1.	GM JIANCHAO ZHOU	MA	545.608
2.	THOMAS FANG	NC	112.5
3.	EMMANUEL CARTER	NC	101.133
4.	GM AWONDER LIANG	WI	97.389
5.	GM FIDEL CORRALES JIMENEZ	CA	96.75
6.	GM SEMEN KHANIN	FIDE	88
7.	GM ALEXANDER IVANOV	MA	80.167
8.	FM DANILA POLIANNIKOV	MA	78.333
9.	IM SAM SCHMAKEL	IL	77.833
10.	GM ARMAN MIKAELYAN	ARM	76

2025 Awards

$12,500 in cash prizes
First Prize $5,000

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

The Grand Prix continues in 2025. For information visit new.uschess.org/us-chess-grand-prix-program

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

New England Open Championship

AUG. 30-SEPT. 1, 2025 — MA **TLA# 51280**

Site: Stonehill College, Alumni Hall **Address:** 320 Washington Street, North Easton, MA 02357 **Overall Prize Fund:** $5,000 **GP Pts:** 50 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Ocean State Chess Association • *frank@oceanstatechess.com* • (401) 212-1335 • *oceanstatechess.com/events/*

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Peter P. Lahde Tennessee Open & Blitz Championship

SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2025 — TN **TLA# 49640**

Site: The Center at Fairfield Glade **Address:** 128 Stonehenge Dr, Crossville, TN 38558 **Overall Prize Fund:** $10,000 **GP Pts:** 50 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Cumberland County Chess Club • *cumberlandcountychessclub@gmail.com* • (931) 200-0875

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • REGIONALS

2025 Fairfield County & Norwalk City Championships

SEPTEMBER 6, 2025 — CT **TLA# 51302**

Site: Norwalk Public Library **Address:** 1 Belden Avenue, Auditorium, Norwalk, CT 06850 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,000 **GP Pts:** 15 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Connecticut State Chess Association • *chess.CSCA@gmail.com* • 8605930225 • *www.ChessCT.org*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess National Grandparents Day Grand Prix

SEPTEMBER 7, 2025 — NC **TLA# 50867**

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,000 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • *jon@dragonknightchess.com* • (919) 422-2535 • *www.dragonknightchess.com*

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 PA State G/60 Championship - West

SEPTEMBER 13, 2025 — PA **TLA# 50852**

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

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess National Hug Your Hound Day Grand Prix

SEPTEMBER 14, 2025 — NC **TLA# 50868**

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,000 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • *jon@dragonknightchess.com* • (919) 422-2535 • *www.dragonknightchess.com*

GRAND PRIX

2025 South Dakota Governor's Cup

SEPTEMBER 19-21, 2025 — SD **TLA# 50282**

Site: Ramkota Sioux Falls **Address:** 3200 W Maple Street, Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57107 **Overall Prize Fund:** $12,000 **GP Pts:** 80 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Chess Weekend Inc. • *glenn@chessweekend.com* • *www.chessweekend.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Connecticut Open

SEPTEMBER 20, 2025 — CT **TLA# 51299**

Site: University of Bridgeport **Address:** Cox Student Center, 244 Park Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06604 **Overall Prize Fund:** $5,000 **GP Pts:** 50 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Connecticut State Chess Association • *chess.CSCA@gmail.com* • 8605930225 • *www.ChessCT.org*

GRAND PRIX

2025 Sacramento Senior Championship

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N **TLA# 50688**

Site: Holiday Inn Express and Suites **Address:** 2224 Auburn Boulevard. Sacramento, CA 95821 **Overall Prize Fund:** $3,300b/40 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** John McCumiskey • *sactochess@sbcglobal.net* • 916-524-9479 • *sacramentochessclub.org/index.htm*

GRAND PRIX

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #25

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N **TLA# 50689**

Site: Holiday Inn Express and Suites **Address:** 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821 **Overall Prize Fund:** $4,800 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** John McCumiskey • *sactochess@sbcglobal.net* • 916-524-9479 • *sacramentochessclub.org/index.htm*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess National Women's Friendship Day Grand Prix

SEPTEMBER 21, 2025 — NC **TLA# 51305**

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,000 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • *jon@dragonknightchess.com* • (919) 422-2535 • *www.dragonknightchess.com*

GRAND PRIX

CFCC 2025 Autumn Open & Scholastic

SEPTEMBER 26-28, 2025 — FL **TLA# 50779**

Site: Holiday Inn Orlando Lake Buena Vista **Address:** 13351 State Road 535, Orlando, FL 32821 95821 **Overall Prize Fund:** $8.500 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Central Florida Chess Club (CFCC) • *info@centralflchess.org* • *https://www.centralflchess.org/cfcc-2025-autumn-open-and-scholastic-weekend-tournament*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess World Rivers Day Grand Prix

SEPTEMBER 28, 2025 — NC **TLA# 51306**

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,000 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • *jon@dragonknightchess.com* • (919) 422-2535 • *www.dragonknightchess.com*

HERITAGE EVENT• AMERICAN CLASSIC • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

42nd Annual Reno Western States Open

OCTOBER 3-5, 2025 — NV **TLA# 50876**

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

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL **TLA# 51289**

Site: Embassy Suites Hotel **Address:**10450 Corkscrew Commons Drive, Estero, FL 33928 **Overall Prize Fund:** $9,000 **GP Pts:** 40 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Jon Haskel • *jon@bocachess.com* • 561-302-4377 • *www.chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

14th annual Hartford Open

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — CT **TLA# 50123**

Site: Sheraton Hartford Hotel At Bradley International Airport **Address:** 1 Bradley Airport, Windsor Locks, CT 06096 **Overall Prize Fund:** $10,000 **GP Pts:** 60 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *www.chesstour.com*

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

33rd annual Midwest Class Championships

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — IL **TLA# 50084**

Site: Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel **Address:** 601 North Milwaukee Ave., Wheeling, IL 60090 **Overall Prize Fund:** $20,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *www.chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Michigan Bottom Half Class Championships

OCTOBER 11-12, 2025 — MI **TLA# 50809**

Site: Wyndham Garden Ann Arbor **Address:** 2900 Jackson Ave., Ann Arbor, MI, 48103 **Overall Prize Fund:** $2,575 **GP Pts:** 15 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Michigan Chess Association • *jeffchess64@gmail.com* • 810-955-7271 • *www.michess.org*

ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

12th annual Midwest Class Blitz Championship

OCTOBER 11, 2025 — IL **TLA# 50085**

Site: Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel **Address:** 601 North Milwaukee Ave., Wheeling, IL 60090 **Overall Prize Fund:** $500 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE :**N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *www.chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess Father-Daughter Day Grand Prix

OCTOBER 12, 2025 — NC **TLA# 51307**

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,000 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • *jon@dragonknightchess.com* • (919) 422-2535 • *www.dragonknightchess.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Thad Rogers Memorial Georgia Class Championships

OCTOBER 17-19, 2025 — GA **TLA# 51066**

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.

