

U.S. JUNIOR ■ WORLD OPEN ■ U.S. GIRLS' JUNIOR

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Time
Coming

NOVEMBER 2025 ■ USChess.org

GM Brewington
Hardaway

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CHESSLIFE

November

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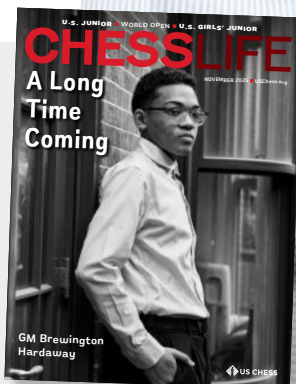
Youth Will be Served

The World Open crowns its youngest-ever clear winner.
BY IM JASON LIANG AND
IM JOSHUA POSTHUMA

ON THE COVER

When we asked Brewington Hardaway about photographs to accompany our cover story, he suggested that we shoot at the Marshall Chess Club. It was a natural fit: With his new title, Brew has become the next chess great to call the Marshall home. Caroline King's photos, like the club, are timeless.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CAROLINE KING



2022

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

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

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

EF: \$290 online only by 1/15/26; ALL \$350 after. All teams: any changes at site or after entering — \$30 charge. **ENTRY MAXIMUM IS 330 TEAMS.** Enter early!

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

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

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

HR: See link to reserve room at www.njscf.org. Chess rates expire 1/17/2026.

Tournament Director NTD/IA:

E. Steven Doyle

Sunday night: Bughouse \$25 per team. Cash prizes.



For help forming teams contact Worldamateurtteam@njscf.org

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



CHESSLIFE

November

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CONTRIBUTORS



GM MAURICE ASHLEY

(Cover Story) is a grandmaster, chess commentator, and author. He was the first African-American GM in history, earning his title in 1999. He is a member of the U.S.

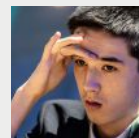
Chess Hall of Fame, and his most recent work, *The Life-Changing Magic of Chess*, is available wherever you buy books.



IM IGOR KHMELNITSKY

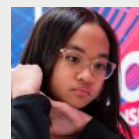
(Coaches' Corner) is a trainer and author with more than 35 years of

playing and coaching experience. The author of the popular *Chess Exam* series of training books, you can find him online at iamcoach.com.



GM ANDY WOODWARD

(U.S. Junior) became the second-youngest American grandmaster in history in 2024 at the age of 13 years, eight months. The current U.S. Junior Champion, he is a frequent contributor to *Chess Life*.



FM MEGAN PARAGUA

(U.S. Girls Junior) is the reigning 2024 World Cadet Rapid and Blitz U12 champion. She is competing in her first U.S.

Women's Championship as we go to press.



IM JASON LIANG

(World Open) is the 2022 Grand Prix winner, with victories at multiple youth and scholastic champion-

ships. He has two GM norms to his name, and with a peak FIDE rating of 2530, he is looking forward to earning his third and final norm in 2025.



IM JOSHUA POSTHUMA

(World Open) is a four-time Michigan champion and chess coach. Contact him

via his coaching page at lichess.org/coach/jposthuma.

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**Youngest-Ever USA
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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."



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Great question!

With the start of a new school year I am finding more students interested in playing chess. I have purchased a few books on chess, but they have not met with the universal acclaim I had hoped.

Can you direct me to books about chess for high schoolers?

A new chess club coach has donated a copy of *Modern Chess Openings*. One student reports that while he likes learning the theory behind moves, he finds the notation daunting. Would you be able to suggest some books on chess that might be good primers for that book?

Any help would be appreciated.

Matt Cadorette
Via email

John Hartmann responds:

I love this kind of question! At the risk of alienating any authors I may neglect to mention — apologies in advance if this is you! — this old book reviewer has some recommendations.

- *Practical Chess Openings* by Martyn Kravtsiv
- *Everyone's First Chess Workbook* by Peter Giannatos
- *World Champion Chess for Juniors* by Joel Benjamin
- *100 Tactical Patterns You Must Know* by Frank Erwich
- *1001 Chess Exercises for Beginners* by Masetti & Messa
- *1001 Chess Exercises for Club Players* by Frank Erwich
- *How to Reassess Your Chess* by Jeremy Silman
- *The Complete Book of Chess Strategy* by Jeremy Silman
- *Logical Chess Move by Move* by Irving Chernev (Batsford edition)

- *The Most Instructive Games of Chess Ever Played* by Irving Chernev (Batsford edition)

I would also recommend any of Jeff Coakley's books. You get a sense of his creativity in his columns for *Chess Life Kids*.

Hope this gets your collection off to a good start!

Math: still hard?

As someone who's been plateaued in the expert class for over 40 years — and who myself beat a still-in-his-prime GM when I was 37, with a rating exactly one point higher than it is today — I was intrigued by Andy Soltis' October 2025 column about rating distribution and surprising late surges.

I'm currently in the process of enrolling in Medicare, so you can imagine my excitement when Soltis mentioned a surge by Boris Spassky at the age of "61" in 1988.

But even at my age it only took a few seconds to notice that something wasn't right. Spassky was 35 when he lost his world championship title to Bobby Fischer in 1972. He must've passed through some kind of strange time warp to have aged 26 years by 1988.

The answer, of course, is that he was 51, not 61. But thanks, Andy, for giving me a short surge of hope that I can still make master at my age.

Gregg Fritchle
Via email

John Hartmann responds:

Thanks for your note, Gregg, and I'm glad you experienced that burst of hope! Alas, the math isn't the problem here. It was a *fingerfehler*: Spassky played Shaked in 1998, not 1988. Somehow that got altered during editing. Apologies.

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



The Game of the World, the World of the Game

Chess collectors meet to touch the game's past and discuss its future.

BY **DR. JOHN McCRARY**



LEATHER FOLDING BOARD
English, Circa 18th or 19th century
Leather, patchboard
14" square (36 cm)



TREATISE OF AMATEURS
French, published in the Café de la Régence
Dated 1779



HESS HAS THE BEST documented history of any game or sport. For 15 centuries it has interacted with social and cultural influences

across nations, resulting in many variations in rules, set designs, organization, literature, and competitions. Today's worldwide game reflects a sort of survival of the fittest of all these changes, as advances in transportation and communication brought about an impetus to produce a standardized game, one in which people from all nations could compete and communicate.

Chess Collectors International (CCI) is dedicated to understanding the many aspects of the evolution of the chess world and bringing together new ideas that are emerging in modern times. Its membership includes some of the world's top experts on chess sets, literature, and the historical development of the game.

CCI held their biannual meeting Sept. 4-7 in New Orleans, with a focus on the legendary New Orleanian Paul Morphy (1837-84), known throughout the world to this day for his brilliant and dominant play. The CCI meeting was held in the French Quarter, where Morphy lived and took daily walks much of his life. Jude Acers, a strong master who has been famous for taking on all comers at his outdoor chess table in the Quarter since 1978 for \$5/game, participated actively in the CCI meeting. Known as "the man in the red beret," he was honored last year by US Chess with the Frank J. Marshall Award for this work, like that of Marshall (U.S. champion from 1909-1936), as a great ambassador for chess. Jude gave a lecture, commented frequently on topics, and gave a simul for the CCI participants. He also introduced Baylee Badawy, of the Jazz & Heritage Foundation, who is also doing great work with New Orleans chess.

The CCI events included displays of items connected with Morphy, including a Staunton-design chess set that Frank Camaratta, the world's leading expert on Staunton sets, authenticated as circa 1850. As the Staunton design first appeared in 1849, this would be one of the oldest extant examples of the set which is now the standard in tournament play. It includes one of the distinctive features of those early Staunton sets: A rook and knight on each side bore a symbol that identified it as the king's rook or king's knight. At that time, notation of moves required identifying a piece as the King's or Queen's piece, even when there was no other need to do so.

The exhibits also included Morphy's copy

of *Chess Praxis*, written by Howard Staunton, a bitter rival of Morphy's. It was published in 1860, after Morphy had ceased playing publicly, and Morphy's acquisition of the book is evidence of his continual interest in chess after the end of his playing career. The book is privately owned by CCI member Jon Crumiller, himself one of the world's top experts on chess sets and a very knowledgeable chess historian. Other Morphy items included a trophy and his walking cane.

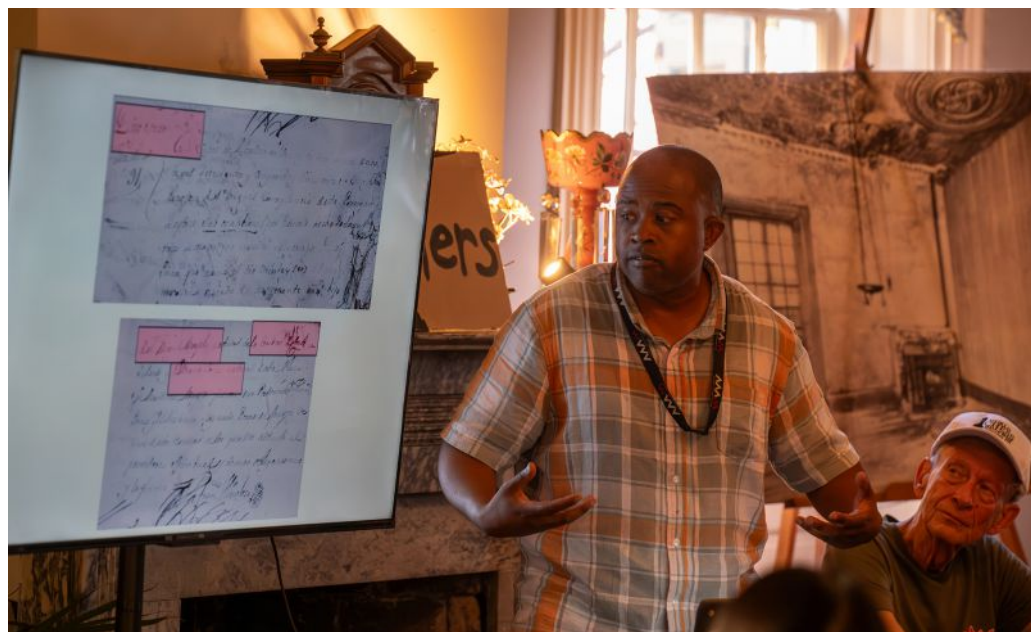
In a panel discussion featuring myself, Crumiller, and Morphy experts Kendric Perkins and Morphy-family descendant Rick Dean, I spoke on Morphy's place in the critical early stages of the evolution of the international chess world; Perkins spoke about local Morphy history, including information on his family in New Orleans, to which Dean added information. After questions, Perkins took CCI members on a local walking tour of other Morphy sites.

The panel discussion and some of the displays of unique sets and historical chess items were housed in the historic Beauregard-Keyes house. Beauregard was a prominent Confederate general well acquainted with the Morphy family, while Francis Parkinson Keyes wrote a very fictionalized biography of Morphy; both lived at different times in the house.

Not all the CCI events were focused on Morphy: Rick Knowlton, co-author of the



Top: Fischer, Morphy, and Marie Laveau? Middle: A Morphy photo in the Morphy room at Brennan's. Bottom: Kendric Perkins presents.



excellent book *A World of Chess*, gave a presentation on the Chess Variants exhibition currently at the World Chess Hall of Fame. Knowlton and I contributed to that exhibit, as did GM Yasser Seirawan and the parents of the famous Polgar sisters, all of whom have invented new variants of chess. Jon Crumiller lectured on the history of the antique chess sets of the East India Company; CCI President Tom Gallegos lectured on attitudes toward professionalism in chess, and Perkins, Gallegos and I contributed articles to the convention booklet.

The gala dinner was held at Brennan's Restaurant, next to the room where Morphy died in the family home, and included an unexpected highlight: In portrayals by local actors, a voodoo queen summoned the ghosts of Paul Morphy and Bobby Fischer to debate the pros (Fischer) and cons (Morphy) of professionalism in chess using a script created by Tom Gallegos. The performance was a creative masterpiece par excellence!

The whole conference was outstanding, for which credit goes to CCI's principal officers, Luann Woneis and Tom Gallegos. Anyone interested in joining CCI should email Luann at chesscollectorsint@comcast.net. ♠

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

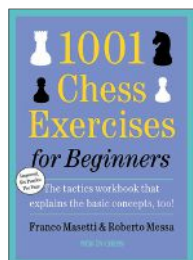




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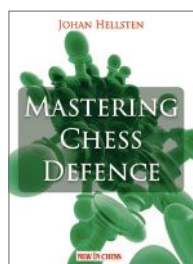
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1001 Chess Exercises for Beginners

Franco Masetti & Roberto Messa

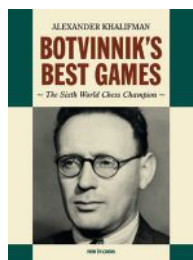
There are two types of books on tactics: those that introduce the concepts followed by some examples, and workbooks that contain numerous exercises. This tactics book does both: the authors explain the basic tactical ideas *and* provide an enormous amount of exercises for each different theme.



Mastering Chess Defence

Johan Hellsten

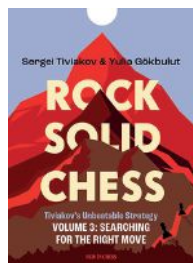
All chess players know that they need to study tactics, calculation, and openings, but when it comes to defense, far too many wait until they're under pressure. The truth is that more games are lost because of defensive mistakes than strategic ones. This book offers the training you need to be prepared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



Botvinnik's Best Games

Alexander Khalifman

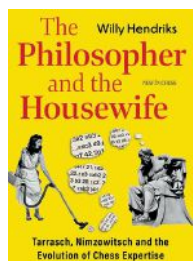
Mikhail Botvinnik is widely regarded as one of the greatest chess players ever. He was the World Champion from 1948 until 1963, with two short interruptions. For this modern biography, the Russian grandmaster Alexander Khalifman has selected and annotated more than fifty of Botvinnik's best games.



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.



The Philosopher and the Housewife

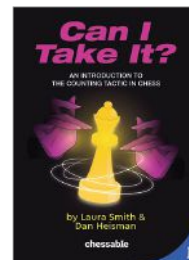
Willy Hendriks

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.

Can I Take It?

Dan Heisman & Laura Smith

This Beginner's Guide to Capturing in Chess teaches you the most basic skills of chess tactics and strategy. You won't just learn if you can take an opponent's piece. You'll also learn how to take that piece, which can make the difference between winning and losing a game! In particular, you'll learn how to evaluate every piece trade you make easily.



Ulf – The Attacker!

Thomas Engqvist

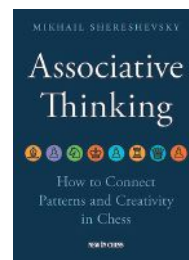
Swedish chess legend Ulf Andersson was a positional genius with a crystal clear style. The former world number 4 rarely lost a game and consistently scored victories from quiet positions. But he could also be a fierce attacker. This book offers 56 thrilling games, both entertaining and instructive.



Associative Thinking

Mikhail Shereshevsky

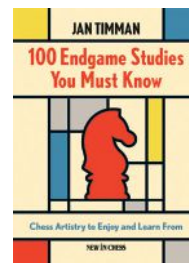
One of the most respected chess trainers in the world introduces an important but little-explored topic: associative thinking. It is not about specific pawn structures, but about more abstract things. For example, what is the best interaction between knight and pawn?



Chess artistry to enjoy and learn from

Jan Timman

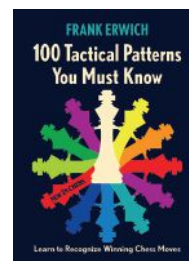
Perhaps the greatest beauty in chess can be found in endgame studies. Delightful twists and turns on the board are combined into true works of art. Chess is distilled to its purest form, with all pieces making only the essential moves. Jan Timman guides you through masterpieces of increasing difficulty.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



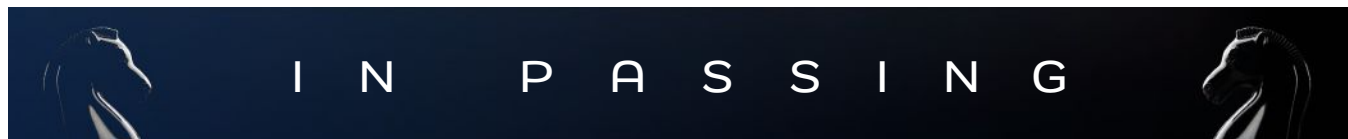
100 Tactical Patterns You Must Know

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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Frank Alexander "Alex" Relyea

1972-2025

BY NITA PATEL

▶ “GOOD SKILL,” NOT “GOOD LUCK” OR “start your clocks,” was how Alex Relyea liked to begin his tournaments. It wasn’t just a quip; it was a philosophy. Luck fades, but deliberate, practiced skill endures. For Alex, that motto captured his approach to both chess and life. When Alex passed away Aug. 16, the U.S. chess community lost a player and organizer, a mentor, and a leader and friend who built communities one tournament at a time.

Born Dec. 5, 1972, in Maine, Alex was first and always a devoted husband to his wife, Nita, of 30 years, and a thoughtful friend.

Alex was a National Tournament Director and an International Arbiter for both FIDE and the International Correspondence Chess Federation. He directed premier national events such as the U.S. Open, U.S. Girls’ Junior Championship, and multiple U.S. Blind Championships. For decades he ran tournaments in his native New England; he once even directed a thematic tournament featuring the Traxler Counterattack aka the Wilkes-Barre Defense). For these achievements, he was awarded the title of US Chess Organizer of the Year in 2016.

He treated everyone as if they belonged, from grandmasters to new players or onlookers nervously pacing outside an event. Alex’s genuine kindness made him approachable; his fairness made him respected, and his generosity made him unforgettable.

More Than Titles

Alex ensured pairings were precise, games began promptly, and players felt supported at every step. He believed that arbiters weren’t only rule-keepers but also caretakers



of fairness and fun. When rulings needed to be made, he never wavered. He listened carefully, applied the rules, and explained his decisions clearly. Players left his events trusting the results as well as the process. That was his style: professionalism wrapped in playfulness, authority carried with humor.

“Players finish and rest,” Alex often said, “but arbiters keep working until everyone is done.” He paid attention to details most players never noticed, and his dedication sprang from the genuine joy of seeing the game and its community flourish.

He told stories, shared jokes, and reminded players that chess was, above all, meant to be enjoyed. “I enjoyed the game,” he once said after a quick defeat, “but it would have been more fun if I didn’t lose in seven moves.”

Alex enjoyed over-the-board play, but as his health declined, he turned increasingly toward correspondence chess. In 2012 he entered his first ICCF tournament, and he gained the title of British Correspondence Chess Association master. He also signed emails with “BCCA Gambit and Counter-Gambit Tournament Coordinator.”

He began correspondence play in the

classic way, by postcard, and delighted in the rhythm of days between moves: It was a way to think deeply, to explore possibilities, and to sneak in a nap between moves. Later, he played online, often juggling 80 to 120 games simultaneously. Whatever the platform, Alex approached the game with thoughtfulness and persistence.

A game with Alex often meant stories, puns, or digressions into baseball, history, math, geography, or current events. His chats might leap from rook sacrifices to chaos theory, from pairing charts to Mark Belanger’s statistics for the 1972 Baltimore Orioles.

These conversations weren’t distractions; they were bridges. Alex believed that chess, like life, was about relationships, and he used his gift of dialogue to bring people together. For many, his words were as memorable as his rulings: insightful, witty, warm, and always leaving you glad you had taken the time to talk.

Within the broader community, Alex was admired not just for efficiency but for character. He championed access for blind players, encouraged new competitors, and mentored budding tournament directors.

Players remember his knowledge. Onlookers enjoyed his lively conversations. Peers respected his judgment. His vision of chess was broad and welcoming.

If Alex had the last word, he might remind us not to rely on luck but to carry “good skill” into every move on the board and beyond.

Winning Silver

Over the years, Alex played more than 1,500 ICCF correspondence games, earning the titles of Correspondence Chess Expert and International Arbiter in 2018, and Correspondence Chess Master in 2020. Among his proudest achievements was winning a British Correspondence Chess Association Silver Medal event in 2017, an uncommon honor for an American player.

He won three games and drew five on his way to that medal, each a testament to the patience, creativity, and precision that define correspondence play at the master level. In true Alex fashion, he liked to say that some points come from *fingerfehlens*, but most from “good skill” and persistence.

PIRC DEFENSE (B07)

Alexander Relyea (2234)
Eoin S. Campbell (2121)
BCCA Silver Medal 2017, ICCF,
03.02.2017

1. e4 d6 2. d4 Nf6 3. Nc3 g6 4. Bg5 Bg7 5. Qd2 h6 6. Bf4 a6 7. Nf3 g5 8. Be3 Ng4 9. 0-0-0 Nxe3 10. Qxe3 Nc6 11. d5 Ne5 12. Nxe5 Bxe5 13. g3 c5 14. dxc6 e.p. bxc6 15. f4 Bg7 16. e5 Rb8?? 17. exd6 Bf6 18. Bg2, Black resigned.

SCANDINAVIAN DEFENSE (B01)

Alexander Relyea (2234)
Nigel Norman (2174)
BCCA Silver Medal 2017, ICCF,
03.02.2017

1. e4 d5 2. exd5 Nf6 3. d4 Bg4 4. Bb5+ Nbd7 5. f3 Bf5 6. Nc3 a6 7. Ba4 b5 8. Bb3 Nb6 9. Nge2 Nbx5 10. Nxd5 Nxd5 11. 0-0 g6 12. Ng3 Bc8 13. a4 b4 14. Ne4 Bg7 15. Re1 0-0 16. Bg5 h6 17. Bh4 Nf4 18. c3 Bf5 19. Bg3 bxc3 20. bxc3 Nd5 21. Rc1 c6 22. Qd2 h5 23. h3 Kh7 24. Rcd1 Bh6 25. Qb2 Ne3 26. Rd3 Nd5 27. Rdd1 Ne3 28. Rd2 Nd5 29. Nc5 Bxd2 30. Qxd2 a5 31. Bh4 f6 32. g4 hxg4 33. hxg4 Bc8 34. Bg3 Kg7 35. c4 Nb4 36. Qe3 Ra7 37. Kg2 g5 38.

Rd1 Na6 39. Ne4 Rb7 40. Nxb5 Rh8 41. Ne4 Rb4 42. Re1 Rb7 43. Bc2 Kf7 44. Qc3 Rd7 45. Bb3 Nb4 46. Rd1 Qf8 47. d5 Qh6 48. Qd4 f5 49. gxf5 Rdd8 50. d6 Bxf5 51. c5+ e6 52. Qe5 Nd5 53. Bxd5 cxd5 54. Nf2 Rhg8 55. Rf1 Qg7 56. Ng4 Rc8 57. Qf4 Ke8 58. Re1 Kd8 59. d7 Qb2+ 60. Kh1, Black resigned.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B99)

Alexander Relyea (2234)
Ian J. Mason (2194)
BCCA Silver Medal 2017, ICCF,
03.02.2017

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Bg5 e6 7. f4 Be7 8. Qf3 Qc7 9. 0-0-0 Nbd7 10. f5 e5 11. Nde2 b5 12. Bxf6 Nxf6 13. Nd5 Nxd5 14. exd5 Bb7 15. Ng3 Rc8 16. Bd3 Qc5 17. Be4 Bg5+ 18. Kb1 Qe3 19. Qh5 Bf6 20. Rhe1 Qf2 21. Rf1 Qc5 22. Rd2 0-0 23. Qe2 Kh8 24. Rd3 Rg8 25. Bf3 a5 26. Qd2 b4 27. Ne4 Qc7 28. Be2 Be7 29. Bh5 Rcf8 30. Be2 Rc8 31. Rff3 Ba6 32. Rh3 Bxd3 33. Qxd3 h6 34. Qd2 Bf8 35. f6 g5 36. Bg4 Qc4 37. Qd3 Rc7 38. b3 Qxd3 39. Rxd3 Rb7 40. Kb2 Rb5 41. a3 Rb7 42. Rh3 Rg6 43. c3 bxc3+ 44. Rxc3

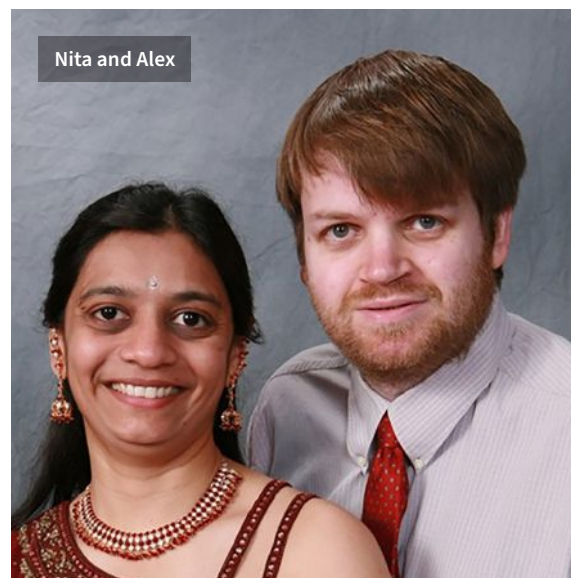


Black is so tied in knots that modern engines rank his next move (which traps the rook) as second-best in the position.

44. ... Kg8 45. Bf5 Rb5 46. Rd3 g4 47. Bxg6 fxg6 48. b4 axb4 49. a4 Rb8 50. Kb3 Kf7 51. a5 g5 52. Rd2 Kg6 53. Ra2 Kf5 54. Nd2 Kxf6 55. a6, Black resigned.

In Memoriam

In honor of Alex's lifelong service, contributions may be made to US Chess to support programs that build community and expand access. Donations can be directed to uschess.org/donate. ♠



The Attention Arc

Pavlov's dog and blunders of thinking technique

BY **GM ANDY SOLTIS**

W

E TALKED LAST MONTH about the bell-shaped graph that characterizes the careers of many players. It looks like an arc and it represents how your rating rises, hits plateaus and reaches peaks.

You probably experience other tell-tale arcs without knowing it. One of them can depict your play in an individual game, as GM Nikolai Krogius explained.

Once one of the world's top 20 players, Krogius became Boris Spassky's world championship trainer and later a much-hated government boss of Soviet masters.

But he may be best remembered for his attempt to study chess psychology in a scientific manner. He focused on what he called "attention," the ability to concentrate at the board.

Krogius concluded that our attention level varies widely in each game, and that it can often be plotted on an arc. This helps explain how we make our best moves as well as our blunders. Let's see how in a Spassky game.

RUY LOPEZ, BREYER VARIATION (C95)

GM Judit Polgar (2595)

GM Boris Spassky (2565)

Match (10), Budapest, 02.16.1993

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. O-O Be7 6. Re1

Both players were moving quickly. Why not? They had played these moves countless times. But this is a blunder in thinking technique, according to Krogius.

He cited research by physiologist Ivan Pavlov — of "Pavlov's dog" fame — that found humans cannot easily adjust from performing one task to another. This is why it can be mentally jarring to go from blitzing "book" moves to thinking on your own.

To smooth the transition, you should make even the most familiar opening moves slowly, Krogius said. For example, Black can ponder questions like "Why is 6. ... b5 the book move?"

Of course, Spassky would know the answer: When White protects their e-pawn in a Ruy Lopez they're usually threatening Bb5xc6 followed by Nf3xe5. But by recalling that rule of thumb, Black would carefully raise their level of attention.

6. ... b5 7. Bb3 d6 8. c3 O-O 9. h3 Nb8 10. d4 Nbd7 11. Nbd2 Re8??



Spassky wanted to reach a book position that usually comes about after 11. ... Bb7 12. Bc2 Re8. But in his haste to get there, he botched the move order.

White could have virtually ended the game with 12. Bxf7+!. Then 12. ... Kxf7 13. Ng5+ and 14. Ne6 would win the queen.

12. Nf1??

But Judit Polgar, one of the world's great tacticians, missed 12. Bxf7+!. What explains these mutual blunders?

Krogius pointed out in a 1976 book, *Psychology in Chess*, how a player typically goes through three very different attention phases. The first is "entering the spirit of the game."

This is when your attention is not yet focused. You may be easily distracted or mentally rushing ahead. Whatever the reason, you are just not concentrating.

12. ... Bb7 13. Bc2 Bf8 14. Ng3 g6

The players had reached this same position in two earlier games of the match and were about to start thinking on their own. This is a critical transition, in a Pavlovian sense. "Many blunders are made at exactly" this pivotal point, Krogius wrote.

