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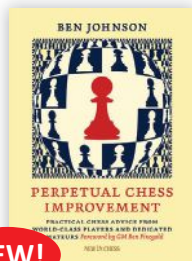


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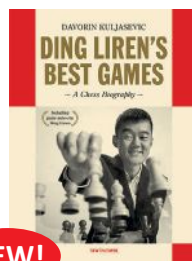
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NEW!

The best practical advice *Ben Johnson*

Ben Johnson hosts the Perpetual Chess Podcast, in which he is talking chess with many of the world's top players, trainers and passionate improvers. In this book, Ben looks for common ground and shared principles in all chess advice on the podcast. You will familiarize yourself with the collected wisdom of guests such as Anand, Nakamura, Ramesh, Hendriks, Aagaard, Christopher Chabris and Neal Bruce.



NEW!

The Best Games of the World Champion *Davorin Kuljasevic*

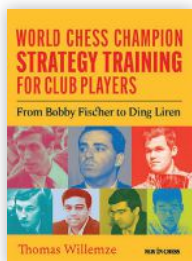
In April this year, Ding Liren sensationally defeated Ian Nepomniachtchi, to become the 17th World Champion, winning the hearts of chess fans with his incredible fighting spirit. He said the match 'reflected the deepest of his soul'. In this biography, best-selling author Kuljasevic follows and explores his rise, from his first chess steps in provincial China to the top of the chess world.



Magnus Carlsen & David Howell Explain the Grind

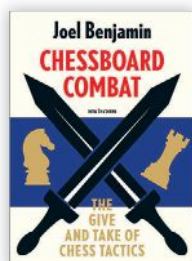
Magnus Carlsen and David Howell show how to win a seemingly equal chess position. Their first book tells you how to keep a game alive, keep posing problems, recognize the first small mistakes, and grind your opponent down until he cracks.

The book is converted from a popular Chessable course. The lively conversations of the two friends translate very well into a highly instructive chess manual.



100 Strategy Lessons from the World Champions *Thomas Willemze*

This book offers you 100 strategic exercises from the games of the best of the best, the World Champions from Bobby Fischer to Ding Liren. IM Thomas Willemze, one of the best chess improvement authors around, will show you foundational techniques such as improving your worst-placed. Solving these exercises will help every ambitious club player better understand how to make and execute plans.



The Give and Take of Chess Tactics *Joel Benjamin*

A chess tactics manual with a twist. Usually, tactics training involves puzzles with a clear solution. White wins brilliantly, or Black wins. But in real life, chess is messy. Sometimes tactics work, and sometimes they don't. That's why former US Champion Joel Benjamin tells the complete story of attack, defence, and counterattack!

A Rich and Dynamic Opening Repertoire for White *Christof Sielecki*

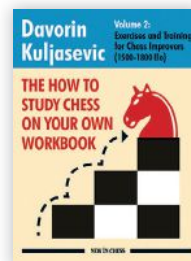
Coach Christof Sielecki has thoroughly revised and updated his 2018 chess opening manual, one of New In Chess' all-time bestselling opening books. This new 632-page hardcover edition contains everything you need to know to play 1.e4 with confidence. The repertoire is suited for players of all levels and the variations are easy to remember and require little or no maintenance.



NEW!

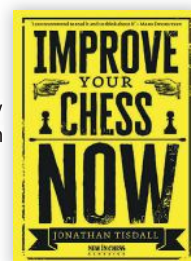
Exercises and Training for Improvers, Volume 2 *Davorin Kuljasevic*

This second workbook in Davorin Kuljasevic's *How to Study Chess on Your Own* series is optimized for chess players with an Elo rating between 1500 and 1800 but is helpful for anyone between 1200 and 2000. The astounding success of his series made clear that thousands of chess players want to improve their game and like to work on their training at least partially by themselves.



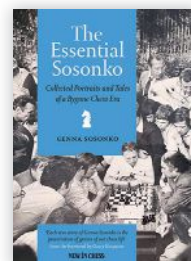
Improve Your Chess Now *Jonathan Tisdall*

A modern classic, originally published in 1997. Adult improvers often name this book as one of their primary sources in Ben Johnson's *Perpetual Chess Podcast*. With infectious enthusiasm, Tisdall covers a wide range of topics, including visualization and calculation, pattern recognition, the psychological aspects of chess, the art of defence and the wisdom of blindfold chess – all still relevant more than 25 years later.



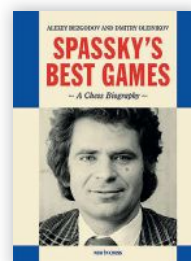
Tales of a Bygone Chess Era *Genna Sosonko*

'Each new story of Genna Sosonko is the preservation of grains of our chess life', says Garry Kasparov. No writer can tell you more about legends such as Tal, Korchnoi or Bronstein and personalities such as Chepukaitis or Nikolaev. This 840-page hardcover edition is a collection of the portraits Sosonko wrote for New In Chess, plus 100 pages of stories published elsewhere. A must-have for every chess aficionado.



Spassky's Best Games – A Chess Biography *Alexey Bezgodov & Dmitry Oleinikov*

World Champion Boris Spassky was a chess genius and a perfect gentleman. He was, for example, gracious in defeat after he lost his title to the American Bobby Fischer in 1972. This wonderful new biography includes more than sixty of his best games and a biographical sketch of more than a hundred pages.



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ON THE COVER

That skyline. Those trophies. Definitely worth a high five.

Congratulations to GM Fabiano Caruana and IM Carissa Yip for their outstanding performances in the 2023 U.S. Championship and Women's Championship. This was the third win for Caruana, and the second for Yip. Anyone want to bet on how many they'll each win before they're done?

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRYSTAL FULLER

CHESSLIFE

January

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The Mednis Memorial

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GM Fabiano Caruana and IM Carissa Yip take home the hardware at the 2023 U.S. Championship and Women's Championship

BY IM CARISSA YIP

For round-by-round reports on the **2023 U.S. Championships**, along with detailed analysis, please visit our dedicated webpage: new.uschess.org/2023-us-championships

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IM CARISSA YIP

(U.S. Championships) is a three-time U.S. Girls' Junior Champion and, with her victory at the 2023 U.S. Women's Champion, a two-time U.S. champion.

Originally from Andover, Massachusetts, she is ranked number two among women and first among girls on the November US Chess rating lists. Currently she is a student at Stanford University. Find her on Twitter at @carissayipchess.



GM ABHIMANYU MISHRA

(U.S. Championships Annotations) is the youngest grandmaster in the world,

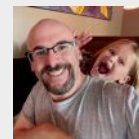
a title he earned at the age of 12 years, four months, and 25 days in June 2021. This accomplishment came after breaking records for youngest US Chess rated expert and master along with youngest international master. The 2023 U.S. Junior Champion, "Abhi" is currently rated 2627 FIDE, his highest rating to date. He is the author of an autobiography with New in Chess.



GM GREGORY KAIDANOV

(Qatar Masters) is the 2021 U.S. Senior Champion and a U.S. Chess Hall of Famer.

After becoming an international master in 1987 and a grandmaster in 1988, he found great success on the American swiss circuit after emigrating to the U.S. in 1991. A member of many U.S. international teams, today Gregory is one of America's leading chess coaches.



JOHN HARTMANN

(Mednis Memorial) is the editor of Chess Life and Chess Life Kids. In 2023 he won the "Best Story of the

Year" award from the Chess Journalists of America. Beginning this spring he will run the chess club at Westgate Elementary School in Omaha, NE, where he hopes his daughter will at least learn to like the game a little. If you're at the Amateur Team East next month, be sure to say hello.

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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: \$240 online only by 1/28/24; ALL \$290 after. All teams: any changes at site or after 1/28/24—\$30 charge. **ENTRY MAXIMUM IS 325 TEAMS.** Enter early!

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

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

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

HR: See link to reserve room at www.njscf.org. Chess rates expire 1/17/2024.

Tournament Director NTD/IA: E. Steven Doyle (49 years)
Sunday night: Bughouse \$25 per team. Cash prizes.



For help forming teams contact
esdoyle@aol.com

See TLA section of this issue or visit new.uschess.org/node/39739 for more details.





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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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COUNTERPLAY



Melik!

What a clever idea to create three separate covers for the November 2023 issue. I'm well over the age cutoff to be a senior player so I was especially tickled to get the Khachiyan cover. Years ago I used to see him at chess tournaments in and around Los Angeles; it seemed like whenever I saw him he was going over games and/or coaching (now WGM) Abrahamyan. Obviously, he turned out to be quite the successful coach and an excellent player besides. Thank you for another great issue, and keep up the good work!

David Marguiles
Via email

Silman

I was sorry to hear about the passing of IM Jeremy Silman. My condolences go out to his family. He will be deeply missed by the chess community.

In my opinion, he was one of the greatest current chess teachers. Through his books, and videos, I have learned so much, and have still so much more to learn from him.

Jim Orner
Via email

Boring?

Many chess players say the London System is boring. I completely disagree. In the past few years, exciting new lines have been added. Because of this, many grandmasters such as Magnus Carlsen are playing the London. I don't want to be the person who tells Magnus one of his openings is boring!

The London System allows flexibility to play different styles. You can adopt positional, attacking, or even universal approaches. The London can be a much more complex opening than first meets the eye.

This system is a perfect opening for beginners because there isn't much theory to be memorize. All they would have to do is move the pieces to the same squares most of the time, including creating the famous London triangle with the pawns. This is generally why players think it's boring, since it's the same setup every time.

Grandmasters obviously play deeper with more theory. New lines have been discovered which have taken the London to a whole different level. The London System is an exciting opening that offers players of all ability levels the opportunity to play the styles of their choosing.

As you can see, the London System is far from being a boring opening. As an intelligent chess player once said, "It's not that it's a boring opening, it's just played in a boring way by boring people."

Isabella Stubbins
Via email

John Hartmann responds:

This letter was submitted as part of the requirements for the Communications BSA merit badge. This Eagle Scout disagrees with the author — the London is boring! — but applauds her initiative in writing.

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

Getting the Gang Back Together

Past and present players return to UT Dallas for a day of fun.

BY **DR. ALEXEY ROOT, WIM**



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT Dallas held its first-ever chess team reunion on October 7, 2023, from 2:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. More than 35 people attended for all or part of the reunion.

After about an hour of eating and socializing, 24 attendees competed in a speed chess tournament with a time control of G/3+2. Alum and GM George (Giorgi) Margvelashvili took the first-place trophy on tiebreak. Margvelashvili earned a master's degree in finance from UT Dallas in 2015, and is currently an equity research analyst at JAG Capital Management. Also finishing with five out of six were current students GM Rahul Peddi (second on tiebreak) and GM Balaji Daggupati (third on tiebreak).

The reunion attracted prominent figures from different eras of the chess team's history, including UT Dallas chess program founder Dr. Tim Redman, current program director Jim Stallings, first coach and IM Rade Milovanovic, current coach GM Julio Sadorra, and six of the chess team's homegrown GMs.

IMS TO GMS

Over the 27 years of the chess team's existence, 10 chess team members matric-

ulated at UT Dallas as IMs, and, while still students, became GMs. The first homegrown GM was Magesh Chandran Panchanathan. Panchanathan made all three of his GM norms while a UT Dallas student and member of the chess team.

Perhaps more dramatic than his final GM norm, earned by tying for first place at the 2005 World Open, was Panchanathan's journey to UT Dallas. As the recruiter for the chess team from 1999–2003, I was a part of his journey. Panchanathan had been admitted to UT Dallas, but when he went to the Indian Embassy for his visa, he was turned down. The Embassy officials said they were worried about a “brain drain” of talents to America. I asked Michael Coleman, then associate provost and dean of undergraduate education, to intervene. Coleman called the Indian Embassy on Christmas Eve, and Panchanathan got his visa. Panchanathan earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in computer science at UT Dallas.

The other homegrown GMs at the reunion were Rahul Peddi, Julio Sadorra, Ivan Schitco, Titas Stremavicius, and Guillermo Vazquez. Not at the reunion, but becoming grandmasters during their UT Dallas chess team years: David Brodsky, Brian Escalante, Conrad Holt, and Denis Kadric.

STUDENTS ARE OUR BEST RECRUITERS

Redman was fond of saying, “Students are our best recruiters.” At the 2008 Singapore Masters International Open, Panchanathan told then-IM Julio Sadorra about UT Dallas. Sadorra applied and matriculated. Like Panchanathan, Sadorra became a GM while a student at UT Dallas. Sadorra graduated in 2013 with a bachelor's degree in business administration.



OLD COACH, NEW COACH

The chess coach for Panchanathan, Sadorra, and many other UT Dallas alumni was IM Rade Milovanovic. Milovanovic was hired as the team's trainer in 1999, a role that evolved into a full-time chess coach position. He retired after the 2018 Pan American Intercollegiate Team Chess Championship (Pan-Am). Since 2019, Sadorra has been the UT Dallas chess coach.

OLD DIRECTOR, NEW DIRECTOR

In 2006, program founder Dr. Tim Redman handed over the reins of the chess program to Jim Stallings, who had served as the associate director under Redman since 2004. Fourteen years later, Redman retired from UT Dallas as a professor of literary studies in February 2020.

Redman attended the reunion with his assistant Thalissa Williams driving Redman to the UT Dallas campus in Richardson. Redman's pride in his students was palpable, and his legacy, the UT Dallas chess program, is thriving. Because of its success, UT Dallas has imitators.

IMITATION IS THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY

Since 1996 — and for about 15 years thereaf-





ter — UT Dallas and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) dominated the college chess world. Each school has won 10 Pan-Am titles. Their most recent Pan-Am titles were shared with Webster University and University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 2012.

In 2001, Redman established the President's Cup with the financial support of then-UT Dallas president Dr. Franklyn Jenifer. In the President's Cup, the top four U.S. schools from the Pan-Am compete for the national collegiate team championship. UT Dallas has won five President's Cups. The President's Cup is held on the same weekend as the basketball final four in April, thus earning the colloquial moniker, "The Final Four of College Chess."

UT Dallas alum Clemente Rendon, who attended the reunion, played a role in the early days of another chess team and eventual Pan-Am champion. Back when The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) was The University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB), then-UTB President Dr. Juliet V. Garcia launched the UTB chess program in 2001. She modeled the UTB program on that of UT Dallas, as described by its chess club president Rendon. UTRGV won the 2015 Pan-Am.

Rendon came to UT Dallas from his hometown of Brownsville on a chess scholarship in 1999. He earned two UT Dallas degrees: a bachelor's degree in management infor-

mation systems in 2002 and an MBA, with a concentration in international business, in 2003. Rendon is an executive in the insurance industry.

The chess programs of two-time Pan-Am champion Texas Tech University and eight-time Pan-Am champion Webster University may also have been inspired by UT Dallas. In 2004, GM Susan Polgar was honored as the first Chess Educator of the Year by UT Dallas. Prior to 2004, Polgar had no involvement in college chess. After meeting Redman, Milovanovic, and UT Dallas chess team members, Polgar became the chess coach for Texas Tech University in 2007. After she left Texas Tech University in 2012, she became the coach for the Webster University team before retiring in 2021.



WHY CHESS?

In Texas, most universities have football teams and students rally before football games. But at UT Dallas, pep rallies are for the chess team. Cheerleaders cheer, the pep band plays, and chess team members are the "football players" of UT Dallas. As Redman used to say, "UT Dallas doesn't have a football team, but we have one of the top college chess teams in the world."

Chess has been part of UT Dallas' identity almost from its start as a four-year college. In 1990, UT Dallas added freshman and sophomore classes to its already existing upper division and graduate classes. From its beginning in 1996, the UT Dallas chess team attracted U.S. high school chess players sporting stellar academic credentials. Additionally, many international chess players became aware of UT Dallas because of its chess team.

BEYOND THE BOARD

While some alumni work in chess, such as Panchanathan with the Kings & Queens Chess Academy and GM Yuri Shulman (not at the reunion) at Shulman Chess, others work in diverse fields such as accounting, computer science, finance, insurance, and pharmacology.

Since 2001, I have taught online courses, popular with chess team members, about chess in education. When IM John Bartholomew was at UT Dallas, he took my courses. Later, he co-founded Chessable. Chessable hired me as its Chief Science Officer in April of 2022, which I described in an interview as a "full circle" moment.

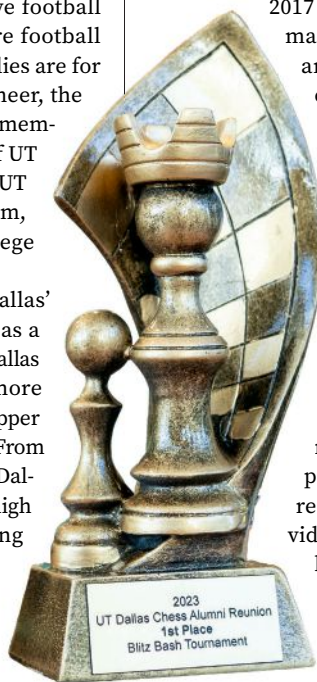
Chessable is now part of *Chess.com*. The Vice President for Global Operations at *Chess.com* is another UT Dallas alum, IM

Dmitri Shneider. While Bartholomew and Shneider were not at this reunion, perhaps they will be at the next one, tentatively planned for three years from now.

REUNION STAFF

UT Dallas alumni and former chess team members Woman FIDE Master Patrycja Labeledz and Woman International Master Mariam Danelia organized the reunion. Labeledz graduated in 2015 with a dual bachelor of science in information technology and systems & marketing. She also holds an MBA from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. She is a cloud program manager at Google. Danelia graduated in 2017 with undergraduate and master's degrees in finance and accounting. She is a consulting manager at Protiviti.

Helping at the reunion were current UT Dallas chess club officers Nitin Chikodi, David Bork, Vittal Ranganath, and Nikhilesh Prabhakar. Prabhakar served as the tournament director for the speed chess tournament. The UT Dallas chess program arranged for the reunion room. It also provided refreshments and gift bags, which included UT Dallas-branded travel sets created by current Chess Program Coordinator Tim Steiner. ♠



Heading North, and Seeing the

Alaskan Evelyn Woods is growing chess in her state.

BY NATASHA ROBERTS

Future.

A

S THE ART DIRECTOR FOR US Chess, I have been fortunate to travel all across this country for work. I have attended gala openings thrown by the Saint Louis Chess Club, and I have

conducted interviews at national tournaments for our “Faces of US Chess” series on Instagram. And I have learned that, sometimes, the best chess travel stories happen when you least expect them.

This past summer, my family and I went on a great adventure, driving from our home in Northern Indiana to Alaska. Chess was not a focus of the trip — we did not even take a chessboard. But this is how all the best stories start, when the unexpected surprises you.

The trip as a whole was a real eye-opener. We learned about the development and

construction of the Alaskan highway, the ecosystems and communities along the way, and the stunning wildlife that lives there. One of our stops was in Fairbanks, where we spent a week learning about the people of Alaska, how and why they choose to live in such extreme conditions, and the community they create while doing so. We visited the University of Alaska at Fairbanks, explored the historic Pioneer Park, and ate from some amazing food trucks. And, although I am not totally certain how we ended up there, we even spent an evening at the local chess club.

At the time, the Fairbanks Chess Club was meeting at the Joy Community Center, where a temporary library was opened while the main branch was under construction. The club was well-attended, with almost equal representation of the genders and a wide variety of ages. Being impressed by this, I inquired about the organizer.

I discovered that a teenager, Evelyn Mills, was running the club. This definitely piqued my interest, so I reached out the next day to see if she would be available for an interview for “Faces.” We met a few days later at a cute coffee shop, where we sat outside at a table bathed in summer sun.

Evelyn explained that she learned chess from an app when she was eight. When she started going to the local chess club, it often was just her and the club organizer, Eamon Stack, in attendance. Eamon ran the chess club out of his rock-climbing gym, but the meetings were irregular. “And then,” Evelyn explains, “less than a year ago, he was, like, ‘I’m kind of done. Do you want take it over?’” She knew she had to, thinking, “Come on, we’re Fairbanks. We’re not a small city, relatively speaking, for Alaska.”

“So I took over the club because I wanted Fairbanks to have one. And I wanted to play chess, and I wanted people to play chess with me.”

Evelyn, who is now in high school, made some small but important changes. She moved the meetings from Saturday afternoons to Tuesday evenings, started hosting the club in the library, and set a goal to get five people to attend each week. At first no one showed up, but Evelyn persisted. Soon, there were 10 or more people at most meetings. Then the library approached her about a partnership, which significantly contributed to the club’s growth and success.

But Evelyn’s chess journey was only



Left and right: Evelyn as she appeared in our Faces series, with the cover story (left) in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner.

PHOTOS: MILES JORDAN (TOP); COURTESY SUBJECT (BOTTOM)

beginning. Some of the individuals who regularly attended the club started asking her to host a tournament. As she explained, “We just don’t have tournaments regularly in Alaska, rated or unrated. So, I decided to host a tournament, an unrated tournament, the first in nearly 20 years in Fairbanks.”

Hoping that a few people would come, Evelyn set up a registration form online, but soon she had to close it — she had run out of room. With 35 people registered, more people kept emailing saying they couldn’t get into the registration. Evelyn’s enthusiasm was evident as she recalled what happened. “It was insane. Oh my gosh, I wish I had more boards.”

Evelyn credits part of the success to the way she advertised the tournament. She put it on *Chess.com*, Facebook, and Instagram — all the normal spots. “But about 90% of the people who came to me did not see it on any social media. Instead, they found out about it from posters I’d put up all over town. I put posters everywhere — the library, the grocery, the bowling alley, the swimming pool. I would ask, ‘Oh, did you see it Facebook?’ They’d respond ‘No. Fred Meyer’s.’ It was, like, old school.”

The tournament ended up being a huge



hit. A reporter from the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* stopped by, and two Alaska State Senators sent Evelyn letters. Afterwards, a lot of people were asking if she was going to host a rated tournament. Laughing, Evelyn recalled thinking, “Can you give me a second? I’m only 16!” But that is exactly what she did.

On National Chess Day this year, Evelyn Mills held the first rated tournament in Fairbanks, Alaska, since 2006. Once again, all the seats were filled, and this time, the tournament made the front page. Alaskan State Senator Scott Kawasaki arrived to make the ceremonial first move. Evelyn was proud to say that he did so on-time, and that the tournament ran entirely on schedule.

What excited Evelyn most was when she learned that Megan Chen was playing in her tournament, and it would mark the completion of her current adventure — to become the first female to play in a rated tournament in every state. (See the March 2023 “My Best Move” for more on Megan. ~ed.)

Evelyn grew up playing chess as the only

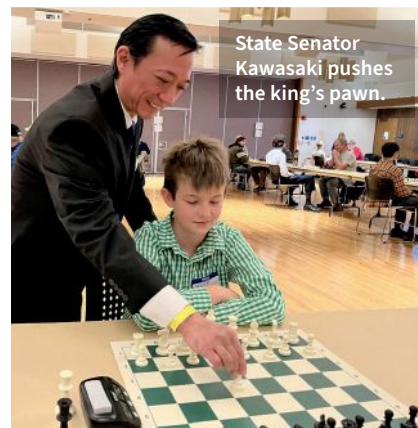
female. “I joined an elementary school chess club, and I was the only girl. I did chess in middle school, too, but again, I was the only girl. None of my coaches were girls. No one I played was a girl. And some people actually refused to play me because I was the only girl. Looking back, I think I know why — they were afraid I would win. But back then it felt different. So, when I got to high school I decided to create a chess club for women.

“I still run that one. And now, at the Fairbanks Chess Club, when a girl walks in, I’ll go up and shake her hand and welcome her to the club. Sometimes I’ll play her. Basically, I try to make her as comfortable as possible. I know first-hand that women can be sometimes uncomfortable in a male-dominated room. I want their experience to be different from mine.”

My trip to Alaska was an amazing adventure on its own. But the true gift Alaska gave me was the opportunity to learn about others’ adventures and how chess can be a part of the journey. With her involvement in the Fairbanks Chess Club and beyond, Evelyn Mills is making a better chess experience for all players in the Last Frontier. I can’t wait to see what adventures lie ahead for her, and for chess, in Alaska. ♠



Left: Megan Chen completes her quest. Top and bottom: scenes from the Fairbanks National Chess Day Tournament.



State Senator Kawasaki pushes the king’s pawn.



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**Read & Write
Chess**

by Jeanne Cairns Sinquefield

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Super Seniors!

Congratulations to GMs Jaan Ehvest, Gregory Kaidanov, Igor Novikov, Alexander Shabalov, and Alex Yermolinsky, who teamed up to win the 2023 World Senior (50+) Team Championship. The tournament, held in Struga, North Macedonia, took place from September 19-28.

Team USA scored seven match wins, along with a draw and a loss, to finish with 15 match points and clear first place. Three teams — England 1, Iceland, and Italy (who defeated the U.S. in the seventh round) — ended with 14 match points, with England and Iceland taking silver and bronze, respectively, on tiebreaks.

Each member of the team also took home a board medal to pair with their team gold. Kaidanov, Ehvest, and Novikov earned gold medals on boards two through four, respectively, with Yermolinsky taking the silver for alternates, and Shabalov winning first board bronze.

Along with his report from the Qatar Masters, sharp-eyed readers will find Kaidanov's critical fifth-round victory over England 1's GM John Emms analyzed in Joel Benjamin's column. Here we offer two tasty final round wins against Poland, reminding us that sharp tactics aren't just for juniors.

BENKO GAMBIT, ACCEPTED (A58)

GM Alex Yermolinsky (2419)

Pawel Flis (1948)

World Senior Teams +50 (9.4), Struga, 09.28.2023

1. d4 c5 2. d5 Nf6 3. c4 b5 4. cxb5 a6 5. bxa6 Bxa6 6. Nc3 g6 7. Nf3 Bg7 8. e4 Bxf1 9. Kxf1 d6 10. g3 Nbd7 11. Kg2 0-0 12. a4
This way of handling the Benko Gambit has driven Black to despair, and to earlier alternatives (including postponing the recapture on a6).

12. ... Ra6 13. Qc2 Qa8 14. Bd2 Rb8
15. b3 e6

Here 15. ... c4! 16. bxc4 Rc8 17. Nb5 Nc5 gives Black good compensation.

16. dxe6 fxe6 17. Rad1 d5 18. exd5 exd5
19. Rhe1 Kh8 20. Nb5 Rc8 21. Bf4 Qc6
22. Ng5!

With the idea of Re1-e6/e7 and a dominating position.

22. ... d4+ 23. Kg1 Qd5? 24. Rxd4 Qg8 25. Rd6 Raa8 26. Re7 Rf8 27. Nc7 Rad8 28. Nce6 Nh5 29. Nxd8 Nxf4 30. Ndf7+, Black resigned.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT, CHEBANENKO SLAV (D15)

GM Gregory Kaidanov (2549)

IM Witalis Sapis (2375)

World Senior Teams +50 (9.2), Struga, 09.28.2023

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. Nc3 a6 5. e3 b5 6. b3 Bg4 7. a4 bxc4 8. bxc4 Nbd7 9. a5 e5 10. Qa4 Bxf3 11. gxf3 exd4 12. exd4 c5?! 13. Nxd5 cxd4?

Opening the position against the bishops proves a dubious decision.

14. Bh3! Be7 15. Nxf6+! Bxf6 16. 0-0 Ra7 17. Ba3! Qc7 18. Rab1 Qf4 19. Qc6! Kd8 20. Bd6 Be5



21. Qc8+!, Black resigned.

Now after 21. ... Kxc8 22. Rb8 is mate. Reversing the move order also works, i.e., 21. Rb8+ Nxb8 22. Qc8 mate.

The second American team in the 50+ section was "USA 5 Brothers," composed of four actual brothers: FM Krishan Jhunjunwala, Ramesh Jhunjunwala, Naresh Jhunjunwala, and Suresh Jhunjunwala. (Brother number five was apparently unavailable.) They notched a respectable two match wins and three draws to finish in 17th place.

The 65+ Championship was won by the "Lasker Schachstiftung GK" team from Germany, who just edged out England 1 (led by an evergreen GM John Nunn) for gold. Slovakia finished a distant third. No Americans were in the field.

Just over one month later, the 2023 World Senior Individual Championships took place in Terrasini, Italy. The event, which ran from October 24 through November 6, saw 12 Americans in competition.

At 8½/11, English GM Michael Adams took 50+ Open gold over GM Suat Atalik on tiebreaks. GM Maxim Novik took the bronze, also on tiebreaks, with eight points.

American GM Max Dlugy finished in seventh place in the 50+, scoring 7½/11. Just behind him were fellow countrymen IM William Pascall with 7 points, and Glen Gratz with 6½. FM Krishan Jhunjunwala finished in the middle of the pack with 5½ points.

England "did the double" with GM John Nunn's second consecutive gold-medal winning performance in the 65+ Open, although tiebreaks were required to give him



the tournament victory over GM Lubomir Ftacnik. Both players scored 8½/11, with GM Nikolay Legky first among equals with eight points to claim bronze.

Nunn's path to victory was not easy, with a round seven loss to GM Daniel Campora complicating matters. But the former Candidate showed he still had plenty in the tank, using his beloved King's Indian to great effect in games like this.