Site: DoubleTree by Hilton Atlanta Perimeter Dunwoody **Address:** 4386 Chamblee Dunwoody Road, Atlanta, Georgia, 30341 **Overall Prize Fund:** $7,500 **GP Pts:** 50 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** XXX • *XXX* • XXX • *www.georgiachess.org*

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

74th New Hampshire Open

OCTOBER 18-19, 2025 — NH **TLA# 50841**

Site: DoubleTree Hotel **Address:** 700 Elm St, Manchester, NH 03101 **Overall Prize Fund:** $3,114 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** John P Elmore • *johnpelmore@yahoo.com* • 603-918-0386 • *www.georgiachess.org*

GRAND PRIX

San Diego Open

OCTOBER 24-26, 2025 — CA **TLA# 49993**

Site: Marriott San Diego Airport/Liberty Station **Address:** 2592 Laning Rd, San Diego, CA 92106 **Overall Prize Fund:** $20,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Charles Ensey • *chucnglo@aol.com* • (858) 432-8006 • *www.sandiegochessclub.org*

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

29th annual Eastern Chess Congress

OCTOBER 24-26, 2025 — NJ **TLA# 50642**

Site: Westin Princeton at Forrestal Village **Address:** 201 Village Blvd, Princeton, NJ 08540 **Overall Prize Fund:** $25,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *www.chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 PA State Action Chess Championship - West

OCTOBER 25, 2025 — PA **TLA# 50853**

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

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

Texas Chess Triathalon

OCTOBER 25, 2025 — TX **TLA# 51164**

Site: The Houston Chess Studio **Address:** 250 Patton St, Suite H, Houston, TX 77009 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,000 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Edgar Acosta • *poisonpawnschessclub@gmail.com* • 281-844-4139 • *www.poisonpawns.club*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

12th annual Eastern Chess Congress Blitz Championship

OCTOBER 25, 2025 — NJ **TLA# 50645**

Site: Westin Princeton at Forrestal Village **Address:** 201 Village Blvd, Princeton, NJ 08540 **Overall Prize Fund:** $500 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *www.chesstour.com*

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

2025 Fredericksburg Open

OCTOBER 25-26, 2025 — VA **TLA# 50693**

Site: Country Inn & Suites by Radisson FreSouth **Address:** 10358 Patriot Highway, Building TBD, Fredericksburg, VA 22408 **Overall Prize Fund:** $4,700 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Mike Hoffpauir, NTD/IA • *mhoffpauir@aol.com* • 757-846-4805 • *www.vachess.org*

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

90th Greater Boston Open

OCTOBER 26, 2025 — MA **TLA# 51274**

Site: Westford Regency Inn and Conference Center **Address:** 219 Littleton Rd., Westford MA 01886 **Overall Prize Fund:** $3,000 **GP Pts:** 15 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Massachusetts Chess Association • *info@masschess.org* • 603-891-2484 • *www.masschess.org*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Chicago Fall Open

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — IL **TLA# 51313**

Site: Hyatt Regency Schaumburg **Address:** 1800 E Golf Rd, Schaumburg, IL 60173 **Overall Prize Fund:** $10,000 **GP Pts:** 50 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** King Registration • *info@kingregistration.com* • *www.kingregistration.com/event/fallopen25*

GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

Central States Master Challenge

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — WI **TLA# 51290**

Site: Sheraton Milwaukee Brookfield Hotel **Address:** 375 S. Moorland Road, Brookfield, WI 53005 **Overall Prize Fund:** $11,000 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** All Americas Chess • *allamericaschess@gmail.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

20th annual Los Angeles Open

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2025 — CA-S **TLA# 50643**

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

GRAND PRIX

The 2025 Downriver Classic

NOVEMBER 8-9, 2025 — LA **TLA# 49811**

Site: Louisiana Bridge Association **Address:** 2709 Edenborn Ave, Metairie, LA 70002. **Overall Prize Fund:** $3,000 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Downriver Chess • *info@downriverchess.com* • *www. downriverchess.com*

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 PA State G/15 Championship - West

NOVEMBER 8, 2025 — PA **TLA# 50854**

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

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

34th annual Kings Island Open

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — OH **TLA# 50644**

Site: Embassy Suites Cincinnati NE **Address:** 4554 Lake Forest Dr, Blue Ash OH 45242 **Overall Prize Fund:** $25,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *www.chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

23rd Annual Turkey Bowl

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL **TLA# 51293**

Site: Fort Lauderdale Marriott North **Address:** 6650 North Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309 **Overall Prize Fund:** $12,000 **GP Pts:** 50 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Jon Haskel • *jon@bocachess.com* • 561-302-4377 • *www.bocachess.com*

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

56th annual National Chess Congress

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — PA **TLA# 50757**

Site: Loews Hotel **Address:** 1200 Market St, Philadelphia PA 19107 **Overall Prize Fund:** $45,000 **GP Pts:** 200 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *www.chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Michigan Action Championship

DECEMBER 6, 2025 — MI **TLA# 51075**

Site: Oakland Center **Address:** 312 Meadow Brook Rd, Rochester, MI, 48309 **Overall Prize Fund:** $2,250 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Michigan Chess Association • *jeffchess64@gmail.com* • 810-955-7271 • *www.michess.com*

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

35th annual North American Open

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV **TLA# 50756**

Site: Horseshoe Casino Resort (formerly Bally's) **Address:** 3645 Las Vegas Blvd. S, Las Vegas, NV 89103 **Overall Prize Fund:** $130,000 **GP Pts:** 300 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *www.chesstour.com*

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

50th annual Eastern Open!