15. b3 Bg7 16. d5 Nb6 17. Be3 Rc8 18. Qe2! c6 19. c4! cxd5 20. cxd5



But with excellent moves the players reached Krogius's second attention phase. This is when you are concentrating at "optimal working capacity."

This position is a "critical moment," as Spassky liked to call them. Finding the right idea is more important here than at any other point in the game.

If Black fails to find it, White's favorable pawn structure will give her a choice of strong plans. Polgar might have launched a promising attack on the wings after, for example, 20. ... Nbd7 21. a4 or 20. ... Nfd7 21. h4.

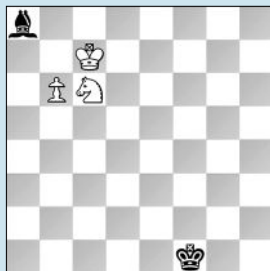
20. ... Nbx5! 21. exd5 Nxd5

QUIZ FOR NOVEMBER

THIS WAS ANOTHER banner year for long games — some with boring endgames, others with sparkling finishes. Here are six positions from 2025 games that lasted more than 80 moves. Your task is to find not just a way to win but the quickest way. In a typical monthly quiz position, the solution is a forced capture of a decisive amount of material, but this time, watch out for mating and queening combinations — and ways to impose *zugzwang*. Solutions on page 63.

PROBLEM 1

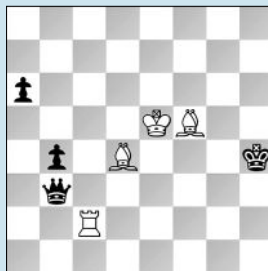
GM Ediz Gurel
FM Aleksa Petrovic



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 2

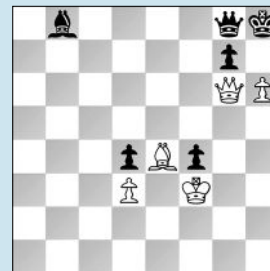
FM Reja Manon
FM Dion Krivenko



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 3

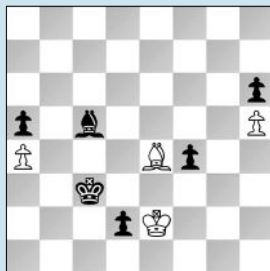
GM Vincent Keymer
GM Praggnanandhaa R



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 4

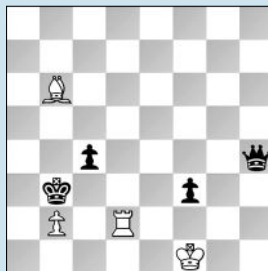
GM Alexander Beliavsky
GM Matej Sebenik



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 5

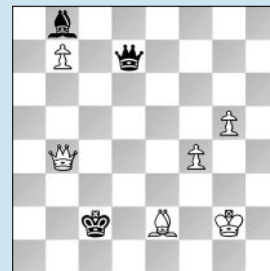
Artsiom Bialiauski
IM Viacheslau Zarubitski



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 6

Taimaz Temirbekov
GM David Paravyan



WHITE TO MOVE

Black has tactical ideas to work with, such as 22. ... e4 and 22. ... Nf4 (if 23. Bxf4? exf4). Polgar may have recognized this was her own critical moment.

Spassky would have had ample compensation for his sacrificed knight after 22. Rac1 Nxe3 23. Qxe3 d5. Polgar might have restrained his center pawns with 23. fxe3! in that line. Instead, she energized her c2-bishop.

22. b4!? Nxb4 23. Bb3 Bd5 24. Red1 Bc4! 25. Qd2 Nd3 26. Bh6 d5 27. Bc2 Nc5 28. Re1? Bh8!



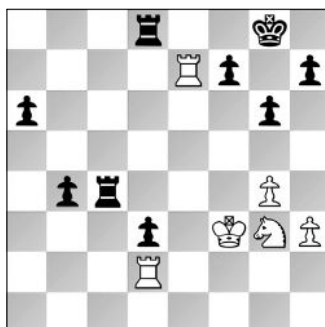
By preserving his dark-squared bishop, Spassky prepared a strong ... e5-e4 or ... d5-d4-d3.

29. Rad1 Qb6 30. Qg5 e4! 31. Qe3 Bxa2 32. Bb1 Bxb1 33. Rxb1 Na4 34. Qxb6 Nxb6 35. Be3 Na4 36. Nd4 Nc3 37. Rbc1 Rc4?!

Black could have won the game by carefully pushing his passed queenside pawns with 37. ... a5!. However, that would have required careful calculation. Spassky began to rely, instead, on moves based on general principles.

We might blame this on time pressure. But Krogus would say it is because he was entering the arc's third stage, "the falling off of attention due to tiredness."

38. Nge2 Nxe2+ 39. Nxe2 Rd8 40. g4 d4 41. Rcd1 d3 42. Ng3 Bc3 43. Bd2 Bxd2 44. Rxd2 Rdd4 45. f3 exf3 46. Kf2 b4 47. Kxf3 Rd8 48. Re7?



In this position White missed her own chances with 48. Ne4!. The attention level of both players was dropping from its mid-game peak.

48. ... Rb8 49. Rd7 b3 50. R7xd3 a5 51. Rb2 a4 52. Ne2 Kg7 53. Ke3 Ra8 54. Nc3 Rb4 55. Nxa4 Rxa4 56. Rbxb3 Rf4 57. Ke2 Kh6 58. Rf3 Kg5 59. Kf2 Rxf3+ 60. Kxf3 Kh4 61. Kg2 Ra2+ 62. Kg1 h5! 63. gxh5 Kxh5, White resigned.

There is another pattern worth knowing about. It can describe your play in a tournament.

You may start slowly. In the first round or two, you take more time than usual to choose moves. But as the tournament continues you gradually feel more comfortable at the board. You concentrate better. Moves flow from you more easily, and you're in the zone.

By the last rounds there may be another change. You may begin to tire. You lose some of the enthusiasm, energy or ambition you had when the tournament began.

When the tournament is over, it may seem that your thinking rose steadily, reached a peak, then declined. In other words, it formed one more arc. ♠

Posting Up

Positional Exchange sacrifices, Part 3

BY IM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN

W

E WILL WRAP UP OUR series on positional Exchange sacrifices with the now-typical motif of sacrificing on an outpost.

We know that knights love outposts, and in this column we are going to see that rooks are partial to them too! The most iconic example I could think of was Mikhail Botvinnik's sacrifice on d4 against Victor Liublinsky in 1943 — that is, until I came across an article by Sam Copeland on *Chess.com*. Sam was under the impression that Botvinnik's sacrifice was first of its kind until a YouTube commenter pointed out that Howard Staunton played a similar motif 100 years earlier. Thus, we have to give credit where the credit is due and travel back in time!

Here, the rook is already on the outpost and it's not going to move.

LEAVE IT BE

Pierre Charles Fournier de Saint Amant
Howard Staunton
Match (21), Paris, 12.19.1843



WHITE TO MOVE

31. Bd3 Qc6! 32. Qb2

The rook is untouchable: 32. Bxc4?? dxc4 threatening ... Qc6xg2 mate and attacking

the queen.

32. ... Qd7

It was even stronger to play 32. ... Bb8 with the idea of ... Qc6-d6 to provoke the weakening f2-f4.

33. Kg1 Nh5

The black rook is not moving from c4. Staunton is carrying on with the game as if it's not hanging.

34. Qd2 f5 35. f4 Ng3 36. Bxc4

White finally decides to capture.

36. ... dxc4



Not only does Black have a strong passed pawn on c4, but now the diagonal of the light-squared bishop is wide open. White's material advantage is irrelevant here; his rook is not as effective as the b7-bishop. The rest of White's pieces are not that impressive either, especially the dark-squared bishop.

37. Qb2 Rf6

An Exchange sacrifice and a rook lift! Black is launching his attack.

38. Nc3 Ne4 39. Re2 Rg6 40. Rd1 Nxc3 41. Qxc3 Bf3

Black gets the material back and will sim-

ply enjoy a winning advantage due to the c4-pawn, the better minor piece, control of the open e-file and pressure on the b4-pawn. White's position will eventually fall apart.

42. Rde1 Bxe2 43. Rxe2 Qe7 44. Qb2 Re6 45. Kf2 Re4 46. Qa2 Kf7 47. g3 Qb7 48. Qa3 Re8 49. Qc3 Qh1 50. h4 g5 51. Qe1 Qh2+ 52. Kf1 Qh3+ 53. Kg1 Qg4 54. hxc5 Bxf4 55. Bxf4 Qxe2 56. Qxe2 Rxe2 57. gxh6 c3 58. Kf1 Re4 59. Bc1 Kg6 60. d5 c2 61. Bd2 Rxb4 62. d6 Rd4 63. Ke2 Rxd6 64. Ke3 Kxh6 65. Ke2+ Kg6 66. Ke1 b4, White resigned.

Staunton left his rook under attack and still enjoyed a nice advantage. Botvinnik, on the other hand, had to sacrifice the Exchange in order to preserve his position.

BARGING IN

Victor Liublinsky
Mikhail Botvinnik
Moscow Ch, 1943



BLACK TO MOVE

25. ... Rd4!

The only way to defend the c-pawn against White's idea of 26. Na4. I will once again defer to Sam's article, where he quotes Botvinnik: "The only way of saving the c-pawn. It is difficult for White to exploit his material superiority when there are no open files, and Black has good chances on the kingside. Best of all for White would be to take the rook with the bishop and then transfer the knight to d3. We must remark that this sacrifice of the Exchange is possible only because Black will still have one rook, without which his bishops would not be dangerous. This is why Black could not delay with this sacrifice; if White exchanged one pair of rooks he would ensure himself the win."

For example, if 25. ... Kg7 26. Rxd8 Rxd8 27. Na4 Black doesn't have a good way of hanging on to all the material: 27. ... Rd4 (not 27. ... Bd6 28. Qc3 Qc7 29. Rd1 and Black

can't really move) 28. Bxd4 cxd4 29. Nb2 c5 30. Nd3 and according to Botvinnik, White would be winning here. I think White can aim for two pawn breaks: either a2-a3 and b3-b4 or g2-g3 and f3-f4. Without a rook, it will be tougher for Black to face this.

26. Ne2

White decides to hang on to the bishop. The idea Botvinnik was referring to was 26. Bxd4 cxd4 27. Na4 Bd6 28. Nb2.

26. ... Bc8 27. Nxd4 cxd4 28. Bf2 c5

Black is down the Exchange but has a very strong passed pawn in the center and the bishop pair.

29. Rf1 f5 30. Bg3

White should hurry up and try to open at least one file for his rooks with 30. a3 with the idea of b3-b4.

30. ... Bd7 31. Rad1 f4 32. Bf2 g5

With the position completely closed, White cannot make the claim that his rook is superior to the bishop. Black is launching a typical King's Indian attack, and that clear plan makes it much easier to play Black here.

33. g4 fxg3 e.p. 34. Bxg3?

This weakens the kingside significantly, and Botvinnik exploits this. At this point, White should be happy to give back the Exchange with 34. hxg3 Bh3 35. g4.

34. ... Bh3 35. Rf2 h5 36. Rfd2 h4 37. Bf2 Rf8 38. Rd3 Rf4

Things have already gone wrong for White here.

39. Kh1 Kh7 40. Rg1 Bd8 41. Qe2 Qf7 42. Qd1 Qh5

With the big threat of ... g5-g4. Once the f3-pawn falls, the light-squared bishop will become a complete monster.

43. Be3 Qxf3+ 44. Qxf3 Rxf3 45. Bxg5 Rxd3 46. Bxd8 Re3

The endgame is completely winning for Black.

47. Bb6 Rxe4 48. Bxc5 Re2 49. Rd1 Bg4 50. h3 Bxh3 51. b4 Bf5 52. Bd6 d3 53. bxa5 h3, White resigned.

With the sacrifice, Botvinnik shut down the d-file and rendered his opponent's rooks useless.

Now let's fast-forward 30 years (and 130 from the Staunton game!) to see an example similar to Staunton's in the King's Indian:

OPENING IT UP

Robert Avery
GM Svetozar Gligoric
National Open, Nevada, 1971



BLACK TO MOVE

21. ... Rf4!

Like Staunton, Gligoric is happy to give up the Exchange in order to open up the bishop's diagonal.

22. Bxf4

As the g5-pawn was under attack, Avery decides to accept the sacrifice.

White should have given up the pawn with 22. Nd3 Bxd3 23. Qxd3 Qxg5 24. Kf2. This looks kind of awkward for White, but the usual KID themes are here: White controls the c-file and the light-squared bishop will become very good via h3, while Black will have a lot of play against the white king.

22. ... exf4 23. Nd3 Qxg5

Life isn't as good here for White. Because Black recaptured on f4 with a pawn, the dark-squared bishop is now a monster and the white king cannot hide on f2.

24. Rc2 Rf8 25. Kd1 a3 26. Nc1 Ba4 27. Nb3 Bb2

With the straightforward threat of trading on b3 and promoting the a-pawn.

28. Rxb2 axb2 29. Qxb2 Rb8

Black has won the material back and went on to convert the advantage.

30. Qd2 Nf6 31. Kc1 Bxb3 32. axb3 Qe5 33. Kb1 g5 34. Rc1 g4 35. Rc7 Nh7 36. Ka2 Ng5 37. Qe2 h4 38. fxg4 Rf8 39. Bf3 Qd4 40. Rc4 Qe3, White resigned.

After I submitted this column to my editors, they informed me that this game had been analyzed by Gligoric in the August 1971 issue of *Chess Life*! You can find it, along with dozens of other games annotated by

the great Serbian grandmaster, in the US Chess Digital Archives.

What makes Gligoric's notes to his game with Avery particularly interesting is the comment on the key 21st move. He writes:

"After the game, a Mr. MacCormick from Chicago was kind enough to tell your commentator, who found his move on the board, that Tal made such a recommendation in a similar position in his book about the first match with Botvinnik. Sacrificing the Exchange, Black solves all his strategic problems, brings his knight and king bishop quickly into play and gets some material compensation on the way."

Let's take a look: After 1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. f3 0-0 6. Be3 e5 7. d5 c6 8. Qd2 cxd5 9. cxd5 a6 10. g4 Nbd7 11. Nge2 h5, "patented by Gligoric," Botvinnik veered from Avery – Gligoric with 12. Bg5. In his analysis of 12. g5 Tal references a 1959 game between Szabo and — you guessed it! — Gligoric that went 12. ... Nh7 13. h4 f6 14. gxf6 (14. Bg2 fxg5 15. hxg5 b5 16. Nc1 Nc5 17. b4 Na4 18. Nxa4 bxa4 19. Nd3 Bd7 20. Rc1 Bb5 21. Nb2 Rf4! gets us to our starting position in Avery – Gligoric) 14. ... Rxf6 15. Ng1.



Instead of 15. ... b5, as seen in Szabo – Gligoric, Tal recommends offering the Exchange with 15. ... Rf4!?, arguing that despite "Black's positional pluses" it is better to accept the material with 16. Bxf4 exf4 than to play 16. 0-0-0 in light of 16. ... Rxh4 17. Bg5 Bh6!.

It's true that modern engines are a bit skeptical about Black's compensation for the Exchange, but Stockfish's opinion notwithstanding, I find it fascinating how the same types of ideas can reappear in similar sorts of positions!

Turning back to more modern times, Levon Aronian shows that two is better than one against the expert of the King's Indian himself.

NO, I INSIST

GM Levon Aronian (2781)

GM Hikaru Nakamura (2708)

World Team Ch (8), Bursa, 01.12.2010



WHITE TO MOVE

32. Rc6!

In the KID, Black's light-squared bishop is the key attacking piece. Without it, the attack normally doesn't go anywhere. Black has buried his other bishop behind the pawn chain, so White would be thrilled for this trade, which would also open up White's own light-squared bishop.

32. ... b5

After 32. ... Bxc6 33. dxc6 White has a big edge. He will no longer have to worry about ... g5-g4; he has a far advanced passed pawn; the knight will land on d5, and the bishop on e2 can also join the action, while Black has no good play. Hikaru should have played 32. ... Nf6, fighting to make ... g5-g4 happen.

33. axb5 axb5 34. Ra6 Rb7



35. Rcc6!

Levon insists on sacrificing the Exchange, and Hikaru gives in! Now the rooks infiltrate.

35. ... Bxc6 36. dxc6 Ra7 37. Nc3

The knight is headed to d5.

37. ... d5

Hikaru gives up the pawn in order to clear out some squares for his pieces.

38. Nxd5 Nf5 39. exf5 Qxd5 40. Ne4

No knight on d5, but e4 is good enough.

40. ... Rgc7 41. Nxc5 Ng7 42. Rb6

A cute tactic. White is winning.

42. ... Nxf5

Grabbing the queen would lead to huge material loss: 42. ... Rxa3 43. Rxb8+ Ne8 44. Rxe8+ Kg7 45. Ne6+ Kf7 46. Nxc7.

43. Rxb8+ Kg7 44. Qb2 Ra2 45. Qb1 Rc2

46. Rxb5 Qd6 47. Rb7 Kh6 48. Kg1 Qxc6

49. Nf7+ Rxf7 50. Rxf7 Ne3 51. Ra7 Qd5

52. Qa1 Nxc2 53. Qa6+, Black resigned.

These games demonstrate several reasons behind this type of sacrifice: shutting down a file, defense, and opening the diagonal of a bishop stuck behind a pawn chain. In all the examples, we saw that the minor piece was at least as good as the rook, and that the positional changes that came as a result of the sacrifice also benefited the side who made it. We will wrap up the series (and the year!) next month with one final column on Exchange sacrifices for defensive purposes. ♠

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IN THE NEWS

BY JOHN HARTMANN

NOW TAKING RESERVATIONS

It's a proven fact: Appearing on our cover does great things for your chess.

Tatev Abrahamyan wrote our August cover story on the American Cup, where she had one of her better performances in recent years and finished in second place. She followed that up with a good showing at the National Open in June and the Dortmund Open at the beginning of August, picking up handfuls of points in both cases.

Her next tournament started just a few days later in Budapest. She started the GM norm event as the eighth seed in a field of 10, needing 58 rating points to reach 2400 FIDE and activate her three IM norms to become an international master.

Abrahamyan got off to a great start with 5½/7, including this slashing win in the Najdorf over FM Peter Balint.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B90)

WGM Tatev Abrahamyan (2342)
FM Peter Balint (2415)
Budapest 1 Week GM (7), Budapest,
08.15.2025

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6
5. Nc3 a6 6. Nb3 e6 7. g4 b5 8. Bg2 Bb7 9.
g5 Nfd7 10. h4 Be7 11. Be3 Nc6 12. f4 Nb6
13. Qe2 Qc7 14. 0-0-0 Nc4 15. Kb1 Nxe3
16. Qxe3 0-0-0



17. Nd5! exd5 18. exd5 Ne5 19. fxe5 dxe5
20. Rhf1 f6 21. Qa7 Rd6 22. Nc5 Qb6 23.
Qxb6 Rxb6 24. Nxb7 Rxb7 25. d6 Bd8 26.
d7+ Kc7 27. Bxb7 Kxb7 28. gxf6 gxf6 29.
Rd6 Rg8 30. a4 b4 31. Rfd1 Rg4 32. R1d5
Rc4 33. b3 Rc3 34. Re6 h5 35. Re8 Kc7 36.

Rh8 e4 37. Rhxh5 e3 38. Rh8 e2 39. Re8
Rh3 40. Rxe2 Rxh4 41. Re6 a5 42. Re8
Rh7 43. Re4 Rh1+ 44. Ka2 Kc6 45. Rd3 f5
46. Rc4+ Kb7 47. Rc8 Bf6 48. c3!, Black
resigned.

Two tasks remained for the final two games. 2400 was within reach, but there was also the matter of the GM norm, which could be had with a win and a draw in the final two games. Her Round 8 game with WGM Rapport started with a whimper, but ended with a bang.

FRENCH DEFENSE, EXCHANGE VARIATION (C01)

WGM Jovana Rapport (2299)
WGM Tatev Abrahamyan (2342)
Budapest 1 Week GM (8), Budapest,
08.16.2025

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. exd5

The Exchange Variation is not what you want to see when you need to win, but Abrahamyan manages to generate imbalances.

3. ... exd5 4. Nf3 Nf6 5. h3 Be7 6. Bd3 0-0
7. 0-0 c5 8. dxc5 Bxc5 9. Nc3 Nc6 10. a3 h6
11. Bf4 Nh5 12. Bh2 Be6 13. Nb5 Qf6 14.
c3 Nf4 15. Bxf4 Qxf4 16. Bc2 Rac8 17. Qd3
g6 18. Rad1 Bf5 19. Qd2 Qxd2 20. Rxd2
Bxc2 21. Rxc2 a6 22. Nbd4 Nxd4 23. cxd4
Bb6 24. Rfc1 Rxc2 25. Rxc2 Re8 26. b4 Kg7
27. a4 Re4 28. Rd2 g5 29. a5 Bc7 30. b5 h5
31. bxa6 bxa6 32. g3 g4 33. hxg4 hxg4 34.
Nh4 Bxa5 35. Ra2 Bd8



36. Nf5+

White's position looks easier to defend if the distant passed pawn is eliminated: 36. Rxa6 Bxh4 37. gxh4 Rxd4 leads to positions where the d-pawn is less dangerous than the a-pawn.

36. ... Kf6 37. Ne3 a5 38. Nxd5+ Ke6 39.
Nf4+ Kd6 40. Ne2 Re7 41. Nc3 Re1+ 42.
Kg2 Rc1 43. Ne4+ Kd5 44. Nc5 Bb6

44. ... Rb1! leaves White with the impossible task of defending the d-pawn. For example, 45. Ra3 Rb5! (not 45. ... Kxd4 yet due to 46. Nb3+) 46. Rd3 Bb6.

45. Nb3 Rb1 46. Ra3

I'm not sure why 46. Nxa5 wasn't played, as 46. ... Rb5 doesn't trap the knight: 47. Nb7 Bxd4 48. Nd8 etc.

46. ... Rb2

More forcing was 46. ... a4 47. Nc5 Bxc5 48. dxc5 Rb4! with a win, but this works too. White is running out of good moves.

47. Kf1 Kc4 48. Nxa5+ Kb4 49. Re3 Kxa5
50. Re7 Bxd4

50. ... f6! keeps the pawn and the advantage.

51. Rxf7

This is equal according to the engine, but difficult to defend in practice. Black keeps the pressure up and soon White's attempt at a fortress cracks.

51. ... Kb5 52. Kg2 Kc4 53. Rf4 Rxf2+!

GM Joel Benjamin would like this liquidation into a winning pawn endgame.

54. Rxf2 Bxf2 55. Kxf2 Kd3 56. Kf1 Ke3 57.
Ke1 Kf3 58. Kf1 Kxg3 59. Kg1 Kh3 60. Kh1
g3, White resigned.

A quick draw with WGM Zsoka Gaal in Round 9 sealed the deal, handing Abrahamyan her first GM norm and earning her 62 rating points in total. With this she jumped from 97th on the FIDE Women's list to 37th in September, placing third among Americans.

Congratulations, IM Tatev Abrahamyan! We'll see whether she can keep this hot streak up in the 2025 U.S. Women's Championship, underway as we go to press.

EUROPEAN TEAM

The 2025 European Team Championships were held in Batumi, Georgia, from Oct. 5-14. Forty Open teams were joined by 36 teams in the Women's section for nine rounds of national team competition.

Ukraine had a spectacular tournament, taking gold in the Open and silver in the Women's. The Open team was paced by GM Igor Kovalenko, who is playing chess part-time while serving in the Ukrainian military. His over-the-board strength seems undiminished, as can be seen by this creative victory over GM Loek van Wely in Round 7. It's not often that you see a queen shift so dramatically around the board!

QUEEN'S GAMBIT ACCEPTED (D24)

GM Loek van Wely (2630)
GM Igor Kovalenko (2669)
25th European Teams (7), Batumi,
10.12.2025

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. Nc3 dxc4 5. e4 b5 6. e5 Nd5 7. Nxb5 Nb6 8. Be2 Nc6 9. 0-0 Bb7 10. Be3 Qd7 11. Rc1 a6 12. Nc3 Be7 13. a3 Na5 14. Nd2 0-0 15. Qc2 Rab8 16. Rfd1 Ba8 17. Rb1 Kh8 18. Nde4 Qc6 19. Bf3 Qe8 20. Bg5 Nb3 21. Qe2 Bxg5 22. Nxc5 Qe7 23. h4 h6 24. Bxa8 Rxa8 25. Nce4 Rad8 26. Nf3 Rd7 27. Qe3 Rfd8 28. g3 Qf8 29. Kg2 Qg8 30. Nc3 Qh7 31. a4 a5 32. Qf4 Kg8 33. h5 Nd5 34. Nxd5 Rxd5 35. Re1 Qc2 36. Qe4 Qxe4 37. Rxe4 Rb8 38. g4 Rb4 39. Kh3 c5 40. dxc5 Nxc5 41. Rd4 Rxd4 42. Nxd4 c3 43. Nc6 Rb3 44. Nxa5 c2+, White resigned.

Poland took top honors in the Women's section, with first board IM Alina Kashlinskaya leading the way. Here's an example of her enterprising play.

CARO-KANN DEFENSE, ADVANCE VARIATION (B12)

IM Alina Kashlinskaya (2450)
IM Yuliia Osmak (2464)
25th European Teams Women (7),
Batumi, 10.12.2025

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 Bf5 4. h4 h5 5. c4 e6 6. Nc3 dxc4 7. Bxc4 Nd7 8. Nge2 Be7 9. g3 Nh6 10. Bf4 Bg6 11. 0-0 Nb6 12. Bb3 Nf5 13. Be3 Nxe3 14. fxe3 Bf5 15. Rxf5! exf5 16. Qd3 Qd7 17. Rf1 f6 18. exf6 gxf6 19. Nf4 Bd6 20. Ne6 Qh7 21. Rxf5 Ke7 22. Qe4 Kd7 23. Qf3 Rae8 24. Rxf6 Kc8 25. Ne4 Be7 26. N6g5 Qg7 27. Qf5+ Nd7 28. Rf7 Rhf8 29. Nd6+, Black resigned.

This report would be incomplete without the following fragment — it's one of the neater mating ideas I've seen in recent months. Store this pattern away for future use!



TOSS THOSE COINS

WIM Marija Zvereva (2003)
WIM Tanja Tuominen (2025)
25th European Teams Women (7),
Batumi, 10.12.2025



BLACK TO MOVE

22. ... Bf3!

Clearing the h-file for the queen and setting up the following.

23. Qf4

No better were 23. gxf3 Qh3 or 23. Bh2 Qg4.

23. ... Rh1+!, White resigned.

With the idea 24. Kxh1 Qh3+ 25. Kg1 Qxg2 mate.

EUROPEAN TEAMS

The European Team Championship is an international affair, but many European countries have their own internal team championships. *Chess Life* readers will likely know of the Bundesliga in Germany, where top Americans have competed for decades, but I have noticed some younger American

players are competing in lesser-known leagues with excellent results.

GM Bryce Tiglon took top board for Burhaniye Satranç Spor Kulübü in the 2024-2025 Turkish Super League, held Aug. 3-16 in Ankara. He scored 4½/10 against players with an average rating of 2603, gaining four FIDE rating points for his troubles. Perhaps his best game was this Round 1 win over GM Ivan Saric.

CARO-KANN DEFENSE, ADVANCE VARIATION (B12)

GM Bryce Tiglon (2545)
GM Ivan Saric (2661)
Turkish Super League (1), Ankara,
08.04.2025

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 Bf5 4. Nf3 e6 5. Be2 Nd7 6. 0-0 a5 7. Nc3 a4 8. Bd2 Bb4 9. Rc1 h6 10. Re1 Ba5 11. h3 Ne7 12. Bf1 0-0 13. Ne2 Qb6 14. Ng3 c5 15. Nxf5 Nxf5 16. Bxa5 Rxa5 17. c3 c4 18. Rb1 Qc7 19. Qd2 a3 20. b4 Raa8 21. Be2 Ne7 22. Bd1 f5 23. exf6 e.p. Rxf6 24. Nh2 Ra6 25. Ng4 Rf7 26. Bc2 Qf4 27. Re3 Nf5 28. Bxf5 Rxf5 29. Rbe1 h5 30. Nh2 Nf6 31. Qc2 Ne4 32. Rf3 Qd2 33. Qxd2 Nxd2 34. Rfe3 Ne4 35. f3 Ng3 36. Rxe6 Rxe6 37. Rxe6 Kf7 38. Re3 g5 39. Nf1! h4

If 39. ... Nxf1 40. Kxf1 Kf6 41. g4! Rf4 and the white rook is vastly superior to the black one: 42. Kg2 Kg6 43. Re5 Rf6 44. Rxd5.