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE, MAKAGONOV SYSTEM (E71)

Anthony Stebbings (2263)

GM John Nunn (2560)

World Seniors 65+ (4), Terassini, 10.28.2023

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. h3 0-0 6. Be3 Nc6 7. Nge2 a6 8. g4 b5 9. g5 Nh5 10. cxb5 axb5 11. Nxb5 Rb8 12. Nec3 e5 13. dxe5 Nxe5 14. Be2 c6 15. Nxd6 Rxb2 16. Nxc8 Qxc8 17. Rc1 Rd8 18. Qa4 Qe6 19. Kf1 f5 20. exf5 Qxf5 21. Bxh5 gxh5 22. Qe4 Qf8 23. Nd1 Rb4 24. Qg2 Nf3 25. Ke2 Ra4 26. Rc2 Qf5 27. Rc1 Rxa2+, White resigned.

Six Americans took part in the Open 65+. Michael A. Gilbert and Boris Tsynman finished with six points — although Gilbert did it in just nine games! — while IM Timothy Taylor ended with 5½. Naresh Jhunjhnuwala and Dmitry Mirkin scored five points, while Leonid Bondar finished at 4½/11 and Suresh Jhunjhnuwala ended at four points.

There were no Americans in the Women's Senior Championship, which, despite being played in one section, awarded prizes for 50+ and 65+ players. Spanish WGM Monica Calzetta Ruiz won the 50+ gold with (you guessed it) 8½/11, while top 65+ honors went to WGM Galina Strutinskaia at 8/11.

82-year-old former women's world champion GM Nona Gaprindashvili finished in 13th place with six points. While she did not manage to win a ninth World Senior title, Gaprindashvili's quality was never in doubt. Here's a clean positional crush from round seven.

CARO-KANN DEFENSE (B10)

Aureliana Eugenia Pancu (1865)

GM Nona Gaprindashvili (2267)

Women's World Seniors (7), Terassini, 11.01.2023

1. Nf3 g6 2. g3 Bg7 3. Bg2 e5 4. d3 d5 5. Nbd2 Ne7 6. e4 c6 7. 0-0 0-0 8. Re1 d4



9. a4 c5 10. Nc4 Nbc6 11. Bd2 b6 12. Qc1 f6 13. Bh6 Be6 14. Bxg7 Kxg7 15. Ncd2 Nb4 16. Bf1 Rc8 17. b3 Qc7 18. Nb1 a6 19. Na3 Rb8 20. c3 dxc3 21. Qxc3 Nec6 22. Nc2 Nxc2 23. Qxc2 Qf7 24. Rab1 Rbc8 25. h3 Nd4 26. Nxd4 cxd4 27. Qd2 Rc3 28. b4 Rfc8 29. Rb2 Qd7 30. a5 b5 31. h4 R8c7 32. f4 h6 33. h5 g5 34. f5 Bb3 35. Qf2 Qd6, White resigned.

Bonin is Back

After an eighteen-month enforced layoff, legendary New York IM Jay Bonin is back at the board.

Often called the "Iron Man of Chess" for the stunning number of over-the-board events he plays — some 4,713 (since late 1991) at time of writing — Bonin was forced to sit on the sidelines after some serious health challenges. After two hospitalizations and a long stint in a rehabilitation center, he returned to tournament play on October 15 for the Sunday G/50 at the Marshall Chess Club.

It took just two days for him to regain his spot at the top of the crosstable, tying for first place in the Marshall Masters on October 17 at 3½/4 with FM Aaron Jacobson and Chenxuan Ling.

With the rust suitably shaken off, the "Iron Man" has been playing all over the New York City area, and word has it that he

has resumed his regular game analysis gig at the Marshall on Thursday nights.

Welcome back, Jay. We missed you.

New Titles

Congratulations to these new American FIDE title holders, awarded between September 8 and December 1, 2023.

- IM: Alexander Velikanov
- WIM: Kelsey Liu
- FM: Adithya Bala, Gabriel Eidelman, Jeevan Karamsetty, Justin Lee, Nicholas Matta, Hersh Singh, Ryan Sun, Zachary Tanenbaum, Sihan Tao, Nathan Yan
- WFM: Chloe Gaw, Iris Li, Megan Paragua
- CM: Krish Bhandari, Kyle Qiyu Dong, Yiding Lu, Bobby Qian, Dylan Tang, Nathan Yan
- WCM: Angela Liu, Avery Yuan, Serena Yuan, Kylie Zhang. ♠

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

Pre-game

The hour that also matters.

BY GM ANDY SOLTIS

Y

OU MAY HAVE SEEN IT ON YouTube:

Magnus Carlsen sprints into a vast tournament hall, dodges tables like an NFL running back, and quickly weaves his way to his board so he can play his first move in a World Blitz Championship.

He had to rush because he had gone skiing at a resort before the round began and got stuck in traffic. When he finally arrived at the playing hall he had lost two of the three minutes allotted for his game. It took him another 30 seconds to find his board.

Of course, since this is a Magnus story, it was his opponent who ran fatally short of time.

TOO LATE, NOT TOO SLOW

GM Vladislav Kovalev

GM Magnus Carlsen

World Blitz Championship (1), Almaty, 12.29.2022



WHITE TO MOVE

Here White might defend with 46. Nf5+ followed by Rd2-f2 and Nf5-g7-h5.

But with only a few seconds left he did what panicked players often do. He changed the nature of the position, with 46. Nxc4+?? dxc4 47. d5 with the idea of Rd2-d4.

But he was lost soon after 47. ... Re3 48. Rd4 b3+ 49. Kd2 Rxf3 50. Rxc4 Kxd5 51. Rb4 Kc5 52. Ra4 Rf4.

Since Carlsen went on to win the tournament, it was easy to overlook this game. But it was a teachable moment. Magnus was giving us an unintended lesson about what *not* to do to get ready for a chess game.

The lesson begins with a basic insight: The outcome of a game often depends as much on what you do in the hour before the clocks are started as in the hour that immediately follows.

Less experienced players think their opening moves are what matters most. As a result, they over-think and over-worry. Before the game begins they go into a cramming panic:

"I just saw my pairing. My opponent plays the Delayed Ponziani Reversed! What am I going to do?"

What you really need in the pre-game period is calm, not crisis. The great Ukrainian GM Vasyl Ivanchuk said one of his fundamental rules was: *Stop* thinking about chess at least a half hour before a tournament game.

There are a vast variety of ways to get your mind off chess in the pre-game. This was illustrated at the 2006 United States Championship, when the players were asked what they did before games.

Sleep, said WIM Esther Epstein. Exercise, said GM Larry Christiansen. Pray, said IM Daniel Fernandez. Meditate, said WFM Chouchanik Airapetian. And IM Dean Ippolito answered, "Moonwalking," his hobby.

What about world champions? Tigran Petrosian listened to classical music to relax. Mikhail Botvinnik took a slow walk to the playing site, often counting the steps. Ding Liren, like Boris Spassky and Viswanathan Anand, said he likes to take a shower before a game.

Hans Berliner, one of the three Americans who won the world correspondence championship, had a different way of feeling refreshed. His secret, at least before an OTB game, was to brush his teeth. "I like to have a winning tang," he told his friend GM Arthur Bisguier.

Bisguier laughed when he heard this. But although he was higher rated than Berliner, he never seemed comfortable in their games, like this one.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED (D35)

Hans Berliner

GM Arthur Bisguier

U.S. Championship (6), New York, 12.26.1960

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. Bg5 d5 5. cxd5 exd5 6. e3 c5 7. Bd3 c4?

The transposition from Nimzo-Indian Defense to Queen's Gambit Declined was confusing in 1960. Because White is not committed to Ng1-f3, the option of Ng2-e2 makes the ... c5-c4 advance dubious.

8. Bc2 Qa5 9. Bxf6!?

The gambit is sound but 9. Ne2! was an easier road to an advantage.

9. ... Bxc3+ 10. bxc3 Qxc3+ 11. Kf1 gxf6 12. Ne2 Qa5 13. Nf4 Nc6 14. Rb1



Now 14. ... Ne7 15.a4 can be followed by Qd1-h5, Nf4-h5, or e3-e4 with a dangerous

QUIZ FOR JANUARY

WHO SAYS LONG GAMES

are dull? As players defend difficult positions more tenaciously than ever before, we are seeing games last much longer. And we are seeing more instructive ways to win them. Before we close the books on 2023, here is a quiz based on the marathons of the year. In each of the six diagrams you are asked to find the fastest winning lines. This will mean either a forced mate or an unstoppable promotion to a queen. For solutions see Page 63.



PROBLEM 1 GM Ray Robson GM Jose Alcantara



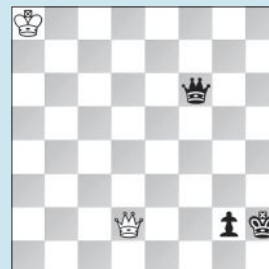
WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 2 GM Harsha Bharathakoti IM Emin Ohanyan



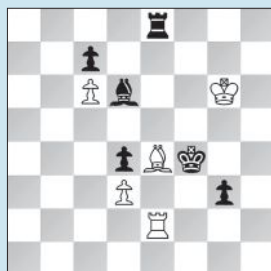
BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 3 GM Abhimanyu Mishra GM Boris Gelfand



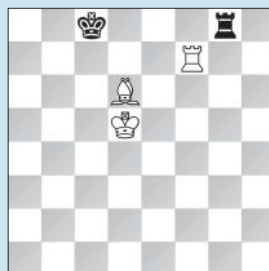
BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 4 GM Jan-Krzysztof Duda GM Magnus Carlsen



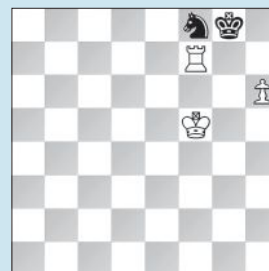
BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 5 GM Thorsten Haub GM Ori Kobo



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 6 GM Andrey Esipenko GM Vincent Keymer



WHITE TO MOVE

initiative. Bisguier found a clever form of desperation.

14. ... Bd7?! 15. Rxb7 O-O-O 16. Qb1 Qa6
17. Rb5 Ne7 18. Rc5+ Bc6



Some sources say White now played 19. Qb2?? and Black inexplicably overlooked 19. ... c3+!

19. Qb4

But this prepared Kf1-e2 followed by Rh1-b1 and/or Rc5-a5.

19. ... Qb6? 20. Qa3

There is no defense, e.g. 20. ... Kb8 21. Ke2 Ka8 33. Rb1 Qc7 34. Ba4 and wins.

20. ... Rd7 21. Ke2 Rb7 22. Rb1 Qc7 23. Qa6 Kb8 24. Nxd5 Nxd5 25. Rxc6 Rxb1 26. Rxc7 Nxc7 27. Qxf6, Black resigned.

When he was young, Spassky liked to shave and dress well for key tournament games. He even wore a necktie. He took so much time getting ready for a game in his first international tournament, he absent-mindedly showed up at the board wearing two ties.

Taking a pre-game nap is another common habit. GM Boris Gelfand, a one-time world championship challenger, was asked in 2018 if he ever overslept before a game "or absent-mindedly put on a shirt back to front."

"Oversleeping — no. But back-to-front can easily happen," he said. In fact, it had happened to him "more than once."

Finally, the pre-game period is nearly over. You arrive at the tournament with at least a few minutes to spare. Veteran masters have a programmed routine for how to spend them. They fuss with their scoresheet, or find a way to strategically play their pen or wrist watch on top of it.

Or they go into what looks like a trance. When Garry Kasparov began his famous 1997 rematch with the Deep Blue computer

he spent the five minutes before the first game doing what his aide Mikhail Khodarkovsky said was "a series of concentration exercises." He won the first game easily.

His pre-game before a critical game in the 1995 world championship match was quite different. Instead of meeting with his team of assistants for lunch, Kasparov watched TV news reports. The verdict in the nine-month-long O.J. Simpson murder trial was about to be announced.

"That's unbelievable! That's unbelievable!" Kasparov exclaimed as the jury found Simpson not guilty of murder. He was "so excited" by what he saw as injustice that his team asked him to stop talking about it, according to Khodarkovsky, in the book *A New Era*.

But, like Carlsen and all great champions, Kasparov was able to recover. He stumbled in the opening but he turned the tables and won what turned out to be his last victory in a world championship match. ♦

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

Black on the Attack

A key thematic idea for Black in the Sicilian Defense

BY **WGM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN**

D HOPE THE LAST COLUMN did not scare any readers away from playing the Sicilian Defense! It is not all gloom and doom, as the Sicilian offers great attacking chances for the player with the black pieces. After all, it was utilized by some of the most dynamic players in chess history, including Kasparov, Anand, and Polgar. This month we will take a look at some typical middlegame ideas for Black in common Sicilian positions.

THE DRAGON

The Sicilian Dragon is an extremely sharp system that carries a lot of risk for both players, and it employs a number of typical attacking themes for Black in the Sicilian.

It is not so simple for White to carry out an attack with the menacing “dragon bishop” staring at the white king. If White is not accurate in their attack, Black’s attack can be devastating.

THEMATIC SHOTS

FM Tamas Pfeifer
IM Judit Polgar
Hungarian Team Ch, 1988

(see diagram top of next column)

17. ... Bxg4!

An unexpected shot. Black’s target is the e4-pawn; by sacrificing on g4, Polgar is removing one of the defenders.



BLACK TO MOVE

18. fxc4

The counterblow 18. e5!, blocking the long diagonal, is crucial if White is to avoid what happened in the game.

After Black’s 18. ... Bxf3 (18. ... dxe5 19. fxc4 Rxc3 20. bxc3 Ne4 is met with 21. Qd8+! Rxd8 22. Rxd8+ Bf8 23. Bh6 with unstoppable mate) 19. exf6 Bxf6 20. hxg6 fxc6 the position remains very messy.

18. ... Rxc3!!

This thematic shot is the point behind the previous sacrifice. Black is happy to give up material, as White’s position is now falling apart. The e4-pawn will fall and the bishop will join the attack.

19. bxc3 Nxe4 20. Qd3 Nxc3+ 21. Kc1 Qa3+

Even stronger was 21. ... Nxa2+ 22. Kd2 Qc6 with the idea of both ... Qc6-g2+ and ... Na2-b4.

22. Kd2 Nxd1 23. Kxd1 Qxa2 24. hxg6 hxg6



Four pawns and a rickety king to target are enough to give Black a big advantage.

25. Rh2 Qa4 26. g5 Rc3 27. Qd2 a5 28. Qf2 Qe4 29. Rh3 a4 30. Nc1 a3 31. Rf3 a2, White resigned.

THE ... Rxc3 SACRIFICE

The Exchange sacrifice seen in the previous example is perhaps the must-know idea in Sicilian middlegames. While it is often seen in games with opposite-side castling, it can still be an important idea in positions where both sides have gone kingside.

OPPOSITE-SIDE CASTLING

The main idea in this case is to force White to recapture with a pawn, thus destroying the pawn structure on the queenside. One of the most well-known examples of this Exchange sac was played by the legendary 13th World Champion himself.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B80)

GM Sergei Movsesian (2668)

GM Garry Kasparov (2851)

Sarajevo (11), 05.29.2000

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6
5. Nc3 a6 6. Be3 e6 7. f3 b5 8. Qd2 Nbd7 9.
0-0-0 Bb7

Black leaves the king in the center for the time being, and instead focuses on creating counterplay on the queenside, where the white king is.

10. g4 Nb6

Black is getting ready to face the incoming g4-g5 push and does not want to create a hook by pushing his own pawn to h6.

11. Qf2 Nfd7 12. Kb1 Rc8 13. Bd3



13. ... Rxc3! 14. bxc3 Qc2

With this Exchange sacrifice, Black has created a long-term weakness in White's camp. He can build an attack slowly, instead of looking to immediately reap the benefits of the sacrifice. The black knights are perfectly positioned to take advantage of the weak dark squares, with one landing on a4 and the other heading to c4. With the c3-knight gone, Black can easily achieve the biggest goal in the Sicilian: the ... d6-d5 pawn break.

15. Ne2 Be7 16. g5 0-0 17. h4 Na4 18. Bc1
Ne5 19. h5 d5

As all of Black's pieces are well-positioned, it is the right time for this pawn push to open the diagonals for the bishops.

20. Qh2 Bd6 21. Qh3 Nxd3

Normally, Black wouldn't capture this bishop that resembles a big pawn, but Kasparov has a specific idea in mind

22. cxd3

Now 22. Rxd3? runs into a big problem after 22. ... dxe4.

22. ... b4!

Perfectly timed. White lacks time to open files on the kingside quickly enough to create an attack, as Black does not have any hooks on the kingside. Meanwhile, the white king looks even more vulnerable now with the c-file reopening.

23. cxb4 Rc8 24. Ka1 dxe4 25. fxe4



25. ... Bxe4!! 26. g6

The point is that 26. dxe4 loses to the beautiful 26. ... Be5+ 27. Nd4 (27. Kb1 Qc2 mate) 27. ... Bxd4+ 28. Rxd4 Qxc1+ 29. Rxc1 Rxc1 mate.

26. ... Bxh1 27. Qxh1 Bxb4 28. gxf7+ Kf8
29. Qg2 Rb8 30. Bb2 Nxb2 31. Nd4 Nxd1
32. Nxe6+ Kxf7, White resigned.

A stunning game by a ferocious attacker!

SAME-SIDE CASTLING

While in the above example the idea behind the sacrifice was straightforward, it's also a viable option when the kings are castled on the same side. The ruined pawn structure won't endanger the enemy king in this case, so the main idea is to target the e4-pawn, giving Black plenty of compensation.

COMPENSATION

GM Robert Huebner

GM Viswanathan Anand

Dortmund (3), 07.07.1996



BLACK TO MOVE

23. ... Rxc3! 24. bxc3 Qxa3

Anand is not afraid of giving up material in exchange for pawns due to the closed nature of the position. It is not easy to see how the white rooks will become active in this position. And while White would love to be able to create some sort of an attack associated with the g-pawn push, it would carry tremendous risk due to the placement of Black's light-squared bishop and the potential opening of the center with the ... d6-d5 break.

25. c4

Here 25. Re2 Rc8 and now 26. c4!? is an enterprising way of handling this position. White should look for tactical ways to free his pieces. Now 26. ... bxc4 27. Ra1 cxd3 (27. ... Qb2? is a mistake: after 28. Rb1 Qa3 29. Bxc4 Black's compensation evaporates as White's pieces get active) is more or less forced, as the queen doesn't have any good squares. After 28. Rxa3 dxe2 29. Qxe2 Bxe4 we see an unusual imbalance of two minors and two pawns versus a queen. Black has well placed pieces and the safer king.

25. ... bxc4 26. Bxc4

White decides to give up a pawn in order to free himself.

26. ... Nxe4 27. Rd3 Qa4 28. Rb3?



Based on the wrong assessment of the position. White needs to keep the bishops on the board with something like 28. Bb3 Qd7.

28. ... Qxc4 29. Rxb7 Qxc2 30. Bg1 Bg5 31.
Rdb1 Bf4

The weakness of the white king becomes apparent as the black pieces swarm it.

32. R1b3 d5 33. Rf3 Rc8 34. Rxf7 Ng5 35.
Rxf4

If 35. Rf2 Qe4! 36. Qxe4 Nxe4 37. Ra2 Rc1 is already nearly winning.

35. ... exf4 36. Re7 f3, White resigned.

More on the Sicilian for Black next time! ♠



The Mednis Memorial

What does it mean for a community when a norm tournament comes to town?

BY **JOHN HARTMANN**

A

SK A TITLED PLAYER OF A certain age about their norms, and you will inevitably be regaled with an epic tale of trials and tribulations — about those half-point misses, about being

thwarted by bad pairings in big swisses, and most certainly about having to go to Europe to find the right events.

In those days, ambitious Americans, almost to a person, had to cross the Atlantic to try to earn their elusive norms. There weren't enough highly-rated players — or, more specifically, highly-rated players from foreign federations — in the States, so

norm-hunters were forced to roam Europe, taking any opportunity that came their way.

Things are different today. Almost every week, it seems, there are GM and IM norm events to play somewhere in America, along with a growing number of what might have been called, in days gone by, “futures,” or events designed for non-norm seekers to boost their FIDE ratings.

The romanticism of the “European adventure” notwithstanding, it seems fairly clear to me that this shift is a net positive for American chess and players. With events run by the Charlotte Chess Center in North Carolina, NYC Chess Norms in New York,

and 1000GMs on both coasts, along with the many norm-eligible swisses that dot the country, today's young masters can find appropriate events within driving distance of wherever they might live.

They might find them in some surprising places, as well.

The Edmar Mednis Memorial IM Norm tournament was held in Omaha, Nebraska from November 15-19, 2023. Despite a rich history in the game, with U.S. Junior and Open championships held here over the years, our state is not a hotbed of high-level chess activity. We have exactly one active titled player living within our borders, and

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a total of seven active players rated above 2000.

So what was an IM norm event — the first such tournament in Nebraska history, to my knowledge — doing in our fair city?



The economics of the norm event are tricky. Playing locations and event staff cost money. The titled players need to receive honorariums. And the norm-hunters have to foot the bills for travel, hotel, and an entry fee.

There are those who loudly shout about the corruptness of the entire system — the norm-seekers buying full points, the organizers putting profit over all else, the titled players going easy on the kids so they're invited back for another payday. And undoubtedly there are those who have gamed the system for their own benefit.

But for every Eastern European organizer stacking cash for titles, there's a Jeff DiOrio, putting his head down and getting on with the hard work of putting on good tournaments for people who want to test themselves in the game they love.

I sat down with Jeff on the third day of the Mednis Memorial, because I wanted to know just how it was that this tournament was happening in downtown Omaha. Jeff is a Chicago guy, and his affiliate, Elite Chess, is a mainstay of scholastic chess in the Windy City. Until recently he was a school administrator by trade; now, he's doing chess full-time.

Jeff explained that a sponsor (who for now will remain anonymous) with links to Omaha wanted to have an event run here. With substantially less overhead required than in bigger cities like Chicago, and with the well-connected but easy-to-use Omaha airport just a few miles from downtown, the sponsor's idea was not hard to bring to fruition.

That's not to say that the Mednis was a money-spinner. Indeed, as Jeff told me, this tournament was little better than break-even once staff, travel, and expenses were factored in. He views norm events like these, at least for now, as loss leaders, giving back to the community and growing name recognition for Elite Chess and his scholastic programs.

One of the key factors in a successful norm tournament is choosing the players. Jeff has a no-jerk policy; beyond that, he puts players in three buckets when filling the field. You need three IMs or GMs for an IM-norm event. IMs Augusto Cesar Campos and Luis Carlos Torres were recruited, and GM John Fedorowicz was invited as a special ask from the sponsor.

Then there are the young lions — the quick-rising juniors who are on the hunt for titles. Here three aspirants made the trip to the Great Plains. FM Harshid Kunka and Shelev Oberoi joined us from Texas, while FM Bryan Xie came from California. If you think you recognize these names, you're probably not wrong. Bryan was on the December 2020 cover of *Chess Life Kids*, and we tweeted about Harshid all the way back in 2016!

Beyond the titled players and the teenaged title-hunters, there's a third group of players, perhaps most critical for an event's success — the adult masters with time, interest, and money to take four or five days away from their real lives to sit in a hotel conference room and push pawns across a board. For this tournament, FM James Canty, Adam Dorrance, and FM Alexandre Kretchetov signed up to test themselves, while FM Eugene Yanayt arrived as a last-minute replacement due to a medical withdrawal.

I was interested in talking to everyone, but my curiosity was perhaps most piqued by the presence of James Canty. And he does have a presence! I am not a small man by any stretch of the imagination, but I was absolutely dwarfed by Canty, who has a Discord channel about gym routines and who promotes bodybuilding supplements on his popular Twitch stream. Perhaps the broadest person I've ever met, it was a struggle fitting him into my tiny Toyota Yaris.

I had lunch with Canty the day before the tournament started at a restaurant near both the playing site and Charles Schwab Field, the home of the College World Series. We talked about his ambitions for the event; with a score of 7/9 required for the norm, he knew it wouldn't be easy, but after a few months of study with his coach and a lot of work on a now-available Jobava London course for Chessable, he felt confident about his chances.

Canty talks in real life like he talks on stream, and he is immensely likeable. We discussed his career path, the economics of streaming, and how conversations with GM Hikaru Nakamura have helped him grow both professionally and personally. We wandered the Old Market, the epicenter of downtown Omaha tourism, and discussed the joys and pressures of being a dad. He was like a kid in a candy store scanning the chess books at Jackson Street Booksellers, and he found the t-shirts at Raygun more than a bit amusing.

What I most liked about Canty was his humility, which might seem a strange thing to say about a fast-talking chess streamer. But consider the fact that, as I write these

words, Canty is part of the Champions Chess Tour production in Toronto. It would be easy for him to coast now, his part in the chess ecosystem secure, but instead here he was in Omaha, effectively losing money by not actively streaming, and choosing to test himself over-the-board.

I was also hoping to visit with GM John Fedorowicz, the U.S. Chess Hall of Famer whom I — like so many others — have gotten to know over the years at the U.S. Open and the Amateur Team East. There isn't much that "Fed" hasn't done in chess; with wins in most of the major American opens under his belt, along with victories in Cannes and Wijk aan Zee, coupled with his spots on two U.S. Olympiad teams, he has a story for nearly every situation and audience.

The pressures on Fedorowicz in Omaha would be different from those on Canty. With his active over-the-board play now reduced to when he can get time off from his 9-to-5 chess teaching gig at the Speyer Legacy School in New York, and with his being the oldest player in the field, it was clear that the lone GM would be the hunted and not the hunter.

But Fed relished the challenge. Or, as he told me in an interview that will run in *Chess Life* next month, he was relishing it... until he came down with a virus — not COVID-19, thank goodness! — just before he was scheduled to travel.

This is one of the risks run by norm event organizers. It's relatively easy to find replacements for norm-seekers, provided they are of a sufficient FIDE rating, but locating appropriate titled replacements can be difficult on short notice. The vast expanse of middle America means that there might not be an



GM John Fedorowicz

IM available and within driving distance.

So Fed got on the plane and came to Omaha, hoping his illness would pass. It didn't; in fact, it got worse as the event went on. He went into "survival mode," taking quick draws and retreating to his room, all the while knowing that some Internet muckrakers might call him out on it.

Still, Fed was in good spirits. A group of us from the Nebraska State Chess Association visited the tournament on the final morning, handing out Husker ski hats to the players and staff. After an eighth-round draw with Canty, he spent a little time on @gmcanty's livestream, spinning stories for a spell before heading back to his room for rest. He told me then, and also in our interview, that he's anxious to come back to this "nice, modern city" for another event and show a bit of what he can do.

Well, and maybe also for another visit to that Brazilian steakhouse just down the street from the hotel.



In the end, the 2023 Edmar Mednis Memorial did not produce any norms. While 19 of the 45 games saw decisive results, there definitely was a bit of sag in fighting spirit in the later rounds, especially when norm chances were gone and some players just wanted to stop the bleeding.

Finishing tied for first at 5½/9 were Cuban IM Augusto Cesar Campos Jimenez and Canada's Adam Dorrance. Making his first appearance on American soil, Dorrance notched four wins along with two losses to finish at

Below, left to right: Kretchetov, Fed, Kunkra, Torres Rosas, Yanayt, Canty, Bulkis, Xie, Dorrance, Campos Jimenez, DiOrio, Oberoi.

+2, while Campos Jimenez took a smoother path, with two wins and seven draws. His round four win over Oberoi was one of the more interesting battles of the event.

FRENCH DEFENSE, ADVANCE VARIATION (C02)

IM Augusto Cesar Campos Jimenez (2324)

Shelev Oberoi (2309)

Edmar Mednis Memorial (4), Omaha, 11.17.2023

1. d4 e6 2. e4 d5 3. e5 a6?! 4. c3 Bd7 5. Bd3 Bb5

The problem is that the bishop is just misplaced here. White can gain space on the queenside with tempo.

6. Bc2 c5 7. a4

Or 7. dxc5 Bxc5 8. a4 Bc6 9. b4 Ba7 10. Nf3 with advantage to White.

7. ... Bd7 8. Nf3 cxd4?!

I understand why Black played this, but to me, allowing Nb1-c3 without any real penalty means that White has an unearned advantage.

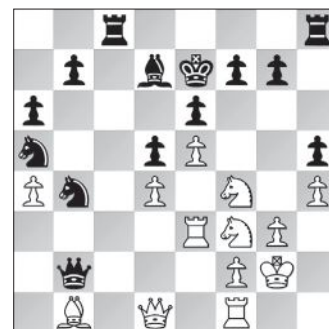
9. cxd4 Nc6 10. Nc3 Qb6 11. 0-0 Nge7 12. h4 Rc8 13. g3 h5?!

Is the Nf3-h2-g4 maneuver so worrisome that this is required?

14. Kg2 Nb4 15. Bb1 Nec6 16. Ne2 Na5 17. Bg5 Nbc6 18. Nf4

With the idea of Nf4-g6.

18. ... Be7 19. Bxe7 Kxe7 20. Ra3!? Qxb2 21. Re3 Nb4



22. Bg6?!

22. Ng5! brings another piece into play, and also frees the queen on the d1-h5 diagonal. Black needs to defend with 22. ... Nbc6 23. Re2 Qb4 24. Bg6! Be8 (24. ... Nxd4 25. Bxf7 Nxe2 26. Qxe2 and now only 26. ... Rh6! holds) 25. Rd2 Nc4 26. Rd3 with pressure for White.