DECEMBER 26-29, 2025 — VA **TLA# 50760**

Site: Hyatt Regency Crystal City **Address:** 2799 Richmond Highway, Arlington VA 22202 **Overall Prize Fund:** $30,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *www.chesstour.com*

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

14th annual Boston Chess Congress

JANUARY 2-4, 2026 — MA **TLA# 51000**

Site: Hyatt Regency Boston Harbor **Address:** 101 Harborside Dr, Boston MA 02128 **Overall Prize Fund:** $12,000 **GP Pts:** 80 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • *director@chess.us* • *www.chesstour.com*

Regional

ALABAMA

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL **TLA# 51289**

3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL **TLA# 51293**

23rd Annual Turkey Bowl

See Grand Prix.

ARIZONA

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N **TLA# 50688**

2025 Sacramento Senior Championship

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N **TLA# 50689**

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #25

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2025 — CA-S **TLA# 50643**

20th annual Los Angeles Open

See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV **TLA# 50756**

35th annual North American Open

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 28-31, 2025 — FL **TLA# 51141**

2025 World Chess Festival - Hawaii

See Hawaii.

CALIFORNIA

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N **TLA# 50688**

2025 Sacramento Senior Championship

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N **TLA# 50689**

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #25

See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 24-26, 2025 — CA **TLA# 49993**

San Diego Open

See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 25, 2025 — CA **TLA# 50842**

USC Invitational Chess Tournament, Joseph D. Atkinson III Memorial

Site: University of Southern California, Tutor Campus Center, Room 350 / 351 / 352 **Address:** 3607 Trousdale Pkwy., Los Angeles, CA 90089 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Ben Eubanks, USC '78 • *ben.eubanks@alumni.usc.edu* • (310) 968-4459

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2025 — CA-S **TLA# 50643**

20th annual Los Angeles Open

See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV **TLA# 50756**

35th annual North American Open

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 28-31, 2025 — FL **TLA# 51141**

2025 World Chess Festival - Hawaii

See Hawaii.

COLORADO

SEPTEMBER 19-21, 2025 — SD **TLA# 50282**

2025 South Dakota Governor's Cup

See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV **TLA# 50756**

35th annual North American Open

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

CONNECTICUT

AUG. 30-SEPT. 1, 2025 — MA **TLA# 51280**

New England Open Championship

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2025 — CT **TLA# 51302**

2025 Fairfield County & Norwalk City Championships

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2025 — CT **TLA# 5129**

2025 Connecticut Open

See Grand Prix.

OCT.8, 2025-APR. 26, 2026 — NY **TLA# 51272**

11th Annual New York State Magnus High School and Junior High Chess League (Out of state welcome)!

See New York

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL **TLA# 51289**

3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event

See Grand Prix..

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — MA **TLA# 50123**

14th annual Hartford Open

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL **TLA# 51293**

23rd Annual Turkey Bowl

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 15-16, 2025 — NY **TLA# 50845**

9th Annual New York State Girls Championship!

See New York.

JANUARY 2-4, 2026 — MA **TLA# 51000**

14th annual Boston Chess Congress

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DELAWARE

JULY 11-SEPT. 13, 2025 - MONTHLY ON FRI. AND SAT. — DE **TLA# 50388**

Dover Elks Rapid Swiss Open

Site: Dover Elks Lodge **Address:** 200 S Saulsbury Rd, Dover, DE 19904 **Overall Prize Fund:** $300 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Delaware Chess Association • *aa.legolas@gmail.com* • **4102193179** • *https://delawarechessassociation.org/*

OCTOBER 25-26, 2025 — VA **TLA# 50693**

2025 Fredericksburg Open

See Grand Prix.

DIST. OF COLUMBIA

DECEMBER 26-29, 2025 — VA TLA# 50760
50th annual Eastern Open!
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 25-26, 2025 — VA TLA# 50693
2025 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

FLORIDA

SEPTEMBER 26-28, 2025 — FL TLA# 50779
CFCC 2025 Autumn Open & Scholastic
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2025 — FL TLA# 50780
CFCC 2025 Autumn Open - Saturday Night Blitz
Site: Holiday Inn at Lake Buena Vista **Address:** 13351 State Road 535 Orlando, Florida 32821 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Central Florida Chess Club (CFCC) • *info@centralflchess.org* • *www.centralflchess.org/cfcc-2025-autumn-open-and-scholastic-weekend-tournament*

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

GEORGIA

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 17-19, 2025 — GA TLA# 51066
2025 Thad Rogers Memorial Georgia Class Championships
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

HAWAII

DECEMBER 28-31, 2025 — FL TLA# 51141
2025 World Chess Festival - Hawaii
Site: Neal Blaisdell Center **Address:** 777 Ward Avenue, Honolulu, HI 96814 **Overall Prize Fund:** $5,000 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Joe Hanley) • *hanleychessacademy@gmail.com* • 7149253195 • *www.hanleychessacademy.com/2025WCFHawaii.html*

IDAHO

SEPTEMBER 19-21, 2025 — SD TLA# 50282
2025 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N TLA# 50688
2025 Sacramento Senior Championship
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N TLA# 50689
Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #25
See Grand Prix.

ILLINOIS

SEPTEMBER 19-21, 2025 — SD TLA# 50282
2025 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 26-28, 2025 — MI TLA# 50840
2025 Harold Steen Memorial Cup
See Michigan.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2025 — IL TLA# 51078
The Marvin Cole Memorial Chess Tournament
Site: Park Forest American Legion Post 1198 **Address:** 1631 Western Ave, Chicago Heights, IL 60411 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Herbert Ferguson • *saint21961@yahoo.com* • 7089256469

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — IL TLA# 50084
33rd annual Midwest Class Championships
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 11, 2025 — IL TLA# 50085
12th annual Midwest Class Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — IL TLA# 51313
Chicago Fall Open
See Grand Prix.