40. Nxc3 hxc3 41. Kf1 Rf6 42. Re5 Re6 43. Rxe6! Kxe6 44. Ke2 Kf5 45. Ke3 b5 46. f4! gxf4+ 47. Kf3 Kg5 48. h4+, Black resigned.

IM Nico Chasin completed a long European sojourn with a stint in the Serbian First League (Sept. 18-28), where he played second

board for Red Star Belgrade. He featured in 10 of the 11 team matches, scoring 4½/10.

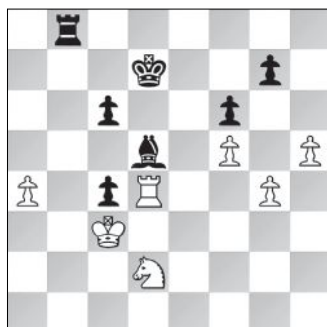
In Round 4 Chasin faced off with GM Bharath Subramaniyam in a rematch from their 2025 World Open encounter — see page 42 of this issue for that game. Some tough defense allowed Chasin to save the half-point in this battle.

REMATCH

GM Bharath Subramaniyam (2565)

IM Nico Chasin (2474)

Serbian First League (4), Bajina Basta, 09.21.2025



BLACK TO MOVE

45. ... Kd6 46. Nxc4+ Kc5 47. Nd2 Re8 48. Rd3 Rb8 49. Rd4 Re8 50. Kd3 Re1 51. Ne4+ Kb6 52. h6! gxh6 53. Nxf6 Ba2 54. Kd2 Rg1 55. Rf4 c5! 56. Ne4 Kc6 57. Ke3 Bf7 58. Kf2 Ra1 59. g5?

Too hasty. Now Chasin shows excellent technique to hold the position.

59. ... hxg5 60. Nxg5 Bd5 61. f6 c4 62. Ke3 Ra3+ 63. Kd4 Rxa4 64. Rf5 Ra3 65. f7 Rd3+ 66. Ke5 Bxf7 67. Nxf7 Rd5+ 68. Ke4 Rxf5 69. Kxf5 c3 70. Ke4 c2 71. Ne5+ Kb5 72. Nd3 c1=N 73. Nxc1, draw.

GM Kirk Ghazarian started his preparation for November's FIDE World Cup with six games in the Slovenian Team Championship. Held in Radenci, Slovenia, Sept. 19-28 and set to wrap up Nov. 14-16, Ghazarian scored 4/6 as the top board for ŠK Trebnje BMP. Here's his Round 1 victory over IM Domen Tisaj.

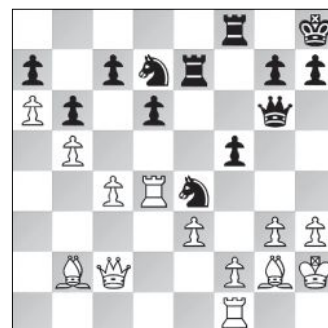
ENGLISH OPENING (A28)

GM Kirk Ghazarian (2518)

IM Domen Tisaj (2429)

Slovenian Teams (1), Radenci, 09.19.2025

1. c4 e5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. Nf3 Nc6 4. e3 Bb4 5. Qc2 Bxc3 6. Qxc3 d6 7. b4 0-0 8. Be2 Re8 9. b5 Ne7 10. Bb2 Ng6 11. 0-0 b6 12. a4 Bb7 13. a5 Ne4 14. Qc2 Nc5 15. a6 Be4 16. Qc3 f6 17. d3 Bxd3 18. Bxd3 e4 19. Be2 exf3 20. Bxf3 Rb8 21. Qc2 Qe7 22. Bc6 Rf8 23. Rad1 Kh8 24. g3 Ne5 25. Bg2 Rbe8 26. Bd5 Qd8 27. Rd4 f5 28. Bg2 Re7 29. Rd5 Qe8 30. h3 Ne4 31. Qe2 Nf6 32. Rd4 Ne4 33. Kh2 Nd7 34. Qc2 Qg6



Now the tables turn in White's favor.

35. g4 Ndc5 36. f3 Ng5 37. gxf5 Qxf5 38. Rf4 Qc8 39. Rg4 h6 40. Qg6 Qe6 41. Qh5 Rf5 42. Qh4 Nh7 43. f4 Ne4 44. Bxe4 Qxe4 45. Rfg1 Rf6 46. Bxf6 Nxf6 47. Rg6 Qf5 48. Qg3, Black resigned. ♖

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Game Analysis

Ideas on how to examine your games plus 'diagramming'

BY IM IGOR KHMELNITSKY

A

LMOST EVERY PARTICIPANT in our June Tri-Bridges Club training camp (see our September 2025 issue for a report

on this camp ~ed.) saw their ratings rise at July's World Open Festival — one young player tied for third in the Under 1600 Section, earning nearly \$1,300 — so Joshua Anderson and I chose to focus our post-World Open seminar on game analysis.

Most of the prospective attendees, who were school-age players rated between 1400 and 1800, were already reviewing their own games, so we decided to provide them with practical objectives and techniques for analyzing their play.

I asked all attendees to submit one or two of their recent games in PGN format, with optional brief annotations, a couple of days before the seminar. This proved more challenging than expected, even for experienced players in the group. Joshua assisted with the process, and eventually, everyone managed to send in their games, though some arrived at the last minute. Interestingly, our World Open prize-winner misplaced his World Open games and submitted a game from nearly a year earlier — a fascinating and instructive game, but somewhat dated for feedback.

Seminar Goals and Methodology

My main goals for the seminar were to:

- Introduce general ideas and techniques for reviewing chess games;
- Demonstrate the methods and tools I utilize as both a player and coach;

- Lead group analysis of submitted games, emphasizing pivotal moments.

We spent the first hour of the seminar discussing modern analysis tools — *Chess.com*, *LiChess.org*, and the venerable Chess-Base and Fritz software. I stressed the value of entering each game and recording initial notes soon after playing, while the thought process is still fresh.

A more detailed review should follow within a week, and a final round of analysis should be conducted with an engine, incorporating comments and annotations and checking everything for accuracy. Players working with coaches can then present their findings for further insight.

Diagramming and Training Techniques

I introduced my favorite technique, “diagramming,” inspired by the Soviet Chess School and popularized by renowned coach IM Mark Dvoretsky. I advised students to preserve diagrams of positions that made them proud, or where they made significant mistakes (excluding simple blunders). Options included:

- Saving positions in a separate database;
- Printing and archiving hard copies in a binder;
- Taking screenshots to store in a computer folder;
- Revisiting these diagrams periodically to reinforce learning.

Interactive Analysis and Sample Positions

To foster group discussion, I reviewed all submitted games beforehand and selected intriguing positions. I also prepared a short warm-up with four examples from those games. During the seminar, participants spent five minutes on each position, writing their thoughts before group review. Those positions are in the box to the right. Try your hand at them!

#1. Black to Move

Should Black play **8. ... Nxc3**? What should Black play after **9. hxg3**?

#2. White to Move

What do you prefer: **33. Re1** or **33. d6**?

#3. White to move

How should White continue?

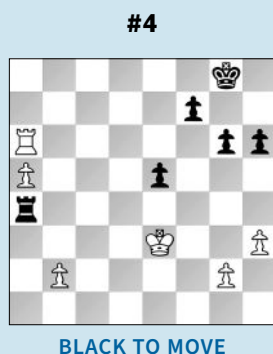
#4. Black to move

What result do you expect? How should Black continue?

Answers:

#1: Initial opinions varied, but after discussion, everyone agreed that capturing on g3 should be delayed to avoid activating the h1-rook and providing tactical opportunities for the d3-bishop. After exchanging on g3, Black should play **9. ... Kf7** to prevent **Bd3xg6+** since the h7-pawn is pinned. Another tactical shot would come if Black plays **9. ... Bg7?** as White has **10. Rxh7!**. This position highlighted strategic, tactical, and psychological factors.

#2: White is a pawn up with well-placed pieces, while Black has some activity but a



sidelined bishop. The natural moves 33. d6 or 33. Qxc5 give White a large advantage, but the cautious 33. Re1 could allow Black to win back the d5-pawn. After 33. ... Rxe1 34. Nxe1 Qxd5, White has a couple of scary checks, but nothing specific. This example showed how dangerous excessive caution can be.

#3: Most students wanted to capture on e5, but one suggested 23. Rc1. In the game, White played 23. fxe5, regaining a pawn and maintaining the attack, but after 23. ... Qc6 (or 23. ... Qb5), Black was able to consolidate, leaving White only a slight edge.

The discussion highlighted the importance of keeping pressure on Black's king, and the group realized 23. Rc1! would offer more threats and greater control of the open file. Black has no good way to deal with the threats of Rc1-c7 (after a trade on c1 or if Black's c8-rook moves along the eighth rank) and f4xe5 (after 23. ... Rc2 24. Rxc2 Qxc2).

#4: This endgame was likely headed for a draw, with White needing to advance the b-pawn and connect pawns for a win. But Black's move, 37. ... Rb4?, was a mistake. White missed 38. Rb6!, which could have secured victory. Instead, after 38. Ra8+? Kg7, White lost the b2-pawn. After a back-and-forth struggle with several missed chances for both sides, White eventually won.

Black had the safer option of 37. ... Kg7, which would have offered better chances

for defense. For example, 38. Kd3 e4+ 39. Kc3 e3 40. Kd3 e2 41. Kxe2 Ra2 with an equal position.

Group Engagement and Example Analysis

Most participants had their games presented and analyzed by the group, sparking lively and thoughtful exchanges. My role was to guide the discussions, encouraging students to discover optimal solutions together.

One opening position provoked particularly spirited debate: After 1. e4 g6 2. d4 Bg7 3. c4 d6 4. Nc3 Nc6 5. d5 Ne5 6. f4, how should White respond to 6. ... Bg4?

When polling the group, 7. Be2, 7. Qa4+, 7. Qb3 were suggested. All are fairly natural responses with some merit. When dissecting the position, I introduced students to the concept of the "null move." Imagine I moved the white queen somewhere — what would Black do? Immediately, the kids saw that Black's knight is nearly trapped and would need to retreat to d7, but that shuts the door on escape paths for the g4-bishop, which could be trapped after 8. h3.

"See, I was right," said one kid who rec-

ommended 7. Qb3. Another immediately asked, "But what about 7. Qc2?"

What is the difference and why does it matter? Use positions 5a and 5b above.

The impact of one square's difference is subtle. In **#5a**, after 7. ... Nd7 8. h3 Nc5! Black gains time to save the bishop, leaving White with a +1.5 evaluation from Stockfish. In **#5b**, Black cannot save the bishop, and White's advantage grows to roughly +3.5 per the engine. This is a good example to add to my "Chess Doubles" collection. Check out three Doubles in the October issue of *Chess Life Kids*!

Seminar Format and Future Plans

Our three-hour format, with five-minute breaks each hour, worked well. The participants remained focused and engaged while working with difficult material. We capped things off with an hour of socialization and blitz, and I gave each participant the section from my *Chess Exam and Training Guide* book devoted to the topic of game review.

We are already planning the next seminar, and I look forward to sharing even more material with the students. ♠

2nd Time Around

GM Andy Woodward on winning the U.S. Junior

BY **GM ANDY WOODWARD**

I WAS PRIVILEGED TO PLAY in the U.S. Junior Championship again this year. Invitations go out to the top 10 active players under age 21, and it's a round robin in a standard time control. The prize fund totaled \$75,000, along with a \$10,000 scholarship for the winner thanks the generosity of Dewain Barber and US Chess. There is also the small matter of a spot in the U.S. Championship that goes to the winner.

Aside from me, the field this year consisted of the youngest GM in history, Abhimanyu Mishra; the second African American GM, Brewington Hardaway; Californian GM Kirk Ghazarian, and five other strong IMs and an FM.

Last year I came into my first U.S. Junior with the third-highest rating, and I had high expectations, but I finished tied for fifth. This year, I was determined to improve my score and came into the tournament as the second seed, but all the players are very close in strength. I hadn't trained much in June, due to sickness, a week-long volunteer service project at the Mexican border with my church friends, and some online speed tournaments. I knew I wouldn't be in top form, but I wanted to play my best and see what happened.



It's all fun and games in the pre-event interview with Yasser!

PHOTO: COURTESY SLCC / A. FULLER

During the four days between the World Open and the Junior, I focused my chess study on openings and calculation. It was just enough time for me to forget about the last tournament and refocus.

The venue for the tournament this year was moved from the prestigious Saint Louis Chess Club to the University Tower because of the construction at the club.

The new venue looked as impressive as the old one, and everything felt the same; the only people we shared the elevators with worked there.

The day before the tournament was filled with pictures and interviews, which went smoothly due to the hard-working staff of the club, followed by the drawing of lots. I drew number 8, not a very encouraging number — it meant five blacks and four whites, and consecutive blacks in Rounds 5 and 6 — but I've learned from past tournaments to deal with whatever I get to my best ability. Afterward, I sat down with my chess friends at the dinner table for some light conversation, knowing that we would have to save the fun time until the end of the tournament.

I didn't do any specific opening preparation for any of my opponents before the tournament, so I started preparing right after dinner. The first three rounds had relatively easier pairings for me, but then I knew I had to try to win against them if I wanted to have a chance to win the tournament. With an early announcement of the field and the one-round-per-day schedule, the other players had plenty of time to prepare and review their openings deeply. More focus was put on how to avoid your opponent's preparation and try to steer into the positions that you are comfortable with.

I was lucky that all three games went my way without much difficulty; I knew it wouldn't be like that afterwards. In Round 4, I played against last year's second-place finisher, IM Justin Wang, a fellow Texan majoring in math in college. Justin's playing wasn't consistent in this tournament: He could play at a very high level when he was in good form, but at times he would have some unfortunate oversights. This was his sixth U.S. Junior, so I knew he was very experienced.

LONDON SYSTEM (D02)

GM Andy Woodward (2627)

IM Justin Wang (2625)

U.S. Junior Ch (4), St. Louis, 07.18.2025

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. Bf4 Bf5 4. c4 e6

5. Qb3 Nc6

5. ... dxc4 6. Qxb7 Be4 is probably the most accurate way to handle this line.

6. Nbd2

White can also play 6. c5!?. Play could go 6. ... Rb8 7. e3 Ne4 (7. ... Nh5 8. Bb5 Be7 9. h3 Nxf4 10. exf4 0-0 11. Qc3, or 7. ... a6 8. h3) 8. h3 g5 9. Bh2 Bg7 10. Nc3.

6. ... Na5?!

A dubious but semi-practical choice. Better was 6. ... Bd6! 7. Bxd6 cxd6 8. cxd5 exd5 9. e3 0-0 10. Be2 a5 11. 0-0 a4, when Black's doubled pawns control the center squares and restrict the white pieces.

7. Qa4! c6 8. c5!

White must act fast. If 8. e3?! dxc4 9. Bxc4 (not 9. Nxc4? Nxc4 10. Bxc4 b5!) 9. ... Nxc4 10. Qxc4 Qd5 when Black has a slightly more pleasant endgame due to the bishop pair.

Notice that the fork doesn't work in this variation, but only after some interesting lines: After 9. Bxc4 b5? 10. Bxb5! cxb5 11. Qxb5+ Nd7 12. e4! and now:

(a) 12. ... Bg6 13. b4 White wins back the knight and emerges a pawn up after 13. ... Qb6 14. Qxb6 axb6 15. bxa5 Rxa5 16. Ke2.

(b) Black can try to vary with 12. ... a6!?, but White replies 13. Qa4! maintaining the pin on the d7-knight. After 13. ... Bg6 14. h4! f6 15. Rc1 Nb7 16. h5 Bf7 17. Bc7! Qc8 18. h6 gxh6 the move 19. 0-0? lets the advantage slip after 19. ... Nbc5! 20. dxc5 Qxc7 21. Rfd1 Bh5.

Looking more deeply, however, 19. e5! in this line leaves Black a piece up, but all of White's pieces are active and after castling, Black will have a very unpleasant attack coming. The point is that 19. ... Nbc5 doesn't work in this line because of 20. dxc5 Qxc7 21. Ne4!.

8. ... b5



9. Qa3!

A weird looking move, but it has a purpose. White now wants to play b2-b4, forcing ... Na5-c4, after which Qa3-a6 leads to a good

position for White. Nf3-e5 is a threat to watch out for as well.

9. ... Nh5?!

White is still better after 9. ... Be7! 10. e3 0-0 11. Ne5 Ng4 12. Nxg4 Bxg4 13. Bd3 Nc4, but proving the advantage is much more difficult. Meanwhile, the point of White's weird-looking queen move is seen after 9. ... Nc4?! 10. Qa6! Qc8 11. Qxc8+ Rxc8 12. a4! when Black's queenside is falling apart. White has a big advantage after 12. ... a6 13. axb5 axb5 14. Ra7!, especially because 14. ... Nxb2 is met by 15. Ne5.

10. Be3

I spent around 20 minutes on this move trying to figure out the best place for the bishop. It turns out, all the options were quite strong:

(a) 10. Bd6?! is not great, but White's still slightly better after 10. ... Bxd6 11. cxd6 0-0 12. e3 Nf6 13. Ne5 Ng4! 14. Nxg4 Bxg4 15. Rc1;

(b) Another less-great option was 10. Be5?! f6 11. Bd6 Bxd6 12. cxd6 g6 with a slight advantage.

(c) Probably the best option was 10. Bg5!, when play could go 10. ... Qc7 11. Rg1 Nf6 12. e3 Nc4 13. Qa6 Nxd2 14. Nxd2 Nd7 15. g4 Bg6 16. Bf4 e5 17. Bg3.

10. ... Nf6 11. Bf4

I decided to repeat moves once to gain a bit of time.

11. ... Nh5 12. Be3 Nf6 13. Ne5! Ng4 14. Nxg4 Bxg4



15. Bf4

Looking to play Qa3-g3, attacking the bishop and threatening Bf4-c7.

15. ... g5!

Well spotted by Black. I hadn't even considered this move, but once he played it, it made a ton of sense. Of course not 15. ... Be7?? 16. Qg3!, and if 15. ... Bf5?! 16. g4! Bxg4 17. Qg3. If 16. ... Bg6 instead, the same idea

from before works: 17. b4 Nc4 18. Qa6 Qc8 19. Qxc8+ Rxc8 20. a4.

16. Be5?!

Practically, I liked my choice, but apparently it was good to just take the pawn: 16. Bxg5! Qxg5 17. Qxa5 Bg7 18. h3! (18. e3?! is no good after 18. ... e5 19. h3 Qh6!, pinning the pawn to the rook and defending the c6-pawn: 20. Rg1 Bd7 and Black has great compensation for the pawn) 18. ... Bf5 (Black loses after 18. ... Bh5 19. e3 e5 20. g4! Bg6 21. Qc7) 19. e3.

16. ... f6 17. Bg3 a6?

His point was to keep the queen out of a6 after ... Na5-c4, but this is simply too slow. The right way to play was 17. ... Bg7!, when Black prepares to play ... e7-e5 and the position is double-edged after 18. h4 e5.

18. h4! gxh4 19. Rxh4 h5 20. f3?!

I considered 20. e4!, but I was getting low on time so I played quickly on intuition rather than calculating much. White's much better after, say, 20. ... dxe4 21. Nxe4 Qxd4 22. f3 b4 23. Qd3 Qxd3 24. Bxd3 Bf5 25. Nxf6+ Kf7 26. Bxf5 exf5 27. Nd7!.

20. ... Bf5 21. e4 Bg6 22. Qe3 Nc4 23. Nxc4 dxc4 24. Be2 Kf7 25. Kf1 Be7 26. Rh3 Qd7? Slightly careless. Black's still in it after 26. ... a5 27. b3 cxb3 28. axb3 a4.

27. b3?!

Not punishing the mistake. Much better was 27. Rd1!.

27. ... cxb3 28. axb3 a5!



Even though White has a pretty big space advantage, it is not easy to make useful moves here, especially with low time.

29. Bf2 Kg7 30. Bd1?

Better was 30. f4! f5 31. exf5! Bxf5 32. Rxh5 Rxh5 33. Bxh5 a4 34. Bd1! Rh8 35. Kg1 axb3 36. Qxb3.

30. ... e5!

Immediately punishing the fact that I can't play Ra1-d1 any longer.

31. f4 exd4?!

Taking with the queen was more accurate.

It's equal after 31. ... Qxd4 32. Qxd4 exd4 33. f5 Bf7 34. Bxd4 h4.

32. Qd3!

Black would actually be slightly better after 32. Qxd4 Qxd4 33. Bxd4 Rad8! 34. Bf2 Bxe4 35. Be2 Ra8.

32. ... Kf8

The risky-looking 32. ... Bxc5! actually works after a series of only moves: 33. Rg3! Kh7 34. f5 Be8! 35. e5 Rg8! 36. Rh3 Rg5! and Black can hold it together.

33. f5 Bf7 34. Qxd4 Qxd4 35. Bxd4 Rd8 36. Be3 Ke8?!

36. ... Kg7! is counterintuitive, but Black could put his rook on a8 while preventing g2-g4. He's in good shape after 37. Bc2 Ra8.

37. Bc2 Ra8 38. g4!

Creating a passed pawn.

38. ... Kd7 39. Rd1+ Kc8 40. e5!?

The first step in the wrong direction. It was Move 40, which meant after this move, both players would get an additional 30 minutes for the rest of the game. Probably the easier and much more practical way to win was 40. Bd4! The threat is g4-g5, and there is no way to stop it without the loss of material. For example, 40. ... Rh7 41. e5 fxe5 42. Bxe5.



PHOTO: COURTESY SLCC / OOTES

40. ... fxe5



And it was in this position that I blundered the game away. Had I taken time to refocus after reaching the time control, I would have easily realized that White is simply winning.

41. f6??

Never move fast after reaching the time control! After 41. g5! Bd5 42. f6 Bd8 43. Bf2 White wins with ideas of Bf2-h4 and Rh3-e3 followed by the advance of the passed pawns.

41. ... Bxf6 42. Rf3

The point of the double pawn sacrifice, but it's not enough to win.

42. ... Bd5 43. Rxf6 hxf6!

Black not only has three pawns for the piece but a very safe king. I decided to call it a day and force a draw.

44. Bf5+ Kb7 45. Rxd5

I didn't see any real prospects after 45. Bh6?! Rad8 46. Bxg4 Bxb3.

45. ... cxd5 46. Rf7+ Ka6 47. Rf6+ Kb7 48. Rf7+ Ka6 49. Rf6+ Kb7, draw.

After spoiling this game, there was still one more game before the rest day, and I had black in Round 5 against IM Nico Chasin, of New York. The opening didn't go as planned, and I quickly got an almost losing position. Fortunately, after a complicated tactical battle the game ended in a draw. Going into the rest day, I had 4/5, a half-point ahead of Ghazarian and Mishra, who were not far ahead of Brewington Hardaway. I knew that the next round, with black against Abhimanyu, was going to be crucial for the tournament standings.

During the rest day, I spent quite a bit of time pacing around the room trying to figure out what I would play against each of his options. I spent the majority of my time preparing against 1. d4. Abhi instead played 1. e4 and went into a line in the Najdorf

which I didn't prepare at all. I got a losing position very quickly after some accurate moves from him; fortunately, I barely survived in a complicated position when I had more time on the clock.

After three draws in a row, I was now tied for first with Kirk at 4½/6. In Round 7, four of the five games were drawn, meaning the standings at the top remained the same going into the penultimate round: Kirk and I were tied for first, a half-point ahead of Abhi and Brewington.

Round 8 was the critical round. I had black against Evan Park; Kirk had white against Nico Chasin, and Abhi had white against Brewington. Surprisingly, all the games went in my favor.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B93)

IM Evan Park (2538)

GM Andy Woodward (2627)

U.S. Junior Ch (8), St. Louis, 07.23.2025

Many players save their opening surprises for important tournaments like this one. By the eighth round, I'd experienced plenty of surprises already.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. f4!?

Surprise No. 1. I was expecting 6. Bg5 or something classical.

6. ... e5 7. Nf3 Qc7 8. a4 Nbd7 9. g4!?



Surprise No. 2! It's dubious, but it's a very interesting idea, considering it's not easy to find the best reply. I decided to make a move that he probably wasn't familiar with.

9. ... Qc6!?

Other considerations:

(a) The best move was 9. ... d5!, following the rule about breaking in the center when your opponent attacks on the flank. He probably prepared 10. g5! (because 10. Nxd5?! Nxd5 11. exd5 exf4 leads to a great

position for Black after some simple developing moves such as ... Bf8-e7 and ... 0-0 because White's kingside is overextended). After 10. ... d4 11. gxf6 dxc3 12. fxg7 Bxg7 13. Rg1 Bf6 14. f5! I believe the position is very complex, and engine lines prove it. Possibly the game could continue 14. ... cxb2 15. Bxb2 b6 16. Ra3! Bb7 17. Rc3 Nc5 18. Ba3 Bxe4 19. Ng5 Rd8 20. Qg4 Bb7 21. Bc4 e4 with a double-edged position.

(b) I couldn't play 9. ... Nc5?! because of 10. g5 Nfxe4 11. Nd5 Qd8 12. Bc4 when Black's knights are very clumsy and White gets a very fast initiative.

(c) The move 9. ... Nxd4! is fine as long as Black reacts accurately to White's attack: 10. Nd5! Qd8 11. Bc4 Nb6! (not 11. ... Ngf6?? 12. Ng5! when f7 falls and the game is over, or 11. ... Nc5 12. Rg1 Nf6 13. Be3 when Black is completely undeveloped and has no safe



place for any of his pieces, all for the price of a pawn) 12. Bb3 Nxd5 13. Qxd5 Be6 14. Qxb7 Qc8 15. Qxc8+ Rxc8 16. Bxe6 fxe6 17. Rg1 Nf6 18. fxe5 Nxe4!. After the dust settles, Black is doing fine.

10. Nd2!

10. Bd3 was also fine, but this is most logical.

It's true that 10. Bb5?? looks tempting, but Black has a nice tactic: 10. ... axb5 and now 11. axb5 attacks both the rook and the queen, which can't defend each other, but then comes 11. ... Qxc3+!! 12. bxc3 Rxa1 and Black gets two pieces and a rook for the queen.

10. ... h6!

Otherwise 11. g5 is coming. Black would have to retreat the knight to g8 after 10. ... exf4 11. g5.

White is much better after 10. ... Nc5?? 11. f5!. Of course 11. Bb5!? is tempting, and sort of works, but it's not as effective: 11. ... axb5 12. axb5 Rxa1 13. bxc6 Bxg4 14. cxb7! Nxb7 15. Ne2 and now Black only has one piece and a rook for the queen, but also has great activity.

11. f5?

White can keep an advantage with 11. g5! hxg5 12. fxg5 Nh5 13. Qf3!.

11. ... Be7?

Once again missing the opportunity to take control of the center with 11. ... d5! 12. exd5 (12. Bg2 d4 13. Nd5 b6) 12. ... Nxd5 13. Nxd5 Qxd5 14. Qf3 Qxf3! and now 15. Nxf3 b6 is the move I missed. Black is doing well.

12. Bc4?!

White missed 12. Qf3! g6 (not 12. ... b6 13.

h4! Bb7 14. g5) 13. Bb5! Qc7 14. Bc4 with a good advantage.

12. ... b6

12. ... b5 would have been better, to gain more activity: 13. axb5 axb5 14. Bxb5 Qb7 15. Rxa8 Qxa8.

13. Qf3 Rb8 14. Qe2 Qa8?

A mistake, but a good practical decision. White can get an advantage, but they have to play two only moves to get it.

Best was sacrificing a pawn with 14. ... Bb7!. Once again, ... d6-d5 is the key breakthrough and Black should do everything they can to get it: 15. Bxa6 d5 and Black is fine.

15. b3!

A nice find by White. To be honest, I missed this move; I was only considering possibilities such as 15. h4.

15. ... Bb7 16. Bb2?

White is in great shape after 16. Ba3! preventing ... d6-d5 while preparing to castle long. I believe he might have been a bit concerned about 16. ... Rc8 and some tactics around ... b7-b5, but after 17. h4! (not 17. 0-0-0?? b5! 18. axb5 axb5 19. Nxb5 Nxe4) 17. ... Nc5 18. Bxc5 Rxc5 19. 0-0-0 b5 20. g5! White is in time to kick out the f6-knight so he will get the nice outpost on d5 for his knights.