22. ... Rc3?

After 22. ... fxe6 23. Nxe6+ Kf7 24. Nxh8+ Rxh8 25. Ng5+ Ke7! the king is perfectly safe.

23. Rxc3 Qxc3 24. Ng5!

Now White is cooking.

24. ... Be8 25. Bxh5

Even stronger is 25. Bxf7 Bxf7 26. Qb1!.

25. ... Qc2?

Here 25. ... Nb3 loses to 26. Ngxe6! fxe6? (26. ... g6 27. Qg4! Kd7 28. Nc5+ Kc7 29. e6 with an attack) 27. Qg4!. Best is 25. ... Nac6 26. Qg4 Nxd4 27. Rd1, when White is ahead.

26. Qxc2 Nxc2 27. Rc1! Bxa4 28. Bxf7 Rc8 29. Ng6+ Kd8 30. Nxe6+ Kd7 31. Nc5+ Kd8 32. e6 Rxc5 33. e7+ Kc7 34. dxc5 d4 35. Rxc2 Bxc2 36. e8=Q Nc6 37. Nf4, Black resigned.



Fedorowicz ended in shared third with an undefeated 5/9, his sole victory coming in round three against FM Bryan Xie. As we see in the game, despite his illness and the passage of time, his technique remains undiminished.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, ENGLISH ATTACK (B90)

FM Bryan Xie (2302)

GM John Fedorowicz (2444)

Edmar Mednis Memorial (3), Omaha, 11.16.2023

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Be3 e6 7. f3 b5 8. Qd2 Nbd7 9. g4 Nb6 10. a3 Bb7 11. 0-0-0 Rc8 12. Kb1 Be7

Here 12. ... Nfd7 is more typical, but it may transpose.

13. g5 Nfd7 14. h4 Ne5 15. Qe1 Nec4 16. Bc1 Qc7 17. Nde2! Qc5

With the e-file blocked, 17. ... d5! becomes viable.

18. Rh3 b4 19. axb4 Qxb4 20. b3?!

White should have played 20. Nd4 Na3+ 21. Ka2 (forced) 21. ... e5 22. Nf5 Nxc2 23. Qd2 Na4 (23. ... Rxc3 24. Qxc3 Qa4+ 25. Kb1 Nb4 26. Bc4 Nxc4 27. Qxc4 d5 and White has to bail out with 28. Rxd5 Bxd5 29. exd5 Kd7 30. Nxe7 Kxe7 31. Qc7+ Ke8 32. Qc8+ Ke7 33. Qc7+ with equality) 24. Qxc2 Nxc3+ 25. bxc3 Rxc3 26. Qd2! and White is hanging on.

20. ... Na3+ 21. Bxa3 Qxa3 22. Rd4!



22. ... Qc5

Black has pressure, but it's not clear how the breakthrough will occur. White must conjure counterplay to stay in the game.

23. f4 0-0 24. Qd1 Rfe8

With the opening of the e-file in mind.

25. Rf3 Bf8 26. f5 exf5 27. Rxf5 Re5! 28. Bh3 Rce8 29. Qf1 Qc7 30. Qf3 Rxf5 31. Qxf5 Re5 32. Qf3 Rc5 33. Qd3

Necessary was 33. Nd5!! Bxd5 34. exd5 Rxc2 (34. ... g6 35. Qd3 a5 with initiative) 35. Bf5! and an unclear position.

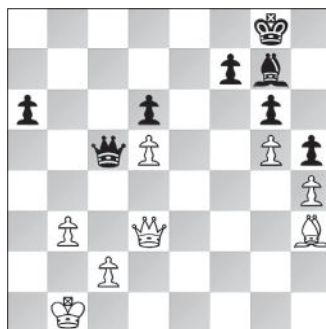
33. ... g6 34. Bg2 Re5 35. Nf4 h5!? 36. Bh3?

Black is only slightly better after 36. gxh6 e.p. Bxh6 37. Nxg6 fxg6 38. Rxd6 Bg7.

36. ... Qc5

Even stronger is 36. ... Bg7!, hitting the weak c3-knight. Black is vastly better after 37. Rxd6 Rc5 38. Rd8+ Kh7.

37. Ncd5 Nxd5 38. Nxd5 Bxd5 39. Rxd5 Rxd5 40. exd5 Bg7



The position has transformed from a tactical morass to one with permanent weakness for White. Now Fed shows his solid technique.

41. c3 a5 42. Kb2 Qf2+ 43. Ka3 Be5 44. Qc4 Qe3 45. Qc8+ Kg7 46. Be6 Qxc3 47. Qxc3 Bxc3 48. Bc8 Kf8 49. Ka4 Ke7 50. Kb5 Be1 51. Bb7 Bxh4 52. Kxa5 Bxg5 53. b4 Bd2 54. Kb5 h4 55. Bc8 f5 56. Kc6 Bxb4, White resigned.

Canty finished in the middle of the pack with an even 4½/9, losing to Campos Jimenez in round three and Oberoi in round five, but defeating Yanayt in round four and Dorrance in the final round. His win over Yanayt highlights some of his ideas in the Jobava London, and features a striking bishop maneuver.

LONDON SYSTEM, JOBAVA VARIATION (D01)

FM James Canty (2259)

FM Eugene Yanayt (2203)

Edmar Mednis Memorial (4), Omaha, 11.17.2023

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nc3 d5 3. Bf4 e6 4. e3 Be7 5. Bd3 c5

Uncommon, but viable. More usual is 5. ... 0-0 6. Nf3 c5.



EDMAR MEDNIS

The Mednis Memorial was named for GM Edmar Mednis (1937-2002) at the request of the sponsor. But just who was Edmar Mednis, and why was honoring him in this way so meaningful?

Long-time readers of *Chess Life* know Mednis very well. A columnist in these pages for many years, Mednis came to America from Latvia in 1944 as a displaced person. In 1955 he was the American entrant in the World Junior Championship, where he finished second behind a certain Boris Spassky after drawing him in their individual game.

That link to Spassky, and to Bobby Fischer, gave Mednis a profession in chess. He defeated Fischer in the 1962 U.S. Championship, a win that gave credence to his 1974 bestselling book, *How to Beat Bobby Fischer*. Mednis' commentary during the 1972 World Championship match was a springboard to a long career in chess journalism and writing. Some 26 books appeared under his name, along with the dozens and dozens of columns in *Chess Life* and chess periodicals around the world.

It is especially fitting that the first norm event in Nebraska history be named for Mednis, given the great number of Latvians who emigrated to Lincoln, Nebraska after World War II. Many of the best Nebraskan players of that era were Latvian, including Alex Liepniks, Anton Sildmets, and Viktors Pupols, who spent a formative three years in Lincoln before relocating to the Pacific Northwest.

6. dxc5

If 6. Nb5 Na6.

6. ... Nc6 7. Nf3 Nd7 8. Bg3 Nxc5 9. e4?!

This is premature, but perhaps Canty felt it had to be played now, before castling (as can be seen in the analysis). Alternatives include 9. Nb5 0-0 10. Nc7 Rb8 11. Nb5 Ra8 with equality, and 9. 0-0 0-0 10. e4? (10. Re1 Bf6 is slightly better for Black) 10. ... dxe4 11. Bxe4 Nxe4 12. Nxe4 f5 13. Qxd8 Rxd8 14. Nc3 g5 when Black is much better.

9. ... dxe4 10. Bxe4 Qb6 11. Rb1 0-0 12. 0-0 Rd8 13. Qe2 Bd7

Now comes a memorable repositioning of the light-squared bishop.

14. Bd5!? Be8

White is better after 14. ... exd5 15. Nxd5 Qa6 16. Nxe7+ Nxe7 17. Qxe7, while 14. ... Bf6! 15. Bc4 Ne7 is perhaps slightly better for Black.

15. Bc4 Na5 16. Bb5!

With the idea of b2-b4 and/or squeezing the queen.

16. ... Na6 17. Bxe8?!

Stronger is 17. b4 Nc6 (or 17. ... Bxb5 18. Nxb5 Nc6 19. c4) 18. Na4 Nd4 19. Nxd4 Qxd4 20. Bxe8 Rxe8 21. Rfd1 Qf6 22. a3 with advantage.

17. ... Rxe8 18. b4 Qc6 19. bxa5 Qxc3 20. Rxb7 Nc5 21. a6!? Qa3 22. Ne5 Qxa6 23. Qxa6 Nxa6 24. Nc6 Bc5 25. Rd1 Bb6 26. Bd6**26. ... Red8?**

It's not clear why this was deemed necessary. Without clear tactics for White, why such drastic measures?

Black should have tried 26. ... Nc5! 27. Bxc5 (27. Ne7+ Kh8 and White has nothing) when 27. ... Bxc5 28. Rdd7 looks a bit frightening, but Black plays 28. ... Rac8 (28. ... Rf8 29. Rb5 Ba3 30. Rb3 Rac8! 31. Rxa3 Rxc6 32. Raxa7 Rxc2 is equal) 29. Rxf7 Rxc6 30. Rxg7+ Kh8 31. Rxh7+ Kg8 32. Rbg7+ Kf8 with equality.

27. Nxd8 Rxd8 28. Rd2! g5

Here 28. ... Bc5 is met by 29. Bf4, easily winning.

29. Kf1 Nc5 30. Rb8 Rxb8 31. Bxb8 f6 32. f3 e5 33. Bd6 Ne6 34. c4 Kf7 35. Rd5 Nf4 36. Rb5 Bd4 37. c5 Ke6 38. Ra5 h5 39. Rxa7 h4 40. a4 Nd5 41. a5 Ne3+ 42. Ke2 Nxe7 43. a6 Nf4+ 44. Kf1 Nd5 45. Re7+ Nxe7 46. a7 Nd5 47. a8=Q Ne3+ 48. Ke2, Black resigned.

It's easy to be a bit jaded about events like these. After all, when *Chess.com* and Lichess broadcast top tournaments from around the world, what's so special about a small round-robin in Omaha?

Nothing, and everything. At its heart, chess is communal — a battle of minds across 64 squares, of course, but more than that, it is a site for people to come together in a time when social bonds are frayed. For the players, it's a chance to claim a norm or boost a rating, but for us here in Omaha, it's a chance, a catalyst, the inspiration to grow the game in a place that is hungry for it.

I'm told the sponsor was pleased enough to want to do more Omaha events in the future. Maybe we can get Fed to do a simul next time, and invite the press to cover it. Maybe Canty can stream a blitz tournament held in his honor.

Maybe we'll see the next great American talent take a step on their path to grandmaster.

And maybe they'll be a Nebraskan. ♠

Edmar Mednis Memorial

OMAHA, NEBRASKA, NOVEMBER 15-19, 2023

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	IM Augusto Cesar Campos Jimenez	2324	*	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	½	5½/9
2	Adam Dorrance	2261 FIDE	½	*	½	1	0	0	½	1	1	1	5½/9
3	GM John Fedorowicz	2444	½	½	*	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	5/9
4	Shelev Oberoi	2309	0	0	½	*	1	1	½	1	0	1	5/9
5	IM Luis Carlos Torres Rosas	2384	½	1	½	0	*	½	½	½	1	0	4½/9
6	FM James Canty	2259	0	1	½	0	½	*	½	½	1	½	4½/9
7	FM Bryan Xie	2302	½	½	0	½	½	½	*	½	½	1	4½/9
8	FM Alexandre Kretchetov	2252	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	*	½	1	4/9
9	FM Eugene Yanayt	2203	½	0	½	1	0	0	½	½	*	½	3½/9
10	FM Harshid Kunka	2394	½	0	½	0	1	½	0	0	½	*	3/9

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MAIN EVENT

6-SS, G/90,d5

Friday April 12

2:30 PM Opening Ceremony
 3:00 PM Round 1

Saturday April 13

10:00 AM Round 2
 2:30 PM Round 3
 6:30 PM Round 4

Sunday April 14

9:00 AM Round 5
 1:00 PM Round 6
 5:00 PM Awards Ceremony

ENTRY FEE

\$90 by 3/4, \$110 by 4/1, \$120 by 4/11, \$135 on-site.

SIDE EVENTS

Bughouse Tournament

Fri. April 12 11:00 AM
 Entry fee: \$50 by 4/1, \$60 after 4/1 and on-site.

Blitz Tournament (G/5,d0)

Fri. April 12 7:00 PM
 Entry fee: \$40 by 4/1, \$50 after 4/1 and on-site.



SECTION/AWARDS

Age as of 1/1/2024

Under 8 top 15 individuals
 top 500 – 799, top U500, top 6 schools
Under 10 top 15 individuals
 top 700 – 999, top U700, top 6 schools
Under 12 top 15 individuals
 top 900 – 1199, top U900, top 6 schools
Under 14 top 15 individuals
 top 1100 – 1399, top U1100, top 4 schools
Under 16 top 8 individuals
 top 1300 – 1599, top U1300, top 3 schools
Under 18 top 8 individuals,
 top 1500 – 1799, top U1500, top 3 schools

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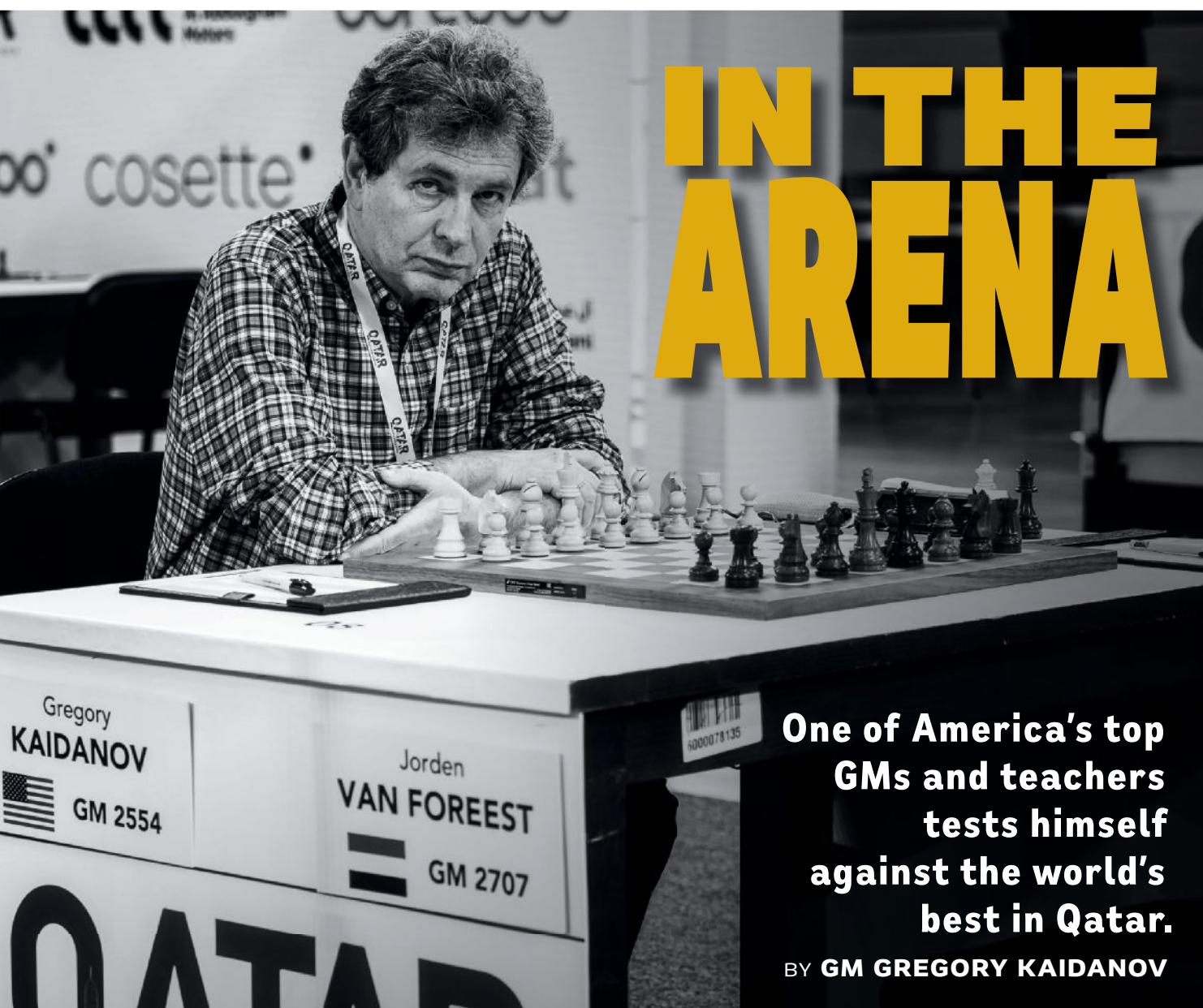
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W

WHEN I LEARNED THAT Magnus Carlsen was going to play in an open tournament in Doha, Qatar, I immediately

marked those dates in my calendar. At first, there was no response from the organizers, and after some weeks, I gave up on the idea. However, and to my great pleasure, the invitation eventually came.

Generally speaking, I prefer to not play two tournaments in a row, but since I committed to the World Senior Team Champi-

onship earlier on, I had to face the reality of playing back-to-back tournaments with only 10 days in between. I know many professional grandmasters will laugh at me; today, it seems to be a common belief that 10 days between tournaments is a luxury! To prepare myself, I spent the time in between tournaments mostly solving calculation puzzles.

I knew the Qatar Masters would be very strong, but it was a pleasant surprise to find myself as the #35 seed with my FIDE rating of 2554. The top seeds, besides Carlsen, were GMs Hikaru Nakamura and Anish

Giri. There was a huge Indian delegation, boasting 75 (!!) players out of total 158, including the young stars Gukesh, Erigaisi, and Nihal Sarin. The second largest contingent was from Uzbekistan, with 14 players. Both nations showed their strength and immense promise — six of the top eight finishers represented those two countries.

At 64, I was by far the oldest player in the field. As a matter of fact, there was just one other player over the age of 40! The average age of my opponents was 22, with Magnus being the oldest at the ancient age of 32!

Already the second round produced

a huge surprise: Carlsen lost to the little-known 23-year-old Kazakh GM, Alisher Suleimenov. And it wasn't just that he lost — it would be fair to say that Magnus got crushed.

Magnus himself admitted it in his tweet, adding, "This is not to accuse my opponent of anything, who played an amazing game and deserved to win, but honestly, as soon as I saw my opponent was wearing a watch early in the game, I lost my ability to concentrate. I did ask an arbiter during the game whether watches were allowed, and he clarified that smartwatches were banned, but not analog watches. This seems to be against FIDE rules for events of this stature."

This tweet created a lot of speculation and internet memes. People were accusing Alisher of cheating, despite the fact that Carlsen himself did not. Just as we saw after the famous game Niemann – Carlsen in St. Louis, the security in tournament hall increased starting with the third round.

Here I would like to share my own method of determining whether someone used a computer assistance. This method is neither scientific nor reliable. However, it helps me to form my own opinion on the subject.

Many of my students and friends know my love for "solitaire chess," which is also

known as "guess a move." The idea is familiar to *Chess Life* readers, who have been playing "solitaire chess" with Bruce Pandolfini for many years now. I took the Suleymenov – Carlsen game and tried to guess the moves for White, starting from move 15. Unless otherwise noted, my moves were identical to Suleimenov's.

QUEEN'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E12)

GM Alisher Suleymenov (2512)

GM Magnus Carlsen (2839)

Qatar Masters (2.1), 10.12.2023

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 b6 4. a3 Ba6 5. Qc2 Bb7 6. Nc3 c5 7. e4 cxd4 8. Nxd4 Bc5 9. Nf3 Nc6 10. b4 Be7 11. Bb2 Qb8 12. Rd1 O-O 13. Be2 d6 14. O-O Rc8

I didn't like this move, because all Black's major pieces are now boxed in the corner, but the engine says it is OK.

15. Rfe1

My move 15. Qb1 was not worse.

15. ... Bf8?!

Playing every game for a win means that you have to take risks. Here Magnus tried

to maintain the tension and avoid trades, but in this particular situation, the strategy backfired. Instead 15. ... Ne5 is equal.

16. Bf1 Ne7?



Magnus played these two moves very quickly; he clearly didn't sense the danger in the position. White's advantage is manageable after 16. ... Ne5 or 16. ... Rd8.

17. Nb5!

I was attracted to the Exchange sacrifice beginning with 17. Rxd6?, but it does not work. After 17. ... Qxd6 18. e5 Qd7 19. exf6 gxf6 White has nothing.

17. ... Ne8?



The ceremonial first move of the Suleymenov – Carlsen game.

Black could limit the damage with 17. ... Ng6 18. Bxf6 gxf6 19. Qd3 when White has a significant advantage. Instead White's attack blossoms.

18. Ng5! Ng6 19. e5 d5 20. Qb3 Be7 21. Nxf7

I guessed 21. cxd5 with the same idea. It works as well: 21. ... Bxd5 22. Rxd5 exd5 (after 22. ... Bxg5 23. Rd7 Nf8 24. Rdd1 White still has a huge advantage) 23. Nxf7 transposes to the game.

21. ... Kxf7 22. cxd5 Bxd5 23. Rxd5 exd5 24. Qxd5+ Kf8 25. Nd4 Nf4 26. Qf3 Kg8 27. Qxf4 Qb7 28. Nf5 b5 29. Bxb5

My move 29. Nd6 is also winning. Indeed, White's position is so good that many paths lead to Rome.

29. ... Bf8 30. Bc4+ Kh8 31. Nh6, Black resigned.

As you can see from my annotations, I guessed correctly all the key moves for White, spending about 30 minutes for moves 15 through 31. What this means, at least to me, is that the moves are not that hard to find for a grandmaster.

After two rounds I had 2/2, and I caught myself thinking (somewhat bittersweetly) "This is the last time in my life that I am ahead of Magnus Carlsen in tournament standings!" Indeed, I lost in round three to the 17-year-old GM Javokhir Sindarov, while Magnus won. But after round seven I found myself a half-point ahead of Magnus. It was in that round that I played this game, which received some attention on the internet.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT, SEMI-SLAV MERAN (D47)

GM Gregory Kaidanov (2554)
GM Jorden van Foreest (2707)
Qatar Masters (7.8), 10.18.2023

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 c6 3. Nc3 d5 4. e3 e6 5. Nf3 Be7

This is a little bit unusual. Normally Black plays 5. ... Nbd7, and while I knew that Jorden had played 5. ... Be7 in the past, I didn't look at it before the game. There were many problems in other openings that required more attention!

6. Bd3

One of the ideas of 5. ... Be7 is that in case of 6. Qc2 the black knight might find a better square than d7, as can be seen in the following variation: 6. ... 0-0 7. b3 dxc4 8. bxc4 c5 9. Be2 Nc6 with equality.

6. ... dxc4 7. Bxc4 b5 8. Bd3 b4 9. Ne4 Nbd7

Now the game transposes to "normal" Meran variations, though I did not remember much of the theory.

10. Nxf6+ Nxf6 11. e4 Bb7 12. 0-0 0-0 13. e5 Nd7

Up to this point I just played moves that made sense to me. But here I had the oddest flashback in my mind! What I realized was that if I played 14. Be4, we would transpose into Polugaevsky – Mednis (Riga iz, 1979).

Memory is a very strange thing. Sometimes you can't remember the lines you looked at right before the game, and sometimes, like in this case, you recall what you saw in a chess magazine 44 years ago!

14. Be4 Qb6?

I was surprised, and on high alert. I knew that this was the move Mednis played, but since I hadn't looked at the game since then, I was not sure as to its evaluation. What if Jorden had analyzed this position with an engine and overturned the old theory?

I am sure Jorden had 14. ... Rb8 on his computer, but just could not remember it. Now Black would equalize without many problems. What follows is just a sample line, as the moves are not forced: 15. Qc2 h6 16. Be3 Qc7 and White cannot prevent Black from playing ... c6-c5. Even if White wins a pawn, Black wins it back, e.g., 17. Rac1 c5 18. Bxb7 Qxb7 19. dxc5 Bxc5 20. Bxc5 Rfc8 with equality.

15. Bg5 Bxg5?



The Polugaevsky – Mednis game went 15. ... Rfe8 16. Bxe7 Rxe7 17. Qc2 (stronger is 17. Rc1! Rc8 18. Qd2 Ba6 as in Zugic – Novikov, Montreal 2004) 17. ... h6 18. a3 b3 19. Qc3 c5 20. Bxb7 Qxb7 21. dxc5 Rc8 22. Qb4 Nxc5 23. Rac1 and now Mednis could have had equality with 23. ... Qb6!.

In this position I sat down and took my time to think. I knew that there was no way to calculate everything perfectly, but I wanted to make sure that this "Greek gift" sacrifice at least didn't lose for me!

16. Bxh7+ Kxh7 17. Nxg5+ Kg6

Looking back at *Informant* 28, Byrne and Mednis recommend this line, calling the position "unclear." There is no such word in today's chess!

18. Qg4 f5 19. Qg3

The computer suggests 19. Qh4 instead, and the difference is found only with reference to the placement of the rook. To understand why this should be preferred is extremely difficult, but after 19. ... Rh8 20. Qg3 c5 21. Rad1 cxd4 22. Nxe6+ Kf7 23. Nxd4 we begin to recognize Stockfish's "reasons." With a rook on f8, Black has ... Kf7-g8 here, and without it we play Nd4xf5. It looks like a



GM Jorden van Foreest



GM Alisher Suleymenov

typical computer line, which we can understand after the game, but have no chance to find at the board.

19. ... Qxd4?



Played relatively quickly. Black wants to play ... Qd4-g4 when the White attack is gone.

Instead the best defense is 19. ... c5. I was going to play 20. dxc5 Nxc5 and I was not sure whether to play Ra1-c1 or Ng5xe6+ next. The engine says both moves win.

The computer's top choice is 20. ... Qc6, which I have to admit that I did not consider. Fortunately White still has a big advantage after 21. Nxe6+ Kf7 22. Nd4 Qxg2+ 23. Qxg2 Bxg2 24. e6+ Ke7 25. Rfc1!!.. True, I am not sure I would find this last move, but in any event White is still much better after 25. Kxg2.

20. Ne4+

And now it became clear that Jorden missed something, because he sank into a long think here. Note that 20. Rad1? Qg4 21. Qxg4 fxe4 22. Rxd7 Bc8 completely ruins the position for White.

20. ... Kh7 21. Qh4+!

Maybe he was expecting 21. Qh3+ Kg6 22. Qg3+ with a draw? I have to admit that from far away I also saw this line, and only when we got closer did I find 21. Qh4+.

21. ... Kg6

Or 21. ... Kg8 22. Nf6+.

22. Qg5+ Kf7 23. Rad1 Qxe5 24. Rxd7+ Kg8 25. Rxb7

And the knight on e4 cannot be taken.

25. ... Qxb2 26. Nc5 Rf7 27. Rxf7 Kxf7 28. Rd1 Qe5 29. Rd7+ Kg8 30. h4 Re8 31. Qg6, Black resigned.

As the lowest-rated player in my point group, I was paired against Carlsen in round eight. Needless to say, I was very excited.

LONDON SYSTEM (D02)

GM Magnus Carlsen (2839)

GM Gregory Kaidanov (2554)

Qatar Masters (8.1), 10.19.2023

1. d4 d5 2. Bf4

One of many openings in Magnus' repertoire.

2. ... c5 3. e3 Nc6 4. c3

I spent a few minutes here, because I was debating which system to play.

4. ... Nf6 5. Nd2 e6 6. Ngf3 cxd4 7. exd4 Nh5 8. Be3 Bd6 9. Bd3 Nf4 10. Bxf4 Bxf4 11. 0-0 0-0 12. Re1 Bd7 13. Nb3 b6 14. Qe2 g6 15. a4 f6 16. Bb5 Qc7 17. a5 Rae8

Up to this point Magnus was playing very quickly. After the game I asked him whether the moves were all theory. With a smile, he answered, "This is all more less standard."

18. g3

This was the first move Magnus really thought about, spending 11 minutes.

18. ... Bh6

After the game Magnus told me he thought 18. ... Bd6 was better. I felt that I needed to control the c1-square, not allowing the white rook to land there. As so often happens, the difference between the two moves is miniscule, with the engine preferring the game continuation by the slimmest of margins.

19. axb6 axb6 20. c4 dxc4

This was still OK, but Stockfish says I could ignore the c-pawn. At the board I didn't want to allow c4-c5. The alternative 20. ... Kh8 21. c5 e5 is equal according to the machine.

21. Qxc4 Qd6

I considered 21. ... Rc8 but I wasn't sure about 22. d5. Things are equal after 22. ... exd5 23. Qxd5+ Kh8 24. Ra4 Rfe8.

22. Ra6 Rb8



23. Nc5!



GM Magnus Carlsen



This was a complete shock, so it took me awhile to find my next move.

23. ... Nxd4!

Forced.

24. Nxd4 Qxc5 25. Ra7!

And this is another move I missed. At first I thought I was completely lost, but seeing that Magnus remained at the board (he usually walks around quite a bit) gave me a hint that perhaps there was something to find.

25. ... Rbd8!