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — WI TLA# 51290
Central States Master Challenge
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — OH TLA# 50644
34th annual Kings Island Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

INDIANA

SEPTEMBER 26-28, 2025 — MI TLA# 50840
2025 Harold Steen Memorial Cup
See Michigan.

SEPTEMBER 26-28, 2025 — FL TLA# 50779
CFCC 2025 Autumn Open & Scholastic
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — IL TLA# 50084
33rd annual Midwest Class Championships
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 11, 2025 — KY TLA# 51232
The Butch Mosby National Chess Day Classic
See Kentucky.

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — OH TLA# 50847
10th Annual Golden Buckeye Senior Open
See Ohio.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2025 — IL TLA# 51078
The Marvin Cole Memorial Chess Tournament
See Illinois.

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — IL TLA# 51313
Chicago Fall Open
See Grand Prix.

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — WI TLA# 51290
Central States Master Challenge
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — OH TLA# 50644
34th annual Kings Island Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

IOWA

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

SEPTEMBER 27-28, 2025 — IA TLA# 49959
2025 National G/30 and G/60 Championship
See Nationals.

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — IL TLA# 51313
Chicago Fall Open
See Grand Prix.

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — WI TLA# 51290
Central States Master Challenge
See Grand Prix.

KANSAS

SEPTEMBER 19-21, 2025 — SD TLA# 50282
2025 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

KENTUCKY

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — OH TLA# 50847
10th Annual Golden Buckeye Senior Open
See Ohio.

OCTOBER 11, 2025 — KY TLA# 51232
The Butch Mosby National Chess Day Classic
Site: Roots101 Museum **Address:** 124 North 1st Street, Louisville, KY 40202 **Overall Prize Fund:** see online TLA **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Corbin Seavers • *urbanlouisvillechess@yahoo.com* • 5023656369

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — OH TLA# 50644
34th annual Kings Island Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

LOUISIANA

NOVEMBER 8-9, 2025 — LA TLA# 4981
The 2025 Downriver Classic
See Grand Prix.

MAINE

AUG. 30-SEPT. 1, 2025 — MA TLA# 51280
New England Open Championship
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 18-19, 2025 — NH TLA# 50841
74th New Hampshire Open
See Grand Prix.

MARYLAND

SEPTEMBER 26, 2025 — MD TLA# 51234
14th Annual Chesapeake Open
Site: Rockville Hilton **Address:** 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852 **Overall Prize Fund:** see online TLA **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Michael W Regan • *mregan@stsci.edu* • 4104195130 • *mdchess.com*

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 24-26, 2025 — NJ TLA# 50642
29th annual Eastern Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 25-26, 2025 — VA TLA# 50693
2025 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — PA TLA# 50757
56th annual National Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2025 — VA TLA# 50760
50th annual Eastern Open!
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MASSACHUSETTS

AUG. 30-SEPT. 1, 2025 — MA TLA# 51280
New England Open Championship
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — MA TLA# 50123
14th annual Hartford Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

REGIONALS

OCTOBER 18, 2025 — MA TLA# 48666
1st Harvest Chess Fest
Site: Florence Civic Center **Address:** 90 Park Street, Florence, MA 01062 **Overall Prize Fund:** $700 b/30 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Greater Baystate Chess • *greater.baystate.chess@gmail.com* • 4133560303 • *www.greaterbaystatechess.com*

OCTOBER 18-19, 2025 — NH TLA# 50841
74th New Hampshire Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 26, 2025 — MA TLA# 51274
90th Greater Boston Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

REGIONALS

NOVEMBER 22, 2025 — MA TLA# 48648
2nd Mayflower Open
Site: St. John's Lutheran Church **Address:** 60 Broad Street, Westfield, MA 01085 **Overall Prize Fund:** $600 b/30 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Greater Baystate Chess • *greater.baystate.chess@gmail.com* • 4133560303 • *www.greaterbaystatechess.com*

JANUARY 2-4, 2026 — MA TLA# 51000
14th annual Boston Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MICHIGAN

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — OH TLA# 50847
10th Annual Golden Buckeye Senior Open
See Ohio.

SEPTEMBER 26-28, 2025 — MI TLA# 50840
2025 Harold Steen Memorial Cup
Site: Crowne Plaza - Auburn Hills **Address:** 1500 Opdyke Rd., Auburn Hills, MI 48326 **Overall Prize Fund:** $6,000 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Edward Mandell • *eman1943@aol.com* • *2486352375*

SEPTEMBER 27, 2025 — IL TLA# 51078
The Marvin Cole Memorial Chess Tournament
See Illinois.

OCTOBER 11-12, 2025 — MI TLA# 50809
2025 Michigan Bottom Half Class Championships
See Grand Prix.

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — IL TLA# 51313
Chicago Fall Open
See Grand Prix.

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — WI TLA# 51290
Central States Master Challenge
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — OH TLA# 50644
34th annual Kings Island Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

NOVEMBER 22, 2025 — MI TLA# 51074
2025 Michigan Scholastic Club Championships
Site: Lansing Center **Address:** 333 E Michigan Ave, Lansing, MI, 48933 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Michi-

gan Chess Association • *jeffchess64@gmail.com* • 810-955-7271 • *www.michess.com*

DECEMBER 6, 2025 — MI TLA# 51075
2025 Michigan Action Championship
See Grand Prix.

MINNESOTA

SEPTEMBER 19-21, 2025 — SD TLA# 50282
2025 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — WI TLA# 51290
Central States Master Challenge
See Grand Prix.

MISSISSIPPI

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
SEPTEMBER 13, 2025 — MS TLA# 50820
2025 Mississippi State Women's Championship
Site: Nissan Training Center **Address:** 300 Nissan Drive, Gate 1, Canton, MS 39046 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Mississippi Chess Association • *mark@mcachess.org* • 615-631-3876 • *www.mcachess.org*

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
OCTOBER 18-19, 2025 — MS TLA# 51247
2025 Mississippi State Championship
Site: Nissan Training Center **Address:** 300 Nissan Drive, Gate 1, Canton, MS 39046 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Mississippi Chess Association • *mark@mcachess.org* • 615-631-3876 • *www.mcachess.org*

MISSOURI

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — WI TLA# 51290
Central States Master Challenge
See Grand Prix.