16. ... d5!

I was fortunate to have this move!

17. exd5 Nxd5 18. Nxd5 Bxd5 19. Bxd5

(see diagram top of next column)

19. ... Bh4+!



POSITION AFTER 19. Bxd5

Not 19. ... Qxd5?? 20. 0-0-0! when the knight can go to e4 or c4, and Black's position collapses.

20. Kd1?

The game goes on after 20. Kf1! Qxd5 21. Rg1.

20. ... Qxd5 21. Qe4 Qd6!

Probably the move he missed.

22. Ke2

Relatively best was 22. Ba3 Nc5! 23. Bxc5 Qxc5 24. Qc4 Qe7! 25. Qc6+ Kf8.

22. ... 0-0

White's king is weak, and Black is winning.

23. Nc4 Qc5 24. Ne3 Rfc8 25. Rhd1 Nf6 26. Qxe5 Qc6 27. Qd6 Qe4

Threatening both 28. ... Rxc2+ and 28. ... Nxg4.

28. Qd3 Qf4!

Now the queen can come in on f2 or h2.

29. Rh1 Qf2+, White resigned.

He is losing the rook and more after 30. Kd1 Qf3+ 31. Kd2 Ne4+ 32. Kc1 Qxh1+.

Going into the final round, I was a full point ahead of Kirk, Abhi, and Brewington, which meant I only needed a draw to clinch the tournament. I had white against Kirk, and the night before the round I didn't sleep as well as I had been, and I didn't have any appetite either — most likely due to the stress I felt.

Yes, the hardest part was done, and holding a draw as White shouldn't be too difficult a task for a grandmaster, but I knew Kirk was an excellent calculator. What if I was outprepared in the opening? What if I made a mistake and lost? The morning of the game, I spent three or four hours checking my lines. Before I left for the playing hall, I reminded myself I just needed to do my best and leave the rest to God. A few minutes into



GM Andy Woodward

the game, I was relieved to see a Grünfeld because I knew I had a draw if I wanted.

GRÜNFELD DEFENSE, EXCHANGE VARIATION (D85)

GM Andy Woodward (2627)

GM Kirk Ghazarian (2592)

U.S. Junior Ch (9), 07.24.2025

It was the last round and I just needed to draw, so I played it pretty boringly. I made a slight memory slip in the opening, though.

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 d5 4. cxd5 Nxd5
5. e4 Nxc3 6. bxc3 Bg7 7. Nf3 c5 8. h3 Nc6
9. Be3 Qa5 10. Bd2 0-0 11. Be2 cxd4 12.
cxd4 Qa3 13. d5 Ne5 14. 0-0 Bd7



15. Nxe5?!

The correct move was 15. Rb1!. With all the stress, I forgot the right move order.

I was aiming for 15. ... Ba4 16. Qc1 (16. Qe1 Nd3 17. Bb4 Nxb4 18. Qxb4 Qxb4 19. Rxb4 Bc2 20. e5 Rfc8 21. d6 exd6 22. exd6 Bf8 23. Rxb7

Bxd6 24. Ng5) 16. ... Qxa2 17. Nxe5 Bxe5 18. Bc4 Qc2 19. Qxc2 (19. Rxb7 Bf6) 19. ... Bxc2 20. Rxb7 Bd6 21. e5 Bxe5 22. Bg5, but my memory failed.

15. ... Bxe5 16. Rb1 Qxa2! 17. Rxb7 Ba4 18. Qe1 e6?

After 18. ... Rfb8! White is in pretty big trouble. The key point is that the e7-pawn is immune because the rook will be trapped after ... Be5-d6. After 19. Rxb8+ (19. Rxe7? Bd6!) 19. ... Rxb8 20. Bb4! (or 20. Qc1 Qc2) 20. ... Bf6 21. Bc5 White's position is objectively fine, but Black clearly has more prospects.

19. Bh6!

An intermediate move he likely missed. Now White pretty much has a draw at least.

19. ... Rfb8 20. Rxb8+ Rxb8 21. dxe6?!

A dubious move, but I was just trying to play it safe. It would still have been an intense game after 21. f4! Bd4+ 22. Kh2.

21. ... Qxe6 22. Qa5 Bc6 23. Rd1 Re8



24. Qxa7?!

The engine shows I had a slight advantage after 24. f3!? Qe7 25. Be3 Ra8 26. Qa6 Qb7 27. Qxb7 Bxb7 28. Rd7 Bc6 29. Rxa7 Rxa7 30. Bxa7, but I like this move much more because I just wanted to avoid the complications and head for a draw.

24. ... Bxe4 25. Bb5 Bc6 26. Bxc6 Qxc6 27. Be3 Bg7 28. Qd7

Trading off the queens.

28. ... Qxd7 29. Rxd7 Bh8 30. Kh1 Bg7 31. Kg1 Bh8 32. Kh1 Bg7 33. Kg1 Bh8 34. Kh1, draw.

There is no longer anything left to play for, so I claimed the threefold repetition which gave me the title!

Holding the trophy, I was happy and grateful. I want to thank my family for their sacrifice; Kasparov Chess Foundation coaches for their coaching and advice; my private coaches for their help; my chess friends for their encouragement; and Dr. Jeanne Cairns Sinquefield and Rex Sinquefield, the Samford Fellowship, and the Saint Louis Chess Club for their financial support. To be honest, I am disappointed that I didn't play any games that I am really proud of, the beautiful game I was hoping for. I was being more practical and safer rather than being willing to take risks. There were gives and takes all throughout the tournament, but I was glad to be on the lucky side. I hope I can play more fighting games in my next tournaments to come! ♠

U.S. Junior Championship

ST. LOUIS, JULY 15-25, 2025

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	GM Andy Woodward	2627	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	6½/9
2	GM Abhimanyu Mishra	2689	½	*	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	6/9
3	GM Brewington Hardaway	2575	½	½	*	½	1	0	1	½	1	1	6/9
4	GM Kirk Ghazarian	2592	½	½	½	*	0	½	½	1	1	1	5½/9
5	IM Nico Chasin	2542	½	0	0	1	*	½	½	½	1	1	5/9
6	IM Justin Wang	2625	½	0	1	½	½	*	0	1	½	½	4½/9
7	IM Grayson Rorrer	2516	0	½	0	½	½	1	*	½	0	½	3½/9
8	IM Sandeep Sethuraman	2508	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	*	½	1	3½/9
9	FM Sharvesh Deviprasath	2534	0	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	*	½	2½/9
10	IM Evan Park	2538	0	½	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	*	2/9

Back for More

My return trip to the 2025 Girls' Junior Championship

BY **FM MEGAN PARAGUA**



FEATURING 10 OF THE TOP American female players under the age of 21, the 2025 U.S. Girls' Junior Championship was held July 15-25 in St. Louis. Each day required preparation and focus as every game was critical for the final results.

This was my second year participating in the Girls' Junior, and after finishing in shared seventh place last year, I was determined to improve upon my previous result. First place earns the winner a cash prize of \$12,500 along with a \$10,000 scholarship jointly funded by Dewain Barber and US Chess. It also gives the winner a spot in the U.S. Women's Championship! Ranked fourth in the field, I thought my chances were as good as anyone's — anything could happen.

Returning to St. Louis felt great. Unlike last year, when the tournament was held at the World Chess Hall of Fame, this event was held off-campus due to construction at the chess club. Still, it felt very much the same to me. I especially enjoyed seeing some of the players I've gotten to know in person, and I met some new faces too.

My Round 5 win against FM Rose Atwell was a really important moment for me in this tournament. She was the number two



An animated Megan, mid-interview with Yasser Seirawan

PHOTO: COURTESY SLCC / A. FULLER

seed, so beating her gave me a huge confidence boost. It also left me in first place at 4/5 heading into the rest day, which I spent relaxing by walking around the hotel and talking with friends.

FRENCH DEFENSE, EXCHANGE VARIATION (C01)

FM Megan Paragua (2249)

FM Rose Atwell (2271)

U.S. Girls' Junior Ch (5), St. Louis, 07.19.2025

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. exd5 exd5 4. Bd3 Nc6 5. Ne2

This move is less common in this position. Usually White plays c2-c3 before developing the knight to e2. I wanted to keep my options open and try to bring Black into an unfamiliar position.

5. ... Nb4 6. Bb5+ Bd7 7. Bxd7+ Qxd7 8. a3 Na6 9. Nbc3 c6 10. Bf4 Nc7 11. Qd2 Ne6 12. Bg3 Ne7



13. 0-0-0

The decision between castling kingside or queenside is critical, since each option comes with a different plan. I decided to go queenside because I felt my king was safe there, and I could start a kingside attack.

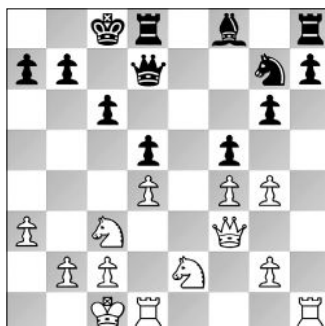
Instead 13. 0-0 could let Black get her attack going first with 13. ... h5 14. h3 Nf5 15. Rae1 0-0-0 16. Na4 b6 17. b4 h4 and a slightly better position.

13. ... Nf5 14. Qd3 Nxd3 15. hxd3 g6 16. f4 0-0-0 17. g4 Ng7 18. Qf3 f5

(see diagram top of next column)

19. gxf5

My idea was to try and open the h3-c8 diagonal towards Black's king and possibly the g-file. I felt it might give attacking chances and, if we exchanged queens, I could get to a comfortable ending. I also liked that it undoubled my pawns.



POSITION AFTER 18. ... f5

Despite all of this, 19. g5 was better. Play might continue 19. ... Bd6 20. Kb1 Nh5 21. Rh4 Rde8 22. g3 with an interesting position.

19. ... Nxf5 20. Kb1 Nd6 21. Qh3 Re8 22. Ng1 Ne4 23. Nxe4 Rxe4 24. Qxd7+ Kxd7 25. Nf3 Bd6 26. g3 Re3 27. Rdf1 Ke7



28. f5

Trying to break open Black's defenses. With many possible responses to consider, Rose started running low on time, adding to the pressure.

28. ... Bxg3?

The only way to survive was 28. ... gxf5 29. Nh4 Re6 30. Nxf5+ Kd7 when White is just a little better.

29. fxg6 h5 30. Ng5 Rg8 31. Rxh5

Even stronger was 31. Rf7+ Ke8 32. Rxh5 Re7 33. Rf6 Bc7 34. Ne6.

31. ... Rxg6 32. Rf7+

The plan is to capture all of Black's queenside pawns while maintaining mate threats. I felt confident I'd win here.

32. ... Kd6 33. Rxb7 Re7 34. Nf7+ Ke6 35. Nd8+ Kd6 36. Rh7 Rxh7 37. Rxh7 Bf2 38. c3 a6 39. Nb7+ Ke6 40. Nc5+ Kf6 41. Nxa6 Ke6 42. Nc5+ Kf6 43. Nd7+ Kg5 44. Ne5 Re6 45. Rc7 c5 46. Nd3 Bg3 47. Rxc5 Kf5 48. Rxd5+ Ke4 49. Rg5 Kxd3 50. Rxg3+ Kc4 51. Ka2, Black resigned.

WGM Zoey Tang was tied with FM Ruiyang Yan for second place after five rounds, and as the top seed, I knew she would be dangerous. We drew a long game in Round 7, but she was able to win in Rounds 6 and 8 while I made draws. The result was that she and I swapped places with one round to go.

At 6/8, Zoey was a half-point ahead of Ruiyang and me. After I won against WIM Iris Mou and Ruiyang drew with WFM Rachael Li, everything came down to Zoey's game against Jasmine Su. A draw would lead to a playoff against me, while a win would give her clear first place. At first I thought it was leaning towards a draw, but under pressure Jasmine made a mistake that let Zoey grind out an endgame win.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, O'KELLY VARIATION (B28)

Jasmine Su (2189)

WGM Zoey Tang (2371)

U.S. Girls' Junior Ch (9), St. Louis, 07.24.2025

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 a6

The O'Kelly, probably to try and take White out of her preparation.

3. c3 d5 4. exd5 Qxd5 5. d4 e6 6. Be2 cxd4 7. cxd4

Now we have transposed into an Alapin setup.

7. ... Nf6 8. Nc3 Qd8 9. 0-0 Nc6 10. Be3 Bd6 11. Rc1 0-0 12. h3 h6 13. Bd3 Nb4 14. Bb1 b5 15. Ne5 Bb7 16. Qd2 Re8 17. Rfe1 Bf8 18. a3 Nbd5 19. Nxd5 Bxd5 20. f3 Rc8 21. Qd3 Rxc1 22. Rxc1 Bd6



23. Ng4?!

The dark squares around the king get a little weak now. White could have kept the balance with 23. Bf2 Qb8 and only now 24. Ng4.

23. ... Nxd4 24. fxg4 Qh4 25. Bf2 Qg5 26. Be3 Qh4 27. Bf2



POSITION AFTER 27. Bf2

27. ... Bh2+

Faced with a possible repetition, Zoey instead offers a temporary bishop sacrifice that gets her queen to a more active, threatening square.

28. Kxh2?

Some gifts shouldn't be accepted! Better was 28. Kf1 Qg5 29. Qh7+ Kf8 30. Rc3 Qd2! 31. Qc2 and now 31. ... Qxc2 32. Bxc2 Bd6 leaves Black with a better structure, but 31. ... Bf4! is even stronger. Now if 32. Qxd2 Bxd2 33. Rc5 Ba5 the bishop gets to b6 where it is very powerful.

28. ... Qxf2 29. Rc2 Qf4+ 30. g3 Qf3

Letting Jasmine back into the game. Better was 30. ... Qe4! 31. Qxe4 Bxe4 32. Rc1 Bxb1 33. Rxb1 Rc8 when Black has an active rook and a better pawn structure.

31. Qxf3 Bxf3 32. Rc3 Bd5 33. Kg1 g5 34. Kf2 b4!

Breaking up White's queenside pawns and gaining targets.

35. axb4 Rb8 36. Bd3 Rxb4 37. Bxa6 Rxd4 38. Be2 Rb4 39. Rc2 Rb3 40. Rd2 Kg7 41. Bd1 Rb4 42. Ke3 Kf6 43. Kd3 Ke5 44. Re2+ Kd6 45. Rd2 f5 46. gxf5 exf5 47. b3 Ke5 48. Kc3

I think 48. Ke3 is a simpler way to defend. White will keep the king near the kingside and try to trade off the bishops.

48. ... Rb8 49. Re2+ Be4**50. b4?**

The first step in the wrong direction.

50. ... Rc8+?

Handing White a lifeline!

Much stronger was 50. ... Rd8!, cutting off the king. Now Black can march on the kingside: 51. Rd2 Rc8+ 52. Kb2 f4 53. gxf4+ gxf4 54. Rd7 Rf8 55. Re7+ Kd4 56. Rd7+ Ke3 and stopping promotion will be tricky.

51. Kb3?

There was still time to turn back. Instead 51. Kd2 admits the error and keeps White in the game.

51. ... Kd4

Zoey decisively brings her king into the game and prepares to start pushing her pawns on the kingside.

52. Rd2+ Ke3 53. Re2+ Kd3 54. Rh2 Bd5+ 55. Kb2 Ra8 56. Rc2 Rb8 57. Be2+ Ke3 58. Bh5 Rxb4+ 59. Kc1 Rc4 60. Rxc4 Bxc4 61. Bg6 f4 62. gxf4 gxf4 63. Kd1 f3, White resigned.

So Zoey won the 2025 Girls' Junior Championship with an impressive 7/9, while I was very grateful to take sole second. I celebrated my performance by treating myself to frozen custard at Ted Drewes and took time to visit downtown St. Louis and the Gateway Arch!

Playing the Girls' Junior was a great experience that taught me many useful lessons. I hope to apply some of them at the 2026 edition! ♠



WGM Zoey Tang

U.S. Girls' Junior Championship

ST. LOUIS, JULY 15-25, 2025

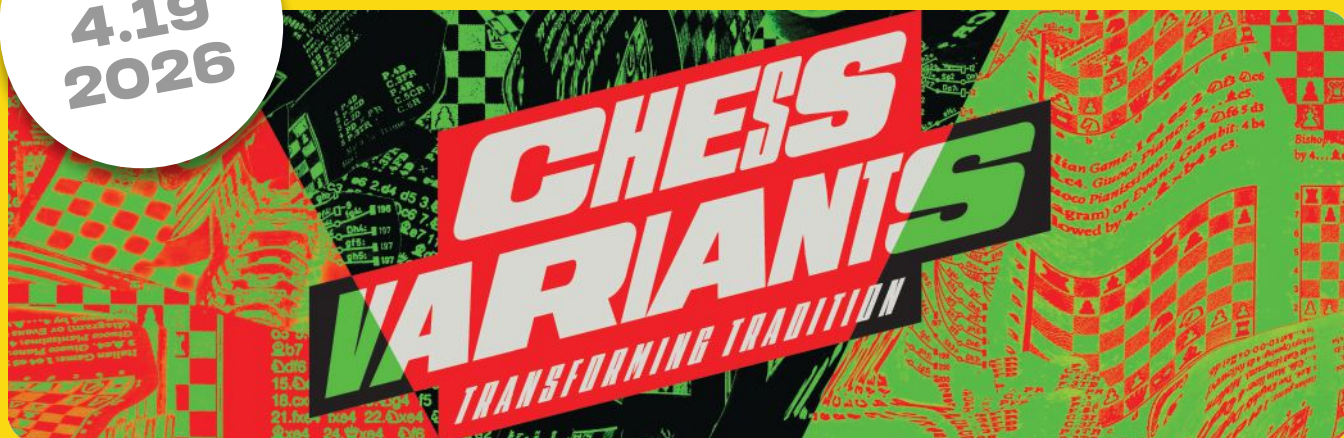
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	WGM Zoey Tang	2417	*	½	1	1	½	1	½	½	1	1	7/9
2	FM Megan Paragua	2295	½	*	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	6½/9
3	WFM Rachael Li	2327	0	½	*	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	6/9
4	FM Ruiyang Yan	2354	0	½	½	*	½	½	1	1	1	½	5½/9
5	WIM Iris Mou	2324	½	0	0	½	*	1	1	0	1	½	4½/9
6	Jasmine Su	2329	0	½	½	½	0	*	½	½	1	1	4½/9
7	FM Rose Atwell	2348	½	0	½	0	0	½	*	1	0	1	3½/9
8	WGM Rochelle Wu	2337	½	½	0	0	1	½	0	*	0	½	3/9
9	WFM Laurie Qiu	2180	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	*	1	3/9
10	WIM Chloe Gaw	2242	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	½	0	*	1½/9

CURRENTLY ON VIEW AT THE



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A LONG TIME COMING

Brewington Hardaway breaks through to the GM title.

BY **GM MAURICE ASHLEY**



IMAGINE WAITING 25 years to see a dream come true.

When I became the first African-American in history to attain the GM title, in 1999, the expectation was that there would be many more to quickly follow. It still boggles the mind that it took this long before another Black person here in the United States would replicate the feat. However, it finally came to pass last year in the form of Brewington Hardaway, a 15-year-old prodigy from the Bronx who never would have taken up chess in the first place if not for a funny twist of fate.

Brewington, now 16, is the youngest in a family of four. As luck would have it, his mother, Ikuko, enrolled one of his sisters for chess club when he was 5. Brew's parents decided that it would be easier to leave him in the chess club with his sister than take him home and then have to return to pick her up. "The story goes that my sister Noni signed up for chess, but didn't really like it," Brew remembered during our Zoom call. "But the cost was \$150, and my mom said that she had already spent the money, so my sister had to do it. If Noni had quit chess, I don't know if I would have ever played chess. Probably not."

While Noni would soon come to enjoy chess, eventually reaching the top 20 in the country for her age group among girls, the effect chess was having on her baby brother would lead to the discovery of a world-class talent.

"I just sat over in a corner of the room drawing and doing homework," Brew recalls. "Every so often, I would look up to watch the big screen with all the puzzles and see the kids playing, and I started to gain interest. I eventually asked how this game works, and ever since, I've been hooked."

Within about a month, the coach of the club, Chris Johnson, began to understand that the young boy wasn't an average kid.

"As a kindergartner, he beat everyone in the club, including the fourth graders," said Coach Johnson, an expert who now runs a citywide program in NYC called Project Pawn. "By the time he got to first grade, he started beating a few of the coaches too. He could barely tie his shoelaces!"

Johnson recalled the moment he knew Brewington was special: "I showed him a bunch of lines in the Sicilian, and then months later he still remembered everything. I never had to show him the same thing twice." At age 5, Brewington won the New York K-1 championship, and Johnson remembers that while "everyone else was

celebrating, he was still going over the games he had just played, still trying to improve."

'She thought I was lying'

Brew had a massive breakthrough just two years later when, at just 7 years old and rated 1537, he defeated IM Jay Bonin, a New York City legend.

"I played my only opening then — the Benko," Brewington recalls. (Johnson says that, coincidentally, they had just gone over the line a week before.) "I remember I hit Jay with a nice tactic and won two pieces, so he resigned. When I told my mom I'd won, she thought I was lying."

Coach Johnson remembers seeing a photo of the winning scoresheet that Ikuko had texted him: "I was shocked that he had beaten someone so strong so early on in his development, but I wasn't really surprised, if that makes sense. This is a kid who used to fall asleep at night at his laptop while going over chess. I told his mom that one day soon he would be a GM."

(In a curious twist of fate, Coach Johnson's very first coaches were Kasaun Henry, Charu

Robinson, and Daniel Gray, who were members of the Raging Rooks, a team I coached to a national championship title back in 1991).

One would have expected such a victory to motivate the youngster to work extremely hard to get even better. However, it was a few more years before he would take chess seriously. “Honestly, back then, I didn’t even study chess,” Brewington says with a smirk. “I just played for fun. I barely did anything outside of the school chess club — no openings, only puzzles. ... I didn’t even know what the IM title meant or even what

a FIDE rating was. ... I just played chess because I enjoyed it.”

Three years later, at age 10 and still not studying consistently, Brewington gained the title of national master, defeating Bonin once again as well as other highly rated players along the way. Even these results hadn’t yet been enough to spark the singular focus a young talent needs to get to the highest levels. That would come from another twist of fate, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced everyone into lockdown, prompting him to pursue the game full-blast.

That was where he realized “I just loved to play. Whenever I saw a nice tactic, it made me happy. Something about all the different possibilities, cool tricks, positional ideas — it always made it interesting for sure.”

Setbacks and stepping up

Two years of secluded study plus work with a new coach, GM Gregory Kaidanov, saw a period of accelerated growth. Now he was tearing up the New York scene, and it was time to go outside of familiar territory to tournaments around the country.

The next big breakthrough came at what many would consider a moment of personal failure: In the last round of the 2022 SPICE Cup, Brewington needed only a draw to secure an IM norm, he made a crucial mistake that cost him the game. However, instead of hanging his head in defeat, he was able to reframe it as a positive outcome.

“Losing the game was tough for sure,” he recalls. “I was not really happy, obviously. But at that point I realized that norms were possible. ... I hadn’t come close before. To get close like that was definitely motivational.”

That mindset helped catapult him at the beginning of 2023 when he scored two IM norms in back-to-back tournaments in New York. He also came agonizingly close to the 2400 rating required to secure the title by reaching a live rating of 2399.4! The third norm followed in July of that year at the World Open, but it would be November before the elusive 2400 rating would be finally achieved — at the U.S. Masters, in Charlotte, he gained 62 rating points, the IM title, and his first GM norm in one fell swoop.

With his confidence soaring, it now seemed like the wind was at his back. 2024 kicked off with a bang when, in his very first tournament of the year, he sprinted to a 5-0 start and coasted with four draws to finish with a 2668 performance rating, a half-point over the GM norm. However, the next several months saw only decent results, with a modest rating boost, and then a depressing setback at the U.S. Junior in St. Louis.

“I had three completely winning positions that ended in a loss and two draws,” he says.



Top: Brewington with Chris Johnson, his first coach. Bottom: Brewington with GM Gregory Kaidanov.

“That was really tough for me. If I had won all those games I would have tied for first. I could see I had the middlegame strengths to make the GM title, but my conversion and focus needed to improve. In the critical moments, in time pressure; that’s when I stumbled. I realized that I had to try to not overthink things, to manage my time better and have more self-confidence.”

Those realizations stayed with him as he took aim at a summer tournament in Barcelona, Spain. After a modest start, he picked up steam and then found himself face to face with one more major obstacle to clear the last hurdle.

“It’s funny because in the second-to-last round, I thought I had to make a draw against a random 2330 to get my final norm,” he recalls. Instead, he ended up with Black against German GM Alexander Donchenko, who had a peak rating of 2684. “But I told myself that if I could draw a player of that level with Black, then I really deserve the title. I ended up playing a 99% accuracy game and got the draw.”

A little more than two months later, Brewington eclipsed the 2500 mark at the New York Fall GM Invitational, finishing with an undefeated 6 out of 9. In doing so, he cemented his place in history as the second (and by far the youngest) African American to secure the GM title. It was a relief to him and pure joy to those of us who had followed his quest. Though the journey seemed a bit drawn out, he actually secured his three IM and three GM norms in just 21 months.

Brewington credits Kaidanov for helping him navigate the twists and turns of the journey. (Coincidentally, Kaidanov was my coach when I attained the GM title as well.) As Brew put it, “The GM title was really all thanks to him. During all these ups and downs, he was really supportive. He let me know that bad things happen to everyone. He let me know I had all the tools I needed to become a top player. That was really good to hear.”

As for what it means to be an African American in a sport where there is so little representation, Brew, as he often does, put on a positive spin.

“I just see it as an opportunity to inspire kids from a similar background. There are not many others besides my good friend, Tani [IM Tani Adewumi]. I think there’s a lot of potential out there; we just need kids to have motivation and inspiration to reach their potential.”

What’s next?

With so much talent and a fairly rapid rise, he speaks about the future with a blend of high aspirations and pragmatic realism. His next step: Get to 2600 in the next two years, before high school is over.

“I feel like I still have a lot to improve, of course. I don’t think my rating shows the work I’ve been putting in. ... I think over time if I keep working as I am, the rating will start to show. I’m just gonna keep training, then the results will come. I’m not too worried about it.”

As for one day becoming the World Champion, he simply replied: “Isn’t that everyone’s dream?”

Nowadays, he spends at least three to four hours a day working on openings, calculation training, and a bit of the endgame, while additionally using blitz to practice the opening lines he’s been learning. He balks at the idea of studying all day long like some of his peers.

“I personally can’t see myself focusing for eight to 10 hours on chess. I like to do other things like going to the gym to be in shape and watching NBA basketball. That’s also important for tournaments. There’s other things in life to do other than chess. I try to be well-balanced, but when I work on chess, I try to be really focused and maximize the time I have.”

Brew through the years, L to R: first steps at the 2019 K-12 Grades, winning the 2022 Barber, and today at the Marshall Chess Club.



His second-place finish at the 2025 U.S. Junior, where he picked up a cool prize of \$11,000, would seem to suggest he's going in the right direction. With a busy tournament schedule, including events in the United Arab Emirates and invitations to play in the Icelandic league, it would seem he's well on the way to living the life of a young professional. Despite the challenges, or maybe because of them, he's excited to see what the future holds.

"I think the past few tournaments I've been trying to enjoy the journey a lot more. I think that's the most important thing: to enjoy the game and never give up. Anything is possible if you really put your mind to it. I'm looking forward to what's to come." ♠

Postscript: As referenced in Ashley's article, Hardaway travelled to the UAE in August for the Abu Dhabi Open and the Fujairah Global Masters. He scored a solid 6/9 in the Abu Dhabi Open but stormed to victory in the Blitz, lapping the field by a full point at 10/11.

This was followed by what he calls the "biggest tournament win of my career," a clear first-place finish with 7½/9 and a performance rating of nearly 2700 at the Fujairah Global Masters. Hardaway has annotated two games from that event in the game section accompanying this article.



Four Pivotal Games

ANNOTATED BY **GM BREWINGTON HARDAWAY**

RUY LOPEZ (C77)

IM Brewington Hardaway (2457)

GM Yasser Quesada Perez (2668)

U.S. Masters (4), Charlotte, 11.24.2023

I went into this game on 2/3. I had a live FIDE rating of 2384 while my opponent was over 2500, so a win would get me over 2400 and give me the IM title (I already had four norms at this point).