Burning lots of time, but I correctly landed on another “only move.”

26. b4! Qxc4 27. Bxc4



27. ... Rfe8?!

Right after the game Magnus told me about

the magnificent 27. ... b5!! If I had seen his plan with b4-b5, I might have found it, but to see 28. b5! was hard for me.

Peter Leko approached me at the closing ceremony and praised Magnus' play in our game, specifically noting that 28. b5! was a great move, one that was hard to anticipate at the board. This made me feel better.

After 27. ... b5!!, play continues 28. Bb3 (or 28. Bxe6+ Bxe6 29. Nxe6 Rfe8 30. Ra6) 28. ... Rfe8 with equality in both cases.

28. b5 Bc8 29. Nc6 Rd6 30. Rc7 Bd7??

Played with just a few minutes on the clock.

I considered the necessary 30. ... Kh8!! but as I didn't see his next move, I thought that the bishop shift was fine. After 31. Ra1 Rd7 32. Rxc8 Rxc8 33. Bxe6 Rcd8 34. Bxd7 Rxd7 35. Ra8+ Kg7 36. Rb8 Bc1 37. Rxb6 Ba3 Black has good drawing chances.

31. Ra1!

Strong. I saw this only after making my move!

31. ... Bf8 32. Raa7 Bxc6 33. bxc6 Rd1+ 34. Kg2 Rc1 35. Ra4?!

Even better was 35. Bb5 Rc5 36. Ba6.

35. ... b5 36. Bxb5 Rc5 37. Bc4?!

More precise is 37. Rb4!.

37. ... Bd6?

Black's last chance was 37. ... f5!! although

the task is still difficult, especially against a world champion.

38. Rb7 Kh8 39. Bxe6 Re7 40. Rxe7 Bxe7 41. Ra8+ Kg7 42. Ra7 Rxc6 43. Rxe7+ Kf8 44. Rf7+, Black resigned.

While I lost this game, I felt good about my play. In the last round I beat Vaishali, who at this point had already secured her third and final GM norm. Since Magnus drew the Indian GM Puranik, we ending up tying for ninth place with 12 other players, which was a great result for me, and a terrible result for him!

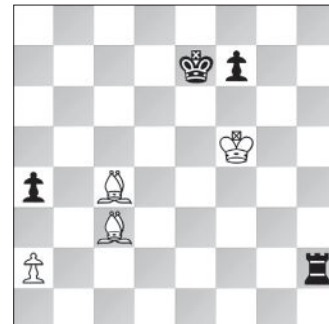
Before the last round the impressive young GM Arjun Erigaisi was leading with 6½/8, and he played Black against another elite talent, GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov. Arjun was under a lot of pressure the whole game, but in the end, when the worst seemed over, tragedy struck.

UNFORCED ERROR

GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov (2716)

GM Arjun Erigaisi (2712)

Qatar Masters (9.3), 10.20.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

48. ... Rh4??

Here any reasonable move would draw the game, allowing Erigaisi to tie with Yakubboev for first place. However...

49. Bf6+, Black resigned.

So it was two Uzbek grandmasters named Nodirbek who tied for first place with 7/9. GM Nodirbek Yakubboev, 21, won the tie-break to take home the first-place trophy. Considering their countryman, GM Javokhir Sindarov, was among the six players to tie for third with 6½/9, the tournament must be seen as a huge success for Uzbek chess. Here is one final game, a nice effort from the tournament winner.



“Hey, isn't this that Twitch streamer guy? Let's get a picture!”

PHOTO: VALERIA KAIDANOV

QUEEN'S GAMBIT, ACCEPTED (D24)

GM Nodirbek Yakubboev (2616)

GM Baskaran Adhiban (2551)

Qatar Masters (5.8), 10.15.2023

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. c4 d5 4. Nc3 dxc4 5. e4 b5 6. e5 Nd5 7. Nxb5 Nb6 8. Be2 Be7 9. 0-0 Nc6 10. Be3 Rb8 11. Nc3 0-0 12. a3 Bb7 13. Qc2 Na5 14. Rad1 h6 15. Nd2 Qd7 16. Nde4 Nd5 17. Bd2

After 17. Bf3 White would be on the better side of equality.

17. ... Rfd8 18. Na4?!

Better is 18. Rfe1 Nb3 19. Bxh6! gxh6 20. Bxc4 Nxc3 21. bxc3 Bd5! 22. Bd3 when White has compensation in a complex position.

18. ... Nb3 19. Qxc4 Nxd4

More precise is 19. ... Bc6! with a slight edge.

20. Qxd4 Nf4 21. Nf6+

If 21. Qxd7?! Nxe2+ 22. Kh1 Rxd7 23. Nec5 Rd5 and White cannot win the knight on e2.

21. ... Bxf6 22. Qxf4 Bg5 23. Qc4

The position is equal after 23. Qg3 Bxd2.

23. ... Bxd2 24. Nc5



24. ... Qc8?

Looking at the move times from the broadcast, Adhiban spent more than 20 minutes on this move. As it often happens, such long thoughts can result in a mistake. The reason? Before making a move you feel tired and confused. Sometimes you can't even remember all the variations you looked at!

Better is 24. ... Qe7 with equality.

25. h4!

A very good prophylactic move. The black bishop can no longer retreat to g5. Less impressive is 25. Qc2?! Bg5 when Black is fully equal.

25. ... Ba5



GM Gregory Kaidanov

Forced; otherwise White will play b2-b4 and the bishop will be trapped. If 25. ... Bd5? 26. Qc2 Ba5 27. Ba6.

26. Rxd8+ Qxd8 27. Nxb7 Rxb7 28. Rd1 Qe7??

This loses by force, but by now Adhiban did not have much time. The queen has to stay on the back rank: after 28. ... Qf8! Black has very good chances to equalize.

29. Qa6 Rxb2

(see diagram top of next column)

30. Qc8+

White's position is so winning that there are alternatives. 30. Bd3 wins, as does 30. Qxa5 Rxe2 31. Qb5! and, suddenly, the rook is trapped: 31. ... Rc2 (similar is 31. ... Re4 32. Qb8+ Kh7 33. Qb1) 32. Qb8+ Kh7 33. Qb1.



30. ... Kh7 31. Bd3+ g6 32. Bxg6+! Kxg6 Or 32. ... fxg6 33. Rd7.

33. Qg8+ Kf5

The alternative 33. ... Kh5 is met by 34. Rd4!

34. Qh7+ Kxe5 35. Qg7+, Black resigned. Black resigned in view of 35. ... Qf6 36. f4+ Kf5 37. g4+ and he loses the queen. ♠

2023 QATAR MASTERS AT A GLANCE

OCTOBER 11-20, 2023 | DOHA, QATAR

1st-2nd: GMs Nodirbek Yakubboev, Nodirbek Abdusattorov, 7/9. 3rd-8th: GMs S.L. Narayanan, Javokhir Sindarov, Hikaru Nakamura, Arjun Erigaisi, Parham Maghsoodloo, Gukesh D, 6½. 158 players.

OTHER AMERICANS:

GMs Gregory Kaidanov, Grigory Oparin, 6/9. GM Akshat Chandra, IM Eric Rosen, 5. IM Aleksandr Ostrovskiy, 4½. IM Josiah Stearman, 3. FM Jeevan Karamsetty, 2½.

For full results, visit: chess-results.com/tnr831193.aspx?lan=1&art=1



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MAKE YOUR MOVE

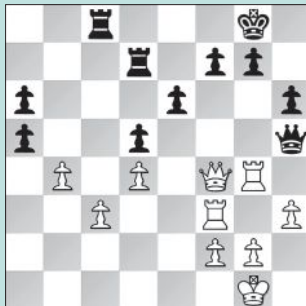
BY **FM CARSTEN HANSEN**

THIS MONTH'S PUZZLES ARE TAKEN FROM THE 2023 U.S. Championship that took place in St. Louis in October.

The puzzles start from easy and gradually move toward being 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 to solve the puzzle before reading the text at the bottom of the page. If unsuccessful, play through the solution, but return to the puzzle in one or two weeks to see if you can now solve it. That way you gradually expand your tactical vision, and it will be more likely that you will spot tactics as they occur in your own games. Whatever you do, do not use an engine 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.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 4.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 5.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 6.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 7.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 8.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 9.



WHITE TO MOVE

Position 1: STRAIGHT FOR THE GUT

Position 2: GUNS BLAZING

Position 3: PREPARE THE KILL

Position 4: OPEN THE DOOR

Position 5: COMMITTED DEFENDERS

Position 6: COORDINATE FOR POWER

Position 7: ONLY PATH TO SURVIVE

Position 8: PREPARE, THEN ATTACK

Position 9: THE RIGHT COORDINATION



Cyou in
ST. LOUIS

GM Fabiano Caruana and IM Carissa Yip take home the hardware at the 2023 U.S. Championship and Women's Championship.

BY **IM CARISSA YIP**

ADDITIONAL ANNOTATIONS BY
GM ABHIMANYU MISHRA



The 2023 U.S. Championships were held from October 5-18 at the Saint Louis Chess Club, featuring 24 of the top players in the country. This year was my sixth entry in the Women's Championship, and the field was immensely strong, headlined by rising stars FMs Alice Lee and Ruiyang Yan, top American woman GM Irina Krush, and IM Anna Zatonskih, who was fresh off a dominating Cairns Cup performance.

The Open Championship boasted a star-studded lineup of the best players not just in the U.S., but in the world. GMs Levon Aronian, Fabiano Caruana, Leinier Dominguez Perez, and Wesley So could all reasonably call themselves title hopefuls, while GMs Abhimanyu Mishra and Hans Niemann brought youth and excitement to the field.

I was not entirely feeling that excitement as I arrived in St. Louis. Two days prior, I was wrapping up the World Junior Girls U20 Championship in Mexico. The summer is my primary time for tournaments, but my last few events had been disappointing and lackluster. After a break in August, I returned to chess with back-to-back tournaments: the

World Junior Girls, and the U.S. Women's.

At first it seemed that everything was finally clicking in Mexico. I scored seven points in my first eight games, and I felt fully in-shape. But with a series of bad gametime decisions in rounds nine and 10, I managed to just salvage a co-champion finish. Worried that this would not bode well for my Women's performance, I approached the tournament with no small trepidation.

The opening ceremony and drawing of lots did little to reassure my nerves; my lot number guaranteed that my first three games were against my biggest competition for the title. Though I'd have the white pieces against defending champion WGM Jennifer Yu, I would be facing Krush and Lee with the black pieces.

I had a topsy-turvy game against Krush in round one, with mistakes in time trouble, but we reached move 40 with the position in my favor. Unfortunately, I was unable to find the correct finish, and we agreed to a draw in an endgame with bishops of opposite colors. In rounds two and three, I played nice attacking chess to win both games, even managing to surprise Yu in a sharp opening.

After this excellent start, my game plan was now to ensure that I didn't drop any full points. If I could stick to this strategy, I believed, I would have a very good shot at the title. And while I didn't know it at the time, the fourth round would end up being my most important game of the tournament.

With 2½/3, I faced off with my Olympiad teammate, WGM "Begin" Tokhirjonova, taking the white pieces. While I didn't want to get reckless, I was playing for a win, and looking for a fight. After a Scotch where we were both out of book quite early, I had an opportunity to gain an advantage in the complications.

SCOTCH GAME (C45)

IM Carissa Yip (2470)

WGM Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova (2430)

U.S. Women's Championship (4), St. Louis, 10.08.2023

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 exd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nxc6 bxc6 6. e5 Qe7 7. Qe2 Nd5 8. h4 a5 9. c4 Nb6 10. Nc3 Ba6 11. b3 0-0-0 12. Rh3 f6 13. exf6 Qf7 14. Bb2 Re8 15. Re3 Bc5 16. Re4 Rxe4 17. Nxe4 Bb4+ 18. Kd1 gxf6 19. Qf3 Rf8 20. Kc2 d5 21. cxd5 Bxf1 22. Rxf1 cxd5 23. Qf5+ Kb7 24. Ng3 Qe7 25. Qd3 f5 26. f4 Rg8 27. Kb1 Qxh4 28. Nxf5 Qh2 29. g3 a4 30. a3 Bf8 31. bxa4 Qg2

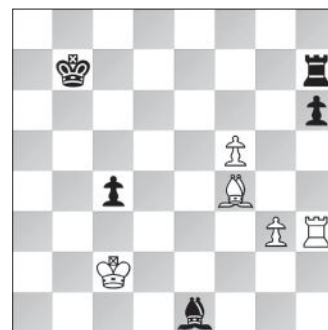


While I entered a slightly better endgame for White with the game continuation, I missed a much stronger move.

32. Rd1

While 32. Re1 does not at first glance look threatening, the point is that the rook will infiltrate on the eighth rank and render Black's pieces immobile. The black king is suddenly now very vulnerable. Some sample lines: (a) 32. ... Nxa4 33. Qb5+ Nb6 34. Re8 and White is completely winning here, as a3-a4-a5 is unstoppable. To wit: 34. ... Qh3 (alternatives: 34. ... Qd2 35. a4 Qd1+ 36. Ka2 Qxa4+ 37. Qxa4 Nxa4 38. Ba3 c5 39. Kb3 Nb6 40. Bxc5; 34. ... c6 35. Rb8+!!; 34. ... Bxa3 35. Rxg8 Qe4+ 36. Ka2 Bxb2 37. Nd6+ cxd6 38. Kxb2+- Qg2+ 39. Kc3 Qf3+ 40. Kd2 Qf2+ 41. Kd1 Qg1+ 42. Ke2 Qg2+ 43. Ke3 Qg1+ 44. Kf3 and the king runs) 35. Nd4 Qd7 36. Nc6 Qxc6 37. Rb8+ Kxb8 38. Qxc6. (b) 32. ... Nc4 is natural, but White has a string of brilliant moves to refute this: 33. Qb3+ Ka7 34. Bd4+ c5 35. Ka1!! Rg6 (35. ... cxd4 36. Rb1 wins for White) 36. Ne7!! is crushing, as it stops ... Rg6-b6.

32. ... Nxa4 33. Qxd5+ Qxd5 34. Rxd5 Bxa3 35. Ba1 Nb6 36. Rd2 Bb4 37. Rh2 Be1 38. Rh3 Nc4 39. Ng7 Ne3 40. Bd4 h6 41. f5 c5 42. Bxe3 Rxc7 43. Bf4 Rh7 44. Kc2 c4



Another key position. White to play and win?

45. Kd1?

The bishop ending is holdable as the black



Above: Yip and Tokhirjonova do battle at the board. Left: With hostilities ceased, a friendly post-game interview can take place.



WGM Tatev Abrahamyan

king gets involved. The correct plan was to immediately start my pawn with 45. f6!. The point is that, instead of taking on h6 with one of our pieces, we want to get in g3-g4-g5 to win the pawn. But we must play f5-f6 first, as g3-g4 will be met with ... Rh7-g7. Play continues 45. ... Kc6 46. g4 Kd5 47. g5 Ke6 (47. ... Rf7 48. Rxh6) 48. g6 and the pawns will win the day after 48. ... Rh8 49. f7.

45. ... Bf2 46. Rh2 Bd4 47. Rxh6 Rxh6 48. Bxh6 Kc6 49. g4 Kd5 50. Kc2 Ke4 51. Bd2 Kf3 52. Bc3 Kxg4 53. Bxd4 Kxf5 54. Kc3 Ke4 55. Kxc4, draw.

I wasn't too fazed by this missed half-point; I should have been able to find the winning move, but still, with 3/4 Begim and I were the only leaders. Having already played most of the highest-rated players in the tournament, surely I'd be able to jump forward and take the lead over the next few rounds.

Unfortunately, this turned out to be an extremely optimistic assessment. After the rest day, I won a nice game against WGM Tatev Abrahamyan.

KING'S INDIAN, SEMI-AVERBAKH VARIATION (E73)

WGM Tatev Abrahamyan (2370)

IM Carissa Yip (2470)

U.S. Women's Championship (5), St. Louis, 10.10.2023

1. d4

An opening surprise, as Tatev has until very recently favored 1. e4. I expected her to have some very good prep against my King's Indian, but I felt that my structural understanding of the opening should lend me an advantage regardless if I could somehow deviate from theory.

1. ... Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 0-0 5. Be2 d6 6. Be3

A line that has grown increasingly popular in recent times. Instead of allowing Black the classic kingside attack against White's pawn race on the queenside, White seeks to develop quick kingside play of their own with h2-h4 and g2-g4.

6. ... e5

I think this is best, although 6. ... c5 is also viable. The point is that after d4-d5, Black gets the c5-square.

7. d5 Na6 8. h4 Nc5 9. Qc2 h5

A bit of a concession, as White now gets the nice g5-square for either the knight or bishop. But it had the intended effect of getting White out of theory. Now Black focuses on the queenside after defending the kingside.

The main line is 9. ... c6 10. h5 cxd5 11. cxd5 Qa5 12. h6 Bh8 13. f3 Nh5 and it's just a game, though White's h6-pawn is quite annoying.

10. f3 a5

Black's plan is to open up the queenside with ... c7-c6 soon, finish development with ... Bc8-d7, and resolve the tension in the center with ... c6xd5 when it can be followed up with an immediate ... b7-b5.

11. Nh3 c6 12. Nf2 Bd7 13. g4

A bit hasty. Instead exchanging off Black's sole active piece with 13. Nd3 would have been best.

13. ... cxd5 14. cxd5



14. ... a4

The point of this move was to open the a5-square for the queen, where I could play for ... b7-b5 as well as ... a4-a3 and ... Rf8-c8 to pressure the knight on c3. White definitely doesn't want to castle to either side, so Black has to figure out a way to take advantage of the king in the center.

15. Bg5

White wants to break the standstill on the kingside, so the intent is to take on f6 and then h5. But this is already a bit misguided; now White's dark squares will be weak, and her attack too slow.

Probably closing the kingside with 15. g5 is best, playing for a pure space advantage. But this is a hard plan to get behind, as all dynamic potential is killed on the attacking front. After 15. ... Ne8 the knight reroutes and will make itself useful on the queenside.

15. ... Qa5

The immediate 15. ... b5 push was already possible. Taking the pawn leads to complications which favor Black:

(a) 16. Nxb5? is met by 16. ... Bxb5 17. Bxb5 Qa5+.

(b) 16. Bxb5 Bxb5 17. Nxb5 hxg4 18. fxg4 Qa5+ 19. Nc3 a3 with initiative on the queenside. Moving the b-pawn leads to a tactic on e4; for example, 20. b3 Nfxe4 21. Nfxe4 Nxe4 22. Qxe4 Qxc3+ with a tremendous advantage.

(c) 16. gxf5 b4 17. Ncd1 b3 18. Qc3 bxa2 19. hxg6 fxf6 20. Rxa2 Qe8 and here, despite being down a pawn and with limited pawn cover for the king, Black is doing very well. There are ideas of ... Nc5-b3-d4, as well as ... Nf6-h5-f4. Meanwhile, White's pieces are awkwardly placed, especially the knights on f2 and d1.

16. Qd2 Rfc8

Black could also have continued with the attack on the queenside via 16. ... b5, resolving to allow White a kingside pawn in exchange for the two bishops and full control over the dark squares. After 17. Bxf6 Bxf6 18. gxf5 Kg7 19. hxg6 fxf6 20. h5 Rh8 the king is perfectly safe. It is difficult to get the a1-rook into the game, and even then, Black has all the entry squares covered.

17. Bxf6 Bxf6 18. gxf5 a3

(see diagram top of next column)

19. Rb1?

A mistake.

The only move that now keeps the balance is 19. b4!!, i.e., 19. ... Qxb4 20. Rb1 Qa5



21. hxg6 fxf6 22. h5 Na4 23. Nxa4 Qxd2+ 24. Kxd2 Bxa4.

Even worse is 19. b3?? Nxb3 20. axb3 Qxc3 21. Qxc3 Rxc3.

19. ... axb2 20. Rxb2 gxh5!

The white queen cannot immediately join the attack, as the c3-knight would hang (as we see in the game). Black's next move will be ... Kg8-h7, when the king is safe as the bishop pair covers the holes in Black's position and the rooks will play on the g-file. The white king is vulnerable in the center, and the black pieces are more active. Already, Black is winning.

21. Qh6?

A move borne of desperation, and played in time trouble.

21. ... Qxc3+ 22. Kf1 Bg7 23. Rg1 Bg4!

This is a hammer-blow, blocking the g-file. White doesn't have time to take as the queen is hanging, and with White's attack paused, Black will have time to grab material while also defending the king.

24. Qg5 f6 25. Qg6 Qxb2 26. Nxf4 hxg4 27. Rxf4 Rc7

Killing off the final bits of the White attack.

28. h5 Nd3, White resigned.

The idea is 29. Bxd3 (or 29. h6 Rc1+ 30. Kg2 Qxe2+) 29. ... Rc1 mate.

But Begim also won a nice game, and we both continued in this fashion for four days. I would return to my hotel room with a win and the hope that this would be the day I grabbed the sole lead. And every day I watched Begim play spectacular chess to also earn victories. This meant that after eight rounds, and heading into the second rest day, we were both at 7/8, a full two points ahead of Krush and Alice Lee, who had bounced back after a shaky start with four straight wins.

Meanwhile, in the Open section, Abhimanyu Mishra was also showing his quality.

He jumped into an early lead in round three with a very nice victory over GM Ray Robson.

CATALAN OPENING, OPEN VARIATION (E01)

GM Ray Robson (2776)

GM Abhimanyu Mishra (2677)

U.S. Championship (3), St. Louis, 10.07.2023

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. Nc3 e6 5. g3 dxc4 6. Bg2 Nbd7 7. 0-0 b5 8. e4 Bb7 9. e5 Nd5 10. Ng5 h6

This is the main line, allowing the piece sacrifice. Nothing else is better, as White will get a strong initiative if the knight can stay on g5 unopposed.

The dark squares are weak after 10. ... Be7 11. Qh5 Bxg5 12. Bxg5.

White is also quite happy after 10. ... Nxc3 11. bxc3 Nb6 12. Ne4, as the center is shored up with the exchange of knights. Meanwhile, Black has trouble developing his pieces; if the bishop moves to e7, then Qd1-g4 will be unpleasant, and h2-h4-h5 is coming. It's hard to come up with a very good plan for Black. Here ... c6-c5 is hard to get in, especially after White plants the queen on g4 and stares down the g7-pawn.

11. Nxe6

Here 11. Nge4 is also an option, if White doesn't want to play the piece sacrifice. It has been a bit trendy recently, although I think Black feels a lot better about the position with the c3- and d5-knights on the board and the b-file still closed.

11. ... fxe6 12. Qh5+ Ke7 13. Ne4

Threatening mate after Ne4-d6 comes; Black rushes to defend.

13. ... Qe8 14. Bg5+ hxg5 15. Qxh8 Kd8

16. Nxf5 Qe7 17. Qh5 Kc7 18. Qg6



Both players have been blitzing the top opening and engine lines to this point. Now Mishra takes his first think of the game.



Robson and Mishra plumb the depths of the position.

18. ... Re8

With the intention of bringing the king to safety and manually castling queenside.

19. a4 Kb8 20. Ra3 Nc7!

The best move for Black. White has ideas of taking on d5, forcing ... e6xd5 and leaving the sixth rank opened up to the queen. For example, if Black tries to shore up the queenside with ... a7-a6, White's attack suddenly becomes very strong: 20. ... a6 21. axb5 cxb5 22. Bxd5 exd5 (or 22. ... Bxd5 23. Rxa6) 23. Rfa1 and Black cannot stop Ra3xa6.

21. Rf3

After Robson's first think of the game, he swings the rook around to the kingside. If Black does nothing, White's plan is to push the h-pawn as far as possible, drop the knight onto d6 to force the dark-squared bishop off the board, and then pick up the g7-pawn. Another idea is to play Ng5-h7, with the same intention to exchange off the dark-squared bishop, thereby weakening the g7-pawn. Black must be precise with his defense.

21. ... bxa4

A typical idea to pick up the pawn after the rook has left; Black will be able to hang on to it for quite a while, thanks to ... Nd7-b6. Despite the atypical implementation, Black closes up the a- and b-files with this capture.

22. h4 Qd8

Here 22. ... Qb4 was equally good, and slightly more active. But it is very double-edged, as the queen can't take on b2 quite yet, and this leaves the kingside at the mercy of White's pieces. Play continues 23. Rf7 (23. Nh7? c5!) 23. ... Re7 24. Rf4 (now White wants Ng5-h7) 24. ... c5! (24. ... Qxb2?? doesn't work because now White's other rook gets into the game:

25. Rb1 Qa2 26. Bxc6 and White is winning) and Black gets the key pawn break in. After 25. Bxb7 Qxb7



POSITION AFTER 25. ... Qxb7

we have a sharp position. If Black can coordinate and activate his minor pieces, then he is doing well; if White can win the g7-pawn, then he is very happy as well. If both sides can achieve their plans, then the position will become extremely complex and double-edged.

A sample line is: 26. dxc5 Re8 27. Nf7 Bxc5 28. Qxg7 Nd5 29. Rxc4 Qxb2 30. Rxa4 Qe2 White's knight is a bit misplaced on f7, while Black is stopping h4-h5. Both kings are facing weaknesses; White can't take advantage of the passed pawns on the kingside because of them, and meanwhile Black's pieces must stay around the queenside/center because of open files in front of Black's king. It's extremely complicated, with much play for both sides.

23. Rf7

Note that 23. Nh7 immediately doesn't work because Black's 23. ... c5 comes with tempo on White's rook.

23. ... Re7 24. Rf4

Now Ng5-h7 is properly threatened, and will be played if Black tries to repeat.

24. ... Qe8 25. Qh7

If 25. Qxe8+ Black is happy trading into an endgame and getting one of White's most dangerous pieces off the board. Now White can still try to go after the g-pawn, but Black's pieces can activate themselves quickly: 25. ... Rxe8 (forced; the d7-knight is freed from defending the bishop) 26. Ra1 (26. Rc1 Nb6) 26. ... Nb6 27. Rf7 g6 28. Rf6 c5! giving up the g-pawn to play this pawn break at the optimal moment, i.e., 29. dxc5 Bxc5 30. Rxg6 Bd4 with a great position for Black.

25. ... g6 26. Rf7?

The wrong way to block the attack.

After the correct 26. Nf7!! White has a solid advantage. The point is that Black's plan in the game, with ... c6-c5 to free his position, no longer works thanks to the knight's jump to d6 after exchanging bishops. With that main break taken care of, White will continue with taking on g6 and then pushing the h-pawn. It is difficult for Black to coordinate his pieces, especially with the knight on f7 restricting the queen and rook.

For example: 26. ... Nb6 (best, activating the knight) (26. ... c5?! 27. Bxb7 Kxb7 28. Qxg6) 27. Qxg6 Nbd5 28. Bxd5!! (28. Rf3 Nb5 29. Rd1 c3)



POSITION AFTER 28. Bxd5

This is the only move to keep an advantage. Otherwise, Black's knights grow quite annoying: 28. ... Nxd5 29. Rf3 c5 30. Qg8 and the break does not come in time, while Nf7-d6 is unstoppable. Black is losing material. Play will continue after ... Nd5-c7, but Black is definitely not pleased.

26. ... c5

Black's key break!

27. Bxb7 Kxb7 28. Qxg6

White must give up the d-pawn, as taking on c5 is not possible. White would be happy if it were the knight on f7 instead, ready to hop into d6 as well as threatening d4xc5 (as the e5-pawn is now defended). But with the rook instead, Black can carry on with the counterplay in the center.

Note that 28. dxc5? fails to 28. ... Nxe5.

28. ... Rxf7

Here 28. ... cxd4 lets White back into the game with 29. Qe4+.

29. Nxf7 cxd4

Already, Black is quite happy. White's active rook has been traded for Black's passive one, and the d4-pawn has been picked up! It proves very difficult for White to actually pick the central pawns off.

30. Qe4+

If 30. Rd1 d3 31. Qe4+ Nd5 32. Ng5 N7b6 and Black is cruising.

30. ... Nd5



31. Nd6+?!

Another inaccuracy, though once again it is not quite clear at first glance how the alternative is better. Mishra seizes upon the opportunity to simplify a bit and let the knights dominate the board.

The right move is 31. Ng5, bringing the knight back in order to properly attack the d4-pawn. In the game, Robson tries this same idea, but there is a nice tactical refutation that holds on to all the pawns in

the center. Here, that same tactic is no longer viable. Though the line is still good for Black, it does lead to a complex and unclear endgame — not at all clear to human eyes.

Now after 31. ... Bc5 32. Nf3 Qh5!! is key, eyeing the d1-square. This will prove important in some critical lines, such as after White plays Rf1-c1 here: 33. g4 (33. Nxd4 Bxd4 34. Qxd4 Nxe5; 33. Rc1 d3 34. Rxc4 Nxe5!! this is the point of 32. ... Qh5; the knight is untouchable, because Black has control over the queening square) 33. ... Qh6 34. Nxd4 Qf4!! 35. Qxf4 Nxf4 36. Nf3 a3. Black needed to find a lot of good moves to reach this position, and he is definitely pressing. But the game is not quite over yet; White still has two connected passers on the kingside, and Black will have to fight for the full point.

31. ... Bxd6 32. exd6 Qh8

Black holds on to the pawn via the long diagonal!