MONTANA

SEPTEMBER 19-21, 2025 — SD TLA# 50282
2025 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

NEBRASKA

SEPTEMBER 19-21, 2025 — SD TLA# 50282
2025 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
SEPTEMBER 27-28, 2025 — IA TLA# 49959
2025 National G/30 and G/60 Championship
See Nationals.

NEVADA

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N TLA# 50688
2025 Sacramento Senior Championship
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N TLA# 50689
Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #25
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 3-5, 2025 — NV TLA# 5087
42nd Annual Reno Western States Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 50643
20th annual Los Angeles Open
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV TLA# 50756
35th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

AUG. 30-SEPT. 1, 2025 — MA TLA# 51280
New England Open Championship
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 18-19, 2025 — NH TLA# 50841
74th New Hampshire Open
See Grand Prix.

NEW JERSEY

SEPTEMBER 20, 2025 — NJ TLA# 47756
Hamilton Chess Club Quads
Site: Swiltlik Park Pavilion **Address:** Fisher Place/Joe Dimaggio Drive, Hamilton, NJ 08610 **Overall Prize Fund:** $25 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Edward Sytnik • *edmendou@aol.com* • 6097582326 • *hamiltonchessclub.com*

SEPTEMBER 26, 2025 — MD TLA# 51234
14th Annual Chesapeake Open
See Maryland.

OCT.8, 2025-APR. 26, 2026 — NY TLA# 51272
11th Annual New York State Magnus High School and Junior High Chess League (Out of state welcome)!
See New York.

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — MA TLA# 50123
14th annual Hartford Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 24-26, 2025 — NJ TLA# 50642
29th annual Eastern Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 25, 2025 — NJ TLA# 50645
12th annual Eastern Chess Congress Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 25-26, 2025 — VA TLA# 50693
2025 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 15-16, 2025 — NY TLA# 50845
9th Annual New York State Girls Championship!
See New York.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — PA TLA# 50757
56th annual National Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2025 — VA TLA# 50760
50th annual Eastern Open!
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JANUARY 2-4, 2026 — MA TLA# 51000
14th annual Boston Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NEW MEXICO

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV TLA# 50756
35th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 26, 2025 — MD TLA# 51234
14th Annual Chesapeake Open
See Maryland.

OCT.8, 2025-APR. 26, 2026 — NY TLA# 51272
11th Annual New York State Magnus High School and Junior High Chess League (Out of state welcome)!
Site: Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School **Address:** 36 West 93rd Street, New York, NY 10025 **Overall Prize Fund:** $7,050 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Chess Center Of New York • *chesscentr@gmail.com, director@magnusleague.org* • *http://www.magnusleague.org/*

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — MA TLA# 50123
14th annual Hartford Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 24-26, 2025 — NJ TLA# 50642
29th annual Eastern Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 25-26, 2025 — VA TLA# 50693
2025 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
NOVEMBER 15-16, 2025 — NY TLA# 50845
9th Annual New York State Girls Championship!
Site: Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School **Address:** 36 West 93rd Street, New York, NY 10025 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,000 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Chess Center Of New York • *director@chessgirls.win, chesscentr@gmail.com* • *www.chessgirls.win*

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — PA TLA# 50757
56th annual National Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2025 — VA TLA# 50760
50th annual Eastern Open!
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JANUARY 2-4, 2026 — MA TLA# 51000
14th annual Boston Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NORTH CAROLINA

SEPTEMBER 7, 2025 — NC TLA# 50867
Dragon Knight Chess National Grandparents Day Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2025 — NC TLA# 50868
Dragon Knight Chess National Hug Your Hound Day Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2025 — NC TLA# 51305
Dragon Knight Chess National Women's Friendship Day Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 28, 2025 — NC TLA# 51306
Dragon Knight Chess World Rivers Day Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 12, 2025 — NC TLA# 51307
Dragon Knight Chess Father-Daughter Day Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 25-26, 2025 — VA TLA# 50693
2025 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2025 — VA TLA# 50760
50th annual Eastern Open!
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

2025 - 42nd Annual Reno-Western States Open

An American Classic & Heritage Event!

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

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NEW LOCATION: J RESORT CASINO HOTEL, RENO, NV

Hotel Rates: Sun-Thu. $92.66; Fri-Sat. $138.06

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

SEE TLA on page 56

NORTH DAKOTA

SEPTEMBER 19-21, 2025 — SD TLA# 50282
2025 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

OHIO

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — OH TLA# 50847
10th Annual Golden Buckeye Senior Open
Site: Salt Fork State Park Lodge **Address:** 14755 Cadiz Rd, Lore City, OH 43755 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Grant Neilley • *grant@neilley.com* • 614-314-1102 • *www.neilley.com/chess*

SEPTEMBER 26-28, 2025 — MI TLA# 50840
2025 Harold Steen Memorial Cup
See Michigan.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — OH TLA# 50644
34th annual Kings Island Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OREGON

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N TLA# 50688
2025 Sacramento Senior Championship
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N TLA# 50689
Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #25
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV TLA# 50756
35th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

PENNSYLVANIA

SEPTEMBER 13, 2025 — PA TLA# 50852
2025 PA State Game/60 Championship - West
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — OH TLA# 50847
10th Annual Golden Buckeye Senior Open
See Ohio.

SEPTEMBER 26-28, 2025 — MI TLA# 50840
2025 Harold Steen Memorial Cup
See Michigan.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2025 — MD TLA# 51234
14th Annual Chesapeake Open
See Maryland.

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 24-26, 2025 — NJ TLA# 50642
29th annual Eastern Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 25, 2025 — PA TLA# 50853
2025 PA State Action Chess Championship - West
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 25-26, 2025 — VA TLA# 50693
2025 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 8, 2025 — PA TLA# 50854
2025 PA State Game/15 Championship - West
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 15-16, 2025 — NY TLA# 50845
9th Annual New York State Girls Championship!
See New York.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — PA TLA# 50757
56th annual National Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2025 — VA TLA# 50760
50th annual Eastern Open!
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

PUERTO RICO

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

RHODE ISLAND

AUG. 30-SEPT. 1, 2025 — MA TLA# 51280
New England Open Championship
See Grand Prix.