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. d3 d6 6. c3 g6 7. 0-0 Bg7 8. Re1 0-0 9. h3 h6 10. Nbd2 Re8 11. d4 b5 12. Bc2 Bb7 13. a3 Nb8 14. b3 Nbd7 15. Bb2 c6 16. b4 Nh5 17. a4 Nf4 18. Nb3 Qc7 19. Na5 Bc8 20. axb5 axb5 21. Nb3?!

Looking back, I think I was just trying to simplify instead of playing the best moves. White would have a slight edge after the very logical 21. Bc1, aiming to get rid of the strong knight on f4.

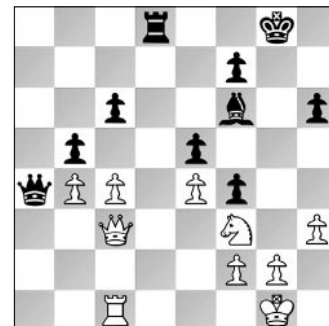
21. ... Rxa1 22. Qxa1 Nb6 23. Bc1 g5 24. Bxf4



24. ... gxf4?!

My opponent wanted to open the g-file, but it is very hard to achieve anything with it, and now his dark-squared bishop is shut out of the game.

25. dxe5 dxe5 26. Nc5 Bf6 27. Bb3 Nd7 28. Nxd7 Bxd7 29. Qa2 Be6 30. Rd1 Bxb3 31. Qxb3 Rd8 32. Rc1 Qa7 33. c4 Qa4 34. Qc3



AFTER 34. Qc3

34. ... c5!?

With 10 minutes left, this move was a shock. My opponent clearly wanted to muddy the waters, hoping I would make a mistake in time pressure.

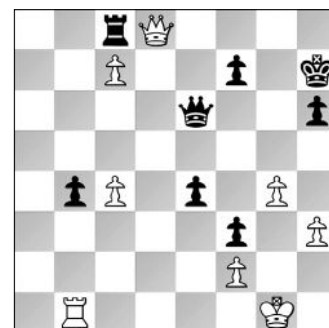
35. bxc5 b4 36. Qa1 Qc6?!

Not the best, since it allows my queen to infiltrate.

37. Qa7 Qxe4 38. Qb6 Qf5 39. c6 e4 40. c7 Rc8 41. Nd4 Bxd4 42. Qxd4 Kh7 43. Qd5 Kg6 44. Qd6+ Kh7 45. Qd5

I'd be happy with a draw, since it is very balanced and I am low on time.

45. ... Qg6 46. Qd8 f3 47. g4 Qe6 48. Rb1



48. ... e3?

The engine says that Black is still OK, but my opponent must have missed my next move. Suddenly I am the one pushing for the win!

49. Qd3+!

Retreating moves are always important, and hard to spot.

49. ... f5?

This loses on the spot. My opponent simply panicked, I would assume, because he went from trying to press on the board and clock to suddenly needing to shift into defensive mode.

I'm up a pawn after 49. ... Kg8 50. Qxe3 Qd6 51. Qxf3 Rxc7, but Black should hold this.

50. Qxe3 Qxe3 51. fxe3 Rxc7 52. Rxb4 fxg4 53. hxg4 Kg6 54. Kf2 Rc6 55. Kxf3 Rf6+ 56. Kg3 Rc6 57. Kf4 Rc5 58. e4 Rc8 59. e5 Rf8+ 60. Ke4 Kg5 61. Rb7 Rf4+ 62. Kd5 Kxg4 63. Rg7+ Kf3 64. e6 Ke3 65. Rg3+ Kf2 66. Rh3, Black resigned.

I was jubilant after this game. I had had a live FIDE rating of 2399.4 in February 2023, but I didn't hit 2400 until this game, played in November. I also ended up earning my first GM norm in this event, which ended a very memorable month for me — I gained a whopping 112 points after starting the month at 2323, my lowest point in a year. This just shows the ups and downs of chess, but resilience and determination always prevail.

ENGLISH OPENING (A28)

GM Paulius Pultinevicius (2596)

IM Brewington Hardaway (2471)

Sants Open (7), Barcelona, 08.29.2024

I came into this game with 5/6 after beating four lower-rated players and drawing two higher-rated players; with four rounds left I was on good pace for a norm.

1. c4 e5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. Nf3 Nc6 4. e4 Bc5

I also could have played 4. ... Bb4, but based on the tournament situation I wanted a sharper game.

5. Nxe5 Nxe5 6. d4 Bb4 7. dxe5 Nxe4 8. Qf3 Nxc3 9. bxc3 Ba5 10. Bf4 0-0 11. 0-0-0 Rb8 12. Qe3 Qe7 13. Kb2 b5

Again I played the more aggressive option. The main alternative is 13. ... Bb6.

14. c5

It's unclear after 14. cxb5 Re8 15. Qxa7 Ba6, and it can be analyzed further, but since the white queen is away from the defense of the king, in most lines Black will go for ... Ba5xc3+ followed by some queen checks and a perpetual.

14. ... b4 15. c4 b3!?

I remembered seeing this idea in some games and decided to go for it. After something like 15. ... Re8?! 16. Kb3 my bishop on a5 is shut out of the game.

16. a3

Not 16. axb3?! Bb4.

16. ... Qe6 17. Rd4 Bb7 18. Bd3 f6 19. Qg3 Rbe8 20. Rd1?

The engine says this is a mistake, but the idea is clear: 21. Rxd7 is a big threat.

20. ... Rf7?



I instantly just thought I had to protect the d-pawn, but apparently the best way to continue was 20. ... fxe5 21. Rxd7 Qf6 22. Be3 Bc6 when White has some compensation for the Exchange, but Black is objectively better.

21. Rd5??

I remember being totally shocked when he played this move. At first, I thought I had to take the Exchange (which is not good), but then I looked at my options and realized that I was much better, if not winning, after what I played in the game.

21. ... fxe5!

Very simple, but very effective. My opponent probably wanted me to play 21. ... Bxd5? 22. cxd5 Qe7 23. Qh3, when Black has to be precise just to survive: 23. ... Bc3+!! 24. Kxc3 Qxc5+ is the only way to equality.

22. Be3

Not 22. Rxe5 Qf6 and Black is winning.

22. ... e4 23. Be2 Bxd5 24. cxd5 Qf5 25. h4 Kh8 26. Qg5 d6 27. Bg4 Qf6+ 28. Qxf6 Rxf6 29. Kxb3 dxc5 30. Kc4 h6 31. h5 Rb8 32. Be6 Rb2 33. g4 a6?



Here the nerves got to me and I made a pretty terrible move.

34. Bf5

I was thinking that after 34. Bxc5 Rc2+ he couldn't play 35. Kb5, but apparently after 34. Kxc5 Rc2+ 35. Kd4 is equal for White. It's still very complex, but they've survived the worst. Fortunately, my opponent was also in time pressure and made the final error.

34. ... Rc2+ 35. Kb3 Rc3+ 36. Ka4 Bb6 37. Bf4 Rd3 38. Rxd3 exd3 39. Bd2 c6, White resigned.



Brewington studies the competition at the 2025 U.S. Junior

After this crucial win, I had 6/7 and drew GMs Gergely Kantor and Alexander Donchenko to secure my final norm! This game changed me as a player: Now I felt that I could fight against these strong GMs in sharp, complex games, even with the black pieces, and come out victorious.

SLAV DEFENSE, EXCHANGE VARIATION (D14)

GM Vitaly Sivuk (2495)

GM Brewington Hardaway (2499)

Fujairah Global (6), UAE, 08.29.2025

Going into this game I was on 4½/5 and my opponent was perfect at 5/5. Victory here would be key for my chances to win the tournament.

1. Nf3 c5

My opponent tends to prefer more solid positions to grind down his opponents, so I hoped to transpose into a sharp Sicilian.

2. c3

No luck! This is already a bit of a surprise, so I had to spend some time to decide what path to take.

2. ... d5 3. d4 cxd4 4. cxd4 Nc6 5. Nc3 Nf6

And so we transpose into an Exchange Slav, which is well known to not give many winning chances to either side. My thinking

was that because I am not a Slav player, he probably didn't expect me to go into this.

6. Bf4 Bf5 7. e3 a6!?

Objectively this is not best, but if I played 7. ... e6 White would have a few ways to essentially force a draw: 8. Bd3 Bxd3 9. Qxd3 Bd6 10. Bxd6 Qxd6 is pretty uninspiring.

8. Be2 e6 9. Ne5 Nxe5 10. Bxe5 Bd6 11. 0-0 0-0 12. Rc1 Rc8 13. Qb3 Rc7 14. f4 Bxe5 15. dxe5 Ne4 16. Nxe4 Bxe4 17. Rc3 Qd7 18. Rfc1 Rfc8



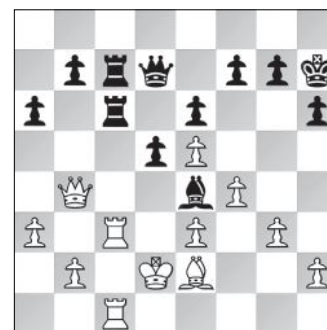
19. Kf2

Playing for tricks with 19. Qxb7?? does not work as I have 19. ... Rxc3!.

19. ... h6

Here I felt the game was just going to be a draw, but I played on to see what his ambitions were.

20. Qb4 Rc6 21. g3 R8c7 22. Ke1 Qc8 23. Kd2 Qd7 24. a3 Kh7



25. Qd6!?

At the board I was annoyed and thought I had blundered when this move was played. I saw this idea previously, but got lazy and forgot he could play it here. Luckily Black is still doing fine.

25. ... Rxd6 26. Rxc7 Qd8 27. exd6 d4!

I think this my opponent missed this.

He likely expected 27. ... Qxd6, but this is not great for Black: 28. Rxf7 Bg6 29. Rxb7 d4 30. Rcc7 dxe3+ 31. Kxe3 and the engine says I could maybe hold this, but Black would have to be super precise.

28. d7 Bc6 29. R1xc6 bxc6 30. Rb7

It might seem like my queen is stuck stopping the pawn, but I had a plan.

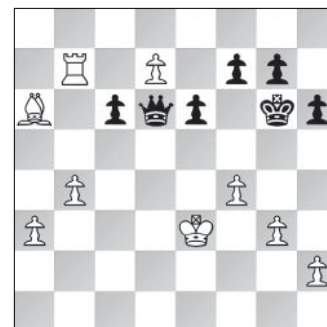
30. ... Qa5+ 31. b4 dxe3+ 32. Kxe3 Qd5 33. Bc4

Trying to decoy my queen away from the d-pawn.

33. ... Qd6!

Definitely not 33. ... Qd1? 34. Bd3+.

34. Bxa6 Kg6



At this point I felt the tide was shifting. Before White had no risk, but suddenly all three results are possible.

35. Bd3+ Kf6 36. a4 e5 37. fxe5+ Qxe5+



Deep in thought at the Fujairah Global Masters

38. Kd2 Qb2+ 39. Bc2?

This was not a great move, but I failed to see the winning idea.

39. ... Qd4+?

After the correct 39. ... Ke7! I forgot that I have a huge threat in ... c6-c5 when I'm practically winning!

40. Ke2?

The final mistake. He had to retreat the bishop with 40. Bd3 when it would likely have been a draw. For example: 40. ... Ke7 41. a5 Qb2+ 42. Ke3 c5 43. a6 cxb4 44. d8=Q+ Kxd8 45. a7 Qc1+ and I would have to force a repetition because the a-pawn is too strong.

40. ... Ke7!

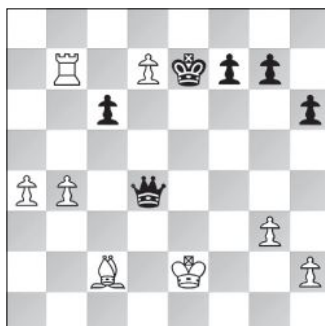
(see diagram top of next column)

Now my queen is finally free from defending that pawn!

41. a5 Qe5+ 42. Kd2 c5!

Now we see why 40. Bd3 was necessary!

43. Bd3



POSITION AFTER 40. ... Ke7

After 43. a6 I have 43. ... Qd6+ and the a-pawn falls.

43. ... Qb2+ 44. Ke3 Qd4+ 45. Ke2 c4 46. Bc2 c3 47. Bd3 Qe5+ 48. Kf3 Qd5+ 49. Be4 Qxb7!!

A pretty finish. My c-pawn will be one tempo faster than his a-pawn.

50. Bxb7 c2, White resigned.

Sometimes you cannot force your way into a better position with black, but instead you have to be patient and wait for your chances, even if the position looks dry and drawish.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED (D55)

IM Jimmy Jubin (2464)

GM Brewington Hardaway (2499)

Fujairah Global (8), UAE, 08.31.2025

I faced off with a young Indian IM in Round 8. We both were on 6/7, and with black I decided to play solidly. Fortunately, chances came and I took over the game.

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bg5 Be7

5. e3 h6 6. Bh4 0-0 7. Nf3 Nbd7 8. Qc2 c5

This is the most common move, but I think he was surprised as I usually play ... c7-c6 heading for the triangle setup.

9. Rd1 cxd4 10. Nxd4 Qa5 11. Nb3 Qc7

12. Bg3 Qc6

I thought White might try to force a draw based on the tournament situation and his norm chances, but thankfully he tried to fight.

13. a3

13. Nd4 Qc5 14. Nb3 Qc6 is probably going to be a repetition.



13. ... dxc4 14. Na5 Qc5 15. Nxc4 b6 16. Qa4



16. ... e5



The champion!

After 16. ... Bb7!? we would reach an imbalanced position where White has three pieces for the queen after 17. Rxd7 b5 (17. ... Bc6?? 18. Rc7) 18. Rxe7 bxa4 19. Rxb7. During the game I wasn't sure how to evaluate this position; of course the engine gives triple zeros!

17. Qb5 Qxb5 18. Nxb5 Ne4 19. Bxe5 Nxe5 20. Nxe5 Bf6

Giving up a pawn, but I can't be worse with such active pieces.

21. Nc4 Ba6 22. Nd4 Rfc8



23. Nd2

23. Nd6 is interesting, but it doesn't lead to much for White after 23. ... Bxf1 24. Nxc8 Bxg2 25. Rg1 Bh3 26. f3 Ng5 27. Nd6 Bxd4 28. Rxg5 hxg5 29. Rxd4 and this endgame should be balanced.

23. ... Bxf1 24. Rxf1 Bxd4 25. exd4 Nd6

The only way to keep fighting. 25. ... Re8 26. Nxe4 Rxe4+ 27. Kd2 Rxd4+ is lifeless.

26. Nf3?!

The first small mistake.

26. ... Re8+ 27. Kd2 Nc4+ 28. Kc3 Rac8 29. Kb3 Re2 30. Rb1



30. ... Na5+?!

A missed opportunity. 30. ... b5 is most precise. Black is in no rush as White's pieces are all defending on the back rank.

31. Ka2 Rcc2 32. d5 Nc4 33. Rfc1

At the board I thought 33. Kb3 was annoying, and that I'd likely have to force the perpetual with 33. ... Na5+ 34. Ka2 Nc4.

33. ... Rxc1 34. Rxc1 b5!

Avoiding 34. ... Rxb2+?? 35. Ka1 b5 36. Rxc4 when White wins.

35. Ka1 Rxf2 36. Nd4?!

It is hard to be precise in such a complex endgame, so I understood that I had good chances to win.

36. ... a6 37. Rc2 Rf1+ 38. Ka2 Rd1 39. Nc6 Ne3



40. Rc5?

White was banking on the d-pawn being a strong asset, but fortunately my rook controls it very well.

40. ... Nxc7

Not 40. ... Nxd5?? 41. Rxd5 Rxd5 42. Ne7+.

41. Ne7+ Kh7 42. Nc8 Ne3 43. d6 Nc4 44.

Rc6 Rd2 45. Kb1 f5 46. b3 Rd1+ 47. Ka2 Rd2+ 48. Kb1 Rd1+ 49. Ka2

Repeating the position twice to gain extra time to calculate. This is an important tip I received from my coaches.

49. ... Ne5 50. Rc5 Nf7 51. Rxf5 Nxd6 52. Rc5 Rd2+ 53. Kb1 Nxc8 54. Rxc8 Rxh2 55. Ra8 g5 56. Ra7+ Kg6 57. Rxa6+ Kf5 58. Ra5 g4 59. Rxb5+ Ke4, White resigned.

My pawns are way faster than his, so White gave up.

This win left me in clear first with 7/8, not to mention a perfect 4/4 with the black pieces. I was paired with the only player at 6½ in the final round, and with the white pieces I was able to get the draw I needed to secure first place!

This was the biggest tournament win of my career to date. I was very pleased with the quality of my play (a 2696 performance rating) after having felt stuck at a plateau for a few months. ♦

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Youth Will Be Served

The World Open crowns its youngest-ever clear winner after a dramatic last-round battle.

BY IM JASON LIANG AND IM JOSHUA POSTHUMA

M

ORE THAN 1,200 PLAYERS came together in Philadelphia this summer to compete in the World Open, the U.S.'s largest

competition and one which has only gotten more popular in recent years. The tournament is now split and held on two separate weekends: The U1200 and U1000 sections battled from June 27-29, while the six higher sections competed from July 2-6, all at the Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown, a historic location in the heart of the city, close to City Hall, Reading Terminal Market, and the iconic Love Park.

Every round saw intense focus and determination from the entire playing hall, even as each wearying round went by. Top seed GM Jeffery Xiong started the event with a perfect 5/5, but after a Round 6 bye cooled off and drew the remainder of his games. The only draw on the top eight boards in Round 8 was between co-leaders Xiong and GM Razvan Preotu, leaving the door open for other players to catch up, and the other seven of the top eight games were decisive! Going into the last round, the leaders were Xiong, Preotu, GMs Jianchao Zhou, Robby Kevlishvili, Bharath Subramaniyam, and the standout of the crowd, IM Samrug Narayanan, the only non-GM in contention. He started slowly, with two draws against lower-rated players in the early rounds, but climbed up with a string of victories, culminating with an impressive win over GM Semen Khanin in Round 8.

Subramaniyam also joined the leaders going into the final round, with a brilliant attacking victory:

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B30)

GM Bharath Subramaniyam (2597)

IM Nico Chasin (2540)

World Open (8), Philadelphia,
07.06.2025

Annotations by IM Joshua Posthuma

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 Nd4

This move prevents White from transposing into an Open Sicilian with 4. d4, but Black risks falling behind in development.

4. Bc4 e6 5. 0-0 Qc7

Simple development with 5. ... Ne7 was perhaps the safer option. Play could go 6. Nxd4 cxd4 7. Ne2 Nc6 8. d3 Be7.

6. d3 Nc6

Moving the knight yet again!

7. Re1 a6 8. a4

White already had the thematic knight sacrifice 8. Nd5!, which Black should probably decline with 8. ... Qd8, even though White retains a plus in development and space, because after 8. ... exd5? 9. exd5+ Nce7 10. d6! Qxd6 11. Ne5 White has unbearable threats against f7.

8. ... d6 9. d4 cxd4 10. Nxd4 Na5?!

Safer was 10. ... Nxd4 11. Qxd4 Nf6.

11. Ba2 Bd7 12. Bf4 Ne7

Hoping to get to g6 next move.

13. Nf5!!



Nope! White senses the moment and rips open the center.

13. ... exf5 14. Bxd6 Qc6 15. Bd5

More tactics!

15. ... Qb6

Not 15. ... Qxd6 16. Bxf7+.

16. exf5 Nac6 17. a5 Qxb2 18. Qd2

Now Black's queen is trapped, and White still has immense pressure on the black king.

18. ... Nb4 19. Bb3 0-0-0 20. Reb1 Qxa1

21. Rxa1 Bc6 22. Bxf7 Nxf5 23. Be6+ Bd7

There are many ways to convert the material advantage, but Bharath finds the most precise one.

24. Na4 Bxd6 25. Nb6+ Kc7 26. Nxd7 Rxd7

27. Bxd7 Kxd7 28. Rb1 Kc7 29. Rxb4 Bxb4

30. Qxb4 Rd8 31. Qc5+ Kb8 32. Qe5+ Ka8

33. g3 g6 34. Qc7 Rd1+ 35. Kg2 h5 36. h3

Rd2 37. Qc3 Rd6 38. Qc8+ Ka7 39. g4 hxg4

40. hxg4 Rc6 41. Qxc6 bxc6 42. gxf5 gxf5

43. Kf3, Black resigned.

With a six-way tie at the top, who would have the courage to risk a payday of several thousand dollars to play for the top prize? For the players on the top two boards, the risk was not worth it: Preotu – Zhou and Xiong – Kevlishvili ended peacefully in mere minutes, the players settling for a sure \$4,700 each. It all came down to Board 3: Subramaniyam – Narayanan. Both players surely realized that they were battling head-to-head for more than \$20,000.

Regardless of the outcome, history was about to be made. The 17-year-old Subramaniyam would be the youngest player to ever take clear first at the World Open, while

Narayanan would be the first IM to win the World Open since 1990.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

GM Bharath Subramaniyam (2597)

IM Samrug Narayanan (2506)

World Open (9), Philadelphia,

07.06.2025

Annotations by IM Joshua Posthuma

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. d3 Nf6 5. 0-0 0-0 6. h3 h6 7. Re1 d6 8. c3 a5 9. Bb3 Bb6 10. d4 Re8 11. Bc2 exd4 12. cxd4 Nb4 13. Nc3 Nxc2 14. Qxc2 c6 15. Bf4 Be6 16. Be3 d5 17. e5 Nd7 18. Ne2 Nf8 19. Nf4 Qd7 20. Qd2!?



Ambitious. Although it was objectively better to take out Black's light-square bishop with 20. Nxe6, after 20. ... Nxe6 21. Rad1 c5 22. dxc5 Bxc5 23. Bxc5 Rac8 Black regains material with total equality and the main imbalance would be removed from the position.

20. ... Bf5 21. Nh5 Bg6 22. Ng3 Bd8 23. Nh2 Nh7 24. f4

White dreams of achieving the f4-f5 advance, but Black has many ways of dealing with this.

24. ... h5

It seems clever to attack the g3-knight, but the pawn will become overextended on h4. With 24. ... f5!, Black can maneuver the h7-knight to e6 and enjoy a flexible position.

25. Qf2 h4 26. Ne2 Qf5 27. Nf3 Qh5 28. Kh2 Bf5 29. Rh1

Bharath prepares g2-g4.

29. ... Nf8 30. Kg1 Be4 31. Nd2 Bf5 32. Nf3 Ne6 33. g4 hxg3 e.p. 34. Nxc3 Qg6 35. Kh2 Qh7 36. Qg2 Kf8?!

Headed in the wrong direction. After 36. ... Be4! 37. Rhg1 f5! Black's minor pieces are secure and White has no attack.

37. Raf1 b6 38. Ng5?!

In time pressure, Bharath gets impatient. Preparing this with Kh2-g1 and h3-h4 would've been more powerful.

38. ... Bxg5 39. fxg5 Bg6 40. Qf3



40. ... Ke7?!

Perhaps Samrug missed his opponent's cold-blooded response. The threats against the d4-pawn after 40. ... Qh4! force White's hand. After something like 41. Nf5 Qh5 42. Nd6 Qxf3 43. Rxf3 c5! 44. dxc5 bxc5 45. Nxe8 Kxe8 Black's superior bishop, as well as the mobile pawn duo, give him the better side of equality.

41. h4! Rh8

After 41. ... Qxh4+ 42. Kg1 Black loses at least a minor piece.

42. Kg1 Bh5 43. Qf2 Raf8?!

Overprotecting the kingside, but abandoning the queenside! Bharath acutely senses this vulnerability, and shifts his plans accordingly. Perhaps it was time to admit the mistake with 43. ... Kf8, though Black's position remains tough to play.

44. Qd2! Qg6 45. Qc3 Kd7 46. Qa3 Nc7 47. Nf5 Re8 48. Rh2 Nb5 49. Qb3 a4!?

A good practical try, preventing White from playing 50. a4 himself and buying time to drum up some kingside counterplay.

50. Qxa4 Bg4 51. Ng3 f6 52. Qb3 fxg5 53. Bxg5 Ref8?!

With 53. ... Rhf8! 54. Rhf2 Rxf2 55. Rxf2 Nxd4! Black could grab the d4-pawn without getting mated, unlike the game continuation.

54. Rhf2 Rxf2 55. Rxf2 Kc7

This is the difference; 55. ... Nxd4?? 56. Qxb6 Nf3+ 57. Rxf3 Bxf3 58. Qb7+ Ke6 59. Qe7 mate.

56. Rf4 Qb1+ 57. Kg2 Bd1

Preventing the rook invasion with 57. ... Be6 was perhaps a better try, though White remains dominant after 58. a4 Na7 59. Ne4.

58. Qb4 Re8 59. a4 Qc2+ 60. Rf2 Qxa4 61. Rf7+ Kc8 62. Qxa4 Bxa4 63. Nf5 g6 64. Ne7+ Kd7 65. Nxc6+ Kc8 66. Ne7+ Kd7 67. Rg7?! Ke6 68. Nxc6 Bc2 69. Kf3 Rc8 70. Kf4! Rf8+ 71. Bf6 Rxf6+ 72. exf6 Kxf6 73. Rb7 Nd6 74. Rxb6 Nc4 75. Rb8, Black resigned.

Ultimately, Subramaniyam's courage to press on in a slightly worse position with little time was handsomely rewarded, as he pulled out the victory, taking home \$20,500.

Other notable performances from the Open Section included IM Tanitoluwa Adewumi's strong 6½/9 result, sharing the \$5,000 U2450 prize with five other players, including his last-round opponent, one of your co-authors. Whoever could win this game had a great shot at winning the prize outright.

TWO KNIGHTS DEFENSE (C55)

IM Jason Liang (2481)

IM Tanitoluwa Adewumi (2476)

World Open (9), Philadelphia,

07.06.2025

Annotations by IM Jason Liang



1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 h6
5. 0-0 d6 6. a4 g6 7. Nc3 Bg7 8. h3 0-0
9. Be3 a6 10. Re1 Kh7 11. Qd2 Ne7



My opponent has played quite solidly so far, though I felt that my space advantage should count towards something.

12. d4 exd4 13. Bxd4 Nc6 14. Be3 Be6 15. Qe2 Re8 16. Rad1 Qd7 17. Bc1 Qc8 18. Bxe6 Qxe6 19. b3 Rad8 20. Qd2 Qc8 21. Re3 Re6 22. Qe2 Rde8 23. Qc4 Na5 24. Qd3 Nc6 25. Ba3 Qb8 26. Rde1 Qa7 27. g3 Qb6 28. Bc1 Qc5 29. Qd1 Ne5 30. Nxe5 Rxe5 31. Qd3 Qc6 32. f4 R5e6 33. Nd5 Nd7 34. Ba3 Nc5



I was happy to see this as now I take full control of the light squares. 34. ... b5 would've offered Black some play on the queenside.

35. Bxc5 Qxc5 36. Kg2 Kh8 37. c4 a5 38. R3e2

More powerful was 38. Rf3!? preparing f4-f5 when I can recapture with the rook.

38. ... Rg8 39. Qf3 c6 40. Ne3 Rge8 41. Ng4 h5?!

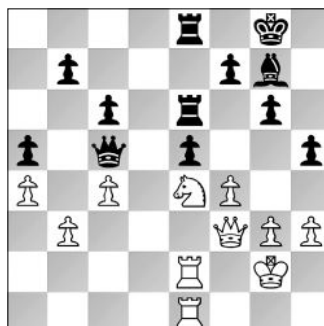
Unnecessarily creating a potential weakness. 41. ... b5!? is still good.

42. Nf2 Kg8 43. e5!

Now I get a light-square blockade.

43. ... dxe5 44. Ne4!

Move order is important! Not 44. f5? e4!.



44. ... Qe7 45. f5 gxf5 46. Qxf5 h4 47. g4 Bh6??

Losing two tempi. Black could get counterplay on the d-file with 47. ... Rd8 48. Rf1 Rg6.

48. g5! Bg7

My opponent told me after the game that he'd missed 48. ... Bxg5 49. Nxc5 Rg6 50. Rxe5. And if instead 48. ... Rg6 49. Kf3! the pawn remains untouchable: 49. ... Bxg5 50. Rg2.

49. Rf1 Rg6 50. Rd2 Qe6 51. Rd7 Re7



52. Qxe6?!

After 52. Rxe7 Qxe7 53. Kf3! it turns out my king is safest on g4! Black is simply stuck.

52. ... Rgxe6 53. Rfd1 Kh7 54. Rxe7 Rxe7 55. Rd6?