33. Rd1 Ne5

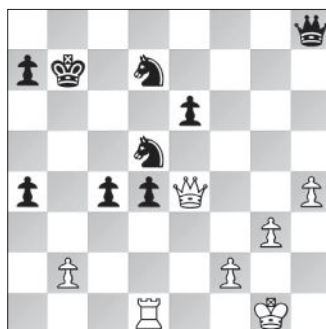
The point: if White takes on d4 with any piece, it will be met with ... Ne5-f3+. White cannot stop Black's next move, ... Ne5-c6, which defends the d4 pawn.

34. d7

Most forcing, and therefore necessary to explore, is 34. f4. After 34. ... Nc6 35. Qxe6 Nb6 White's passers are coming, but Black has his own as well; further, the knights prove effective in stopping White's pawns.

Now 36. f5 a3 (36. ... Qe5 is better and simpler) wins, though it does require a bit of calculation. The tactics work out for Black; for example: 37. bxa3 c3 38. f6 c2 39. Rc1 d3 40. Qe3 Qh7 41. f7 Nc4! and while White can promote, ... d3-d2 is coming: 42. Qf4 d2 43. Qxd2 Nxd2 44. f8=Q Nb3 with a winning position.

34. ... Nxd7?!



Surprisingly, this very natural move is an inaccuracy. Black is totally winning after 34. ... Kc7!. Black needs the knight on c6,

and so would rather retake the pawn with another piece.

35. Qxd4?

Returning the favor. The endgame is lost for White.

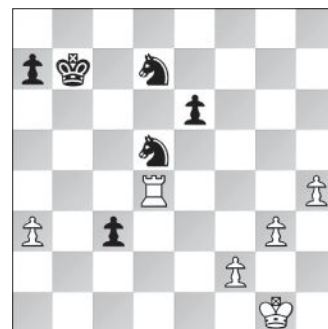
After 35. Kg2 Black no longer has ... Nd7-e5-f3+ tactics. After 35. ... Nc5? (35. ... a5! 36. Qxd4 Qxd4 37. Rxd4 a3! keeps the win in hand) 36. Qxd4 Qxd4 37. Rxd4 we reach a position that resembles the game, but now the tactics no longer work because the knight is on c5 instead of d7.

The alternative 35. Rxd4 is also much better than entering the endgame; White retains chances, and Black must play precisely to retain the advantage: 35. ... Nc5? (or 35. ... N7b6 36. Rd2 a3 37. bxa3 c3 38. Rc2 when White is holding on, and Black cannot push the pawn any further) 36. Qg4 Kb6! (if 36. ... c3 37. bxc3 a3 38. Qd1 Nxc3 the game is unclear, as White has many hidden resources, including the surprising 39. Rd7+!) Black defends the c5-knight, so after Rd4xc4 the queen is allowed to take on b2. Now after 37. h5 (37. Rxc4 Qxb2) 37. ... c3 38. bxc3 a3 39. Rd2 Qxc3 40. Qd1 the game continues. Both sides' passers are very quick.

35. ... Qxd4 36. Rxd4 a3 37. bxa3

Of course 37. Rxc4? loses on the spot to 37. ... axb2.

37. ... c3



White will be forced to give up the rook in exchange for this pawn. The kingside pawns are neither fast nor strong enough to provide effective counterplay.

38. Rd1

Alternatives are no better: (a) 38. Rc4 Ne5 39. Rc5 Kb6 40. Rc8 Nc6 and Black wins. (b) 38. Re4 Nc5 (38. ... c2?? 39. Rc4 flips the script) 39. Re2 Nb3 40. h5 (40. Kg2 Nd4 41. Re1 c2 42. Rc1 Nf6) 40. ... Nd4 41. Re1 c2 and Black is winning.

38. ... Nc5 39. h5 Nd3

Since the knight is untouchable, promotion is imminent.

40. h6 c2 41. Rf1 Nf6

Black's knights are effective at stopping the pawns.

42. g4 Nh7 43. Kg2 c1=Q 44. Rxc1 Nxc1 45. f4 Kc6 46. Kf3 Kd5 47. g5 Nf8 48. Kg4 Nd3 49. f5 Ne5+ 50. Kf4 Nfg6+

A nice sacrifice to get rid of all complications.

51. fxc6 Nxc6+ 52. Kg4 Ke4 53. a4 a5 54. h7 Ke5 55. Kh5 Kf5 56. Kh6 e5, White resigned.

However, after Abhi's misstep against Niemann in round four, Fabiano Caruana seized the lead and never relinquished it. With consecutive wins in round three through five, "Fabi," at 5½/8, was a full point ahead of four players — Dominguez Perez, Mishra, Niemann, and So — coming out of the rest day, and faced off with Niemann in a must-win (for Hans) round nine battle.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

GM Hans Moke Niemann (2732)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2861)

U.S. Championship (9), St. Louis, 10.15.2023

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 Bc5 5. c3 a5 6. 0-0 d6 7. Re1 Ba7 8. Nbd2 0-0 9. h3 Be6 10. Bb5

With this move, White seeks to take advantage of the hole on b5 to force a quick d3-d4. Meanwhile, Black will try to drop a piece on the f4-square.

10. ... Ne7 11. d4 Ng6 12. Ba4

Prophylaxis against a coming ... c7-c6. Also viable is 12. Nf1.

12. ... Nh5 13. Nf1 Nhf4 14. Ng3 exd4 15. Nxd4

The alternative 15. cxd4 d5 16. e5 f6 results in nearly the same position as in the game, but Black keeps the dark-squared bishop, which may prove dangerous in the long run. White is better exchanging it off.

15. ... Bxd4 16. cxd4

Also reasonable is 16. Qxd4 Qg5 (16. ... Nxc2 is interesting if Black feels frisky: 17. Kxg2 Nh4+ 18. Kh1 Nf3 19. Qe3 Nxe1 20. Qxe1 Qh4 is slightly better for White), securing the hold on the dark squares and opening up d8 for the rook. Black has plans of a quick ... d6-d5. Black's piece coordination is actually quite good, despite the pin of the knight to queen, as White has no good way to take advantage of this. 17. Qd1 Rad8 18. Qf3 d5 and Black is generating good play; for instance: 19. e5? f6!.

16. ... d5



17. e5

The only other move that has been played in this position is 17. Qf3, when Black has a choice of nice moves, but simplest is 17. ... Qh4 when e4-e5 will always be met with ... f7-f6. The rooks will come to d8 and e8 (once the light-squared bishop's diagonal is blocked). Black is pretty happy.

17. ... f6

Allowing White to simplify a bit, while also maintaining the space advantage with the pawn on e5.

It appears that 17. ... Qh4 stronger. It stops Ng3-h5 first, before playing ... f7-f6 on Black's terms, after which the half-open f-file will be very good for a kingside attack. Without this simplification available, White is not very happy.

18. Bxf4 Nxf4 19. Nh5 Nxh5 20. Qxh5

All forced.

20. ... f5?!

Refusing the immediate simplification. While this may not have been objectively best, it does mean there are more dynamical possibilities in the air.

After 20. ... fxe5 21. Rxe5 Bf7 22. Qe2 there's definitely still play left, but White will have the e-file and especially the e5-square. It will be hard for White to lose this position.

21. f4 Qe7 22. a3 c5 23. Rac1 c4

White is better after 23. ... cxd4 24. Qd1.

24. Qd1 Kh8 25. Bb5?!

Below: Niemann and Caruana offer contrasting models of board posture during their critical round nine encounter.



PHOTO: COURTESY SLCC / C. FULLER



White probably completely missed Black's next move. If White had time to get in b2-b3 without any intervention on Black's end, then he would be better with the strong center, better bishop, open-file, and clear weaknesses to play against. But Black has a surprise up his sleeve!

White needed to prepare for Black's idea with 25. Rc3 g5 26. fxc5 Qxc5 27. Rf1 Rg8 28. Rf2 and White is in time to defend everything. With the attack at a standstill, White is very happy indeed.

25. ... g5!

An unusual idea, but an incredible move! Black is opening up his king, destroying his pawn structure, etc., but somehow, he has enough initiative on the kingside to keep White on his toes. Despite the lack of minor pieces, the attack proves dangerous!

26. b3

White correctly recognizes that taking on g5 is not best, but that means that the pieces should be readying for defense — there is not much time for aggression.

After 26. fxc5 Qxc5 27. Rc3 (on 27. Rf1 Rg8 28. Rf2 f4 29. Kh1 f3 the white kingside will not hold together for long) is important! The third-rank will be crucial to Black's attack, either with some ... f5-f4-f3 push or some ... Be6xh3 tricks. The queenside rook swinging around will take care of those problems: 27. ... Rg8 28. Re2 f4 29. Ba4 Qh6 30. Qf1 (30. Kh1 Bg4) 30. ... Raf8 31. Kh2 Bf5!. And now the bishop prepares to jump into d3 or e4, provoking White's light squared bishop to return. Black has a dominating position.

26. ... gxf4 27. bxc4 Rg8

Again, at first glance, it does not seem that this position is particularly good for Black. But White has a very hard time defending. The g-file proves to be a particular source of trouble because White's light-squared bishop is so far away; were it on f3, it would be a different story.

28. Rc3?

The only move to hold the balance is 28. Rf1 as the pawn cannot be allowed to come to f3, lest the kingside ecosystem be poisoned: 28. ... Rg3 (after 28. ... Qxa3 29. Rf3 Qb2 30. Rf2 Qa3 neither side has more than a repetition) 29. Rf3 Rag8 30. Rc2 Qh4 and while Black is pressing, White can hold with careful play.

28. ... dxc4

Taking the opportunity to win a pawn.

29. Bxc4

Not 29. d5?? Qc5+.

29. ... Bxc4 30. Rxc4 Qxa3

Now Black is winning and perfectly placed to initiate some shenanigans on the third rank. For instance, ... f4-f3 is coming while the h3-pawn is hanging. It is very hard for White to deal with both threats.

31. Rc2



31. ... f3?!

Inaccurate.

Picking up a clean pawn with 31. ... Qxh3 was best, thanks to a tactical idea: 32. Rf2 (if 32. Rf1 Qe3+ 33. Rc2 Rad8 a third pawn is falling) 32. ... Rxg2+! This move looks crazy, but it works! After recapturing, White's rook has to stay on the g-file to stop ... Ra8-g8 and mate, but there are too few safe squares available on the g-file for the rook, so Black wins it back! 33. Rxg2 f3 34. Rg5 (34. Ra2 Rg8+ 35. Kf2 Rg2+ 36. Ke3 f2+ and mate soon) 34. ... Qh4 35. Qd2 f4. Now the rook is trapped. If it leaves the g-file, mate is incoming.

32. e6?!

Returning the favor.

Required was 32. Rf2 which may feel like a waste of time, but White has to be ready to defend the h3-pawn once g2 falls. After 32. ... fxc2 33. Rf3 Qb4 34. e6 White's kingside is stabilized and he can start pushing central pawns. This is enough for equality.

32. ... fxc2

Now h3 is hanging, and the position is nearly impossible to defend.

33. Qe2

If 33. Qh5 Qd3, while; 33. Rxg2 is not possible, because White is out of defenders after 33. ... Rxg2+ 34. Kxg2 Rg8+ and wins.

33. ... Qxh3 34. Qe5+ Rg7 35. Rcc1 Qh1+

36. Kf2 Qh4+ 37. Ke2 f4

A second passer comes in to further harass White's king.

38. Rg1 Qg4+ 39. Kd2 f3 40. Ke3 Kg8 41.

Rc2 Rf8 42. Rf2 h5 43. Qd5 Re8, White resigned.

With this win, Fabi defeated one of his closest opponents for the title, and stayed a full point ahead of the field. But while the day went well for our eventual Open champion, I suffered a bit of a setback. Begim found a nice shot to exploit an opening mistake by FM Ruiyang Yan, but I could not convert a better position against IM Nazi Paikidze. With these results, Begim pulled ahead to take a half-point lead with two rounds to spare.

My confidence crumbled. I trudged back to my hotel room in despair, ruining all the decisions I'd made that led me to this point in life, and flopping on my bed like a dead fish. But the tournament wasn't over — there were still two rounds to go, and I could not act like I'd lost when things were not quite done yet. To pull myself together, I tried to take my mind off chess for the night. I binge-watched some TV, did some homework (which did not help my mood), and ordered boba with my dad (which did boost my spirits!).

The next morning, I attempted to do some preparation for round 10. I would be lying if I said I wasn't still affected at the board by what had happened the day before. I was hyperconscious that my tournament depended on winning the next two rounds, and that Begim was facing off with Irina just a few feet away. Fortunately, the emotions all faded to the background as the game started, especially as Anna surprised me immediately in the opening.

PIRC DEFENSE, BY TRANPOSITION (B07)

IM Anna Zatonskih (2433)

IM Carissa Yip (2470)

U.S. Women's Championship (10), St. Louis, 10.16.2023



IM Carissa Yip



IM Anna Zatonskih

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 g6 3. Nbd2

This was already a surprise to me, although of course it is a solid option. White wants an immediate e2-e4. Since my King's Indian setup had been serving me well, I decided to utilize it one last time.

3. ... Bg7

If Black plays 3. ... d5, the idea is 4. b4 Bg7 5. e3 with a stronghold over the queenside dark squares. Typically, Black retaliates with a quick ... a7-a5 or ... c7-c5, but I wasn't in the mood for slow chess that day!

4. e4 d6 5. Bd3 0-0 6. 0-0 Nc6 7. c3 e5 8. dxe5 Nxe5

Another option is 8. ... dxe5, keeping more pieces on the board. But the knight on c6 is a bit awkwardly placed, and it's typically a good idea to get it exchanged off if possible.

9. Nxe5 dxe5

The position is solid for both sides. Black will need to take some risks to induce some concessions from White.

10. Nc4 Nh5 11. g3 Qe7 12. Qe2 h6

A waiting move, aiming to see how White plans to deploy her pieces.

13. a4 a5 14. Rd1 Nf6

Now that the knight is no longer useful on h5 (with the f4-square being defended), a re-route is needed, either to c5 (via d7), or to h7 followed by the ... f7-f5 push.

15. b3 Re8 16. Ba3 Qe6 17. Rab1 Qh3

Trying to convince White to move some more pawns in front of her king.

18. f3 h5 19. Qf2 Bh6??



This allows White a very nice shot.

20. Bf1

The point of the previous move is that 20. Ne3 is not viable due to some tactics on h4, i.e., 20. ... h4 21. g4? Bxg4 22. Nxg4 Nxg4 23. fxg4 Be3.

But Anna and I both missed 20. Qc5!! when all of the pawns are hanging, and Black has no way to cover e5 or c7. To make matters worse, there's no play on the king-side. Play continues 20. ... c6 (20. ... h4 21. Bf1) 21. Nd6 Rf8 22. Bf1 Qe6 23. Nc4 (23. Bc4 is also very good, winning material) and White is clearly in the driver's seat. Pawns are hanging, and with ... c7-c6 provoked, Black has made significant weaknesses on the queenside for White's pieces to take advantage of.

20. ... Qe6 21. Ne3

Here again 21. Qc5 would have been very good, as Black is forced to enter into a bad endgame. After 21. ... Qc6 22. Qxc6 bxc6 White is the one playing for the win, but it must be said that despite Black's pawn structure, it's not hopeless. White has no way to attack the doubled pawns, and at least the pawns cover the central d5- and d6-squares.



Lee, Yan, and Eswaran (L to R) enjoy blitz at the closing ceremony.

21. ... h4

Here, I think Anna panicked with her next move. Though things are getting a little scary, with ideas of taking on g3 and some sort of doubling on the h-file, White will be okay if she just leaves her kingside pawns where they are and focuses instead on queenside expansion. Here c3-c4-c5 is both typical and good for White in this position.

22. gxh4?!

The engine does not fully reject this move, but in practical terms, it gives Black something substantial to play against. The dark squares (such as f4) are weakened. Black will soon be loading up on the h-file and focusing on winning back the h-pawn. Here Anna was already getting low on time in a position that is extremely hard to defend as a human.

22. ... Kg7



23. Ng2

The best move to fight for an advantage is 23. Bc4 Qh3 24. Bc1 (24. Bf1? Nxe4!) as White absolutely needs to exchange off the dark-squared bishops. The h6-bishop is far more useful for Black than the bishop on a3. After 24. ... Rh8 25. Ng2 Bxc1 26. Rbxc1 White is doing all right with another pair of minor pieces off the board. It is difficult for Black to pick up the h4-pawn, and the f4-outpost is nicely covered by the knight — Black does not want to exchange the knights and have to take back on f4 with a pawn. Of course Black would love it if the bishop were on h3 right now, but it's impossible for the queen to go to any other square.

23. ... Nh5 24. Bb5

Here the same plan of exchanging the bishops with 24. Bc1 no longer works as well, because the black queen is much better placed and therefore lends itself to superior

coordination with the pieces. For instance: 24. ... Bxc1 25. Rdxcl Qf6 followed by ... Bc8-h3, removing White's last defender of the dark squares.

24. ... Rh8 25. Bc4

Black is placing the pieces where they want to be without resistance.

25. ... Qf6

Now ... Bc8-h3 or ... Nh5-f4 are real threats, with the h4-pawn dropping soon.

26. Qc5

White goes for her last shot at activity amidst time trouble, lest she wait and just get steam-rolled on the kingside. Unfortunately (for her!) the tactics do not work out.

26. ... Bh3 27. Qe7 Qxf3

The white kingside is falling apart, with all of Black's pieces involved.

28. Qxe5+ Kh7 29. Bf1 Nf4 30. Rd2

The knight is untouchable: if 30. Nxf4 Bxf4, threatening the queen and mate on e3.

30. ... Bxg2 31. Rxc2

Or 31. Bxg2 Qe3+ 32. Rf2 Qxf2+!

31. ... Nh3+ 32. Kh1 Be3

Getting the last minor piece into the attack. White cannot defend against the upcoming deadly discovered check.

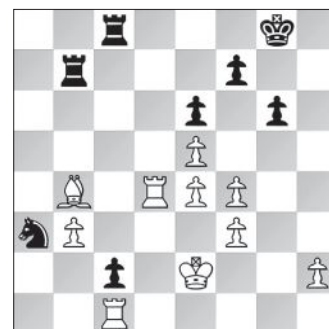
33. Qxc7 Nf2+ 34. Kg1 Nd1+, White resigned.

It wasn't my best game; I gave Anna chances to seize a big advantage in exchange for active play on the kingside. But she ended up missing them, and the risk paid off — I'd managed to generate an attack on her king and win the game. Now, all I could do was watch Begim's game.

Irina was in extremely good form, and Begim was defending for the majority of the game. But while Irina's position was very good, it did seem Begim would be able to hold. And then...

JUST THE RULES

GM Irina Krush (2513)
WGM Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova (2430)
U.S. Women's Championship (10), 10.16.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

46. ... Nb1 47. Kd3 Na3 48. Ke3 Nb1 49. Kd3 Na3



Right: The tension is palpable during the critical game between Tokhirjonova and Krush.

Instead of claiming the draw and calling the arbiter, Begim played the repetition on the board, invalidating her claim. Not interested in the peace offering, Irina spurned the repetition and was soon rewarded for her bravery.

50. f5 Nb5?

Dropping a second pawn, and soon, the game. Instead Black would have held with 50. ... Rcb8 51. Bxa3 Rxb3+ 52. Kxc2 Rxa3 due to the active rooks.

51. Rxc2 Re8

Black also loses after 51. ... Rxc2 52. Rd8+ Kh7 53. fxc6+ Kxg6 54. Kxc2.

52. Rdc4 exf5 53. Rc8 fxe4+ 54. Kxe4 Nc3+ 55. R2xc3 Rxb4+ 56. R3c4 Rxc8 57. Rxb4 Rc2 58. h4 Kg7 59. Rc4 Rb2 60. b4 Rb3 61. f4 Kh6 62. Kd5 Kh5 63. Kc6 Kxh4 64. b5 Kg4 65. b6 Kf5 66. b7 Rb1 67. Kc7 g5 68. fxg5 Kxg5 69. b8=Q Rxb8 70. Kxb8 Kf5 71. Rc5, Black resigned.

From being half a point behind to half a point ahead, I was feeling good about my chances. There was only one game left, and I needed just a draw to secure at least a playoff. Yet, even with this knowledge, when I sat down at the board for the last game of the tournament, I found that I didn't really feel like a draw. I wanted to win outright.

Ruiyang played excellently; we entered a rook endgame in which I was pressing, but she found all the right defenses. My time ticked down as I tried to break through the position. We reached a position where I had two connected passers, while she had one passed pawn and two rooks on the second rank. I could have taken this pawn, but this would have allowed Ruiyang to force a draw. And here is one of my worst mistakes as a player: with four minutes left on my clock, instead of taking a repetition, I made a decisive blunder and lost.

RAMPAGING ROOKS

IM Carissa Yip (2470)

FM Ruiyang Yan (2351)

U.S. Women's Championship (11),
10.17.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

48. ... Rf2 49. c5

Allowing Black to get the doubled rooks on the second in order to push my pawns.

49. ... Ra7 50. b4 Raa2 51. Rb3 e4 52. Rd1 e3 53. Re1 Rad2

I'd seen this position in my calculations; Black is just in time to advance her passer one more square, while also stopping my connected pawns.

54. c6

Naturally 54. Rbxe3 would allow Black a perpetual.

54. ... e2 55. Kc1 Rd6

Here is the critical moment.

56. b5??

Here 56. Kc2 would have just led to a simple draw, as White will be picking up the e2-pawn shortly, i.e., 56. ... Rxc6+ 57. Kd2 Rd6+ 58. Rd3.

56. ... Rf1 57. Rg3+ Kf6

I had planned 57. ... Kf8 58. Rg1 expecting 58. ... Rdf6. But once I played 58. b5, I suddenly noticed Black had 58. ... Rd1+ and the rook is untouchable!

58. Rf3+ Rxf3 59. Rxe2 Rc3+ 60. Kb1 Rb3+, White resigned.

Black picks up the pawns or forces a rook exchange, and it's time to resign.



PHOTO: COURTESY SLCC / OOTES

Usually, I do want to win, but sometimes I don't quite know when to accept that a game is a draw. At the 2023 U.S. Girls' Junior, I couldn't make the right gametime decision to take a draw instead of playing for a win against Alice. I overpressed at the World Junior Girls when I should've taken a draw, and it cost me the title. And here, again, the same mistake was costing me another title.

But I accepted this turn of events: the mistake was all mine. Perhaps I didn't deserve to be the U.S. Women's Champion if I couldn't make the right calls when it came down to it. I signed the scoresheets, took a glance at Begim's position, and started my lonely trek back to the hotel.

I was numb on the walk, already beginning to accept what had happened. The sky was a dreary gray; I fiddled my fingers and wondered how I would tell my parents. I passed by my favorite cupcake store and briefly contemplated a pick-me-up, but decided I was too sad for it. I thought about the last glimpse of Begim and Jennifer's position, in which things looked fairly complex... but quickly I banished the thought: it was out of my hands now.

Back in the room, my dad gave me a hug and settled in to watch the rest of Begim's game. I found it too nerve-wracking, and spent some time sitting on my bed to contemplate my life's mistakes for the second time that tournament.

It was in the middle of this riveting activity that I received a phone call from an unknown number. "A spam caller... not today, sir," I thought, immediately declining the call. Seconds later, my phone resumed its ringing. "Guys, please, I am busy spiraling and thinking of every little mistake I have ever made that has led me to this sadness."

I hit the red "decline" button again. There was a brief pause of peace, and then my phone started buzzing with an explosion of text messages. "You're going to be the U.S. Women's Champion" shot to the top of my notifications.

Words really cannot adequately describe the emotional turbulence during this tournament. So many ups and downs, mistakes, and blunders came from both sides of my games, but it had ultimately come down to this: somehow, I had won the tournament.

I did end up getting that cupcake after all. And it was as good as you can imagine.

Fabi won the U.S. Championship with a round to spare — not that shocking, given his playing strength and already-legendary career. The big surprise was second place, which was shared between Wesley So, Leinier Dominguez Perez, and... Abhi-

manyu Mishra! Picking up steam in the last stretch of the tournament, Abhi scored three points out of his last four games to complete a tremendous performance at his first U.S. Championship. Here's his critical final round win over Aronian, with his own annotations.

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E61)

GM Abhimanyu Mishra (2677)

GM Levon Aronian (2818)

U.S. Championship (11), St. Louis, 10.17.2023

Annotations by GM Abhimanyu Mishra

In this game, I was playing against one of the legends of the game. I was looking forward to a complicated fight!

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. g3 Bg7 4. Bg2 0-0 5. Nc3 Nc6 6. e3

There are many move order subtleties in the King's Indian. Here the main idea is to play Nf1-e2 to keep the g2-bishop open.

6. ... d6 7. Nge2 e5 8. d5 Ne7 9. b3!?

Not committing to e3-e4. The plan of this setup is to instead potentially push f2-f4.

9. ... Nd7

This move is quite common in these KID positions. The idea is to play ... f7-f5 next.

10. Bb2 f5



11. f4!?

An interesting positional decision. Black wanted to play ... e5-e4 to restrict the g2-bishop, and I am allowing it. My purpose for putting the pawn on f4 is to prevent Black from accessing the e5-square. I judged that my g2-bishop would not be bad forever, as I could always play Bg2-f1-e2 at some point in the future.

Top: Yip versus Yan. Middle and bottom: Mishra's signature win against Aronian.





11. ... e4 12. Nd4 Nf6

White's position is better statically with more space. Black should have tried to change the character of the game immediately.

The critical test of White's plans was 12. ... Nc5!, trying to open the game. Here 13. Bf1! is needed to prevent ... Nc5-d3. After 13. ... c6!? 14. b4 the piece sacrifice with 14. ... cxd5! had to be foreseen. Now 15. bxc5?! (15. Nxd5 is safer, with a complex game ahead) 15. ... dxc5 16. Nb3 d4 gives Black a huge pawn center! The engine claims White is fine if he gives back the pieces, but I don't think this is what White should aim for.

Left: GM Sam Shankland handed out his new book to his fellow participants. Below: everyone signed Alice Lee's copy!



13. 0-0 c5 14. dxc6 e.p. bxc6 15. Qd2 a6

Preparing ... c6-c5. Here 15. ... c5 immediately failed due to 16. Ndb5 hitting the d6-pawn.

16. Rfd1 Qc7

Now 16. ... c5 17. Nde2 is not optimal for as Black has to play ... Nf6-e8 to defend the d6-square.

17. Nde2

I liked this solution as I improve my structure.

The alternative 17. b4!? c5 18. bxc5 dxc5 19. Nb3 Be6 20. Bf1 looks a bit strange, but it has a point: the c5-pawn is quite weak after Nc3-a4.

17. ... Rd8 18. c5! Ne8 19. Na4

Trading off the g7-bishop, a key defender of Black's king.

19. ... Bxb2 20. Qxb2 Nd5 21. Qc1

Reserving the d4-square for the knight.

21. ... Nef6 22. Nd4 Ng4 23. Nb6!

The point. White does not passively defend e3.

23. ... Nxb6 24. cxb6 Qxb6 25. h3



25. ... Nf6?

Aronian desperately needed to get rid of my d4-knight. Correct therefore was 25. ... c5! 26. hxg4 cxd4 27. Rxd4 d5 with a complicated game where White is to be slightly preferred.

26. Qxc6 Qxc6 27. Nxc6 Rd7 28. Rac1

This endgame is very unpleasant for Black, as my pieces are better coordinated and I have the better pawn structure.

28. ... Bb7 29. Na5!

Keeping the weak a6-pawn in place.

29. ... d5 30. Bf1

At last, improving the limited bishop.

30. ... Kf7 31. b4 Rg8!?

An interesting attempt to change the character of the game, but here it is too late.

2023 U.S. CHAMPIONSHIPS AT A GLANCE

OCTOBER 5-17, 2023 | ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

OPEN

1st: GM Fabiano Caruana, 8½/11. **2nd-4th:** GMs Wesley So, Leinier Dominguez Perez, Abhimanyu Mishra, 6½. **5th-7th:** GMs Hans Moke Niemann, Samuel Sevian, Ray Robson, 5½. **8th:** GM Levon Aronian, 5. **9th-10th:** GMs Sam Shankland, Jeffery Xiong, 4½. **11th-12th:** GMs Dariusz Swiercz, Andrew Tang, 4.

WOMEN

1st: IM Carissa Yip, 8½/11. **2nd:** WGM Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova, 8. **3rd:** FM Alice Lee, 7½. **4th:** WGM Tatev Abrahamyan, 7. **5th:** GM Irina Krush, 6½. **6th:** IM Nazi Pakidze, 5½. **7th:** FM Ruiyang Yan, 5. **8th-9th:** WGM Jennifer Yu, IM Anna Zatonskih, 4½. **10th:** WGM Atousa Pourkashian, 3½. **11th:** FM Ashritha Eswaran, 3. **12th:** WGM Thalia Cervantes Landeiro, 2½.

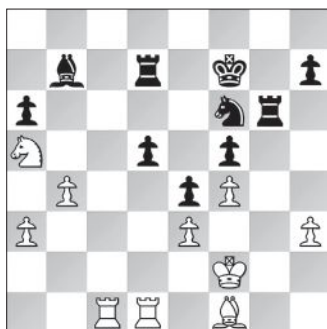
For complete results and additional photos, visit uschesschamps.com.