SOUTH CAROLINA

MONTHLY TLA# 51018
Lowcountry Scholastic Grand Prix Quads
Site: Chess for Everyone - Summerville Academy **Address:** 901 Old Trolley Rd Suite A, Summerville, SC 29485 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Chess for Everyone • *admin@chess4everyone.com* • (929) 769-7177 • *www.chessgirls.win*

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

SOUTH DAKOTA

SEPTEMBER 19-21, 2025 — SD TLA# 50282
2025 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

TENNESSEE

SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2025 — TN TLA# 49640
2025 Peter P. Lahde Tennessee Open & Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix.

TEXAS

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
OCTOBER 17-19, 2025 TLA# 51586
28th Annual Texas North/Central Grade Championships
Site: Houston Marriott Westchase **Address:** 2900 Briarpark Drive, Houston Texas, 77042 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Barbara Swafford • *barbrounds@gmail.com* •214-533-0061 • *www.dallaschess.com*

OCTOBER 25, 2025 — TX TLA# 51164
Texas Chess Triathalon
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV TLA# 50756
35th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

VERMONT

AUG. 30-SEPT. 1, 2025 — MA TLA# 51280
New England Open Championship
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 18-19, 2025 — NH TLA# 50841
74th New Hampshire Open
See Grand Prix.

VIRGINIA

SEPTEMBER 26, 2025 — MD TLA# 51234
14th Annual Chesapeake Open
See Maryland.

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 24-26, 2025 — NJ TLA# 50642
29th annual Eastern Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 25-26, 2025 — VA TLA# 50693
2025 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — PA TLA# 50757
56th annual National Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2025 — VA TLA# 50760
50th annual Eastern Open!
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

WASHINGTON

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N TLA# 50688
2025 Sacramento Senior Championship
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — CA-N TLA# 50689
Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #25
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV TLA# 50756
35th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

WEST VIRGINIA

SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2025 — OH TLA# 50847
10th Annual Golden Buckeye Senior Open
See Ohio.

OCTOBER 25-26, 2025 — VA TLA# 50693
2025 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

WISCONSIN

SEPTEMBER 19-21, 2025 — SD TLA# 50282
2025 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2025 — IL TLA# 51078
The Marvin Cole Memorial Chess Tournament
See Illinois.

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — FL TLA# 51289
3rd Gulf Coast Open, A National Chess Day Event
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025 — IL TLA# 50084
33rd annual Midwest Class Championships
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — WI TLA# 51290
Central States Master Challenge
See Grand Prix.

OCT. 31-NOV. 2, 2025 — IL TLA# 51313
Chicago Fall Open
See Grand Prix.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
NOVEMBER 8-9, 2025 TLA# 50051
2025-2026 Wisconsin Junior Open
Site: Holiday Inn Manitowoc **Address:** 4601 Calumet Ave. Manitowoc, WI 54220 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Steve Erbach • *terranchess@gmail.com* • 920-279-5688 • *www.wischess.org*

NOVEMBER 8-9, 2025 TLA# 51262
2025 WCA Veterans Tournament
Site: Holiday Inn Manitowoc **Address:** 4601 Calumet Ave. Manitowoc, WI 54220 **Overall Prize Fund:** $1,350 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Mike Neitman • *mike.nietman@charter.net* • 608-467-8510 • *www.wischess.org*

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

WYOMING

SEPTEMBER 19-21, 2025 — SD TLA# 50282
2025 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

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https://new.uschess.org/benefactor-members

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www.cavemanchess.com

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www.charlottechesscenter.org

CHESSanity
Jericho, NY
917.678.2077
www.chessanity.org

Continental Chess Association
Pelham, NY
201-347-2269
www.chesstour.com

Hamden Chess Club
Hamden, CT
203.680.8456
www.playmorechess.com/

King Registration
Chicago, IL
773.317.8347
www.kingregistration.com

Manasota Chess Center
Sarasota, FL
941.900.3296
www.manasotachess.org

Marshall Chess Club
New York, NY
212.477.3716
www.marshallchessclub.org

New York State Chess Association
New York, NY
646-232-3155
nysca.net/

Ocean State Chess Association
Riverside, R.I.
401.212.1335
oceanstatechess.com/

PaperClip Pairings
Brownsville, TX
956.621.0377
rrferrari@bisd.us

San Diego Chess Club
San Diego, CA
619.752.4377
www.sandiegochessclub.org

Saint Louis Chess Club
Saint Louis, MO
314.361.CHESS (2437)
saintlouischessclub.org/

Washington Chess Federation
Redmond, WA
206.769.3757
www.wachess.com

US CHESS SILVER AFFILIATES

Boca Raton Chess Club (FL)
www.bocachess.com

CDA Collin County Chess Club (TX)
www.coramdeoacademy.org/chess

ChessPalace (CA)
www.chesspalace.com

Chess Core (TX)
chesscore@yahoo.com

Cincinnati Scholastic Chess (OH)
www.chesscincinnati.com

Downriver Chess Club (LA)
www.downriverchess.com

Evangel Chess Club (AL)
evangelchurch.me

Little House of Chess, Inc. (NY)
littlehouseofchess.org

Michigan Chess Association (MI)
www.michess.org

Rochester Chess Center (NY)
www.chessset.com

Texas Chess Center (TX)
www.texaschesscenter.com

TLA CHESS (VA)
jack.scheible@verizon.net

For all information on becoming a Gold or Silver Affiliate, please visit *https://new.uschess.org/gold-and-silver-affiliates.*

CORRESPONDENCE CHESS

Check out these US Chess Rated Events!