Another miss. With the clean and simple 55. Kf3 Kg6 56. Kg4 Black's king will be pushed back by Rd1-d6 (+) anyway.

55. ... Rc7 56. Kf3?

Now 56. Rd8! had to be played to stop Black's idea. After 56. ... Kg6 57. Kf3 Kf5 58. c5 my rook will come to g8 and Black's position is collapsing.

56. ... Bf8 57. Rd8 Be7

Now I am forced off the ideal post.

58. Re8 Rd7 59. Kg4 Kg6 60. Rg8+ Kh7 61. Ra8 Kg6 62. Rg8+

There's always a trap: 62. Rxa5?? is met by 62. ... Rd4!! 63. Rxe5 Bd6 64. Re8 f5+ 65. gxf6 e.p. Kf7.

62. ... Kh7 63. Ra8 Kg6 64. Rg8+, draw.

A disappointing finish for me, especially since I would've won \$3,500 more had I won this game. Winning a won position is never easy against strong players!

Another player in the U2450 pack was FM Sharvesh Deviprasath, who has since competed in his first U.S. Junior Championship. His 6½/9 performance earned him an IM norm. Also earning an IM norm in this event was FM Gabriel Petesch, who took the \$5,000 U2300 prize. FM Rose Atwell picked up a WIM norm.

The U2200 prize went to Rachael Li, who is no stranger to winning big money at this event — she tied for first in the U1600 section back in 2017 at the age of 7!

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED (D30)

IM Joshua Posthuma (2455)

WFM Rachael Li (2288)

World Open (9), Philadelphia, 07.06.2025

Annotations by IM Joshua Posthuma

We both had a lot to play for: A win would give me a share of the top U2450 prize for the second year in a row, while a win or draw for Rachael would secure her the \$5,000 prize for clear first U2200.

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. c4 c6 4. Nbd2 e6 5. g3 b6 6. Bg2 Bb7 7. 0-0 Nbd7 8. b3 Bd6 9. Bb2 c5?

Castling before opening up the center is generally the way to go.

10. cxd5 exd5



11. Ne5?

I played this natural move relatively quickly, missing a far better way to exploit the uncastled black king: 11. e4!! dxe4 12. Ng5 0-0 13. Ndx4 Nxe4 14. Nxe4 Be7 15. dxc5 Nxc5 16. Qg4 g6 17. Nxc5 Bxg2 18. Rfd1 Qc8 19. Nd7 and White will be winning the Exchange at the very least, with a decisive advantage.

11. ... 0-0 12. Ndc4 Be7 13. Nxd7 Qxd7 14. dxc5 bxc5 15. Rc1 Rac8 16. Ne5 Qe6 17. Nd3 Bd6 18. Nf4?!

I correctly wanted to exchange minor pieces while playing against the hanging pawn structure, but this was the wrong exchange to make; Black's knight on e4 will be quite bothersome.

The counterintuitive 18. Bxf6! is the clear choice of the engine. Now Black's hanging pawns lose some protection: 18. ... Qxf6 19. Qd2 Rfd8 20. Rc2 and with moves like Rf1-c1 and Qd2-a5 coming next, it will be difficult for Black to avoid losing a pawn.

18. ... Bxf6 19. gxf4 Ne4 20. e3 Rfd8 21. Qh5



21. ... Rc6

Rachael understandably dodges the Bg2-h3 skewer, but misses an opportunity to capitalize on her superior development with 21. ... d4!! 22. exd4 (the light-square weaknesses are too glaring after 22. Bh3 Qe7 23. Bxc8 Rxc8) 22. ... cxd4 23. Bh3 Qb6 24. Bxc8 Bxc8 and White has to tread carefully to maintain the balance.

22. Rfd1 Qe7?! 23. Qe5! Qf8! 24. Qxg7+!?

During the game, I thought this precise move order was a decisive blow. I underestimated the counterplay available to my opponent. Still, it's relatively best.

I managed to avoid 24. Bxe4?! dxe4 25. Rxd8 Rg6+! 26. Kh1 Qxd8 when with opposite-colored bishops and an exposed king, White cannot be better. And the d5-pawn is poisoned: 24. Rxd5? Re8! 25. Qf5? Rg6 and Black's attack on the light squares wins them the game.

24. ... Qxg7 25. Bxg7 Rg6! 26. Bb2 d4! 27. f3

My final winning attempt was probably 27. f5!?. Throwing this pawn push in now keeps Black from making the ... f7-f5 push in the future. After 27. ... Rg7 28. f3 Nc3 29. Bxc3 Bxf3 30. Kf2 Bxd1 31. exd4 Bg4 32. dxc5 Rg5 White is on the better end of this imbalance, with the powerful passed c-pawn being supported nicely by the rook

and bishop pair. Still, the engine only gives White a slight edge here.

27. ... Nd6 28. e4 f5!! 29. Rxc5 fxe4 30. fxe4 Nxe4 31. Rc7



31. ... Nf2!

Not the only move for Black to draw, but the strongest. I completely missed this idea and was fortunate not to be lost.

32. Kxf2 Rxc2+ 33. Kf1 Rxb2 34. Rxb7 Rxa2 35. Rd3 ...

A draw was soon agreed.

The World Open attracts a huge crowd every year due in part to its attractive prize fund. The payouts were particularly exciting this year, as there were clear winners in almost every section.

Usually, clear first in a section requires a score of 8/9. It is rare to see players exceed that score, let alone have a perfect 9/9 performance. And yet, that's exactly what Sam Martin, of Virginia, managed to pull off in the highly competitive U2200 section! Sam earned a hefty \$12,000 prize for his efforts. In the U2000, Surya Suresh won outright with 8/9, taking home \$12,000. In the U1800, Yujeong Yeo also scored 8/9, also earning \$12,000. In the U1600, Frederick Zhao won with 8½/9, earning \$10,000.

The U1400 section featured one of the only ties, with Bharat Reddy Seethagari, Kal Nguy, and Sahas Muthinti each scoring 7½/9 and walking away with \$4,333.34. In the U1200 section, played the previous weekend, Xavier Chen took home \$4,000 with a dominant 8½/9 performance, while in the U1000 section, Rohin Tiwari and Gal Reichfeld tied for first with 8/9, taking home \$1,500 each. ♠

For complete results from the 2025 World Open, please visit the event website at chessevents.com/event/worldopen. The 2026 World Open is scheduled to be held July 1-5 in Washington, D.C.



IM Jason Liang



IM Joshua Posthuma

A Complete Player

Paul Morphy didn't mind defending before he attacked.

BY **BRUCE PANDOLFINI**



THE AMERICAN WHIRLWIND Paul Morphy (1837-1884) transformed the game of chess. A true two-way player, he infused opening play with his adherence to the principle of development, attacking by mobilizing all his forces. He also relied on the same principle when defending, coping with opposing threats by getting out new pieces and building his position.

We can see him put his natural style to effect in a casual game played in New York in 1857 against Napoleon Marache (White). With each move he strengthens his position, rebuffing his opponent's assault by gaining development and taking control of the initiative until a remarkable conclusion.

EVANS GAMBIT (C52)

Napoleon Marache

Paul Morphy

Casual game, New York, 1857

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4



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. **

3. Par Score 5 Bc5
The Giuoco Piano (quiet game). Such positions can soon become noisier. You may accept **full credit** for 3. ... Nf6, the Two Knights Defense.

4. b4
The Evans Gambit. White sacrifices a pawn to gain time for attack. **

4. Par Score 5 Bxb4
Accepting the pawn is best, but in a spirit of generosity, you may accept **full credit** for declining the gambit by 4. ... Bb6.

5. c3
The advance of the c-pawn gains time on the bishop, potentially supports d2-d4, and also clears the d1-a4 diagonal for the white queen. **

5. Par Score 5 Ba5
Retreating to a5 is preferred over 5. ... Bc5. The bishop is safer and more annoying to White by commanding the e1-a5 diagonal.

6. d4
White tries to seize the initiative. **

6. Par Score 5 exd4
Capturing on d4 is the more dynamic reply, but you may accept **full credit** for the slightly inferior 6. ... d6.

7. e5
Not the best move. It guards f6, but wastes a critical tempo. Morphy immediately seizes the initiative. **

7. Par Score 6 d5
Black vigorously improves his position. Morphy has mounting advantages.

8. exd6 e.p.
To cope with Black's threat, White wastes more effort, moving his e-pawn for a third time. **

8. Par Score 5 Qxd6
Morphy takes back, developing a new piece, though placing his queen on a vulnerable diagonal (a3-f8). You may accept **full credit** for 8. ... cxd6.

9. 0-0
White is ready to utilize the open e-file. **

9. Par Score 5 Nge7
Black develops and closes the e-file. You may accept **full credit** for 9. ... Be6.

10. Ng5
Marache plays for a kingside assault, but 10. Ba3 was possibly more prudent. **

10. Par Score 5 0-0
Morphy continues to ward off threats with developing moves.

11. Bd3
A typical idea in similar positions would be 11. Qh5; here it would force 11. ... Qg6. The game move seemingly leads to material gain, but wastes more time. **

11. Par Score 6 Bf5
Once again, Morphy handles the threat by developing a new piece, though it leaves the Black queen in a position to be skewered.

12. Bxf5 **

12. Par Score 4 Nxf5

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.

NOVEMBER EXERCISE:

Get practice at playing a two-way game. When you're playing through a collection of tactics, in addition to solving the problem, pretend you're the defender and it's your move, with a chance to head off the winning stratagem. Can the tactic be averted? Do this regularly and you will improve your sense of danger, becoming more alert to prospects and better able to ward off opposing attacks.

PROBLEM 1

Mating net



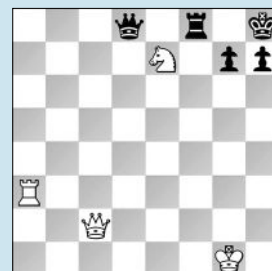
PROBLEM 2

Mating net



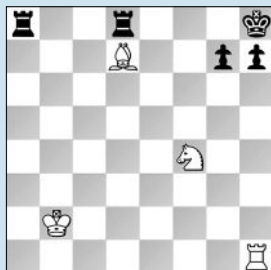
PROBLEM 3

Mating net



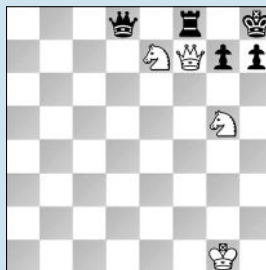
PROBLEM 4

Mating net



PROBLEM 5

Mating net



PROBLEM 6

Mating net



13. Ba3

White is winning the Exchange, but it's going to cost even more time. **

13. Par Score 5

Qg6

The queen is now poised for kingside action.

14. Bxf8 **

To be sure, White gobbles the rook.

14. Par Score 6

Qxg5

By taking the knight, Black constrains White to waste further time, salvaging his hanging bishop.

15. Ba3

We've been here before. White has been playing without a definite plan, while Morphy has developed his game and countered all threats. **

15. Par Score 6

dxg3

This not only wins a pawn but prevents development of the b1-knight and opens the d-file menacingly.

16. Bc1

White undevelops the bishop! If this weren't sad it would be funny. **

16. Par Score 5

Qg6

Black has a knight and three pawns for a rook and is ahead four moves in development. Morphy already has a winning game.

17. Bf4

The bishop has now moved five times in a row. Morphy builds his position even further. **

17. Par Score 6

Rd8

Morphy develops his last piece, seizing the open d-file. White is lost.

18. Qc2

This is as good as anything. **

18. Par Score 6

Ncd4

A crushing invasion. White's queen doesn't have lots of choices.

19. Qe4

Marache centralizes his queen, though the situation is hopeless. It's unlikely he had any idea what was to happen. **

19. Par Score 9

Ng3

A remarkable move, taking control of h1 while exposing White's queen.

20. Qxg6

This saves White from losing the queen, but it doesn't save the game. Let's see how Morphy finishes things off. **

20. Par Score 6

Nde2 mate.

This is certainly one of the most unusual checkmates that I have ever seen. Thank you for creating such beauty, Paul Morphy. ♠



POSITION AFTER 20. ... Nde2 MATE

SOLITAIRE CHESS SCORING:

Total your score to determine your approximate rating below

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

Roller Coaster

The Women's World Cup offered up a thrill ride of an endgame.

BY **GM JOEL BENJAMIN**



IT'S EASY TO BE AN ARM-chair analyst. There's never any pressure from the ticking clock, and Mr. Stockfish eliminates any possibility of error. I admit to fumbling my share of endgames.

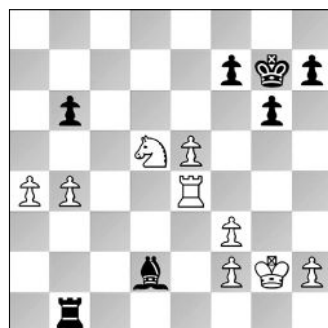
That being said, the featured ending this month reveals a shocking number of serious endgame mistakes. Divya Deshmukh, the surprise winner of the Women's World Cup in Batumi, Georgia, earned the grandmaster title from her tournament triumph. GM Tan Zhongyi is a former World Champion (2017), most recently losing the title match to GM Ju Wenjun. Are endgames really, really difficult to play over the board, or do high-level grandmasters need to study them more?

SICILIAN DEFENSE, ALAPIN VARIATION (B22)

GM Divya Deshmukh (2463)

GM Tan Zhongyi (2527)

FIDE Women's World Cup (6), Batumi, 07.23.2025



WHITE TO MOVE

White is up two pawns with a solid queen-side majority and should be able to bring home the point.

42. e6

This move is logical as it creates opportunities for White's pieces to attack the king-side. Similar and perhaps even cleaner is 42. b5 Ba5 43. e6 fxe6 44. Rxe6 Ra1 45. Re7+ Kh6 (45. ... Kf8 46. Rxh7 Rxa4 47. Rb7) 46. h4 Rxa4 47. Nf6 g5 48. h5 g4 49. Rxh7+ Kg5 50. Nxg4 and White suddenly has a mass of kingside pawns.

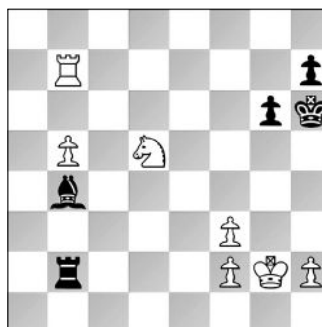
42. ... fxe6 43. Rxe6 b5!

43. ... Ra1 44. Re2 Be1 45. Re4 Rb1 46. b5 Ba5 47. Re7+ gives an even better version than the previous note.

44. Re7+ Kh6 45. axb5 Bxb4

From this moment on, White will consider which circumstances will favor a trade of the minor pieces. For now, though, White profits from pressing her initiative.

46. Rb7 Rb2



47. Nf6?!

The layout of the pieces is optimal for a knockout blow. White could achieve that with 47. h4 g5 (47. ... Bd2 48. Nf6 g5 49. h5 g4 50. Rxh7+ Kg5 51. Ne4+ with an easy rook ending) 48. hxg5+ Kxg5 49. Nxb4 Rxb4 50. b6 White can execute the basic plan of rook to b8, pawn to b7, and advance the f-pawn to ultimately win Black's rook.

47. f4, with similar ideas, is also crushing; e.g., 47. ... Be1 48. Kf1 Rb1 49. h3 g5 50. f5 Bc3+ 51. Ke2 Bd4 52. Ne3 and so on.

47. ... g5!

Black is still utterly lost but with White missing a chance for a clean liquidation, the fight continues.

48. Ne4

48. Nxh7? Kg6 traps the knight and draws out of nowhere.

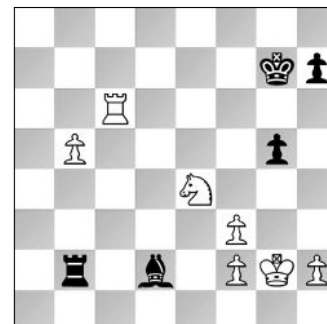
48. ... Ba5 49. Rb8 Kh5 50. Kh3 Rb3 51. Kg2

It's difficult to know when to cash in the b-pawn for other gains: 51. Ng3+ Kh6 52. Kg4 Bc7 53. Rb7 Ba5 54. Nf5+ Kg6 55. Rg7+ Kf6 56. Rxg5 Rxb5 57. f4 should win cleanly, though perhaps not more so than the game continuation.

51. ... Rb2 52. Rc8! Kh6

The b-pawn survives, because the mating net decides after 52. ... Rxb5 53. Rc6 g4 54. f4 Kh4 55. Ng3 h5 56. Rf6.

53. Rc5 Bd2 54. Rc6+ Kg7



55. Rc7+

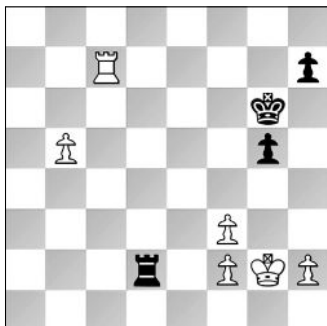
This is the ideal moment to capture: 55. Nxd2 Rxd2 56. f4 gxf4 57. Kf3 Rb2 58. b6 Kf7 (58. ... Rb4 59. Kg4 Kf7 60. f3 doesn't change anything) 59. Kxf4 Rxf2+ 60. Ke5 Rxh2 61. Kd6 h5 (there is no time to "uncut" the king as 61. ... Kf6 62. b7 Rb2 63. Kc7+ Kg5 64. Rb6 Rc2+ 65. Kd7 Rd2+ 66. Ke7 Re2+ 67. Kf7 Rf2+ 68. Kg7 makes a queen) 62. Kc7 h4 63. b7 Rb2 and now 64. Rb6 Rc2+ 65. Kd6 Rd2+ 66. Ke5 or simply 64. b8=Q, as the king is cut off.

The key here is that Black's poorly placed king allows White's king to run free. The pawn is just as powerful on the sixth rank.

55. ... Kg6 56. Nxd2?!

There was still time to repeat the position with 56. Rc6+.

56. ... Rxd2



57. b6?

The greatest improvement in my endgame knowledge came from writing *Liquidation on the Chessboard*, after I had been a grandmaster for almost 30 years. You are never too old to learn! On the surface, it seems that advancing the pawn should produce an easy win, as the Black rook will be permanently stuck. In comparison with the previous line, however, Black's king has gained territory, while White's monarch has no easy way to activate.

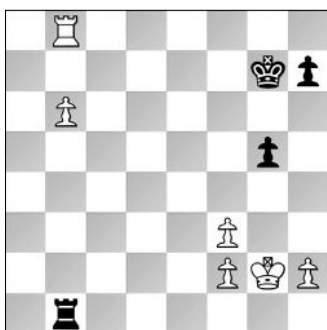
There was still a tricky path to victory: 57. Rc6+! Kf5 (57. ... Kg7 58. f4 wins as in the previous note; 57. ... Kh5 is also hopeless as the king gets stuck) 58. f4! gxf4 (58. ... Kxf4 59. Rc4+ Kf5 60. Rb4 Rd7 61. b6 Rb7 62. Kg3 and White wins easily) 59. Rh6 Rd7 (59. ... Rb2 60. Rxh7 Rxb5? 61. Rh5+ is the key point) 60. b6 Kg5 (the White rook gets behind the b-pawn in all lines, 60. ... Ke4 61. Re6+ Kd5 62. Re2 or 60. ... Rb7 61. Kf3 Kg5 62. Rc6 followed by putting the rook on c5 and b5) 61. Rh3 and 62. Rb3 wins easily.

57. ... Rb2 58. Rb7

Surprisingly, White isn't winning anymore. 58. b7 offers only slight winning chances as White's king will remain boxed out: 58. ... Rb4 59. Kf1 Rb2 60. Ke1 h6 61. Kd1 Kf5 62. Kc1 Rb6 63. Kd2 Kf4 64. Rf7+ Ke5 65. Kc3 Ke6 66. Rh7 Kd5 and White's progress is halted.

The text looks like an even clearer draw.

58. ... Rb1 59. Rb8 Kg7?



Black has to be ready to avert a killing check should the pawn advance to the seventh

rank. Activating the king and shielding it from behind with a pawn will normally be the best option, if at all possible. After 59. ... Kh5! Black holds, while the king retreat plunges Tan back into the losing zone!

60. Kg3 Rb4 61. Kg2?

Increment encourages the stronger side to repeat moves to gain time to think, but here it allows Black to correct a mistake. Instead, 61. b7 Kh6 62. f4 gxf4+ 63. Kg4 wins.

61. ... Rb1?

61. ... Kh6 heads to h5 and equalizes.

62. h4! h6

62. ... gxh4 63. b7 produces a familiar winning pattern; the pawn simply advances to f6.

63. h5!

White needs to keep pawns on the board. 63. hxg5? hxg5 draws because White cannot create a passed f-pawn. 64. f4 gxf4 65. Kf3 Rb4 66. Kg4 Kg6 67. f3 (67. b7 Kg7 68. f3 Kh7 69. Kg5 Kg7 70. Kf5 Kh7) 67. ... Kf6 68. b7 Kg7 69. Kg5 Kh7 and there is no *zugzwang*. If you push the pawns up to f4 and f5, Kg5-f6 would create a fatal *zugzwang*.

63. ... Kh7 64. Rb7+ Kg8 65. Rb8+

With all her hesitation, Divya ends up moving forward in the worst possible way. 65. f4 gxf4 66. Kf3 Rb2 67. Kg4 wins in trivial fashion: 67. ... Rxf2 68. Rc7 wins the rook, so White's king will either take the f4-pawn or waltz into g6.

65. ... Kg7 66. Kg3 Rb4 67. Rb7+ Kg8 68.

f4 gxf4+

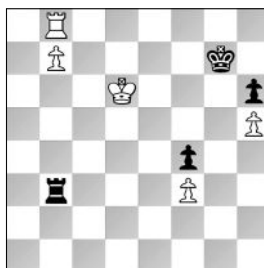
We have already seen the pattern 68. ... Rxf4 69. Rc7.

69. Kg4 Kf8 70. Rb8+

I think 70. f3 is a bit easier to work out; e.g., 70. ... Ke8 71. Kf5 Kd8 72. Kg6 Kc8 73. Rf7 Rxb6+ 74. Rf6 and White wipes out the kingside.

70. ... Kf7 71. f3 Kf6 72. Rb7?!

White can win in a straightforward manner, provided she sees the pattern. 72. b7 Kg7 73. Kf5 Kh7 74. Ke5 Kg7 75. Kd6 Rb3 ...



POSITION AFTER 75. ... Rb3

76. Re8! Rxb7 77. Re7+ Rxe7 78. Kxe7 Kg8 79. Kf6 Kh7 and now 80. Kf7 Kh8 81. Kg6 is obviously the smart way, but White can even win with 80. Kf5 Kg7 81. Kxf4 Kf6 82. Kg4! Ke5 83. f4+ Ke4 84. Kg3 Kf5 85. Kf3 and the rest has been covered in these pages a few times already!

72. ... Ke5 73. Re7+ Kd5 74. b7 Kd6 75.

Rh7 Ke5 76. Rg7?!

You snooze, you lose! 76. Rxh6 Rxb7 77. Ra6 wins cleanly as Black's king is sufficiently cut off: 77. ... Rg7+ 78. Rg6 Ra7 79. h6 Ra1 80. Rb6 Rg1+ (80. ... Rf1 81. Rb5+ Kf6 82. Rh5) 81. Kh5 Rh1+ 82. Kg6 Rg1+ 83. Kf7 the h-pawn queens. Note the sudden conclusion 83. ... Kf5 84. Rb5 mate.

76. ... Rb1 77. Re7+ Kf6 78. Rc7 Ke5 79.

Rh7?

Carelessly losing king position. 79. Re7+ Kf6 80. Rh7 is back on track.

79. ... Rg1+

White's king is forced to retreat and we have a draw again!

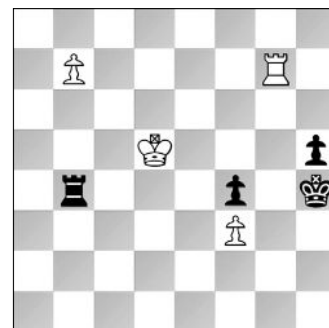
80. Kh3 Rh1+ 81. Kg4 Rg1+ 82. Kh3 Rh1+

83. Kg2 Rb1 84. Rd7 Kf5 85. Kf2 Kg5

I would certainly consider throwing in 85. ... Rb2+ here.

86. Ke2 Kxh5 87. Kd3 Kh4 88. Rg7 h5 89.

Ke4 Rb4+ 90. Kd5



90. ... Kh3?

Black only needed one more moment of accuracy to survive: 90. ... Rb3 (or 90. ... Rb6 91. Kc5 Rb3) 91. Kc6 Rc3+ 92. Kd6 (92. Kb6 Rxf3) 92. ... Rb3 and White cannot make further progress.

91. Kc6 Rc4+ 92. Kd5 Rb4 93. Kc6 Rc4+ 94. Kb5 Rc1

If 94. ... Rc3 95. Rg8 Rxf3 96. Kc4.

95. Rg5 Kh4 96. Rg8 Rb1+ 97. Kc6 Rb3 98.

b8=Q Rxb8 99. Rxb8 Kg3 100. Rb3 h4 101. Kd5, Black resigned. ♠

Bringing It Home

GM Sam Shankland tackles one of the most common situations in chess.

BY IM JOHN WATSON

V

ARIOUS CHESS BOOKS DISCUSS how to exploit a material advantage as a general topic, and a fair number of endgame

books go into detail about how to win an ending in which you are a pawn ahead with few or no pieces remaining. But remarkably few books give a systematic account, or even many examples, of how to convert a one-pawn advantage in the middlegame into a win. That's a bit strange, since winning with an extra pawn is among the most frequent tasks you will encounter during a lifetime of playing chess, and a challenge all of us have failed to surmount many times.

The problem is that such positions are nearly infinite in number and, at first glance, the techniques for addressing them are extraordinarily diverse. In his book *Converting an Extra Pawn in Chess*, GM Sam Shankland suggests a systematic approach to this problem and, in the end, tries to help the reader/student to focus on a practical method of identifying what the problems are and prioritizing their solutions. Shankland advocates a three-step process:

(1) **Stabilize the Position** and prevent counterplay;

(2) **Make the Right Changes.** This involves “evaluating which exchanges of pieces and pawns, and changes to the structure, will help you win, and which will favor your opponent”;

(3) **Find a Plan for the Pawn.** Basically, this means coming up with a plan of how the extra pawn will help win the game. As Shankland says, “We need to have a clear understanding of what the extra pawn is trying to achieve.”

This might sound a bit abstract, but it contrasts with the way most of us proceed; i.e., we “make good moves” until something favorable shows up, while looking around at forcing moves or attacks that might help

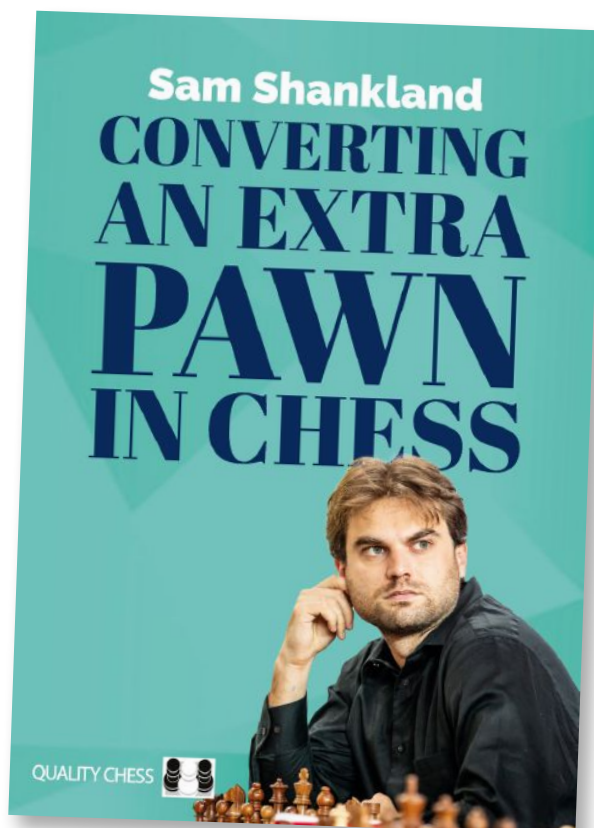
or hurt us. Shankland's process forces us to focus in a disciplined way on what needs to be done.