32. Kf2 g5 33. a3

Good enough, threatening Na5xb7 and Bf1xa6 as the b4-pawn does not hang.

I considered 33. Nb3 immediately, but I did not want to allow 33. ... h5 34. Nd4 h4 when it seems that Black is creating counterplay. Naturally the engine laughs and gives 35. Be2!!, claiming Black is completely busted!

33. ... gxf4 34. gxf4 Rg6



35. Nb3!

Bringing the knight to d4, where it pressures f5.

The direct 35. Nxb7 Rxb7 36. Bxa6 Ra7 (36. ... Ng4+ 37. hxxg4 Rxa6 38. Rxd5 also works) 37. b5 is winning in the long run, but I didn't want to give up my knight for such a dead bishop.

Right: There were a lot of smiles at the closing ceremony. Below: Mishra suggests a move during a wild bughouse game!

35. ... Rh6

This position reminds me of a quote: "In a bad position, all moves are bad!"

36. Nd4 Rh5 37. Rc5 Ng8 38. Rdc1 Ne7

39. a4

Slowly preparing a breakthrough.

39. ... Rh6 40. a5 Kf8



41. b5

Time to strike!

41. ... axb5

42. Bxb5

Rdd6 43. Rc7

Ba6 44. Bxa6

Rxa6 45.

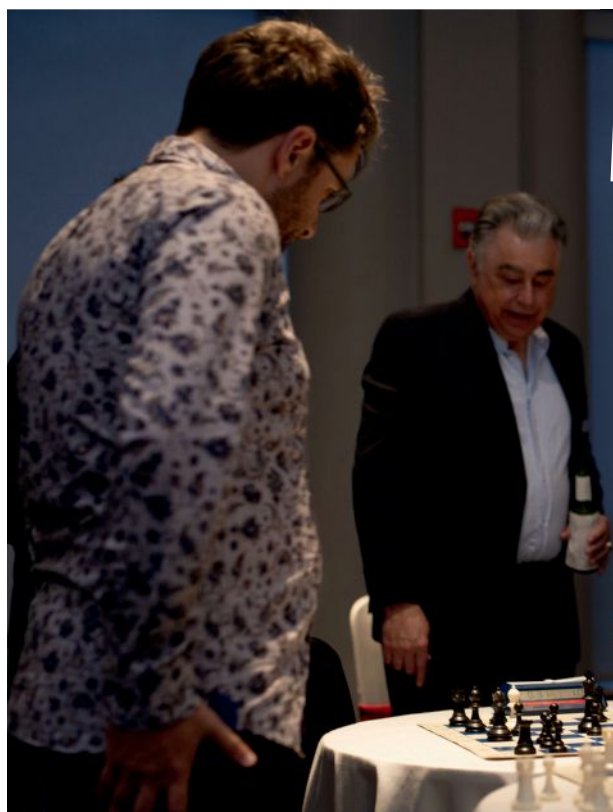
Rb1, Black resigned.

After 45. ... Rxxh3 the black pieces are too uncoordinated

to prevent 46. Rb8+ Kf7 47. Rbb7 Rh2+ 48. Kg3 Rah6 49. Rxe7+ with the end being near.

Similarly, Alice Lee demonstrated incredible mental fortitude. After a bad start, she scored seven points out of the remaining eight games to finish in clear third for the Women's Championship. Both Abhi and Alice had extremely impressive tournaments, and I look forward to watching this next generation's — am I allowed to say that at age 20? — chess careers progress even further!

In conclusion, I want to express my gratitude for the people who supported me along the way to this title: my coaches, my friends, my family. Thanks to them all. And, of course, my sincerest thanks to the Saint Louis Chess Club, Rex and Dr. Jeanne Sinuefield, and everyone who makes this tournament possible. I feel extremely lucky and honored to be the 2023 winner — the list of U.S. Women's Champions is full of incredibly inspiring players, and I am humbled to be a part of such a heritage. ♠



The Unsung Flohr

An outstanding attack from an underestimated player

BY **BRUCE PANDOLFINI**

W

HEN HE WAS AT HIS BEST, in the mid 1930s, the Czech-Soviet Salo Flohr (1908-1983) was truly one of the best. He won or

finished high in various major events. But his careful positional style did not attract as many followers as some of the sharper attacking players, such as Alekhine and Keres. Of course, Flohr didn't always suck the life out of positions. He was a phenomenal speed player, and on occasion he could fashion his own sudden whirlwind attacks. Take a look at his game against Nikolay Evseev (White) played in the Bolshevik Championship of 1949, a year before FIDE officially awarded Flohr the title of International Grandmaster.

CARO-KANN DEFENSE (B17)

Nikolay Evseev
Salo Flohr
Bolshevik Championship, 1949

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Nbd7
5. Nf3 Ngf6 6. Ng3 e6 7. Bd3



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.**

7. Par Score 5 Be7
Flohr plays it solidly. You may accept **full credit** for either 7. ... c5 or 7. ... Bd6.

8. 0-0
White gets ready for action.**

8. Par Score 5 0-0
Black follows suit. But you may accept **full credit** for 8. ... c5.

9. Qe2
This gets the queen into action, while observing key central squares.**

9. Par Score 6 c5
Flohr plays to liquidate the opposing center pawn. Accept **full credit** for 9. ... b6, with the possibility of flanking the queen-bishop.

10. c3
This defends the d-pawn. But having cleared the d1-square, White might have tried 10. Rd1.**

10. Par Score 5 b6
Flohr continues with the idea of developing the queen-bishop to b7. Accept **full credit** for 10. ... Qc7.

11. Ne5
White crosses into Black territory. If the knight could remain safely on e5, it would certainly be advantageous.**

11. Par Score 5 Bb7
By completing the flanking, Flohr avoids any invasion by the e5-knight to c6. The position is about even.

12. f4
White plays aggressively, unworried about

the consequences of this risky advance. Flohr now gets the advantage.**

12. Par Score 5 cxd4
Temporarily playing to create a weakness at d4.

13. cxd4
White now has an isolated d-pawn.**

13. Par Score 5 Nxe5
Black trades to open the d-file.

14. dxe5
Naturally, White takes back with the d-pawn to avoid loss of a pawn. Black's f6-knight is now menaced.**

14. Par Score 6 Ng4
On 15. Qxg4, Black has 15. ... Qxd3. But White sees an opportunity to gain a pawn.

15. Bxh7+
A kind of desperado. Each side has a hanging minor piece, so White obtains a pawn for his.**

15. Par Score 4 Kxh7

16. Qxg4
White is now up a pawn. But the position is not that simple.**

16. Par Score 6 Qd4+
A powerful centralizing move. White will now find it difficult to complete his development.

17. Kh1
This move is essentially forced, since 17. Rf2 is met by 17. ... Bc5.**

17. Par Score 6 Rac8
The c-file is seized. Black is now poised to invade to the seventh rank.

18. Nh5

ABCS OF CHESS

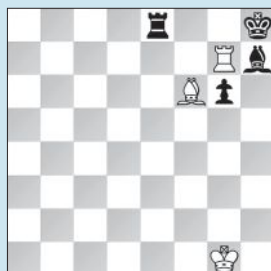
THESE PROBLEMS ARE ALL related to key positions in this month's game. In each case, White is to move. The answers can be found in Solutions on page 63.

JANUARY EXERCISE:

We may think we know something, then fail when trying to explain it to others. Grandmaster Kotov essentially said if we can't put our ideas into words, we don't truly have command over them. So, when you've tried to absorb a chess concept, pretend you're explaining it to a class. Does it make sense? If it does, take it a step further. Try to explain it to another human being. If that doesn't work, you may have to go back to the board and learn it once again.

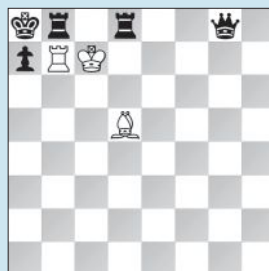
PROBLEM 1

Mating net



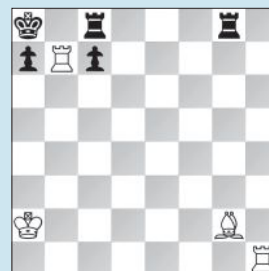
PROBLEM 2

Mating net



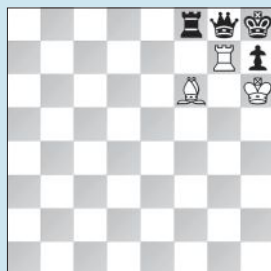
PROBLEM 3

Mating net



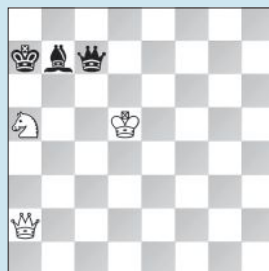
PROBLEM 4

Mating net



PROBLEM 5

Mating net



PROBLEM 6

Mating net



The threat is mate. Flohr of course sees this.**

18. Par Score 5 g6
Black deals with the mate threat. **Deduct 1 point** for 18. ... Rg8, which fails to 19. Qh3, with threats in the air.

19. Qh3
With this move White is menacing an annoying discovery. On 19. ... gxh5, White has 20. Qxh5+ and a perpetual check.**

19. Par Score 6 Rh8
This defense allows Black to keep his advantage. Now the white knight is threatened with capture.

20. Nf6+
White unleashes a double check with this knight hop, but it doesn't do any real damage.**

20. Par Score 4 Kg7
Black has alarmingly placed pieces. White must tread carefully.

21. Qe3
White tries to get the queens off the board. If 21. ... Qxe3 22. Bxe3 Bxf6 23. exf6+, Black can't safely play 23. ... Kxf6 because of 24. Bd4+, gaining the Exchange by a skewer. **(1 bonus point)****

21. Par Score 7 Rc2
A Rubinstein-like intrusion. If Black's queen is taken, 22. Qxd4, then 22. ... Rxc2 wins. **(1 bonus point)**

22. Qg3
White opts to defend g2, but it doesn't quite work. Black has several ways to win.**

22. Par Score 8 Qd3
This defective offering is the prettiest, but you may accept **6 points part credit** for 22. ... Rxc2.

23. Qxd3
White tries to fight to the very end, but the game can't be saved.**

23. Par Score 6 Rxc2
This capture quickly ends White's suffering. Aside from a devastating discovery along the a8-h1 diagonal, Black is also threatening mate on h2.

24. Ng4
The h2-square is protected, but the defense doesn't hold.**

24. Par Score 6 Rxc2
Black's double check ends matters next move. After the compulsory 25. Kg1, Black has 25. ... Rg2 mate. A simple, but elegant conclusion. ♠



POSITION AFTER 24. ... Rxc2+

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

Ntirlis on the English

C-pawn pushers will find much to like in this comprehensive new study.

BY IM JOHN WATSON

O CCF-IM NIKOLAOS “NIKOS” Ntirlis opens his book *Playing the English* with a bold proclamation: “White repertoire books suck!” He points out that “shortly after a white repertoire work is published, many people work to neutralize the author’s recommendations, and soon enough the databases will contain games showing the best antidotes for Black.”

I’m entirely sympathetic to this point of view. As Ntirlis indicates, new neural network engines make it all too easy to respond to the novelties and surprises that even the strongest players come up with, and information spreads so rapidly that today’s new way of playing becomes old news in a matter of days.

So how does Ntirlis propose to construct a durable repertoire for White with the move 1. c4? He argues that if you analyze deeply enough, Black will always equalize, and thus that “maximalist,” labor-intensive attempts to play “new” moves tend to be unrewarding.

Instead of basing his recommendations upon novelties or surprises, Ntirlis wants to achieve a comfortable position with a healthy pawn structure in which White has “a familiar plan” to follow. He therefore begins each chapter with introductions laying out move orders and some positional and strategic features of the variation being discussed. These might include typical pawn structures, classic strategies, or even a relevant endgame position.

To be sure, the bulk of the material in *Playing the English* is primarily analytical, and the average player may not be happy with the fact that most of the time there isn’t much explanatory content. This is an advanced book, after all, and someone who wants to know the “why” of every move won’t get much handhold-

ing. You’ll need to put some work in, but a careful study of Ntirlis’ specific analysis is ultimately the best way to internalize the ideas of the variations and become familiar with their nuances. In the end, no one can master even the characteristic tactics of an opening, let alone the balance and timing of complex offensive and defensive strategies, without immersing oneself in a wide variety of concrete variations.

I went over the majority of lines in this book and have picked out two to illustrate Ntirlis’ approach and give some idea how he chooses and fleshes out a repertoire. I’ll use recent games as models and point out selected and alternative repertoire options in the notes.

ENGLISH OPENING (A29)

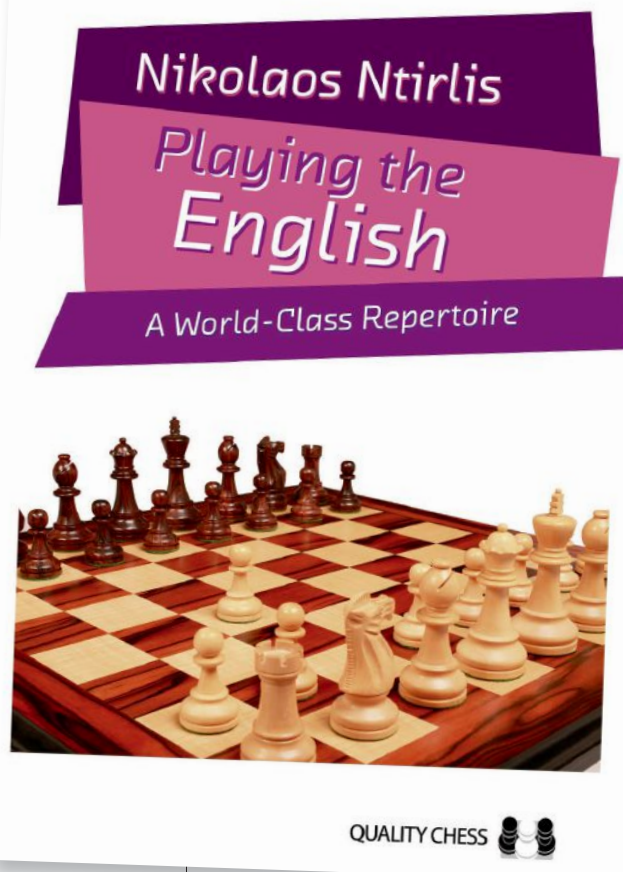
GM Fabiano Caruana (2861)

GM Samuel Sevian (2776)

U.S. Championship (6), St. Louis, 2023

1. c4 e5 2. Nc3

The sequence of moves in the game was 2. g3 Nf6 3. Bg2 d5 4. cxd5 Nxd5 5. Nc3 Nb6 6. Nf3 Nc6, but I’ve adjusted the order to show Ntirlis’ preferred repertoire.



2. ... Nf6

Systems involving an early ... f7-f5 have been played by strong players for years. Ntirlis finds two unique move orders that avoid the kingside play Black often achieves:

a) 2. ... Nc6 3. Nf3 f5 is a traditional and respected order, when Ntirlis suggests the rare but clever 4. e3!, intending 4. ... Nf6 5. d4 e4 6. Ne5!. Of course this is playable for both sides, but avoids some forcing theoretical lines.

b) His preference versus 2. ... d6 3. Nf3 f5 is 4. d4 e4 5. Ng1! with the idea Bc1-f4, e2-e3, and in many cases h2-h4 and Ng1-h3. Here 5. Ng5 is normal, but it’s worked out in great detail and years of experience

indicate that Black can be happy with the resulting positions.

3. Nf3 Nc6 4. g3 d5

A whole chapter is devoted to 4. ... Bb4 5. Nd5, a choice that keeps the play flexible. I do think that Black can equalize at various points, for example, in Ntirlis' line 5. ... e4 6. Nh4 0-0 7. Bg2 d6 8. Nxb4 Nxb4 9. a3, both 9. ... Nc6 and 9. ... Na6 are equal and fairly easy to handle. This is nevertheless a good practical choice for White because there is plenty of play ahead.

5. cxd5 Nxd5 6. Bg2 Nb6 7. 0-0 Be7



Ntirlis points out that for many players, this is the first position that comes to mind when they hear "English Opening." In my latest download of recent games, this is the most popular main line after 1. c4.

8. b3

Ntirlis awards this move an "I". Arguably the move's main advantage is that it bypasses some over-analyzed lines that often lead to too many simplifications.

He also supplies a deep analysis of a second recommendation, 8. d3. A recent elite game followed his main line 8. ... 0-0 9. Be3 Re8 10. Rc1 Bf8 11. d4 exd4 12. Nxd4 Nxd4 13. Bxd4 c6.



POSITION AFTER 13. ... c6

Here White chose 14. Qd3 (14. e4 is Ntirlis recommendation; I'm not convinced that White achieves any advantage, but it's a position with prospects) 14. ... Be6 (14. ... Bf5 15. Qxf5 Qxd4 is also equal) 15. Rfd1 Qg5 16.

h4 Qa5 17. Qc2 Rad8 with equality in Ponomarev – Firouzja, FIDE Grand Swiss 2023.

8. ... 0-0 9. Bb2 Bg4

One of six moves that Ntirlis analyzes. In the very old days when I was trying to find a weapon to use against Black's setup, I remember that when White didn't play the main lines (which back then involved d2-d3 and often a2-a3 with b2-b4), ... Bc8-g4 was frustrating to play against. Although 9. ... Be6 and 9. ... Re8 are somewhat more popular, I rather like the idea here as well.

10. Rc1

After the slightly weakening 10. h3, both 10. ... Bh5 and 10. ... Be6 (intending ... Qd8-d7 with tempo) score well.

10. ... Qd7 11. Ne4 Bh3



12. Nc5

A key decision. Ntirlis suggests the more dynamic course 12. d4 Bxg2 13. Kxg2 Qg4 (he says that 13. ... exd4 14. Nxd4 Nxd4 15. Qxd4 Qxd4 16. Bxd4 "gives us a pleasant edge;" in fact, it's a standard ending which poses few problems after 16. ... c6, when White has a safe position and no reason not to play on) 14. Nc5 Bxc5 (the alternative 14. ... e4 15. Nd2! Bxc5 16. dxc5 Nd5 17. Rc4! "puts Black under some pressure," according to Ntirlis. Okay, 17. ... Rfe8 will equalize, but again, there's enough to play for) 15. Rxc5 e4 16. Ne5 Nxe5 17. dxe5 c6 18. Qc2.



POSITION AFTER 18. Qc2

Ntirlis analyses this position in some depth. I don't think that White has the advantage

here but it's full of possibilities, e.g., 18. ... Rfe8 19. a4 Rad8 20. h3 Qg6 (20. ... Qe6!) 21. a5 Nd7 22. Rc4 Nxe5 23. Rxe4 c5 with the idea 24. Rc1 Rd2! 25. Qxd2 Qxe4+.

12. ... Bxc5 13. Bxh3 Qxh3 14. Rxc5 f6 15. b4 Qe6

Or 15. ... Rf7 16. Qb3 a5 with equality.

16. b5 Nd8 17. Qc2 c6 18. Ba3 Rf7?

Better is 18. ... cxb5! 19. Rxb5 (19. d4 Nc4!) 19. ... Rc8 20. Qb1 Re8 with an equal position.

19. Rb1?!

Here 19. d4! gives White a clear advantage. This is extremely hard to spot, however, since it depends upon the tactic 19. ... e4 20. Ng5! fxg5 21. Re5 Qd7 22. Qxe4 when surprisingly, Black is lost!

19. ... Rd7 20. d3 Qf7 21. bxc6 Nxc6 22. Bc1 Nd5

Black stands solidly and equal here. The game was drawn.

Having played through each chapter, I feel that Ntirlis' repertoire against 1. ... e5 delivers as promised; the resulting play is flexible and favors the player who is most familiar with the typical ideas. He doesn't cut corners or conveniently neglect Black's most challenging moves.

Turning to the Symmetrical Variation 1. ... c5, I find that some of his solutions, while also well-analyzed, are not as satisfying. Too many variations not only allow easy equality, but the play becomes so simplified that even a moderately experienced Black player will have little chance of losing. To be fair to Ntirlis, this may be merely the nature of the symmetrical position. I'm not confident that other move orders would necessarily avoid this problem or lead to positions with more content. At any rate, let's look at one important system to get a feel for Ntirlis' approach.

ENGLISH OPENING, SYMMETRICAL VARIATION (A37)

GM Magnus Carlsen

GM Wesley So

Banter Blitz Cup Final, Chess24.com, 2020

1. c4 c5 2. Nf3

Already an important choice. This avoids certain issues with 2. Nc3, but also commits the king's knight, so that setups with e2-e3 or e2-e4 and Ng1-e2 are no longer available.

2. ... Nc6

After 2. ... Nf6 3. g3, one traditional line goes 3. ... d5 4. cxd5 Nxd5 5. Bg2 Nc6, and in order to avoid the extensive theory that follows 6. Nc3 g6 (or 6. ... Nc7) 7. 0-0 Bg7, which tends to lead to some extremely drawish lines by force, Ntirlis wants to play 6. d4 cxd4 (6. ... Nf6 isn't mentioned, but is another decent solution) 7. Nxd4 Ndb4 8. Nxc6 Qxd1+ 9. Kxd1 Nxc6 10. Bxc6+ bxc6 11. Nc3.



POSITION AFTER 11. Nc3

This is uninspiring. The position is safe for White, but it has been analyzed and played by grandmasters for 50 years or more, with a large preponderance of draws and better-than-normal overall results for Black. A bit of analysis shows that Black's activity and bishops compensate for his lone weakness on c6 after a number of moves, e.g., 11. ... e5 with the idea ... Bc8-e6, or 11. ... h5 12. h4 e5 13. Be3 Bf5; or 11. ... Bf5 intending 12. f3 e5 13. e4 Be6. In practice, I think it is just as easy for White to go wrong as Black.

3. g3 g6 4. Bg2 Bg7 5. Nc3 e6

This move, famously played by Fischer and many elite grandmasters, is worth looking at because Black's strategy is relatively simple and White has failed to make progress against it for decades. Ntirlis gives quite promising lines against 5. ... Nf6, but to my mind, his solutions to 5. ... e5 and 5. ... d6 aren't terribly convincing. Again, this has more to do with the nature of these very sound defenses than any failing on the author's part.

6. h4

Ntirlis likes to use slightly irregular moves that Carlsen has played recently, which seems a reasonable idea. The more traditional lines are worked out in great depth, and this h-pawn advance is still relatively fresh.

6. ... h6 7. e3 Nge7

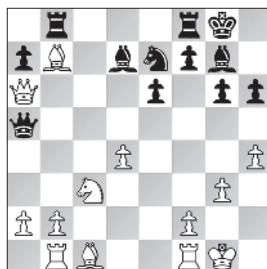
With White's knight on f3 instead of e2, d5 is not a target, so 7. ... d5 is most logical. Then Ntirlis recommends 8. 0-0 ("!"):



POSITION AFTER 8. 0-0

Unfortunately, I find Black's play rather easy here:

a) Ntirlis' main line is 8. ... dxc4 9. Qa4 Qa5 10. Qxc4 Nge7 11. d4 (Ntirlis shows and the engines confirm that 11. Ne4 0-0 is equal, whichever way White captures on c5) 11. ... cxd4 12. Nxd4 0-0 13. Rb1! Nxd4 (or 13. ... Bd7 14. b4 Qd8 with equality) 14. exd4 Bd7!? (14. ... Nf5! is equal) 15. Bxb7 Rab8 16. Qa6.



POSITION AFTER 16. Qa6

Here Ntirlis gives a typical assessment for his Symmetrical lines: "White can claim a tiny edge," and concludes about this line that that "the positions are generally more difficult to handle for Black in practical play." I don't blame him for being encouraging, but I think that Black's play is not challenging at all in most of these positions and it's hard to go wrong. Even in the final position, 16. ... Qxa6 17. Bxa6 Bc6 gives active play and full compensation.

b) Also natural is 8. ... Nge7. Play continues 9. cxd5 exd5 (I think 9. ... Nxd5 is also fine, e.g., 10. d4 cxd4 11. exd4 0-0 12. Re1 Qb6 13. Na4 Qc7 14. Bd2 Rd8 with equality) 10. d4 b6 11. dxc5 bxc5 12. Na4 c4 13. Bd2.



POSITION AFTER 13. Bd2

Here Ntirlis says: "White stands better, as Black's pawns have lost their dynamism and Black's dark squares may become weak after the exchange of bishops." But it's dead equal, e.g., 13. ... 0-0 14. Bc3 Bg4 (14. ... Rb8) 15. Qd2 Qd6 16. Bxg7 Kxg7 17. Nh2 Be6 18. b3 cxb3 19. axb3 Rab8.

8. d4 cxd4 9. Nxd4 d5 10. cxd5 Nxd5

Black should be fine after 10. ... exd5 11. 0-0 0-0 as well. Ntirlis gives 12. Re1 Re8 13. Bd2 Nxd4 (it's equal after 13. ... Ne5!, intending 14. Qb3 Nc4 15. Qc2 Nxd2 16. Qxd2 Bg4) 14. exd4 Be6. This is called equal by Svidler; Ntirlis suggests 15. Bf4 Qd7 16. Be5 and concludes that "White is more comfortable." But after a natural move like 16. ... Rac8, it's hard to believe that White can drum up chances.

11. 0-0 0-0 12. Bd2 Nxd4 13. exd4 Ne7

Not the only move, but Black attacks the d4 pawn and forces matters.



14. Bf4

Here Ntirlis tries to improve upon Carlsen's play by suggesting 14. Re1 ("!"), and if 14. ... Nf5 15. d5, claiming "a healthy initiative for White." Black's pieces are active, however, and I don't see what White has. For example, 15. ... Bd7 16. Bf4 (alternatives: 16. Qb3 Nd4; 16. dxe6 Bxe6) 16. ... Qb6 17. Qd2 Rfe8 18. Rad1 Rad8 19. dxe6 Bxe6 20. Nd5 Qb5 with equality, a possible finish being 21. Nc7!? Rxd2 22. Rxd2 Qa4 23. Re4! Qc6 24. Re1 Qa4 25. Re4.

14. ... Nf5 15. Ne2

If 15. d5 Qb6!.

15. ... Qb6 16. Qb3 Bd7

Also possible are 16. ... Nxd4, or 16. ... Qxb3 17. axb3 Nxd4. Both lead to equality.

17. Bxb7

At this point, Black's easiest solution would have been 17. ... Bb5! 18. Bxa8 Rxa8 19. Rfe1 (19. Qf3 Bc6) 19. ... Bxe2 20. Qxb6 axb6 21. Rxe2 Nxd4, when White has to bail out with 22. Re4 (22. Re3?! e5!) 22. ... f5 23. Rxd4! Bxd4

24. Bxh6 Bxb2 25. Re1 Rxa2 26. Rxe6 Bd4 and fairly clear equality.

The Symmetrical lines aren't all this dry. Ntirlis' solution to the Hedgehog (1. c4 c5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. g3 b6 4. Bg2 Bb7 5. 0-0 6. Nc3) is convincing and full of good suggestions. He gives examples and in-depth positional explanations throughout the chapter. Since many books and products recommend the Black side of the Hedgehog, this is a particularly valuable contribution.

Versus 1. ... Nf6, Ntirlis for the most part succeeds in presenting lines that keep plenty of play on the board and give White good winning chances. His anti-Grünfeld line 2. Nf3 g6 3. Nc3 d5 4. cxd5 Nxd5 5. h4 poses real problems and results in complex positions regardless of how Black proceeds.

Versus the King's Indian, he sidesteps 1. c4 theory and transposes into the main lines, featuring the Bayonet Variation with some impressive new analysis. I suspect that some 1. c4 players will prefer a purely English solution, but that's fine.

I think there is one serious gap here: I can't find the Queen's Indian setup, i.e., 1. c4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. g3 b6. If Black plays ... c7-c5 soon thereafter, we get the Hedgehog analysis already mentioned, but after, say, 4. Bg2 Bb7 5. 0-0 Be7, I'm not sure what Ntirlis recommends. Fortunately there are a number of good options against the QID, so this shouldn't be a huge problem.

Update: After I submitted the first draft of this article, I found that Ntirlis had added a lengthy Appendix online, including material on the Queen's Indian Defense. You can find it at the Quality Chess website: www.qualitychess.co.uk/ebooks/PlayingtheEnglish-Appendix.pdf.

Both the Slav (1. c4 c6 followed by ... d7-d5) and the Queen's Gambit Declined (1. c4 e6 followed by ... d7-d5) are obviously sound choices for Black, and many English players will transpose by 2. d4. Ntirlis offers an excellent overview of the most interesting ways in which White can handle 1. c4 c6 2. Nf3 d5 3. g3, delaying or omitting d2-d4 — this approach has accumulated a lot of theory over the past 20 years. He opts for the Catalan versus 1. c4 e6 via 2. Nf3 d5 3. g3 Nf6 4. Bg2 Be7 5. 0-0 0-0 6. d4. His Dutch solution is the modest 1. c4 f5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. g3, avoiding transposition by d2-d4 in most major lines.