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)

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Solutions

PAGE 15 CHESS TO ENJOY

PROBLEM 1. Fastest is **33. Rg6+ Kh8 34. Rf7!.** Black resigned here; mate is unavoidable. **PROBLEM 2. 26. Nxf7!** threatening 27. Nd6+. The game concluded **26. … Qxf7 27. Rg8+ Ke7 28. Qxf7+ Kxf7 29. R1g7 mate.** **PROBLEM 3. 31. hxg7+ Rxg7 32. Qb8+! Rg8 33. Qe5+ Rg7 34. Rf8 mate** was the finish. **PROBLEM 4. 46. … b3! 47. cxb3 Nb4!** threatened … c3-c2 and … Nb4xd3+. White resigned shortly after **48. Rxe3 Rxe3! 49. Ne2 c2 50. Ra1 Nxd3+ 51. Kf1 Rxe2 52. Kxe2 c1=Q. PROBLEM 5. 43. … Nxg4! 44. Bxg4 Bxg4 45. Qxg4 Rxh2+ 46. Kg1 Rh1+!** and ... Rh1xa1. Or 45. Rxg4 Rxh2+ or 45. Qf2 Bf3. **PROBLEM 6. 31. … h5!** and the threat of … h5-h4-h3 /… Qe4-g2 mate won. Also good is 31. … Qf3 first.

PAGE 19 ABCS OF CHESS

PROBLEM 1. Mating net: Black goes down in 2: **1. Bb8+ Kxb8 2. Qa7 mate. PROBLEM 2. Mating net:** Black is victimized in 2: **1. Qa5+ Kb7 2. Qa6 mate. PROBLEM 3. Mating net:** White announces mate in 2: **1. Bxg6+ Kg8 2. Qh7 mate**. **PROBLEM 4. Mating net:** White finds the only mate in 2: **1. Bf5+ Kg8 2. Be6 mate**. **PROBLEM 5. Mating net:** White mates in 2: **1. Qb7+ Kxb7 2. Rxb6 mate. PROBLEM 6. Mating net:** White terminates Black in 2: **1. f8=N+ Kh8 2. Rh7 mate**.

PAGE 53 MAKE YOUR MOVE

TACTIC 1. 52. Rxe6+!, Black resigned. After 52. … Kxe6 53. Bb3+, White ends up with an extra piece. Dzagnidze – Batsiashvili, Cairns Cup 2025. **TACTIC 2. 26. … Bxf4!** The only move to save Black. **27. Rxf4** Or 27. exf4 Rxd4! 28. Rxd4 Qe3+ and Black has leveled the material situation. **27. … Rxf4 28. Qxd8+ Qxd8 29. Bxg7+ Kxg7 30. Rxd8 Rb4** The endgame is equal, and many moves later the game ended in a draw. Tan – Lee, Cairns Cup 2025. **TACTIC 3. 27. e6!** White clears the dark squares, in particular the a1-h8 diagonal, allowing White a lethal attack. **27. … Rxa3** Black had no choice but to sacrifice material. If, for instance, 27. … Bxe6 White has 28. Bb2 f6 29. Rd8+ Kg7 30. Bd5 with an irresistible attack, or 27. … fxe6 28. Rd7 e5 29. Bxb5 and Black's defense falls apart. **28. exf7+ Kxf7 29. Qxa3 Ne7** The game continued 30. Bf3 Qc5? (*30. ... b4! 31. Qc1 b5* was better) 31. Qc1 (*31. Qxc5! bxc5 32. Rd6* would have been better) 31. ... b4 32. Kf2 b3 33. Qc3 b5 34. Rd2 Qf5 35. e4 and White later won. But the best way to play was **30. Bg2! Qc5 31. Qc1 Nf5 32. Kf2** with a clear advantage. Kashlinskaya – Muzychuk, Cairns Cup (analysis) 2025. **TACTIC 4. 26. Bxe6!** White gives up two minor pieces for a rook and two pawns. **26. … fxe6 27. Nxe6 Ndc5 28. Nxd8 Bxd8** Or 28. … Rxd8 29. Rxd8+ Bxd8 30. Rd1 and White is winning. **29. Be5** White could also win with 29. h5 gxh5 30. Rxh5 Re8 31. Rdh1. **29. … Ne6 30. f4 Rf8 31. Rhf1 Bc7 32. Bxc7 Nexc7 33. f5 gxf5 34. exf5 Nc5 35. f6, Black resigned.** Koneru – Assaubayeva, Cairns Cup 2025. **TACTIC 5. 26. … f6!** Black forces the f-file open to attack White's king on f1. **27. gxf6 Qxf6** The threat is 28. … Nfg3+. **28. Rh2 Qe7 29. Ng1** 29. Ke1 was relatively better, but Black still has a big advantage after 29. ... Nxh4. **29. … Nxh4 30. e4?!** 30. Ke2 was better but Black has an obvious advantage after 30. ... g5 31. Kd1 Nf6. **30. … Qg5 31. Ne2 Ra8 32. f4 Nxf4 33. Qxb7 Ra1+ 34. Kf2 Nh3+ 35. Rxh3 Qg2+ 36. Ke3 Qxh3+** and Black was winning, and eventually won the game. Koneru – Batsiashvili, Cairns Cup 2025. **TACTIC 6. 14. Nxf7!** In the game, White instead continued 14. Qa4 and won after 14. … Ngxe5??, but 14. … Be7 would have at least kept the game going. **14. … Kxf7 15. Nxe6! Kxe6** Or 15. ... Qc8 16. Qd5 Ke8 17. Be3 Qc6 18. Qxc6 bxc6 19. Nc7+ and White wins. **16. Qb3+ Ke7 17. Bg5+,** winning the queen and pawns for three pieces. Assaubayeva – Muzychuk, Cairns Cup (analysis) 2025. **TACTIC 7. 19. … Ba6!** Black attacks the weakest spot in White's position. Rather surprisingly, there is no good way for White to respond. **20. g4** Here, 20. b3 runs into 20. … a4! 21. Kb2 axb3 22. axb3 b5! and White will not survive. If 20. R3d2, then 20. … Bf4 21. Rc2 Bxc4! wins for Black. Finally, 20. Re3 is met by 20. … Bf4 when 21. Nh4 Qh7 22. Rxe6 seems like it saves White, because the rook cannot be captured, but 22. … Bg5! 23. Re1 (threatening a back-rank mate) 23. … Rf8! and Black wins the knight on h4. **20. … Qh7 21. Nd2 b5! 22. d5 bxc4 23. Re3** Or 23. Rd4 Bc5 and Black should win. **23. … exd5 24. Nf3 Bf8 25. g5 c5 26. g6 Qxg6** Black has won some good pawns and soon won the game. Tan – Kashlinskaya, Cairns Cup 2025. **TACTIC 8. 24. Rff2!** A deep move with a brilliant point. In the game, White instead chose 24. Bd4; Black was better after 24. … Re8! 25. Nc3? (*25. Rff2!?* was still best) 25. ... Qxc2 26. Rxc2 exd5 27. cxd5 c5!? 28. dxc6? *e.p.* (*28. Be5* would have kept the chances balanced) 28. ... Bxc6 and eventually won. But here's how White wins: **24. ... b5 25. Rxg4!!** BOOM!!! This shocking move starts a slow-moving but decisive attack for White. **25. … Qxg4+ 26. Rg2 Qh4** Neither 26. ... Qf5 27. Nf6+ nor 26. ... Qxg2+ 27. Qxg2 Kf7 28. dxe6+ Kxe6 29. Ng5+ Ke7 30. Qxb7 allows Black to survive. **27. Nf6+ Kf7 28. Qg6+ Ke7 29. Bc3!** Wow! The obvious threat is 30. Bb4+, but the secondary threat is Rg2-h2 and for that purpose, the e1-square needed to be protected to avoid a perpetual check. **29. … gxf6 30. Rh2 Qxh2+** Or 30. ... Kd6 31. Be5+ fxe5 32. Qxe6+ Kc5 33. Rxh4 with a decisive advantage for White. **31. Kxh2 Kd6 32. Bxf6 bxc4 33. bxc4 Kc5 34. Qb1** and White wins. N. Dzagnidze – H. Dronavalli, Cairns Cup (analysis) 2025. **TACTIC 9. 41. … Kh6!!** A stunning move which the Indian grandmaster missed despite having more than a half-hour on the clock. The immediate threats are 42. ... g6-g5 and 42. ... Kg5, and White cannot adequately respond to both. Instead, Black continued 41. … Qe6 and the game was eventually drawn. **42. Qxf7** If White gets out of the pin by playing 42. Kf3, then 42. … Kg5! 43. Rxf7 (*43. Re4 Qd3+ 44. Re3 Qf1+ 45. Ke4 Re8+*) 43. ... Qd3+ 44. Kf2 Qd4+ 45. Ke2 (or *45. Kf3 Re8!* and White will get mated) 45. … Re8+ 46. Re7 Rd8 and once more, Black will force mate. **42. … Kg5 43. a3 Rc8!** and White is out of useful moves and will lose material or get mated. Lee – Dronavalli, Cairns Cup (analysis) 2025.