There are three main chapters, each highlighting one of the three steps. These chapters consist of a number of very high-level annotated games. In fact, since almost every game requires all three steps (or at least two of the three), Shankland explains every part of the winning process, but in each game one of the steps is most important for the winning process and thus gets the most attention.

Of the 29 games, all involve top grandmasters (such as Karpov, Kasparov, Grischuk, and most often Carlsen), with 10 games from Shankland's own practice. He used these games in a series of classes at the online academy Killer Chess Training, where they received intense scrutiny and feedback from advanced players. Each chapter is introduced with exercises consisting of key positions from the games, which is an excellent way to get a feel for the issues on your own before plunging into the details.

Shankland's annotations are the essence of the book, with a heavy emphasis on verbal explanation and advice, but never sparing important details. Amidst the thematic commentary, Shankland intersperses occasional nuggets of wisdom, e.g., “Something that Magnus Carlsen shared with me some time ago is that in positions where one side has weakened the pawn cover around their king but is facing no immediate threats, the other side should be looking to trade off the minor pieces and just leave the heavy

Sam Shankland CONVERTING AN EXTRA PAWN IN CHESS



pieces on the board,” and “A good rule of thumb is that when you are defending an opposite-colored-bishop endgame, you want to put your pawns on the same color as your bishop. In contrast, the attacking side should put their pawns on the same color as the opposing bishop.” His notes include numerous instructive examples of standard endings with rules of thumb for assessing them. The games are heavily annotated, so I have room for only a few illustrative snippets.

In the following excerpt, White has completed the stabilization phase and proceeds to the “right changes” task:

CHANGING IT UP

GM Ding Liren (2816)
GM Radoslaw Wojtaszek (2749)
Shenzhen, 2018
Annotations by GM Sam Shankland



WHITE TO MOVE

White is no longer worried about any counterplay. He has consolidated his extra pawn, and his pieces are on reasonable squares. He is now thinking about how to plan to make his extra pawn count.

Black has a strong bishop pair, and it looks like there is a long way to go before the extra pawn will become relevant. Which pieces would White like to exchange? As Black's main source of counterplay is his bishop pair, it makes sense for White to trade one half of that pair: the dark-squared bishops. But this is going to be hard to achieve.

25. Nc4! a4 26. bxa4 Rec8 27. Bd6!

A great decision by Ding. He forces the b8-rook to move to an inferior square, and Black's main defensive idea of ... Rb8-a8 is prevented due to Nc4-b6. After 27. Nd6 Rxc1 28. Rxc1 Be7?, Black is close to equalizing with ... Rb8-a8. ...

27. ... Rb7 28. Ne3 Rxc1 29. Rxc1 Bxa2 30. a5

The next phase of the process has been completed. White has secured the existence and the advance of his passed a-pawn. He now needs to decide which endgames will be winning for him. White wants to trade more pieces. White's king is slightly awkward, and Black has a strong bishop pair combined with his rook, making it difficult for White to coordinate. The same-colored-bishop endgame is clearly winning for White. So White is happy to exchange his knight for Black's light-squared bishop. Opposite-colored-bishop endgames are also won for White, provided White can get his king to the center. This is because Black's kingside pawn structure allows White's bishop to

harass the pawns and provoke weaknesses. The a-pawn will distract Black's bishop, and White should be able to stretch the defenses sufficiently to win.

Basically, White is happy with any trade of minor pieces. So, White should win routinely with the exchange of rooks and any one pair of minor pieces. These considerations helped White to find his next few moves.

30. ... Bd4 31. Rc8+ Kh7 32. Nc2! Bd5 33. Nb4 Be4 34. Rc4 Ba7?

Black had to play 34. ... e5. It was the only chance, but it creates more weaknesses, and the black pieces are awkward. For example, after 35. Kf1 Rd7 36. Bc7 Bb6 37. f3!, Black will end up in a pawn-down endgame, and I would expect him to lose, irrespectively of the engine evaluation.

35. Rc7! Kg6 36. Kf1 Kf6 37. f3 Rxc7 38. Bxc7

(JW: At this point, White was clearly winning and the "right changes" phase is complete. Shankland analyses the rest of the game, mistakes and all, with practical advice.)

Possession of the bishop pair is very often worth a pawn, and in many endings the side with the two bishops will draw even when a clear pawn down. Thus, Black's method of conversion in the following position is impressive:

BATTLING THE BISHOPS

GM Anish Giri (2769)
GM Peter Svidler (2751)
Sinquefeld Cup (8), St. Louis, 2016
Annotations by GM Sam Shankland



BLACK TO MOVE

What changes to the pawn structure does Black want? Black would like to create a pawn weakness for White on the queenside. If Black is able to play ... Bg4-e6, ... a5-a4, trade pawns and isolate the c-pawn, he would achieve this. Another point is that

while this is not an opposite-colored-bishop endgame, White does have a bishop of the opposite color to Black's. If that's confusing, let's call it a bishop that is unopposed. A general principle in such endgames is, if you want to try to win, put your pawns on the same color complex as the opposing bishop. Therefore, Black would like to play ... c6-c5 and ... b7-b6. This would fix the white pawns on the light squares, which enables Black to attack the b-pawn in the long term. Should this happen, White would have no counterplay. Furthermore, Black's extra pawn would restrict White's dark-squared bishop, rendering it unable to attack the black pawn mass, whereas the black bishop is able to attack the queenside pawns.

24. ... Be6

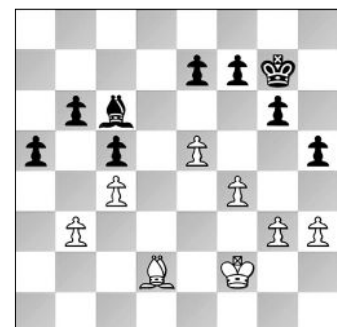
By threatening the ... a5-a4 advance, Black tries to provoke the g2-bishop to move off its current active diagonal. ...

25. Bf1 b6 26. Be3 Kf8 27. Ra4 c5 28. Bg2 Re8 29. Bc6 Ra7! 30. Bb5 Rc8 31. Rd1 Rac7! 32. Ra2 Kg7 33. Rad2 Nb8 34. Rd8 Nc6 35. Rxc8 Rxc8 36. Rd2 h5 37. Kg2 Bf5 38. h3

What type of endgame should Black be aiming for? He does not want a pure rook endgame, given that he does not have control of the d-file. Nor does Black want to trade White's dark-squared bishop, which is the worst piece on the board. Black will probably win a pure opposite-colored-bishop endgame, even if White tries to make a fortress by placing his king on c3, as then Black's king will be able to ransack the kingside. Black would welcome an exchange of light-squared bishops, resulting in a good knight against bad bishop endgame. These considerations result in a number of promising options for Black. ...

(JW: Black went on to win after 38. ... f6?!, but Shankland gives the following instructive alternative.)

38. ... Be4+! 39. Kf2 Rd8! 40. Bxc6 Rxd2+ 41. Bxd2 Bxc6



This is the kind of position that we were discussing before. Black has simplified down to an opposite-colored-bishop endgame, and he is easily winning. The main point is that his extra pawn is providing a huge advantage in piece activity and fixing a key weakness, not that it can create a passed pawn. White's bishop is forever passive and unable to make counterplay, and Black has two winning plans. One is to bring the bishop to c2. The other is to provoke the h3-pawn to h4 and then bring the king to g4. Both of these plans involve using only the light squares, and as such, White's king is the only piece that can fight back. The king is a short-range piece and certainly cannot control both g4 and b3 at the same time.

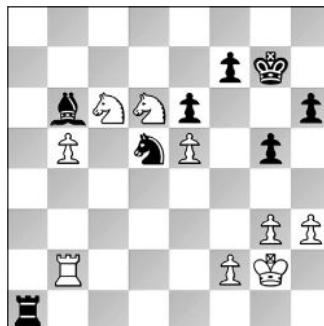
Sometimes technical considerations are not the whole story, and Shankland reminds us that direct forcing moves always deserve consideration:

DIRECT ACTION

GM Anatoly Karpov (2705)

GM Boris Spassky (2580)

World Team Championship, Lucerne, 1985



WHITE TO MOVE

Shankland: Here "Karpov missed a strong maneuver of the rook to the kingside with: 45. Rb3!. The rook is coming to f3, coordinating decisively with the newly arrived knight on d6. ... Black is unable to properly defend the f7-pawn, because all his pieces are set up to keep the b-pawn under control. Even in the endgame, we see the same principle at play: when you have a far advanced passed pawn that your opponent currently has under control, the best plan is often to make unrelated threats to the enemy king."

At the end of the book, Shankland addresses the question of its practical utility: "You

may find yourself asking something along the lines of: 'Okay, how do I put this into practice? What rules and guidelines can I learn from having gone through these 29 games?'. I hate to break it to you, but beyond a few little nuggets of overall chess wisdom you may find scattered through the pages, there are no major guiding principles that will suddenly turn pawns into points. My main hope is that by instilling the right thought process of breaking the conversion into three distinct phases, and then showing a lot of examples of each phase both done well and done poorly, your instincts will have improved."

That's an honest description of how *Converting an Extra Pawn in Chess* might help your chess, without overpromising. I think that Shankland does an excellent job of using straightforward advice and presenting a systematic approach to a problem that plagues every chessplayer from beginner to master. This is the sort of work that will repay your slow and careful study. ♠

Shankland, Sam. *Converting an Extra Pawn in Chess*. Quality Chess 2025. 268 pp. ISBN 978-1784832186, \$32.95. USCF Sales Product Code B0260QT.

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MAKE YOUR MOVE

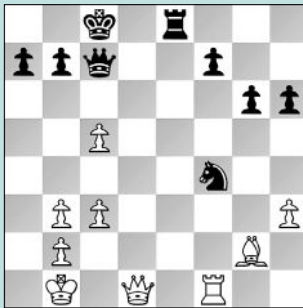
BY **FM CARSTEN HANSEN**

THIS MONTH'S PUZZLES ARE TAKEN FROM GAMES PLAYED at the 2025 U.S. Junior, Girls' Junior, and Senior Championships held in St. Louis in July. Some of the puzzles may seem difficult, but that's the intention. Take your time and don't get discouraged.

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

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

TACTIC 1.



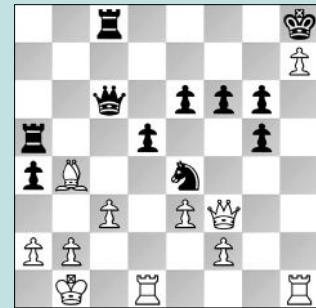
WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 2.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 3.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 4.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 5.



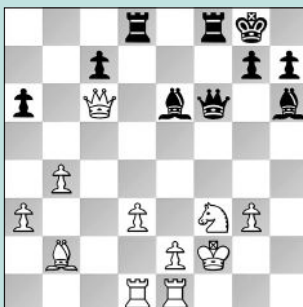
WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 6.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 7.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 8.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 9.



BLACK TO MOVE

Position 1: LOOSE PIECES

Position 2: LURE AND SNARE

Position 3: CLEAR AND DISCOVER

Position 4: DISCOVER AND BREAK

Position 5: BLOCK AND CREATE

Position 6: PLAY THE TRUMP

Position 7: THE WEAKEST SPOT

Position 8: BRUTE FORCE

Position 9: EXPOSE THE WEAKNESS

TOURNAMENT LIFE ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

new.uschess.org/national-events-calendar

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

Nationals

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • GRAND PRIX

2025 US Masters

NOVEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
Site: Hilton Charlotte University Place Address: 8629 JM Keynes Drive, Charlotte, NC 28262 Overall Prize Fund: \$25,000 GP Pts: 150 FIDE: Y Accessible: N Residency: N Org: Charlotte Chess Center • www.charlottechesscenter.org/events/

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Pan-American Intercollegiate Championship

JANUARY 2-5, 2026 — IL TLA# 52063
Site: Hilton Chicago/Oak Brook Hills Resort & Conference Center Address: 3500 Midwest Road, Oak Brook IL 60523 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: Y Accessible: N Residency: N Org: Chess Weekend Inc. • glenn@chessweekend.com • www.chessweekend.com/

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • HERITAGE EVENT

2026 World Amateur Team & U.S. Team East

FEBRUARY 14-16, 2026 — NJ TLA# 52576
Site: Parsippany Hilton Address: 1 Hilton Ct., Parsippany, NJ 07054 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: New Jersey Chess Federation • esdoyle@aol.com • njscf.org

Grand Prix

The Grand Prix point totals reflect all rated event information as of October 14, 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	626.875
2.	EMMANUEL CARTER	NC	140.133
3.	GM FIDEL CORRALES JIMENEZ	CA	113.75
4.	THOMAS FANG	NC	112.5
5.	GM SEMEN KHANIN	FIDE	112
6.	FM DANILA POLANNIKOVA	MA	106.833
7.	GM ALEXANDER IVANOV	MA	98.167
8.	GM AWONDER LIANG	WI	97.389
9.	IM SAM SCHMAKEL	IL	88.433
10.	GM PRAVEEN BALAKRISHNAN	VA	86.6

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

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess Zero Tasking Day Grand Prix

NOVEMBER 2, 2025 — NC TLA# 51897
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 • 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 • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

10th annual Los Angeles Open Blitz Championship

NOVEMBER 8, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 50646
Site: Hilton Orange County Airport Address: 18800 MacArthur Blvd, Irvine CA 92612 Overall Prize Fund: \$500 GP Pts: 10 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • 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 • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess International Tongue Twister Day Grand Prix

NOVEMBER 9, 2025 — NC TLA# 51902
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 • 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 • 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

13th annual Kings Island Open Blitz Championship

NOVEMBER 15, 2025 — OH TLA# 50647
Site: Embassy Suites Cincinnati NE Address: 4554 Lake Forest Dr, Blue Ash OH 45242 Overall Prize Fund: \$500 GP Pts: 10 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • www.chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess International Day for Tolerance Grand Prix

NOVEMBER 16, 2025 — NC TLA# 52455
Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall Prize Fund: \$1,228 GP Pts: 10 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • www.dragonknightchess.com

GRAND PRIX

19th Annual SPICE Cup Open

NOVEMBER 19-24, 2025 — WA TLA# 51858
Site: Hilton Bellevue Address: 300 112th Ave SE, Bellevue, WA 98004 Overall Prize Fund: \$12,500 GP Pts: 150 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Josh Sinanan • WashingtonChessFederation@gmail.com • 2067693757 • www.wachess.com/

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Northern Virginia Open

NOVEMBER 21-23, 2025 — VA TLA# 52361
Site: Marriott Washington-Dulles Airport Address: 45020 Aviation Dr., Dulles, VA 20166 Overall Prize Fund: \$7,200 GP Pts: 40 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Mike Hoffpauir, NTD/IA • mhoffpauir@aol.com • 7578464805 • www.vachess.org

ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Georgia Open & Amateur Championship

NOVEMBER 21-23, 2025 — GA TLA# 52714
Site: DoubleTree by Hilton Atlanta Perimeter Dunwoody Address: 4386 Chamblee Dunwoody Road, Atlanta, Georgia, 30341 Overall Prize Fund: \$6,000 GP Pts: 40 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Charles W Hatherill • kingsgambit50@earthlink.net • 7027430305 • www.georgiachess.org

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess Mother Goose Parade Day Grand Prix

NOVEMBER 23, 2025 — NC TLA# 52456
Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall Prize Fund: \$1,228 GP Pts: 10 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • www.dragonknightchess.com

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2025 Illinois Class State Championship

NOVEMBER 23, 2025 — IL TLA# 50284
Site: Hyatt Regency Schaumburg Address: 1800 E. Golf Rd., Schaumburg, IL 60173 Overall Prize Fund: \$6,000 GP Pts: 30 FIDE: N Accessible: N Residency: N Org: Glenn Panner • glenn@chessweekend.com • www.chessweekend.com/

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX

60th American Open Chess Championship

NOVEMBER 24-30, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 51934
Site: Hyatt Regency Orange County Address: 11999 Harbor Blvd., Garden Grove, CA 92840 Overall Prize Fund: \$36,800 TLA GP Pts: 150 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: American Open Chess Championship • play@americanopen.org • 714-643-8828 • www.americanopen.org/

GRAND PRIX

2025 MidSouth Open

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — TN TLA# 52408
Site: Memphis Chess Club Address: 195 Madison Ave Suite 101, Memphis, TN 38103 Overall Prize Fund: \$6,000 GP Pts: 15 FIDE: N Accessible: N Residency: N Org: Memphis Chess Club • info@memphischessclub.com • 7318685755 • www.memphischessclub.com/

GRAND PRIX

2025 NC Open

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
Site: Hilton Charlotte University Place Address: 8629 JM Keynes Drive, Charlotte, NC 28262 Overall Prize Fund: \$12,500 GP Pts: 50 FIDE: Y Accessible: N Residency: N Org: Charlotte Chess Center • www.charlottechesscenter.org/events/

GRAND PRIX

9th Annual Sevan Memorial

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — IL TLA# 51968
Site: Hyatt Regency Schaumburg Address: 1800 E. Golf Rd., Schaumburg, IL 60173 Overall Prize Fund: \$12,000 GP Pts: 30 FIDE: N Accessible: N Residency: N Org: Glenn Panner • glennpan@gmail.com • 8159554793 • www.chessweekend.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Motor City Open

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — MI TLA# 51922
Site: Crowne Plaza - Auburn Hills Address: 1500 B. Opdyke Rd, Auburn Hills, MI 48326 Overall Prize Fund: \$9,000 GP Pts: 40 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Edward Mandell • eman@aol.com • 2486352375

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, Phila-

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.

delphia 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 • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

16th annual National Chess Congress Blitz Championship
NOVEMBER 29, 2025 — PA **TLA# 50761**
Site: Loews Hotel **Address:** 1200 Market St, Philadelphia PA 19107 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$500 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • www.chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess Secondhand Sunday Grand Prix
NOVEMBER 30, 2025 — NC **TLA# 52457**
Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,228 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • www.dragonknightchess.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 • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Harry Nelson Pillsbury Memorial
DECEMBER 7, 2025 — MA **TLA# 51890**
Site: Westford Regency Inn and Conference Center **Address:** 219 Littleton Road, Westford, MA 01886 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$2,500 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Massachusetts Chess Association • info@masschess.org • 603-891-2484 • www.masschess.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess International Civil Aviation Day Grand Prix
DECEMBER 7, 2025 — NC **TLA# 52458**
Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,228 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • www.dragonknightchess.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess World Choral Day Grand Prix
DECEMBER 14, 2025 — NC **TLA# 52459**
Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,228 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • www.dragonknightchess.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

16th annual Eastern Open Blitz Championship
DECEMBER 28, 2025 — VA **TLA# 50762**
Site: Hyatt Regency Crystal City **Address:** 2799 Richmond Highway, Arlington VA 22202 **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 • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

34th annual North American Blitz Championship
DECEMBER 29, 2025 — NV **TLA# 50984**
Site: Horseshoe Casino Resort (formerly Bally's) **Address:** 3645 Las Vegas Blvd. S, Las Vegas, NV 89103 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$3,000 **GP Pts:** 30 **FIDE:** N **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

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Tim Just Winter Open XLII
JANUARY 9-11, 2026 — IL **TLA# 51956**
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/timjust26

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

17th annual Golden State Open
JANUARY 16-19, 2026 — CA-N **TLA# 51868**

Site: Hilton Concord Hotel **Address:** 1970 Diamond Blvd., Concord, CA 94520 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$25,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **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

58th annual Liberty Bell Open
JANUARY 16-19, 2026 — PA **TLA# 51826**
Site: Sonesta Hotel **Address:** 1800 Market St, Philadelphia 19103 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$25,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • www.chesstour.com

HERITAGE EVENT • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

Land of the Sky XXXVIII
JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — NC **TLA# 50591**
Site: Crowne Plaza Resort Asheville **Address:** One Resort Dr, Asheville, NC 28806 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$13,800 **GP Pts:** 50 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Wilder Wadford • info@landofthesky.us • landofthesky.us

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

17th annual Southwest Chess Championships
FEBRUARY 12-16, 2026 — TX **TLA# 52346**
Site: Westin Dallas Fort Worth Airport Hotel **Address:** 4545 W John Carpenter Freeway, Irving, TX 75063 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$35,000 **GP Pts:** 200 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • www.chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

10th annual George Washington Open
FEB. 27-MAR. 1, 2026 — VA **TLA# 52348**
Site: Washington Dulles Marriott Hotel **Address:** 45020 Aviation Dr, Dulles, VA 20166 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$17,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • www.chesstour.com

56th annual NATIONAL CHESS CONGRESS

6 rounds, Nov 28-30 or Nov 29-30, 2025 - Loews Philadelphia Hotel

\$45,000 prize fund guaranteed, 20 plaques, free entries!

6 rounds, 40/80, SD/30; d30 (2-day option, rds 1-3 G/40 d10). U800 & U600 sections play separate 2-day schedule only, 11/29-30, G/40 d10. Top 3 sections are FIDE rated.

Loews Philadelphia Hotel, 1200 Market St, Philadelphia PA 19107. Hotel rates \$122-122-147-172, use link at chessevents.us, reserve by 11/12.

In 10 sections (see peakrating.us):
Premier Section: Open to 2000/over. Prizes \$4000-2400-1200-800-500, clear/tiebreak win \$200, USCF U2400 \$2000-1000. 200 GPP.
U2200, U2000: Each \$2500-1300-700-500-300.

U1800: \$2400-1200-600-400-300.
U1600: \$2000-1000-600-400-300.
U1400: \$1600-800-500-300-200.
U1200: \$1400-700-400-300-200.
U1000: \$1200-600-400-300-200..
U800, U600: Each, plaques to top 10. CCA free entry prizes to top 4.

Unrated prize limits: U1000 \$200, U1200 \$300, U1400 \$400, U1600 \$500, U1800 \$600, U2000 \$700.

Mixed doubles prizes: Best male+female 2-player combined score among all sections, averaging under 2200: \$2000-1000-600-400. May enter different sections, register before both begin round 2, teams including an unrated limited to \$400.

November official ratings used; unofficial or Online Regular USCF ratings usually used if otherwise unrated. **Cannot play** below USCF Online Regular rating - 100 points.

Top 8 sections entry fee: \$138 online at chessaction.com by 11/25, \$160 later online or at site, until 1 hour before round 1.

U800, U600 sections entry fee: \$52 online by 11/25, \$70 later, at site or online, until 9 am 11/29.

All: No checks at site, credit cards OK. Re-entry (except Premier) \$60.

Special USCF membership dues with magazine if paid online with entry fee: see chess.events.us. USCF membership required.

3-day schedule: Reg. Fri to 11 am, rds Fri 12 & 6, Sat 12 & 6, Sun 10 & 3:30.

2-day U1000/up schedule: Reg Sat to 9 am, rds Sat 10, 12:45, 3:30 & 6; Sun 10 & 3:30.

2-day U800 & U600 sections: Reg Sat to 9 am, rds 10, 12:45 & 3:30 each day.

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

See chessevents.us for more rules and information.

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

Cellphones: No possession during play; in bag near your table OK.

Parking: Loews valet 25% off regular rate (about \$60). Gateway Garage, 3/5 mile away at 1540 Spring St, about \$12/day Sat & Sun, \$30 other days.

Entry: chessaction.com. No mail entries. \$15 charge for refunds.

Email: director@chess.us
Blitz tournament Sat 10:30 pm, enter by 10 pm.

35th annual NORTH AMERICAN OPEN

Dec 26-30, 26-29 or 27-29, 2025, Las Vegas - GM & IM norms possible!
\$130,000 PRIZE FUND UNCONDITIONALLY GUARANTEED!

Open Section: 9 rounds, Dec 26-30, 40/90, SD/30; d30.

Other sections: 7 rounds, Dec 26-29 or 27-29, 40/90, SD/30; d30 (3-day option, rds 1-2 G/60 d10).

At Horseshoe Casino Resort, 3645 Las Vegas Blvd So, Las Vegas NV 89103. Free parking for guests.

In 8 sections. Open Section uses December FIDE ratings, other sections Dec official USCF ratings. Top 3 sections are also FIDE rated.

Open Section: \$10000-5000-3000-2000-1300-1000-800-700-600-500, clear/tiebreak win \$300 bonus, top FIDE U2400/Unr \$3000-2000-1000, 300 GPP.

Under 2300, Under 2100, Under 1900: Each \$7000-4000-2000-1200-800-600-500-500-400-400.

Under 1700: \$6000-3000-1500-1000-800-600-500-500-400-400.

Under 1500: \$5000-2500-1300-1000-700-600-500-400-300-300.

Under 1300: \$4000-2000-1000-800-600-500-400-400-300-300.

Under 1000: \$1500-1000-600-400-300-300-300-200-200-200.

Prize limits: 1) Unrated limit U1000 \$300, U1300 \$500, U1500 \$700, U1700 \$1000, U1900 \$1500, U2100 \$2000. 2) Under 26 games by Dec. list, limit U1000 \$800, U1300 \$1500, U1500 or U1700 \$3000. 3) If any USCF post-event Regular OTB or Regular Online rating from events ending 12/20/24-12/20/25, or current Online Regular rating, was more than 40 points over section maximum, limit \$1500. 4) Balance of any limited prize goes to next player(s) in line.

Cannot play below Online Regular rating minus 100 points.

Mixed doubles: \$2000-1000-500-300-200. **See chessevents.us.**

Top 6 sections entry fee: \$245 at chessaction.com by 9/20, \$275 by 12/23, \$300 later online or at site until 1 hour before round 1. **Open Section \$800 additional fee unless** USCF-rated 2300+ or FIDE rated 2100+.

Special entry fee: U1000 Section \$150 less, Senior 65/over in U1300/up, \$100 less. Re-entry (no Open) \$120.

Unofficial USCF or Online Regular USCF ratings usually used if otherwise unrated.

5-day late reg. ends 12/26 10 am, rds 12/26-28 11 & 6, 12/29 10 & 4:30, 12/30 10 am (Open Section).

4-day late reg. ends 12/26 5 pm, rounds 12/26 6 pm, 12/27-28 11 & 6, 12/29 10 am & 4:30 pm.

3-day late reg. ends 12/27 10 am, rounds 12/27 11, 2:30 & 6, 12/28 11 & 6, 12/29 10 & 4:30.

1/2-pt byes OK all, limit 3 (limit 2 in last 4 rds). Must commit before round 3.

More rules at chessevents.us **Bring set, board, clock** if possible- none supplied.

USCF membership required; see chessevents.us for special rates.

Special room rate at Horseshoe \$109-139. Use link at chessevents.us or 800-833-3308. Rooms may sell out by mid-Nov.

Entry: chessaction.com. No mail entries, no checks. Refunds, \$15 service charge.

Questions, email: chesstour.info, director@chess.us.

Blitz tournament 12/29 10:30 pm. Enter online by 7 pm 12/29 for lowest fee.

50th annual Eastern Open

December 26-29, 27-29 or 28-29, 2025 - 8 rounds, Hyatt Regency Crystal City
\$30,000 GUARANTEED including \$2,500 in Senior prizes!

8-rd Swiss, Hyatt Regency Crystal City, 2799 Richmond Highway, Arlington VA 22202. Parking: see chessevents.us. Free airport shuttle. In 6 sections: Premier 12/26-29, U2200 to U1300 12/26-29 or 27-29, U1000 12/28-29.

Premier (2000/up): \$3000-1500-800-500-400, clear/tiebreak 1st \$100 bonus, top USCF U2300 \$1000-500. FIDE, 150 GPP. See peakrating.us.

U2200: \$1700-900-500-400-300, top U2000 \$600-300. FIDE rated.

U1900: \$1700-900-500-400-300, top U1700 \$400-200.

U1600: \$1400-700-500-300-200, top U1400 \$400-200.

U1300: \$1300-700-400-300-200, top U1100 \$300.

U1000: \$800-500-300-200-100.

Cannot play below Online Regular rating minus 100 points.

Unrated prize limits: U1000 \$150, U1300 \$300, U1600 \$450, U1900 \$750, Senior prize \$200.

Senior, age 50+ bonus prizes: Top born by 12/29/75, across all sections combined, \$1200-600-400-300.

Mixed Doubles: Best male/female 2-player team (average under 2200) combined score: \$1000-500-300. May play in different sections; register before both players begin rd 2.

Top 5 sections entry fee: \$148 at chessaction.com by 12/23, \$170 (no checks, credit cards OK) at site or online until an hour before round 1.

Under 1000 Section: all \$50 less.

Re-entry (except Premier): \$80.

December Official ratings used.