Finally, Ntirlis finds a fascinating solution to 1. ... b6 in an obscure Stockfish – Leela engine game which went 1. c4 b6 2. Nc3 Bb7 3. e4 e6 4. g3 f5 5. d3 Nf6 6. Bg2 fxe4 (all well-known) 7. a3!



This is an amazingly slow move that prevents ... Bf8-b4 and discourages ... Bf8-c5 due to b2-b4. Remarkably, everything seems to favor White at this point, although the game continuation 7. ... d5! 8. cxd5 exd5 9. Nh3 Nbd7 10. dxe4 dxe4 11. 0-0 Nc5 12. b4 Qxd1 13. Rxd1 Nb3 14. Rb1 Nxc1 15. Rbxc1 Rd8 probably holds with accurate defense by Black.

Every experienced English Opening player will want this book. There are only scattered high-level works out there on the English, and most are dated or limited to a particular variation. With this book

we have a gold mine of up-to-date theory and ideas.

To be sure, not every variation Ntirlis recommends escapes his own criticism of White repertoires. Given advance notice that your opponent plays some of these suggestions as White, it may not take much to neutralize them. Furthermore, Ntirlis' fear that databases will soon contain games showing the best antidotes for Black potentially applies to his own ideas as well as to the previously neglected lines he proposes using.

But that's simply the computer-age reality, and I'm grateful that authors like Ntirlis are still willing to put so much time and effort into improving our understanding of opening theory and practice. However much engine power is out there, we will need such books for a long time to come. ♦

Ntirlis, Nikos. Playing the English: A World-Class Repertoire. Glasgow: Quality Chess, 2023. ISBN 9781784831844. 440pp. (Available at uscfsales.com, product code B0222QT, \$32.95)



Leading from the Front

How to deal with a rook in front of a passed pawn

BY GM JOEL BENJAMIN

M

OST OF US KNOW THE OLD adage that rooks belong behind passed pawns. In practice, they often end up in front of a

friendly passed pawn. Though it's a rather awkward way for a pawn to travel, the elements of defending against the pawn's advance is often not well understood by amateur players.

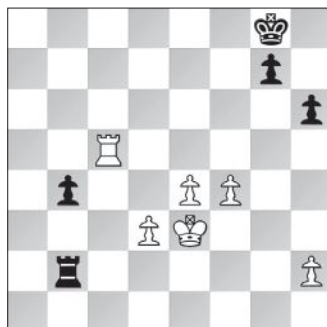
In the New York State Championship played over Labor Day Weekend, I was able to defeat IM Justin Sarkar despite two of his pawns reaching the seventh rank (though fortunately, not at the same time).

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

GM Joel Benjamin (2565)

IM Justin Sarkar (2354)

NY State Championship (6), Albany,
09.04.2023



WHITE TO MOVE

White's dynamic duo of passers in the center should ultimately decide the game, so Black will need a trick to favorably alter the pawn configuration.

41. h4 b3 42. Rb5 Rb1 43. Kd4

The rook is behind the b-pawn, and the king sheltered from checks.

43. ... b2 44. f5

I played this a bit too fast, fixated on the f-pawn. Instead 44. h5 Rf1 45. Rxb2 Rxf4 46. Rb5! seems simplest. The rook protects the h-pawn and comes to f5 to cut off Black's king.

44. ... h5 45. Kc3

I felt this might be a bit simplistic, losing some time to clarify matters. The black rook is dominated and must wait for a target to take before it can move. So I could have plowed forward 45. Rb7 Kf8 46. e5 Kg8 47. e6 Kf8 48. Kc3 Rh1 (48. ... Rf1 49. Rf7+ Kg8 50. Kxb2) 49. Rxb2 Rxh4 50. d4 and the center pawns get home very fast.

The one thing I don't want to do is 45. Ke5 Rd1. Then I don't have connected passed pawns, the pawns are brought closer together and a little more precision will be needed to win.

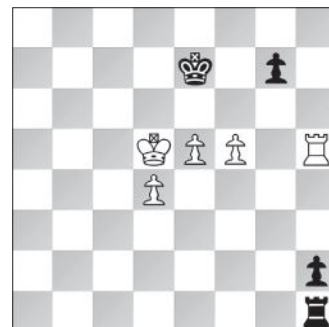
45. ... Rh1 46. Rxb2 Rxh4 47. Kd4 Rh3 48. Rg2 Kf7 49. Rg5 h4

If 49. ... Kf6 50. Rg6+ Kf7 51. e5 advances.

50. e5 Rh1 51. Kd5 h3 52. Rh5

I thought about 52. d4 h2 53. Rg2, but I didn't want to see 52. ... Ra1 53. Rh5 Ra3 so I limited his options.

52. ... h2 53. d4 Ke7



Here 53. ... Rf1 54. Rxh2 Rxf5 55. Kd6 won't help. But I will squeeze his king this time.

54. Rh7 Kf8

Or 54. ... Kf7 55. f6 Ra1 56. Rxh2 Ra5+ 57. Kd6 Ra6+ 58. Kd7 Ra7+ 59. Kc6, etc.

55. e6 Kg8 56. Rh3 Kf8 57. Kd6, Black resigned.

Now 57. ... Kg8 58. d5 would be the end of the h-pawn.

The day before this game I sat next to Justin while he contested a typical rook endgame. The following diagram does not depict the position *exactly*, but the analysis illustrates several critical themes.

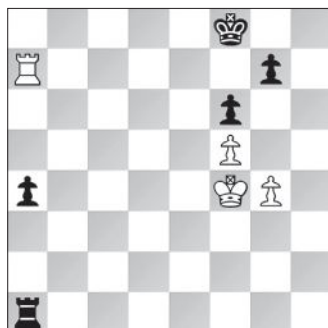
THE WAITING IS THE HARDEST PART

(Inspired by)

Jasmine Zhixin Su

Justin Sarkar

NY State Championship (4), Albany,
09.03.2023



WHITE TO MOVE

I was very busy mulling a winning position in time pressure and missed the last few moves as well as much of what happened after. Somehow Black won by reaching a position with rook and f-pawn versus rook, with the white king cut off all the way on the other side of the board.

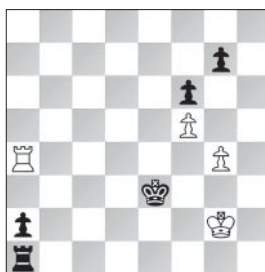
I think that the white pawns were on g3 and f4 when the rook ending began. White would probably have defended more easily by standing pat. Here we are at a decision point; White can plunge forward or back it up.

1. g5

White played this advance in the game, looking for counterplay, as we so often advise in endgames. But the plan for drawing against a passed pawn with a rook in front of it is often to wait, as the strong side will ultimately have to make a run for it with the king. In such a situation the white king has to hang near the safe squares of g2 and h2, should the pawn advance to the seventh rank. So let's consider 1. Kg3 a3 2. Kg2, and now Black must choose if he wants to commit the pawn to a2.

- (a) 2...Kg8 3. Kh2 Kh7 4. Kg2 (spoiler alert: 4. g5 also draws, as will be explained later) 4. ... Kh6 5. Kh2 Kg5 6. Rxg7+ Kh4 7. Kg2 a2 8. Ra7 Kxg4 9. Ra5 holds for White. The key is that the Black king cannot attack the f-pawn and take a square from White's king at the same time.
- (b) 2. ... a2 3. Kh2 Ke8 4. Kg2 Kd8 5. Kh2 Kc8 6. Kg2 Kb8 7. Ra4 Kb7 8. Ra3

Kb6 9. Ra4 Kb5 10. Ra8 Kc4 11. Ra4+ Kd3 12. Ra7 Ke4 13. Ra4+ Ke3



POSITION AFTER 13. ... Ke3

Now White has to avoid 14. Kh2?? Kf3 creating a fatal *zugzwang*. The g4-pawn drops, providing a clear path to victory: Black creates a passed f-pawn, and pushes it all the way to f3, after which he will win White's rook.

Instead, 14. Ra7 forces Plan B: 14. ... Kf4 15. Ra4+ Kg5 16. Kh2 Kh4 17. Kg2 Rb1 18. Rxa2 Rb4 (18. ... Kxg4 19. Ra7) 19. Kf3 Rxg4 and now 20. Ra7 is the most direct draw, though White can even wait, as 20. Ra1 Kg5 21. Ra7 Kxf5? 22. Ra5+ costs Black the rook.

While waiting with the king, White can be a little more proactive with the king. Now 2. ... a2 can be answered by 3. g5.



POSITION AFTER 3. g5

If Black waits, we have already seen that White can trade pawns and keep the f-pawn protected. But ... f6xg5 doesn't help either. The g-pawn cannot dislodge the king to create a tactic (as you know from reading Tatev Abrahamyan's September column) and having two of them won't make any difference. If Black abandons the a-pawn, two g-pawns won't be better than one there either.

Back to 1. g5:

1. ... fxg5+ 2. Kxg5 a3

The white king is in no-man's land, so White has to press the attack.

3. f6! gxf6+

Now 3. ... a2 looks like a winner but White can surprisingly hold with 4. Ra8+ Kf7 5. Ra7+ Ke6 (5. ... Kg8 6. Ra8+ Kh7 7. f7) 6. fxg7.

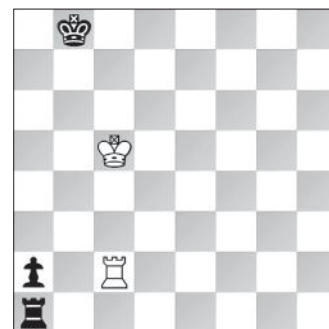
4. Kxf6 Ke8

White is not quite out of the woods yet. But mate threats will gain time to organize a defense to the advancing a-pawn.

5. Ke6 Kd8 6. Kd6 Kc8 7. Rc7+

This is the most direct approach, though 7. Kc6 Kb8 8. Rb7+ Ka8 9. Rb3 a2 10. Rc3! Kb8 11. Rc2! also does the job.

7. ... Kb8 8. Rc2! a2 9. Kc5



The rook shields the king from a deadly check, creating a safe path for it to reach the pawn.

9. ... Kb7 10. Kc4 Kb6 11. Kb3

The position is equal.

The defender needs to stay alert even in seemingly trivial positions. In the following game, Gregory Kaidanov sprung a beautiful trap to send the U.S. Senior (+50) team on the path to their fourth gold medal in five events. (See more in "In the News." ~ed.)

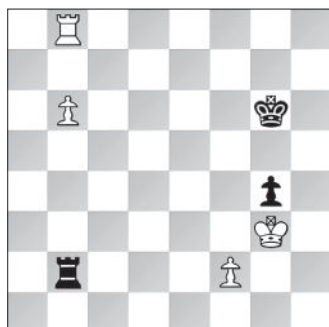
GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

GM Gregory Kaidanov (2549)

GM John Emms (2448)

World Senior Teams +50 (5), Struga,
2023

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. c3 Nf6 5. d3 0-0 6. b4 Be7 7. 0-0 d5 8. exd5 Nxd5 9. b5 Na5 10. Bxd5 Qxd5 11. c4 Qd8 12. Bd2 b6 13. Nxe5 Bf6 14. Bxa5 bxa5 15. d4 Bxe5 16. dxe5 Be6 17. Qe2 Qd4 18. Nd2 Rad8 19. Nb3 Qxc4 20. Qxc4 Bxc4 21. Rfc1 Bxb3 22. axb3 Rd5 23. Rxa5 Rxe5 24. g3 g6 25. Rxc7 a6 26. Rb7 axb5 27. Raxb5 Rxb5 28. Rxb5 Rc8 29. Re5 Rc2 30. g4 Rb2 31. Re3 h5 32. g5 f6 33. gxf6 Kf7 34. Rf3 g5 35. h3 g4 36. hxg4 hxg4 37. Rd3 Kxf6 38. Kg2 Ke5 39. Kg3 Kf5 40. Rd5+ Ke6 41. Rb5 Kf6 42. Rb4 Ke5 43. Rb8 Ke6 44. b4 Kf7 45. Rb6 Ke7 46. Rb5 Kf6 47. Rb7 Kg6 48. Rb8 Kf7 49. b5 Kg6 50. Rg8+ Kf6 51. Rb8 Kg6 52. b6



Emms has been defending accurately for many moves, but one slip will prove fatal. The position is surprisingly subtle because the pawn is not yet committed to the seventh rank.

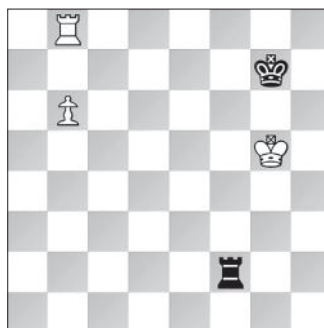
52. ... Kg7??

Black had to maintain the kingside pawns with 52. ... Rb4 53. Kh4 Kh6! and White's king remains boxed in. After 54. b7 Kg7 White will not be able to win the pawn with *zugzwang*, as we saw in the previous game (and my September column).

53. Kxg4 Rxf2 54. Kg5!

John Emms is not only an experienced grandmaster, but an author and editor as well. I sympathize if he hasn't seen this

theme before, because I don't think I have myself! Black loses in this position because his king will be driven to the back rank, allowing a decisive crossing for the opposing monarch.



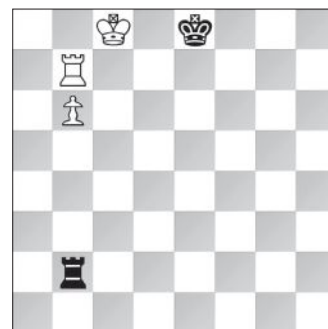
54. ... Rb2

Black can't keep the king cut off because 54. ... Rf1 55. Rb7+ Kf8 56. Rc7 simply wins the rook. Note that 54. ... Kf7 55. b7 Rb2 56. Rh8! is our fundamental winning motif.

55. Rb7+ Kf8 56. Kf6 Ke8 57. Ke6

The engine cites a long-winded win with 57. Re7+ Kd8 58. b7, but practically speaking this is a non-starter because Black can fight on with a rook against a queen after 57. ... Re2+.

57. ... Re2+ 58. Kd6 Rd2+ 59. Kc7 Rc2+ 60. Kb8 Rb2 61. Kc8



The last finesse. 61. ... Rc2+ is met by 62. Rc7, so the Lucena position is on the horizon. Black plays on for his teammates.

61. ... Rb1 62. Rb8 Ke7 63. Kb7 Kd7 64. Rh8 Rb2 65. Rh1 Ra2 66. Rd1+ Ke7 67. Kb8 Rb2 68. b7 Ra2 69. Rd4 Ke6 70. Kc7 Rc2+ 71. Kb6 Rb2+ 72. Kc6 Rb1 73. Re4+, Black resigned. ♠

For more endgame wisdom from GM Joel Benjamin, visit the Digital Archives at new.uschess.org/chess-life-magazine-issues.



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TOURNAMENT LIFE ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Board authorizes a temporary change in the US Chess Grand Prix (GP) rules for the period March 4, 2020 through January 31, 2024 out of concern for the unforeseeable impacts the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) could have on participation in GP events. The change allows organizers with guaranteed prize funds to change the status of their prize fund without first seeking US Chess permission to make the change. More specifically, organizers who have announced "XXXX in Guaranteed prizes" (or similar words) for their GP events shall be allowed to re-state their prize funds in their publicity as "XXXX in Projected prizes based on ### players," where ### represents the number of players in last year's event rounded to the nearest five players. For new GP events lacking historical attendance data, the organizer shall specify a "based on" number of players as part of the Projected Prize Fund language in their publicity. This decision includes all GP tournaments that already have been advertised in Chess Life. For any GP events being publicly advertised (whether by TLA, another website, flyers, emails, social media, etc.), organizers shall take all necessary steps to ensure their revised pre-tournament announcements call attention to this change in prize fund status and provide the appropriate "Projected based on XXX players" in the language of their updated publicity. US Chess asks that the chess community support this temporary change in the spirit that it is intended. The Executive Board shall revisit this matter as necessary.

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

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

Nationals

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2024 US Amateur Team North

FEBRUARY 16-18, 2024, ILLINOIS

Event site: Hyatt Regency Schaumburg **Address:** 1800 E. Golf Rd., Schaumburg, IL 60173 **Overall prize fund:** See TLA **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Chess Weekend **Email:** glenn@chessweekend.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <https://www.chessweekend.com> **TLA ID:** 40220

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • HERITAGE EVENT

World Amateur Team & U.S. Team East

FEBRUARY 17-19, 2024, NEW JERSEY

Event site: Parsippany Hilton **Address:** 1 Hilton Ct., Parsippany, NJ 07054 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** New Jersey Chess Federation **Email:** esdoyle@aol.com **Phone:** esdoyle@aol.com **Website:** <https://njscf.org> **TLA ID:** 39739

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South

FEBRUARY 23-24, 2024, FLORIDA

Event site: Laurel Manor Recreation Center **Address:** 1985 Laurel Manor Drive, The Villages, FL 32162 **Overall prize fund:** Commemorative awards, plaques, trophies **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** The Villages Chess Club **Email:** TheVillagesChessClub@outlook.com **Phone:** 1-407-497-2261 **Website:** <http://www.thevillageschessclub.org> **TLA ID:** 40253

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2024 KCF All-Girls National Championships

APRIL 12-14, 2024, ILLINOIS

Event site: Hyatt Regency McCormick Place **Address:** 2233 S MLK Dr, Chicago, IL 60616 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Kasparov Chess Foundation & Renaissance Knights **Email:** david.heiser@renaissanceknights.org **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <http://allgirls.knights.org> **TLA ID:** 40277

Grand Prix

The Grand Prix point totals reflect all rated event information as of December 31, 2022 for the 2022 Grand Prix.

FINAL 2022 GRAND PRIX STANDINGS

Congratulations to the 2022 Grand Prix Champion

IM JASON LIANG

Name	State/Ctry	Pts
1. IM JASON LIANG	NY	222.68
2. GM BRANDON JACOBSON	NJ	177.20
3. IM JOHN BRYANT	CA	166.43
4. IM SEMEN KHANIN	RUS	152.35
5. GM FIDEL CORRALES JIMENEZ	MA	137.17
6. IM MYKOLA BORTNYK	UKR	127.25
7. FM DANILA POLIANNIKOV	MA	124.26
8. GM MARK PARAGUA	PHI	121.20
9. GM ALEXANDER FISHBEIN	TN	103.43
10. GM ANDREW TANG	MD	103.28

2022 Awards

\$12,500 in cash prizes
First Prize \$5,000

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

The Grand Prix continues in 2024. For information visit new.uschess.org/us-chess-grand-prix-program

GRAND PRIX

CFCC 2024 Winter Open & Scholastic

JANUARY 5-7, 2024, FLORIDA

Event site: Holiday Inn at Lake Buena Vista **Address:** 13351 State Road 535 Orlando, Florida 32821 **Overall prize fund:** \$8,600 **GP Points:** 20 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Larry Storch **Email:** info@centralflchess.org **Phone:** 407-312-6237 **Website:** <http://centralflchess.org> **TLA ID:** 39866

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

56th Annual Virginia Open

JANUARY 5-7, 2024, VIRGINIA

Event site: Marriott Washington Dulles Airport **Address:** 45020 Aviation Dr., Dulles, VA 20166 **Overall prize fund:** \$7,535 **GP Points:** 40 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Mike Hoffpauir, NTD/IA **Email:** mhoffpauir@aol.com **Phone:** 757-846-4805 **Website:** <http://www.vachess.org> **TLA ID:** 41229

GRAND PRIX

Dewey Beach Open 2024

JANUARY 6-7, 2024, DELAWARE

Event site: Hyatt Place **Address:** 1301 Coastal Highway, Dewey Beach, DE 19971 **Overall prize fund:** \$2,800 **GP Points:** 10 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Delaware Chess Association **Email:** Bradct@verizon.net **Phone:** 302-312-4524 **Website:** <http://Delawarechessassociation.org> **TLA ID:** 40526

GRAND PRIX

13th Annual Chesapeake Open

JANUARY 12-15, 2024, MARYLAND

Event site: Rockville Hilton **Address:** 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852 **Overall prize fund:** see TLA **GP Points:** 30 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Michael Regan **Email:** mregan@tsc.edu **Phone:** 4104195130 **Website:** <http://mdchess.com> **TLA ID:** 40948

GRAND PRIX

Delray Beach Matrix Open

JANUARY 13-15, 2024, FLORIDA

Event site: Delray Beach Veterans Park **Address:** 802 NE 1st Street, Delray Beach, FL 33483 **Overall prize fund:** \$8,000 **GP Points:** 20 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** 954Chess INC **Email:** 954chess@gmail.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** n/a **TLA ID:** 41139

GRAND PRIX

Dreaming King Open

JANUARY 13-15, 2024, CALIFORNIA, S.

Event site: Sonesta Los Angeles Airport LAX Hotel **Address:** 5985 W. Century Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90045 **Overall prize fund:** \$20,000 **GP Points:** 120 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Charles Ensey **Email:** chucnglo@aol.com **Phone:** (858) 432-8006 **Website:** n/a **TLA ID:** 40798

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2024 Michigan Master/Expert & Class Championships

JANUARY 20-21, 2024, MICHIGAN

Event site: Doubletree by Hilton Lansing (formerly Radisson) **Address:** 111 N Grand Avenue, Lansing, MI, 48933 **Overall prize fund:** \$4,200 **GP Points:** 20 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Michigan Chess Association **Email:** jeffchess64@gmail.com **Phone:** 8109557271 **Website:** <https://www.michess.org> **TLA ID:** 40834

GRAND PRIX

Morrisville Open

JANUARY 21, 2024, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560

Overall prize fund: \$810 **GP Points:** 10 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Dragon Knight Chess Center **Email:** jon@dragonknightchess.com **Phone:** 9194222535 **Website:** n/a **TLA ID:** 40536

GRAND PRIX

Austin Chess Club Winter Open 2024

JANUARY 26-28, 2024, TEXAS

Event site: Austin Southpark Hotel **Address:** 4140 Governors Row, Austin, TX 78744 **Overall prize fund:** \$5,000 **GP Points:** 30 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Austin Chess Club **Email:** austinchessclub@austinchess-tournaments.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <https://www.austinchess-tournaments.com> **TLA ID:** 40536

GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

3rd Coastal Virginia Open

JANUARY 27-28, 2024, VIRGINIA

Event site: Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront **Address:** 5700 Atlantic Avenue, Virginia Beach, VA 23451 **Overall prize fund:** \$3,750 **GP Points:** 30 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Christina Schweiss **Email:** cschweiss2@hrchessclub.org **Phone:** 757-472-5909 **Website:** <https://hrchessclub.org> **TLA ID:** 41148

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

NC Less Senior

JANUARY 28, 2024, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall prize fund:** \$810 **GP Points:** 10 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Dragon Knight Chess Center **Email:** jon@dragonknightchess.com **Phone:** 9194222535 **Website:** n/a **TLA ID:** 41071

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

Land of the Sky XXXVI

FEBRUARY 2-4, 2024, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Crowne Plaza Resort Asheville **Address:** One Resort Dr, Asheville NC 28806 **Overall prize fund:** \$12,500 **GP Points:** 20 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Wilder Wadford **Email:** info@landofthesky.us **Phone:** n/a **Website:** n/a **TLA ID:** 40025

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.

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

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX

61st Annual Baltimore Open FEBRUARY 2-4, 2024, MARYLAND

Event site: BWI Sheraton Address: 1100 Old Elkridge Landing Road, Linthicum Heights, MD 21090 Overall prize fund: see TLA GP Points: 30 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Michael Regan Email: mregan@stsci.edu Phone: 4104195130 Website: <http://mdchess.com> TLA ID: 41086

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

PA State Game/75 Championship - West FEBRUARY 3, 2024, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: William Pitt Union, Univ. of Pittsburgh Address: 5th Ave. & Bigelow Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15213 Overall prize fund: \$695 GP Points: 6 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Tom Martinak Email: martinak_tom_m@hotmail.com Phone: 412-908-0286 Website: <http://www.pscfchess.org/clearinghouse/> TLA ID: 40867

GRAND PRIX

3rd UVM Spring Open FEBRUARY 3-4, 2024, VERMONT

Event site: Mansfield Room - Davis Center 210 Address: 590 Main St, Dudley H. Davis Center, Burlington, VT 05405 Overall prize fund: \$500 GP Points: 6 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Hayden Collins Email: hayden.collins@uvm.edu Phone: 8023806791 Website: <https://newenglandchess.org/> TLA ID: 40648

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Land of the Earth FEBRUARY 4, 2024, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560

Overall prize fund: \$810 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Center Email: jon@dragonknightchess.com Phone: 9194222535 Website: n/a TLA ID: 41073

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Annual Super Bowl Pre-game Chess FEBRUARY 11, 2024, NEW JERSEY

Event site: South Jersey Innovation Center Address: 498 Kings Hwy, Suite 102, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034 Overall prize fund: \$3,700 GP Points: 30 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: South Jersey Innovation Center Email: dov@incntr.com Phone: 703-989-6867 Website: <https://form.jotform.com/233096747880165> TLA ID: 40956

GRAND PRIX

Dr David Ostfeld Memorial ICA Open Championship FEBRUARY 11, 2024, NEW JERSEY

Event site: Bergen County Academies Address: 200 Hackensack Ave., Hackensack, NJ 07601 Overall prize fund: \$1,100 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: International Chess Academy Email: chessdirector@icanj.net Phone: 201-797-0330 Website: n/a TLA ID: 41033

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Bearcat DKC USCF Grand Prix February 11 FEBRUARY 11, 2024, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall prize fund: \$810 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Center Email: jon@dragonknightchess.com Phone: 9194222535 Website: n/a TLA ID: 41074

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

15th annual Southwest Class Championships FEBRUARY 15-19, 2024, TEXAS

Event site: Westin Dallas Fort Worth Airport Address: 4545 W John Carpenter Fwy, Irving TX 75063 Overall prize fund: \$35,000 GP Points: 200 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us Phone: director@chess.us Website: <http://www.chessevents.us> TLA ID: 39835

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Columbia Tunnelvision XVII FEBRUARY 17, 2024, SOUTH CAROLINA

Event site: First Church of the Nazarene Address: 901 St Andrews Rd, Columbia, SC 29210 Overall prize fund: \$1,000 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Columbia Chess Club Email: info@columbiachess.org Phone: 8035690938 Website: <https://columbiatunnelvision.com/tv-xvii-feb-17%2C-2024> TLA ID: 40583

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

8th annual George Washington Open FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024, VIRGINIA

Event site: Washington Dulles Marriott Address: 45020 Aviation Dr, Dulles VA 20166 Overall prize fund: \$17,000 GP Points: 120 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us Phone: director@chess.us Website: <http://www.chessevents.us> TLA ID: 40252

GRAND PRIX

2nd Annual Music City Open FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024, TENNESSEE

Event site: Millennium Maxwell House Hotel Address: 2025 Rosa L Parks Blvd, Nashville, TN 37228 Overall prize fund: \$7,000 GP Points: 40 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Nashville Chess Center Email: director@nashvillechess.org Phone: (629) 254 - 4737 Website: <https://ncc.clubexpress.com/> TLA ID: 41336

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

31st annual Western Class Championships MARCH 1-3, 2024, CALIFORNIA, S.

Event site: Hilton Orange County Airport Address: 18800 Macarthur Blvd, Irvine CA 92612 Overall prize fund: \$20,000 GP Points: 120 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us Phone: director@chess.us Website: <http://www.chessevents.us> TLA ID: 40212

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

Delaware State Open Championship MARCH 9-10, 2024

Event site: Ramada Inn Address: 260 Chapman Road, Newark DE 19702 Overall prize fund: \$3,800 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Delaware Chess Association Email: bradct@verizon.net Phone: 3023124526 Website: <http://Delawarechessassociation.org> TLA ID: 41065

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

21st annual Southern Class Championships MARCH 15-17, 2024, FLORIDA

Event site: Wyndham Orlando Resort Address: 8001 International Drive, Orlando 32819 Overall prize fund: \$17,000 GP Points: 80 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us Phone: director@chess.us Website: <http://www.chesstour.com/> TLA ID: 40675

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

28th Annual Mid-America Open MARCH 22-24, 2024, MISSOURI

Event site: Clayton Plaza Hotel St. Louis-Clayton Address: 7750 Carondelet Ave., St. Louis MO 63105 Overall prize fund: \$20,000 GP Points: 120 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us

16th annual OPEN at FOXWOODS

March 27-31, 28-31 or 29-31, Easter weekend, Foxwoods Resort Casino

\$60,000 guaranteed prizes, GM & IM norms available!

Open Section: 9 rounds, Mar. 27-31, 40/80, SD/30, d30, FIDE rated, GM & IM norms possible.

Other sections: 7 rounds, Mar. 28-31 or 29-31, 40/80, SD/30, d30 (3-day option, rds 1-2 G/60 d10). U2200 & U2000 are FIDE rated.

Foxwoods Resort Casino and Hotel, in the woods of Southeast CT
Cellphone rules: see devicerules.com..

In 7 sections:

Open: \$5000-3000-2000-1000-800-600-500-400, clear or tiebreak 1st \$200 bonus, top FIDE 2250-2399 \$2000-1000, top FIDE U2250/Unr \$2000-1000. 200 GPP.