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TONY BALLARD

CHESS TEACHER, AUTHOR



I'VE PLAYED CHESS ACROSS more than just 64 squares — I've played in prison yards, shelters, classrooms, and community centers. I've taught it to at-risk youth, incarcerated men, and barbers fresh out of school.

Chess has been a bridge and a battleground in my life. It's helped me think, reflect, and transform. One game in particular reminds me why I teach it. It was in a prison tournament I helped organize — a setting all too familiar, yet filled with new possibilities. My opponent was young and sharp, and underestimated the quiet danger of positional pressure. The game below captures that moment and the move that changed everything.

LONDON SYSTEM (A40)

Tony Ballard
J.L.
Prison tournament

1. d4 g6
A King's Indian setup — it's flexible, but I prefer clarity.

2. Bf4 Bg7 3. e3 Nf6 4. Nd2 d6 5. Bd3 Nc6
Normal development. I'm building tension.

6. c3 0-0 7. h4 e5
Trying to crack open the center, but it's a premature commitment.

8. Bg5 exd4 9. cxd4 Qe8
His queen eyes the kingside. I'm not worried — yet.

10. Bxf6 Bxf6 11. Ne2 Nxd4
A greedy grab. Time to punish!

12. exd4 Bxd4 13. h5 Bxb2
He takes another pawn but opens the floodgates.

14. hxg6 hxg6 15. Bxg6 Kg7
The king steps into the light.

16. Bd3 Qe5 17. Rh7+ Kg8 18. Nc4 Bc3+ 19. Kf1 Qf6

Now comes **My Best Move:**



20. Nxc3!!
Now I can dominate the c-file and rip open the position.

20. ... Qxc3 21. Rc1 Qf6 22. Ne3 Be6 23. Ng4, Black resigned.

When I played 20. Nxc3!! I wasn't just trading material; I was claiming the initiative, the tempo, the momentum. The board opened up, and my rooks and bishop turned into wrecking balls. I knew if I hesitated, the pressure would fade. But I trusted the attack. Just like in life, sometimes you must risk what's comfortable to gain something greater.

This move wasn't just the best technically; it was symbolic. It represented the very reason I teach and play chess: to show others, especially those society has counted out, that transformation is always one decision away. For more on how chess played a role in my 26-year journey through incarceration, isolation, and redemption, check out my memoir *Time Alone: From Isolation to Transformation*.

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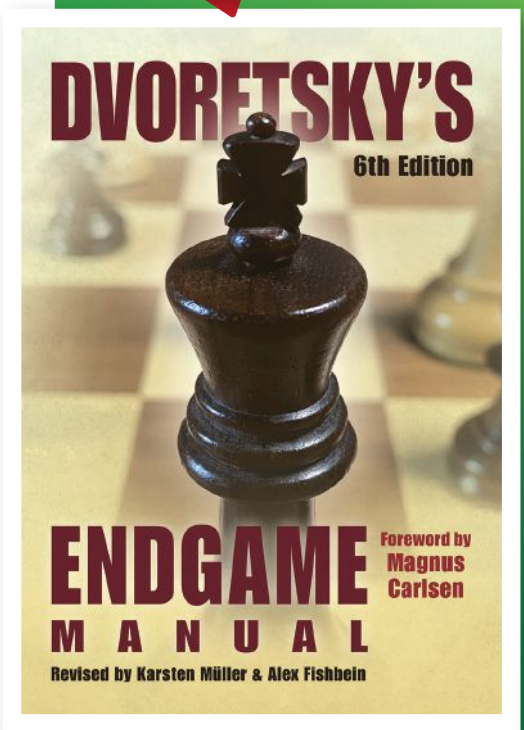
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