Unofficial or Online Regular USCF ratings usually used if otherwise unrated. **USCF membership** required. See chessevents.us for special rates.

4-day: 40/80, SD/30; d30. Reg. ends 12/26 12 noon, rds. 12/26 1 & 7, 12/27-28 11 & 5, 12/29 10 & 4.

3-day: Rds 1-3 G/30, d10. Reg. ends 12/27 10 am, rds 12/27 11, 1, 3 & 5, merges with 4-day at 5 pm.

2-day: G/30, d10. Reg. ends 12/28 10 am, rds. 12/28 11, 1, 3 & 5, 12/29 10, 12, 2 & 4. U1000 only.

1/2 pt bye OK all (limit 3), must commit before rd 3.

Bring set, board, & clock if possible- none supplied. **See chessevents.us** for more rules, info.

Hotel rates: \$137-137-162-187, link at chessevents.us, reserve by 12/4 or rate may increase.

Entry: chessaction.com. \$15 charge for refunds. No mail entries.

Email: director@chess.us.

Blitz tournament 12/28 9:30 pm, enter at site 12/28 by 9:10 pm.

GRAND PRIX

2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
 Site: Bridges Conference Center, Bridges Campus
 Address: 13 Lane Lane, Sheridan, WY 82801 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$9,000 **GP Pts:** 100 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Brian Kuehl • admin@sheridan-chess.com • 202-679-6779 • www.SheridanChess.com

Regional

ALABAMA

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — TN TLA# 52408
2025 MidSouth Open
 See Grand Prix.

ARKANSAS

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — TN TLA# 52408
2025 MidSouth Open
 See Grand Prix.

ARIZONA

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 50643
20th annual Los Angeles Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 24-30, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 51934
60th American Open Chess Championship
 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.

JANUARY 16-19, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 51868
17th annual Golden State Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
 See Grand Prix.

CALIFORNIA

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 50643
20th annual Los Angeles Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 8, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 50646
10th annual Los Angeles Open Blitz Championship
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 24-30, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 51934
60th American Open Chess Championship
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080

2025 NC 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.

JANUARY 16-19, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 51868
17th annual Golden State Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
 See Grand Prix.

COLORADO

NOVEMBER 24-30, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 51934
60th American Open Chess Championship
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV TLA# 50756
35th annual North American Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
 See Grand Prix.

CONNECTICUT

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

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.

DECEMBER 7, 2025 — MA TLA# 51246
1st Auburn Winter Swiss
 See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 2-4, 2026 — MA TLA# 51000
14th annual Boston Chess Congress
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DELAWARE

NOVEMBER 22-23, 2025 TLA# 51843
Delaware Capital Open 2025
 Site: Delaware Agricultural Museum Address: 866 North Dupont Hwy, Dover DE 19901 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,500 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Delaware Chess Association • aa.legolas@gmail.com • 4102193179 • delawarechessassociation.org

JANUARY 10-11, 2026 TLA# 52331
Sussex County Open
 Site: National Guard Readiness Center Address: 109 W Pine Street Georgetown DE 19947 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,500 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Delaware Chess Association • aa.legolas@gmail.com • 410-219-3179 • delawarechessassociation.org

17th annual Southwest Class Championships

Feb 12-16, 13-16 or 14-16, 2026 (Presidents Weekend), Irving, Texas

\$35,000 guaranteed prizes, GM & IM norms possible!

Master Section: 9-SS, Feb 12-16, 40/80, SD/30; d30. **Expert through Class E:** 7 rounds, Feb 13-16 or 14-16, 40/80, SD/30; d10 (3-day rds 1-2 G/60, d10).

Westin Dallas Fort Worth Airport, 4545 W John Carpenter Fwy, Irving TX 75063. Free parking, free airport shuttle. **A US Chess American Classic Tournament!**

In 7 sections, top 3 FIDE-rated. Unr may enter A-E. See peakrating.us.

Master (USCF 2100/up or FIDE 2000/up): \$4000-2000-1500-1200-1000-800-600, clear/tiebreak 1st \$200, FIDE U2300/Unr \$1800-900. FIDE ratings used, 200 GPP (Enhanced).

Expert (1900-2199), **Class A** (1700-1999), **Class B** (1500-1799): each \$2000-1000-500-300-200.

Class C (1300-1599), \$1600-800-500-300-200.

Class D (Under 1400), **Class E** (Under 1200): \$800-400-300-200-100.

Unrated prize limits: E \$100, D \$200, C \$300, B \$400, A \$500.

Mixed Doubles: \$1000-600-400. All sections OK, rds. 1-7, must average under 2200. See chessevents.us.

FIDE ratings used in Master. In **Expert/below:** Feb official ratings used, unofficial USCF ratings or USCF Online Regular ratings usually used if otherwise unrated; **cannot play** below USCF Online Reg. rating-100 points.

Master Section entry fee: \$278 at chessaction.com by 2/11, \$300 later or at site by 6 pm 2/12. **Titled/foreign entry & minimum prizes:** see chessevents.us.

Expert to Class C entry fee: \$168 at chessaction.com by 2/11, \$190 later or at site until 1 hour before rd 1.

Class D or E sections: Entry fees \$70 less than Expert through C.

Re-entry (except Master): \$80. **No checks** at site, credit cards OK.

USCF membership required. See chessevents.us for special USCF dues with magazine if paid online with entry.

No Cellphone possession during play (in bag near table OK).

5-day schedule (Master): Reg. ends Thu 6 pm, Thu 7, Fri 1 & 7, Sat 11 & 5, Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 3:30.

4-day schedule: Reg. ends Fri 6 pm, Rds Fri 7 pm, Sat 11 & 5, Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 3:30 (no 4-day Master).

3-day schedule: Reg. ends Sat 10 am, rds Sat 11, 2 & 5, Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 3:30 (no 3-day Master).

Half point byes OK all, limit 2; must commit before rd 3.

All: Bring clock, set, board if possible- none supplied. See chessevents.us for rules, details.

Hotel rates: \$132-132, use link at chessevents.us or 972-929-4500, reserve by 1/27 or rate may increase.

Entry: chessaction.com. \$15 service charge for refunds.

Email: director@chess.us.

Blitz tournament Sun. 9:30 pm, pm, enter at site Sun. by 9:10 pm.

DIST. OF COLUMBIA

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2025 — VA TLA# 50760
50th annual Eastern Open!
 See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

DECEMBER 28, 2025 — VA TLA# 50762
16th annual Eastern Open Blitz Championship
 See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

FLORIDA

NOVEMBER 2, 2025 — FL TLA# 52802
2025 Brevard Chess "444" Open
Site: Kol Mashlach Community Center **Address:** 2436 Croton Rd, Melbourne, FL 32935 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,000 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Brevard Chess Club • [sean@brevardchess.org](#) • 321-514-8547 • [www.brevardchess.org](#)

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 24-30, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 51934
60th American Open Chess Championship
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 21, 2026 — FL TLA# 52387
2026 FSCJ South Regional Tournament
Site: Hialeah Gardens High School **Address:** 11700 Hialeah Gardens Blvd., Hialeah Gardens, FL 33018 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Florida Scholastic Chess League • [liz@fscjchess.org](#) • 786-755-FSCJ (3725) • [www.fscjchess.org](#)

GEORGIA

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

HAWAII

NOVEMBER 24-30, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 51934
60th American Open Chess Championship
 See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 28-31, 2025 — HI 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

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
 See Grand Prix.

ILLINOIS

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.

NOVEMBER 23, 2025 — IL TLA# 50284
2025 Illinois Class State Championship
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 24-30, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 51934
60th American Open Chess Championship
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — IL TLA# 51968
9th Annual Sevan Memorial
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — MI TLA# 51922
Motor City Open
 See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 51956
Tim Just Winter Open XLII
 See Grand Prix.

INDIANA

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — OH TLA# 50644
34th annual Kings Island Open
 See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NOVEMBER 23, 2025 — IL TLA# 50284
2025 Illinois Class State Championship
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — TN TLA# 52408
2025 MidSouth Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — MI TLA# 51922
Motor City Open
 See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 51956
Tim Just Winter Open XLII
 See Grand Prix.

IOWA

NOVEMBER 23, 2025 — IL TLA# 50284
2025 Illinois Class State Championship
 See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 51956
Tim Just Winter Open XLII
 See Grand Prix.

KENTUCKY

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — OH TLA# 50644
34th annual Kings Island Open
 See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — TN TLA# 52408
2025 MidSouth Open
 See Grand Prix.

LOUISIANA

NOVEMBER 8-9, 2025 — LA TLA# 4981
The 2025 Downriver Classic
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — TN TLA# 52408
2025 MidSouth Open
 See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 12-16, 2026 — TX TLA# 52346
17th annual Southwest Class Championships
 See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

MARYLAND

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 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](#).

JANUARY 16-19, 2026 — PA TLA# 51826
58th annual Liberty Bell Open
 See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

FEB. 27-MAR. 1, 2026 — VA TLA# 52348
10th annual George Washington Open
 See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — VA TLA# 52295
George Washington Saturday 11 AM Satellite Octos
 See Virginia.

MASSACHUSETTS

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
 See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 7, 2025 — MA TLA# 51890
Harry Nelson Pillsbury Memorial
 See Grand Prix.

REGIONALS

DECEMBER 7, 2025 — MA TLA# 51246
1st Auburn Winter Swiss
Site: Century Sportsman's Club **Address:** 531 Rochdale St., Auburn, MA 01501 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$700 **b/30 GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Greater Baystate Chess • [greater.baystatechess@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

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:** Michigan Chess Association • [jeffchess64@gmail.com](#) • 810-955-7271 • [www.michess.com](#)

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — MI TLA# 51922
Motor City Open
 See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 6, 2025 — MI TLA# 51075
2025 Michigan Action Championship
 See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 51956
Tim Just Winter Open XLII
 See Grand Prix.

MINNESOTA

JANUARY 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 51956
Tim Just Winter Open XLII
 See Grand Prix.

MISSISSIPPI

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — TN TLA# 52408
2025 MidSouth Open
 See Grand Prix.

MISSOURI

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — TN TLA# 52408
2025 MidSouth Open
 See Grand Prix.

MONTANA

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
 See Grand Prix.

NEBRASKA

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
 See Grand Prix.

NEVADA

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 50643
20th annual Los Angeles Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 24-30, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 51934
60th American Open Chess Championship
 See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV TLA# 50756
35th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 29, 2025 — NV TLA# 50984
34th annual North American Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JANUARY 16-19, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 51868
17th annual Golden State Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

NEW HAMPSHIRE
DECEMBER 7, 2025 — MA TLA# 51246
1st Auburn Winter Swiss
See Grand Prix.

NEW JERSEY
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.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 15, 2025 — NJ TLA# 47759
Hamilton Chess Club Quads
Site: Switlik Park Pavilion Address: Fisher Place/Joel Dimaggio Drive, Hamilton, NJ 08610 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Edward Sytnik • edmendou@aol.com • 6097582326 • <https://hamiltonchessclub.com>

NOVEMBER 15-16, 2025 — NY TLA# 50845
9th Annual New York State Girls Championship!
See New York.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
NOVEMBER 23, 2025 — NJ TLA# 51938
2025 New Jersey K-12 Championships
Site: Brookdale Community College Address: 765 Newman Springs Rd, Lincroft, NJ 07738 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Alessandro De Marchi-Blumstein • tournaments.njscf@gmail.com • www.njscf.org/2025-k-12-championships/

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — PA TLA# 50757
56th annual National Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 29, 2025 — PA TLA# 50761
16th annual National Chess Congress Blitz Championship
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.

JANUARY 16-19, 2026 — PA TLA# 51826
58th annual Liberty Bell Open
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.

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

NEW YORK
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/>

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 23, 2025 — NJ TLA# 51938
2025 New Jersey K-12 Championships
See New Jersey.

NOVEMBER 24-30, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 51934
60th American Open Chess Championship
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — PA TLA# 50757
56th annual National Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 7, 2025 — MA TLA# 51246
1st Auburn Winter Swiss
See Grand Prix.

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.

REGIONALS
JANUARY 3-4, 2026 — NY TLA# 52439
Official Chess 1st Annual New York Metro Area Scholastic Chess Championships
Site: New York Marriott Marquis, Times Square Address: 1535 Broadway, New York, NY 10036 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Official Chess • info@officialchess.org • officialchess.org/event/2026metros/

JANUARY 16-19, 2026 — PA TLA# 51826
58th annual Liberty Bell Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NORTH CAROLINA
NOVEMBER 2, 2025 — NC TLA# 51897
Dragon Knight Chess Zero Tasking Day

Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.
NOVEMBER 9, 2025 — NC TLA# 51902
Dragon Knight Chess International Tongue Twister Day Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 16, 2025 — NC TLA# 52455
Dragon Knight Chess International Day for Tolerance Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 23, 2025 — NC TLA# 52456
Dragon Knight Chess Mother Goose Parade Day Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52457
Dragon Knight Chess Secondhand Sunday Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 7, 2025 — NC TLA# 52458
Dragon Knight Chess International Civil Aviation Day Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 14, 2025 — NC TLA# 52459
Dragon Knight Chess World Choral Day Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2025 — VA TLA# 50760
50th annual Eastern Open!
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — NC TLA# 50591
Land of the Sky XXXVIII
See Grand Prix.

NORTH DAKOTA
MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

OHIO
NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — OH TLA# 50644
34th annual Kings Island Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 15, 2025 — OH TLA# 50647
13th annual Kings Island Open Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — MI TLA# 51922
Motor City Open
See Grand Prix.

OKLAHOMA
FEBRUARY 12-16, 2026 — TX TLA# 52346
17th annual Southwest Class Championships
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OREGON
NOVEMBER 24-30, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 51934
60th American Open Chess Championship
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV TLA# 50756
35th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.
MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
See Grand Prix.

PENNSYLVANIA
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 23, 2025 — NJ TLA# 51938
2025 New Jersey K-12 Championships
See New Jersey.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — PA TLA# 50757
56th annual National Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — MI TLA# 51922
Motor City Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 29, 2025 — PA TLA# 50761
16th annual National Chess Congress Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2025 — VA TLA# 50760
50th annual Eastern Open!
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JANUARY 16-19, 2026 — PA TLA# 51826
58th annual Liberty Bell Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEB. 27-MAR. 1, 2026 — VA TLA# 52348
10th annual George Washington Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — VA TLA# 52295
George Washington Saturday 11 AM Satellite Octos
See Virginia.

PUERTO RICO
NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

RHODE ISLAND
DECEMBER 7, 2025 — MA TLA# 51246
1st Auburn Winter Swiss
See Grand Prix.

SOUTH CAROLINA
NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
See Grand Prix.

SOUTH DAKOTA

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

NOVEMBER 8-9, 2025 — SD TLA# 51406
2025 Closed South Dakota State Chess Championship
 Site: HyVee Grocery Store Address: 3000 S. Minnesota Ave., 2nd Floor, Sioux Falls, SD 57105 Overall Prize Fund: \$475 GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: N Residency: Y Org: South Dakota Chess Association • gryschst@hotmail.com • 605-400-4116 • www.sdchess.org

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
 See Grand Prix.

TENNESSEE

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

TEXAS

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 24-30, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 51934
60th American Open Chess Championship
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV TLA# 50756
35th annual North American Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEBRUARY 12-16, 2026 — TX TLA# 52346
17th annual Southwest Class Championships
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

UTAH

NOVEMBER 24-30, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 51934
60th American Open Chess Championship
 See Grand Prix.

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
 See Grand Prix.

VERMONT

DECEMBER 7, 2025 — MA TLA# 51246
1st Auburn Winter Swiss
 See Grand Prix.

VIRGINIA

NOVEMBER 8, 2025 TLA# 52683
Shenandoah Valley Fall '25 Chess Open
 Site: Raymond E. Santmyers Student Union & Activity Center Address: 200 E. 8th Street, Front Royal, VA 22630 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: N Residency: N Org: David Hubbard • winchesterchess@gmail.com • 540-316-0883 • www.shenandoahvalleychess.org

NOVEMBER 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 21-23, 2025 — VA TLA# 52361
2025 Northern Virginia Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters
 See National Events.

NOVEMBER 28-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52080
2025 NC Open
 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.

DECEMBER 28, 2025 — VA TLA# 50762
16th annual Eastern Open Blitz Championship
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JANUARY 16-19, 2026 — PA TLA# 51826
58th annual Liberty Bell Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEB. 27-MAR. 1, 2026 — VA TLA# 52348
10th annual George Washington Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — VA TLA# 52295
George Washington Saturday 11 AM Satellite Octos
 Site: Washington Dulles Marriott Hotel Address: 45020 Aviation Dr, Dulles, VA 20166 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: N Resi-

dency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • www.chesstour.com

WASHINGTON

NOVEMBER 19-24, 2025 — WA TLA# 51858
19th Annual SPICE Cup Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 22-23, 2025 — WA TLA# 52571
20th Susan Polgar Foundation National Open for Girls and Boys
 Site: Hilton Bellevue Address: 300 112th Ave SE, Bellevue, WA 98004 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Josh Sinanan • 206-769-3757 • WashingtonChessFederation@gmail.com • www.splno.com

NOVEMBER 24-30, 2025 — CA-S TLA# 51934
60th American Open Chess Championship
 See Grand Prix..

DECEMBER 26-30, 2025 — NV TLA# 50756
35th annual North American Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JANUARY 16-19, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 51868
17th annual Golden State Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
 See Grand Prix.

WEST VIRGINIA

NOVEMBER 27-30, 2025 — NC TLA# 52078
2025 US Masters

See National Events.

WISCONSIN

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 14-16, 2025 — FL TLA# 51293
23rd Annual Turkey Bowl
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 23, 2025 — IL TLA# 50284
2025 Illinois Class State Championship
 See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 6-7, 2025 TLA# 51891
The Wisconsin Memorial
 Site: Hilton Garden Inn Address: 1801 Deming Way, Middleton, WI 53562 Overall Prize Fund: \$1,200 b/80 GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Mike Neitman • mike.neitman@charter.net • 608-467-8510 • www.wischess.org

JANUARY 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 51956
Tim Just Winter Open XLII
 See Grand Prix.

WYOMING

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
 See Grand Prix.

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SOLUTIONS

PAGE 13 CHESS TO ENJOY

PROBLEM 1. 103. Nd8! (or 103. Na5!) followed by 104. Nb7! and Kc7-b8. **PROBLEM 2. 88. Rg2** wins but **88. Rh2+** is a bit faster — for example, 88. ... Kg3 89. Rh3+ wins the queen. The game went **88. ... Kg5 89. Rg2+ Kh6 90. Kf6** and Black resigned before 91. Rh2+. **PROBLEM 3. 78. Qg5!** threatens 79. Bd5. The game went **78. ... Qf8 79. hxc7+ Qxc7 80. Qh4+** and Black resigned because of 80. ... Kg8 81. Bd5+ Kf8 82. Qd8 mate. Also, 78. ... g6 79. Qe7! is *zugzwang*. **PROBLEM 4. 93. ... f3+** threatens 94. Bxf3 Kc2 and queens. White resigned after 94. Kd1 f2 95. Bg2 Be3 96. Bf1 Kb4 97. Bb5 Kb3! In view of ... Kb3xa4 and the advance of the a-pawn. **PROBLEM 5. Fastest** is attacking two pieces with **89. ... Qh6!**. Then 90. Ba5 Qh1+ 91. Kf2 Qg2+; e.g., 92. Ke1 Qg1 mate or 92. Ke3 Qg5+ 93. Kf2 Qxa5. **PROBLEM 6. 84. Qc4+** forces a winning trade of queens: 84. ... Kb2 85. Qb5+ or 84. ... Kd2 85. Qd3+! Qxd3 86. Bxd3 Kxd3 87. g6.

PAGE 47 ABCS OF CHESS

PROBLEM 1. Mating net: Black is upended in 2: **1. Nb6+ axb6 2. Ra1 mate**. **PROBLEM 2. Mating net:** Black is crunched in 2: **1. Nb6+ axb6 2. Ra8 mate**. **PROBLEM 3. Mating net:** Black is dispensed with in 2: **1. Qxh7+ Kxh7 2. Rh3 mate**. **PROBLEM 4. Mating net:** Black is ruined in 2: **1. Ng6+ Kg8 2. Be6 mate**. **PROBLEM 5. Mating net:** Black is dispensed with in 2: **1. Qg8+ Rxc8 2. Nf7 mate**. **PROBLEM 6. Mating net:** Black is terminated in 2: **1. c8=N+ Bxc8 2. Nxc8 mate**.

PAGE 53 MAKE YOUR MOVE

TACTIC 1. 29. Bxb7+! Kxb7 30. Rxf4! In the game, White instead went for the obvious 30. Qf3+ Kc8 31. Qxf4 Qxf4

32. Rxf4 f5 33. Kc2. It's clearly better for White, who won, but it's much more complicated than our suggested solution. After **30. ... Qxf4 31. Qd7+ Qc7 32. Qxe8 g5 33. b4** White should win the endgame. Li – Wu, U.S. Girls' Junior Ch 2025 (analysis). **TACTIC 2. 22. Be3** Luring the black queen closer. **22. ... Qxe2 23. Rd2** Ouch! The queen is trapped. **23. ... Qxd2** If 23. ... Bd3, then 24. Qc5 keeps the trap firmly shut. In the game, White played 24. Bxd2 immediately and eventually won, but the best way is **24. Ne7+! Kf8 25. Bxd2 Kxe7 26. b3! Be6 27. Qc5+ Ke8 28. Bb4 Nc8 29. Qxh5** and White is winning. Sethuraman – Park, U.S. Junior Ch 2025 (analysis). **TACTIC 3. 30. ... d4!** Nasty! The threat is, of course, ... Ne4xc3+, winning the queen. White can move the queen, but then Black breaks through on the queenside. **31. Qe2 dxc3! 32. Qc2 Rb5 33. a3 g4** It was even stronger to play 33. ... Rd5 34. bxc3 Rd2 35. Rxd2 Nxd2+, winning the rook on h1. **34. Rh2 Nd2+ 35. Ka1 cxb2+ 36. Qxb2 Nb3+ 37. Ka2 e5 38. Qc3 Qe6 39. Kb2 Nc1 40. Qxc1 Qb3+** and Black eventually won. Wu – Atwell, U.S. Girls' Junior Ch 2025. **TACTIC 4. 19. ... Ne5!** BOOM! After this brilliant discovered threat against White's queen, the white position entirely falls apart. **20. Qxd6 Nxf3+ 21. gxf3 Rxd6** White's pawn structure has been ruined, and the d-pawn is impossible to protect. **22. d5 exd5 23. Ng3 Nh4** Or 23. ... dxc4 24. Nxf5 Rd3 and Black is completely winning. **24. Re3 Rad8 25. Red3 Nxf3+ 26. Rxf3 dxc4 27. Rxd6 Rxd6**, and Black was winning and eventually picked up the full point. Qiu – Mou, U.S. Girls' Junior Ch 2025. **TACTIC 5. 21. e4!** White blocks the threat on g2, adds a threat to the queen and maintains the threat to the bishop on b6. In the game, White missed her chance but eventually won anyway. But after **21. ... Qd8** Or 21. ... Nxe4 22. Nxb6 and White is winning. **22. Nxb6 Qxb6 23. Bxd4 Qd8 24. e5** White has a decisive advantage. Tang – Li, U.S. Girls' Junior Ch 2025 (analysis).

TACTIC 6. 24. Ncxd4! White sacrifices a piece in order to get a knight to c6. White could also have captured with the other knight. **24. ... exd4 25. Nxd4 Rxe1+** This wins another pawn, but it doesn't help Black's cause. Nor does 25. ... Bg6 26. Nc6 Nxc6 27. bxc6 and White's connected passed pawns will decide the game. **26. Qxe1 Bxd3 27. Rd1** This is best, but even 27. Ra1 Rxb7 28. Rxa5 wins for White. **27. ... Bg6 28. Nc6 Nxc6 29. bxc6 Bc2 30. Rxd6!** A further Exchange sacrifice, leaving White with just two pawns for the rook, but, of course, the pawns are on the sixth and seventh ranks and will decide the game. **30. ... Qxd6 31. Be5 Qe6 32. c7, Black resigned.** Chasin – Park, U.S. Junior Ch 2025. **TACTIC 7. 27. ... Qf7!** A quiet little move with nasty threat attached to it: ... Be6-d5 followed by ... Bd5xf3. **28. Qe4 Rde8** Or 28. ... Bd5 29. Qg4 Rde8, threatening ... Rxe2+. **29. Rf1 Bd5 30. Qg4 Re3 31. Rfe1 Rxf3+ 32. exf3 Bxf3, White resigned.** Ghazarian – Chasin, U.S. Junior Ch 2025. **TACTIC 8. 15. ... Nxd4!!** Boom! **16. exd4 e3!** Forcing his way through toward White's king. **17. Nf3 exf2+ 18. Kxf2 Ne4+ 19. Ke3 Rae8!** This improves over the game continuation, which went 19. ... Bxb3?? 20. Ne5? (20. Qxb3 would have been playable for White) 20. ... Qg3+ and Black eventually won. **20. Ne5 Qg3+ 21. Qf3 Qe1+ 22. Be2 Qc3+ 23. Bd3 Bd5 24. Rg1 Nc5 25. Qxd5 Qxd3+ 26. Kf2 Ne4+** and Black is winning. Christiansen – Dlugy, U.S. Senior Ch 2025. **TACTIC 9. 34. ... d4!! 35. Nb5** If 35. Rxd4, the rook on a1 is left unprotected, thus 35. ... Rxd4 36. Qxd4 Nxb6 should win for Black. **35. ... d3!** Passed pawns must be pushed. In the game, Black rejected this, possibly due to time trouble, and only won after White missed a draw. But after **36. Nc7 Rxc7 37. Bxc7 Rb5 38. Qf2 Nf5** Black's fantastic passed pawn pair will end up costing White serious material. Or 38. ... Nd5 39. Bb6 Nxb6 40. axb6 Qb8 and Black should win. Fishbein – Novikov, U.S. Senior Ch 2025.

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DR. A.V. FLEMING

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CEO,
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I STARTED PLAYING TOURNAMENT chess in 1976 as a student at the University of Louisville. Since then, I have competed in six U.S.

Opens and dozens of major events across the country, including the North American Open, the World Open, the Mid-West Open, King's Island, Foxwoods, the Chicago Open, the Indiana State Championship, and countless local and regional tournaments. As a life member of US Chess, I take pride in a lifelong commitment to our chess community, which has given me the opportunity to battle with and learn from players nationwide.

One of my most memorable games was played at the World Open in 2015, as White against Dave Amit in a sharp French Winawer. The critical moment came in the middle-game, when I found a powerful sequence to break through.

ONE TO REMEMBER

A.V. Fleming (1646)

Dave Amit (1768)

World Open U1800, Arlington, 2015

After some maneuvering, we reached a tense position where my knight had infiltrated Black's position, and here I found **My Best Move:**



WHITE TO MOVE

23. Qh4+!

This surprising queen check seizes the initiative. I consider it the best move I've ever played, as it swung the game decisively in my favor.

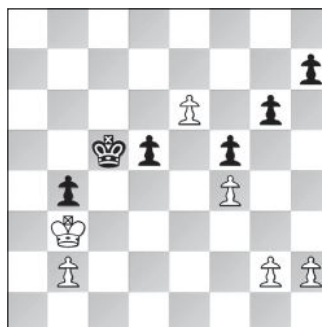
23. ... Kf8 24. Qf6+ Kg8 25. Nd6 Rf8 26. Qg5 Qd8 27. Qg3 Ne7 28. Qf2 Nc8 29.

“
*I take pride in a
lifelong
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our chess
community...”*
”

Nxc8 Bxc8 30. Bb5 Qc7 31. a4 Bb7 32. Re3 Rb8 33. Qh4 Qd8 34. Qxd8+ Rxd8

With queens off the board, the game transitioned into an endgame where I pressed my better pawn structure.

Now we fast-forward about 20 moves.



BLACK TO MOVE

White has just played 53. e6, creating a dangerous passed pawn. From White's perspective, this pawn thrust is the final strategic breakthrough.

53. ... Kd6 54. e7 Kxe7 55. Kxb4 Kd6
Now I closed up the kingside ...

56. h4 Kc6 57. b3 h6 58. g3 h5 59. Kc3 Kc5 60. b4+ Kc6 61. Kd4 Kb6 62. b5 Kxb5 63. Kxd5 Kb4 64. Ke6

... and then marched my king in to pick off Black's pawns.

This victory, punctuated by the bold move 23. Qh4+, remains a highlight of my chess career and a testament to the rewards of a lifelong journey in chess as a US Chess member. ♠

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