U2200, U2000, U1800: Each \$3000-1500-1000-700-500-400-300-300.

U1600, U1400: Each \$2000-1000-800-600-500-400-300-300.

U1100: \$1000-700-500-400-300-300-200-200.

FIDE ratings used in Open, Mar. official USCF in others. Unofficial or USCF Online Regular ratings usually used if otherwise unrated.

Mixed doubles: Male/female combined 2-player team scores in Rounds 1-7 among all sections: \$1000-600-400. Must average under 2200, may play in different sections, register before both begin round 2.

If under 26 games rated by Mar. 2024 list, limit \$600 U1100, \$1000 U1400, \$1400 U1600, \$1800 U1800.

Unrated limits: \$200 U1100, \$400 U1400, \$600 U1600. \$800 U1800.

Cannot play below Online Regular Rating-100 points. If any post-event Regular OTB or Regular Online rating posted 3/25/23-3/25/24, or current Online Regular Rating, was more than 40 pts over section max., prize limit \$500.

Entry fee: \$228 online by 3/25, \$250 later or at site. \$500 more to US Open Section players not FIDE 2000/over. GMs. Foreign IMs/WGMs in Open: free. US IMs/WGMs & FIDE foreign in Open: \$100 less. U1100 section, \$80 less. Seniors 65/over in U1400/up: \$80 less.

Foreign titled minimum prizes: see chessevents.us.

5-day reg. ends Wed 6 pm, rds Wed 7 pm, Thu 1 pm & 7 pm, Fri 11 & 5, Sat 10 & 4, Sun 10 & 3:30.

4-day reg. ends Thu 6 pm, rds Thu 7 pm, Fri 11 & 5, Sat 10 & 4, Sun 10 & 3:30. No 4-Day Open.

3-day reg. ends Fri 10 am, rds Fri 11, 2 & 5, merges with 4-day Fri at 5 pm. No 3-Day Open.

Half-point byes: OK all, limit 3 (limit 2 in last 4 rds). must commit before rd 3. \$15 charge for refunds.

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

Special room rates: Grand Pequot Tower (2-3 minute walk, very luxurious): Fri/Sat \$217, others \$161. Fox Tower (7-9 minute walk in connected building): Fri/Sat \$187, others \$131. Great Cedar Hotel (5-7 minute walk, same building): Fri/Sat \$157, others \$111. All: \$4.95 resort fee, includes wired internet, fitness center, pool, spa, coffee, etc.

Blitz tournament Sat 9:30 pm, register by 8:45 pm.

Entries, registration list: chessaction.com.

Email: director@chess.us.

rector@chess.us Phone: director@chess.us Website: <http://www.chesstour.com/> TLAID: 40663

GRAND PRIX

The New Orleans Open

MARCH 23-24, 2024, LOUISIANA

Event site: The Moreau Center at University of Holy Cross
Address: 4123 Woodland Dr, New Orleans, LA 70131
Overall prize fund: \$1,500 **GP Points:** 6 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Downriver Chess Club of New Orleans **Email:** info@downriverchess.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <https://www.downriverchess.com/> **TLAID:** 40688

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

16th Annual Open At Foxwoods

MARCH 27-31, 2024, CONNECTICUT

Event site: Foxwoods Resort Casino And Hotel Address: Rt 2, Mashantucket CT 06339 **Overall prize fund:** \$60,000 **GP Points:** 200 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association **Email:** director@chess.us **Phone:** <http://www.chesstour.com/> **Website:** <http://www.chesstour.com/> **TLAID:** 40673

HERITAGE EVENT • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

29th Space Coast Open

MAY 3-5, 2024, FLORIDA

Event site: Hilton Melbourne at Rialto Place Address: 200 Rialto Place, Melbourne, FL 32901 **Overall prize fund:** \$20,000 **GP Points:** 120 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Space Coast Chess Foundation, Inc. **Email:** pdyson@modusoperandi.com **Phone:** 321-431-3060 **Website:** <https://www.spacecoastchessfoundation.org> **TLAID:** 41077

GRAND PRIX

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open

MAY 4-5, 2024, WYOMING

Event site: Ramada Plaza Conference Center Address: 1809 Sugarland Dr, Sheridan, WY 82801 **Overall prize fund:** \$8,500 **GP Points:** 100 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Brian Kuehl **Email:** admin@sheridan-chess.com **Phone:** 202-679-6779 **Website:** <http://www.SheridanChess.com> **TLAID:** 41258

Regional

ALABAMA

JANUARY 20, 2024

Evangel 2024 Open

Event site: Evangel Church Address: 3975 Vaughn Rd, Montgomery, AL 36106 **Overall prize fund:** \$1,350 **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Doug Strout **Email:** evangelchess@yahoo.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <http://www.facebook.com/evangelchessclub> **TLAID:** 40710

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (FL)

See National Events.

FEBRUARY 24, 2024

Tom Nard Memorial X

Event site: Evangel Church Address: 3975 Vaughn Rd, Montgomery, AL 36106 **Overall prize fund:** \$1,400 **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Doug Strout **Email:** evangelchess@yahoo.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <http://www.facebook.com/evangelchessclub> **TLAID:** 40711

MARCH 15-17, 2024

21st annual Southern Class Championships (FL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us

ARIZONA

MARCH 1-3, 2024

31st annual Western Class Championships (CA-S)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

ARKANSAS

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (FL)

See National Events.

CALIFORNIA

JANUARY 8, 2024-WEEKLY

Yorba Linda Open

Event site: Travis Ranch Activity Center Address: 5200 Via De La Escuela, Yorba Linda, CA 92887 **Overall prize fund:** \$200 **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Matthew Smith **Email:** sealfrog@gmail.com **Phone:** 7149313277 **Website:** n/a **TLAID:** 41339

JANUARY 13-15, 2024

Dreaming King Open (CA-S)

See Grand Prix.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

FEBRUARY 3, 2024

CalChess Age Level Championship

Event site: Sonesta San Jose (North Milpitas) Address: 777 Bellow Dr. (Off I-880'S 237 Exit), Milpitas, CA 95035 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** BayAreaChess **Email:** events@bayareachess.com **Phone:** 408.409.6596 (voicemail/text only) **Website:** <http://bayareachess.com/calchess/> **TLAID:** 40952

MARCH 1-3, 2024

31st annual Western Class Championships (CA-S)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 9-10, 2024

CalChess Super States Champions League: KG, K-5, & K-12

Event site: Sonesta San Jose (North Milpitas) Address: 777 Bellow Dr., Milpitas, CA 95035 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** BayAreaChess **Email:** events@bayareachess.com **Phone:** 408.409.6596 (voicemail/text only) **Website:** <http://bayareachess.com/calchess/> **TLAID:** 41031

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 23-24, 2024

CalChess Super States Champions League: K-1, K-6, & K-12

Event site: Sonesta San Jose (North Milpitas) Address: 777 Bellow Dr., Milpitas, CA 95035 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** BayAreaChess **Email:** events@bayareachess.com **Phone:** 408.409.6596 (voicemail/text only) **Website:** <http://bayareachess.com/calchess/> **TLAID:** 41034

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

APRIL 13-14, 2024

CalChess Super States Champions League: K-3 & K-8

Event site: Sonesta San Jose (North Milpitas) Address: 777 Bellow Dr., Milpitas, CA 95035 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** BayAreaChess **Email:** events@bayareachess.com **Phone:** 408.409.6596 (voicemail/text only) **Website:** <http://bayareachess.com/calchess/> **TLAID:** 41035

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

COLORADO

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

CONNECTICUT

OCTOBER 15, 2023-APRIL 21, 2024

9th Annual NY State Magnus High

School And Junior High Chess League

(Out-Of-State Players Welcome)! (NY)

See New York.

MARCH 27-31, 2024

16th Annual Open At Foxwoods (CT)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DELAWARE

JANUARY 6-7, 2024

Dewey Beach Open 2024 (DE)

See Grand Prix.

MARCH 9-10, 2024

Delaware State Open Championship (DE)

See Grand Prix.

FLORIDA

JANUARY 5-7, 2024

CFCC 2024 Winter Open & Scholastic (FL)

See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 13-15, 2024

Delray Beach Matrix Open (FL)

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (FL)

See National Events.

MARCH 15-17, 2024

21st annual Southern Class Championships (FL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us

GEORGIA

JANUARY 13-15, 2024

Delray Beach Matrix Open (FL)

See Florida.

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (FL)

See National Events.

MARCH 15-17, 2024

21st annual Southern Class Championships (FL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

IDAHO

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

ILLINOIS

FEBRUARY 3, 2024

2024 Greater Chicago K-12 Championship

Event site: McCormick Place West Building Address: 2301 S Dr Martin Luther King Jr Dr, Chicago, IL 60616 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Renaissance Knights **Email:** info@renaissanceknights.org **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <http://greaterchicago.rknights.org> **TLAID:** 40037

MARCH 22-24, 2024

28th Annual Mid-America Open (MO)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

INDIANA

FEBRUARY 16-18, 2024

2024 US Amateur Team North (IL)

See National Events.

MARCH 22-24, 2024

28th Annual Mid-America Open (MO)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

IOWA

FEBRUARY 16-18, 2024

2024 US Amateur Team North (IL)

See National Events.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

KANSAS

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

KENTUCKY

FEBRUARY 16-18, 2024

2024 US Amateur Team North (IL)

See National Events.

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (FL)

See National Events.

LOUISIANA

FEBRUARY 15-19, 2024

15th annual Southwest Class Championships (TX)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (FL)

See National Events.

MARCH 23-24, 2024

The New Orleans Open (LA)

See Grand Prix.

MARYLAND

MARYLAND CHESS TOURNAMENTS (NORTH PENN CHESS CLUB)

Maryland Chess runs 21+ annual K-12 tournaments every other Saturday from September through June & 12+ annual 1-day or multi-day open tournaments for adults & K-12 players on weekends. See www.MD-Chess.org for tournament announcements, registration for tournaments, updated wallcharts, live standings, signup for K-12 & open e-newsletters, lists of coaches & clubs, camp announcements, & news. K-12 MD players who compete in the Varsity section (for players rated 1600+) of 1 of 8+ annual MD-Sweet-16 Qualifiers can qualify for the \$48,000+ scholarship to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County awarded annually. UMBC is a perennial top-10 contender for the collegiate national chess championship.

JANUARY 6-7, 2024

Dewey Beach Open 2024 (DE)

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 10, 2024

MCA Baltimore County Quads for K-12

Event site: Jewish Community Center of Greater Baltimore Address: 6125 Montrose Rd, Rockville, MD 20852 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Magnus Chess Academy **Email:** divyanshu@chessacademy.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <https://chessacademy.com/tournaments> **TLAID:** 39042

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

8th annual George Washington Open (VA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 9-10, 2024

Delaware State Open Championship (DE)

See Grand Prix.

MASSACHUSETTS

HERITAGE EVENT

JANUARY 27, 2024

32nd Mid-Winter Classic

Event site: St. John's Lutheran Church Address: 60 Broad Street, Westfield, MA 01085 **Overall prize fund:** \$700 **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Western Massachusetts Chess Association **Email:** gbompastore@gmail.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <http://www.wmass-chess.us/> **TLAID:** 40306

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

MARCH 27-31, 2024

16th Annual Open At Foxwoods (CT)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

📍 MICHIGAN

FEBRUARY 16-18, 2024

2024 US Amateur Team North (IL)

See National Events.

📍 MINNESOTA

FEBRUARY 16-18, 2024

2024 US Amateur Team North (IL)

See National Events.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

📍 MISSOURI

FEBRUARY 16-18, 2024

2024 US Amateur Team North (IL)

See National Events.

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (FL)

See National Events.

MARCH 22-24, 2024

28th Annual Mid-America Open (MO)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

📍 MONTANA

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

📍 NEBRASKA

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

📍 NEVADA

MARCH 1-3, 2024

31st annual Western Class Championships (CA-S)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

📍 NEW JERSEY

OCTOBER 15, 2023-APRIL 21, 2024

9th Annual NY State Magnus High School And Junior High Chess League (Out-Of-State Players Welcome)! (NY)

See New York.

JANUARY 6-7, 2024

Dewey Beach Open 2024 (DE)

See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 14-DECEMBER 31, 2024

Hamilton Chess Club Quads

Dates: Jan. 13, Feb. 10, Mar. 9, Apr. 20, May 18, Jun. 8, Aug. 17, Sep. 21, Oct. 19, Nov. 16, Dec. 21. Event site: Switlik Park Pavilion Address: Fischer Place/Joe Dimaggio Drive, Hamilton, NJ 08610 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Edward Sytnik Email: edmondou@aol.com Phone: 609- 351- 2437 text Website: <http://hamiltonchessclub.com> TLA ID: 40988

JANUARY 27, 2024

ICA Open Championships

Event site: Community Church of Glen Rock Education Building Address: 354 Rock Road, Glen Rock, NJ 07452 Overall prize fund: See TLA GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: International Chess Academy Email: chessdirector@icanj.net Phone: 201-797-0330 Website: n/a TLA ID: 41116

FEBRUARY 11, 2024

Annual Super Bowl Pre-game Chess (NJ)

See Grand Prix.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

FEBRUARY 25, 2024

2024 NJ Elementary and Junior High School Championships

Event site: Brookdale Community College - Student Life Center Address: Arena Dr (Park in lot #7), Lincroft, NJ 07738 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: New Jersey State Chess Federation Email: tournaments.njscf@gmail.com Phone: n/a Website: <https://njscf.org> TLA ID: 40213

MARCH 9-10, 2024

Delaware State Open Championship (DE)

See Grand Prix.

MARCH 27-31, 2024

16th Annual Open At Foxwoods (CT)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

📍 NEW YORK

OCTOBER 15, 2023-APRIL 21, 2024

9th Annual NY State Magnus High School And Junior High Chess League (Out-Of-State Players Welcome)!

Event site: Columbia Grammar And Prep School Address: 36 West 93rd Street (between Central Park West and Columbus Ave.), New York, NY 10025 Overall prize fund: \$480/match + \$750 end-of-season prize GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Chess Center of New York Email: director@magnusleague.org Phone: director@magnusleague.org, chesscentr@gmail.com Website: <http://www.magnusleague.org> TLA ID: 40218

JANUARY 27, 2024

ICA Open Championships (NJ)

See New Jersey.

FEBRUARY 11, 2024

Dr David Ostfeld Memorial ICA Open Championship (NJ)

See Grand Prix.

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

MARCH 9-10, 2024

56th annual New York State Scholastic Championships

Event site: Saratoga City Center, Hilton and Courtyard Address: various locations, Saratoga Springs, NY Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us Phone: director@chess.us Website: <http://www.chessevents.us> TLA ID: 40245

MARCH 27-31, 2024

16th Annual Open At Foxwoods (CT)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

📍 NORTH CAROLINA

JANUARY 21, 2024

Morrisville Open (NC)

See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 28, 2024

NC Less Senior (NC)

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 4, 2024

Land of the Earth (NC)

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 11, 2024

Bearcat DKC USCF Grand Prix February 11 (NC)

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 16-19, 2024

ChessKid National Festival

Event site: Charlotte Convention Center Address: 501 S College St, Charlotte, NC 28202 Overall prize fund: See TLA GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Charlotte Chess Center & ChessKid Email: nationalfest@chesskid.com Phone: n/a Website: <https://www.chesskid.com/events/national-chess-festival> TLA ID: 40877

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (FL)

See National Events.

📍 NORTH DAKOTA

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

📍 OHIO

FEBRUARY 16-18, 2024

2024 US Amateur Team North (IL)

See National Events.

MARCH 22-24, 2024

28th Annual Mid-America Open (MO)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

📍 OKLAHOMA

FEBRUARY 15-19, 2024

15th annual Southwest Class Championships (TX)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

📍 OREGON

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

📍 PENNSYLVANIA

North Penn Chess Club

Main & Richardson - St. John's UCC, 500 West Main St., Lansdale, PA 19446. See www.northpennchessclub.org for schedules & info or 215-699-8418

OCTOBER 15, 2023-APRIL 21, 2024

9th Annual NY State Magnus High School And Junior High Chess League (Out-Of-State Players Welcome)! (NY)

See New York.

JANUARY 6-7, 2024

Dewey Beach Open 2024 (DE)

See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 20, 2024

Annual Lehigh Valley K-12 Scholastic Open & Open Quads Championships

Event site: College Hill Moravian Church Address: 72 W Laurel St, Bethlehem, PA 18018 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Bruce R Davis Sr Email: bdavis@lehighvalleychessclub.org Phone: 4848663045 Website: n/a TLA ID: 40519

JANUARY 20-21, 2024

2nd Steel City Open

Event site: Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh Address: 5738 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh,

PA 15217 Overall prize fund: \$3,600 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Pittsburgh Chess Club Email: info@pittsburghchessclub.org Phone: 412-421-1881 Website: <https://pittsburghchessclub.org> TLA ID: 40550

FEBRUARY 11, 2024

Annual Super Bowl Pre-game Chess (NJ)

See Grand Prix.

MARCH 9-10, 2024

Delaware State Open Championship (DE)

See Grand Prix.

📍 PUERTO RICO

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

8th annual George Washington Open (VA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (FL)

See National Events.

📍 SOUTH CAROLINA

FEBRUARY 17, 2024

Columbia Tunnelvision XVII (SC)

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (FL)

See National Events.

📍 SOUTH DAKOTA

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

📍 TENNESSEE

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (FL)

See National Events.

MARCH 22-24, 2024

28th Annual Mid-America Open (MO)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

📍 TEXAS

JANUARY 26-28, 2024

Austin Chess Club Winter Open 2024 (TX)

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 15-19, 2024

15th annual Southwest Class Championships (TX)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 22-24, 2024

28th Annual Mid-America Open (MO)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

📍 UTAH

SEPTEMBER 7, 2023-ONGOING WEEKLY

Chess Knight

Event site: Kiln (Lehi) Address: 2701 N Thanksgiving Way #100, Lehi, UT 84043 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Rob Harker Email: utahchessknight@gmail.com Phone: n/a Website: n/a TLA ID: 39726

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

VIRGINIA

JANUARY 6-7, 2024

Dewey Beach Open 2024 (DE)

See Grand Prix.

FEBRUARY 3, 2024

MCA Arlington Quads for K-12

Event site: Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington **Address:** 4444 Arlington Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22204 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Magnus Chess Academy **Email:** divyanshu@chessacademy.com **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <https://chessacademy.com/tournaments> **TLA ID:** 39037

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

8th annual George Washington Open (VA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (FL)
See National Events.

FEBRUARY 24, 2024

MCA Fairfax County Quads for K-12

Event site: Pozes Jewish Community Center of North-
ern Virginia **Address:** 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fair-
fax, VA 22031 **Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a
FIDE Rated: N **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency**
restriction: N **Organizer:** Magnus Chess Academy
Email: divyanshu@chessacademy.com **Phone:** n/a
Website: <https://chessacademy.com/tournaments>
TLA ID: 39032

WASHINGTON

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

WEST VIRGINIA

JUNIOR GRND PRX

JANUARY 13, 2024

23rd Mountaineer Open

Event site: WVU Mountainlair, Rhododendron/Monon-
gahela Room **Address:** 1550 University Ave., Morgan-

town, West Virginia 26505 **Overall prize fund:** See TLA
GP Points: n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:**
Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Harrison
County Chess Club **Email:** greerlaw@aol.com **Phone:**
13046419241 **Website:** n/a **TLA ID:** 40697

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (FL)

See National Events.

WISCONSIN

HERITAGE EVENT • JUNIOR GRND PRX

FEBRUARY 3-4, 2024

Michael A. Selig Memorial/57th NorthEastern Open

Event site: DoubleTree by Hilton **Address:** 150 S.
Nicolet Rd., Appleton, WI 54914 **Overall prize fund:**
\$1,200 **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap ac-**
cessible: N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:**
Mike Nietman **Email:** mike.nietman@charter.net
Phone: 16084678510 **Website:** <https://www.wisconsin.org/> **TLA ID:** 39081

FEBRUARY 16-18, 2024

2024 US Amateur Team North (IL)

See National Events.

HERITAGE EVENT

FEBRUARY 24, 2024

Waukesha Memorial (42nd Annual)

Event site: Country Inn & Suites **Address:** 1250
South Moorland RD (do not confuse with Moreland
RD which is 2 miles further west, Exit 301 AB from
I-94), Brookfield, WI 53005 **Overall prize fund:** n/a
GP Points: n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessi-**
ble: Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Wauke-
sha Chess Club **Email:** jnickell@wi.rr.com **Phone:**
262.544.6266 **Website:** [https://www.waukeshachess-](https://www.waukeshachess-club.com)
[club.com](https://www.waukeshachess-club.com) **TLA ID:** 40895

WYOMING

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

(MAP)

MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION PROGRAM

US Chess gratefully acknowledges the support of our our Affiliates and Members and offers congratulations to these 2022 MAP Winners.

PCT GAIN STANDINGS

State	Dec20	Dec21	PCT
SD	81	172	112.35
WY	68	134	97.06
KS	402	776	93.03
DC	260	497	91.15
RI	215	409	90.23
SC	556	1,043	87.59
HI	162	296	82.72
ID	239	422	76.57
CO	952	1,607	68.80
AZ	1,293	2,162	67.21

Name	State	Count	Name	State	Count	Name	State	Count
Overall Affiliate Standings			State Chapter Affiliate Standings			Scholastic and Youth Membership Standings		
CONTINENTAL CHESS ASSOCIATION	NY	1,714	MICHIGAN CHESS ASSOCIATION	MI	222	CONTINENTAL CHESS ASSOCIATION	NY	715
PAPERCLIP PAIRINGS	TX	431	WASHINGTON CHESS FEDERATION	WA	221	PAPERCLIP PAIRINGS	TX	430
BAY AREA CHESS	CA	303	MARYLAND CHESS ASSOCIATION	MD	65	BAY AREA CHESS	CA	237
SAN DIEGO CHESS CLUB	CA	294	MASSACHUSETTS CHESS ASSOC.	MA	58	BOCA RATON CHESS CLUB	FL	221
BOCA RATON CHESS CLUB	FL	263	MINNESOTA STATE CHESS ASSOC.	MN	57	WASHINGTON CHESS FEDERATION	WA	179
CHESS CLUB & SCHOLASTIC CENTER	MO	224	UTAH CHESS ASSOCIATION	UT	56	BERKELEY CHESS SCHOOL	CA	166
MICHIGAN CHESS ASSOCIATION	MI	222	TENNESSEE CHESS ASSOCIATION	TN	49	MICHIGAN CHESS ASSOCIATION	MI	160
WASHINGTON CHESS FEDERATION	WA	221	NORTH DAKOTA CHESS ASSOC.	ND	47	NEW ENGLAND CHESS SCHOOL	MA	143
BERKELEY CHESS SCHOOL	CA	191	NEW JERSEY STATE CHESS FED.	NJ	45	ROCKS & ROOKS CHESS CLUB	TX	117
SOUTH MIAMI CHESS CLUB	FL	172	MAINE CHESS ASSOCIATION	ME	42	CINCINNATI SCHOLASTIC CHESS	OH	117
Small State Affiliate Standings			Adult Membership Standings			Member Standings		
NORTH DAKOTA CHESS ASSOC.	ND	47	CONTINENTAL CHESS ASSOCIATION	NY	990	WILLIAM GOICHBERG	NY	3
MAINE CHESS ASSOCIATION	ME	42	SAN DIEGO CHESS CLUB	CA	202	STEVEN JOSEFOWICZ	NY	3
HARRISON COUNTY CHESS CLUB	WV	28	CHESS CLUB & SCHOLASTIC CENTER	MO	186	DAMIAN NASH	HI	2
NEW MEXICO CHESS ORGANIZATION	NM	24	ROCHESTER CHESS CENTER	NY	90	BENNY N. ORMSON	OK	2
LIKENS CHESS	SD	23	CHESSPALACE	CA	83			
TOURNAMENT IN A NOX	NH	21	DOWNRIVER CHESS CLUB	LA	70			
WVSCA	WV	21	MARSHALL CHESS CLUB	NY	69			
NEW HAMPSHIRE CHESS ASSOC.	NH	18	BAY AREA CHESS	CA	64			
KNIGHTS CHESS CLUB	NH	16	MICHIGAN CHESS ASSOCIATION	MI	62			
OCEAN STATE CHESS ASSOCIATION	RI	15	SOUTH MIAMI CHESS CLUB	FL	59			



Gold & Silver Affiliates



US CHESS would like to recognize and thank
all of our Affiliates for their commitment and hard work.

US CHESS GOLD AFFILIATES

Bay Area Chess

San Jose, CA
408-409-6596
www.bayareachess.com

Berkeley Chess School

Berkeley, CA
510-843-0150
www.berkeleychessschool.org

Capital Area Chess

Centreville VA
703-627-5314
www.capitalareachess.com

Charlotte Chess Center

Charlotte, NC
980-265-1156
<https://www.charlottechesscenter.org/>

Continental Chess Association

Pelham, NY
201-347-2269
www.chesstour.com

Marshall Chess Club

New York, NY
212-477-3716
www.marshallchessclub.org

Ocean State Chess Association

Riverside, RI
401-212-1335
www.oceanstatechess.com

PaperClip Pairings

Brownsville, TX
956-621-0377
rrferrari@bisd.us

Sacred Heart University Chess Club

Fairfield, CT
203-365-4827
www.sacredheartclub-sports.com/sports/Chess

Saint Louis Chess Club

St. Louis, MO
314-361-CHESS (2437)
www.saintlouischessclub.org

San Diego Chess Club

San Diego, CA
619-752-4377
www.sandiegochessclub.org

Washington Chess Federation

Redmond, WA
206-769-3757
www.wachess.com

US CHESS SILVER AFFILIATES

Boca Raton Chess Club (FL)

www.bocachess.com

CDA Collin County Chess Club (TX)

www.coramdeoacademy.org/chess

ChessPalace (CA)

www.chesspalace.com

Downriver Chess Club (LA)

www.downriverchess.com

Evangel Chess Club (AL)

www.evangelchurch.me

Little House of Chess, Inc. (NY)

littlehouseofchess.org

Michigan Chess Association (MI)

www.michess.org

Rochester Chess Center (NY)

www.chessset.com

For all information on becoming a Gold or Silver Affiliate, please visit <https://new.uschess.org/gold-and-silver-affiliates>.



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Solutions

PAGE 15 CHESS TO ENJOY

PROBLEM 1. 118. Bd3! forces mate, 118. ... Bd4 119. Re6+ Kh8 and now either 120. Rh6 mate or 120. Re8 mate. **PROBLEM 2.** 92. ... f3! is fastest, e.g. 93. Rxf3+ Ke2 or 93. Kh2 f2 94. Ra2 Rb1 and ... Kf1-e1. **PROBLEM 3.** 122. ... Qc6+! followed by 123. ... Kh1 allows Black to queen. But 122. ... Kh1 123. Qd5! prolongs the game. **PROBLEM 4.** 87. ... Rxe4! 88. Rxe4+ Kf3 and ... g3-g2. Or 88. dxe4 d3 and now 89. Re1 d2 90. Rd1 g2 or 89. Rb2 Kxe4 followed by ... Ke4-f3 and ... g3-g2. **PROBLEM 5.** 109. Ra7! Rg1 110. Kc6 Rc1+ 111. Bc5 is a mating net, e.g. 111. ... Kb8 112. Rh7. Better was 111. ... Rb1 112. Ba3! Kb8 113. Re7 or 112. ... Rb3 113. Bd6 Rc3+ 114. Bc5. **PROBLEM 6.** 99. Kf6! Nh7+ 100. Kg6 (100. Ke7 also works) 100. ... Nf8+ 101. Rxf8+! Kxf8 102. h7 and White wins.

PAGE 31 MAKE YOUR MOVE

TACTIC 1. 39. Rfg3! f5 Black decided to avoid 39. ... g6 40. Rh4 Qf5 41. Qxh6 or 39. ... g5 40. Rg5+ hxg5 41. Rg5+ Qxg5 42. Qxg5+ Kh7 43. bxa5 when White has a winning position. **40. Rh4!** This is much stronger than the game continuation, which went **40. Rg6 Kh7?** (40. ... Rxc3 was a better try) **41. Qe5 Rcc7 42. Rxe6 axb4 43. cxb4 Rb7 44. Re8 Rxb4 45. Rc3 Qg6 46. Rcc8 Rb1+ 47. Kh2** and White was winning in Tang – Swiercz, ch-USA 2023. **40. ... Qd1+ 41. Kh2 Kf8** Or 41. ... h5 42. Qh6!. **42. Rxh6 gxh6 43. Qxh6+** and Black will not survive. **TACTIC 2.** 24. Rxh5! In the game, White instead continued **24. Nce4 Qf5??** (Black should probably led the attackers away from the kingside with 24. ... c3! 25. Rxc3 Qb8 with sufficient counterplay) **25. Ng3 Qd3 26. Nxb5+ gxh5 27. Rxd3 cxd3 28. Ne6+ fxe6 29. Qg5+** and Black resigned before she would get mated in Paikidze – Cervantes Landeiro, ch-USA (women) 2023. **24. ... gxh5 25. Ne6+** Another clearance sacrifice. **25. ... Kh7 26. Rh1** and Black will not survive. **TACTIC 3.** 28. Kg2! Rather than going for the immediate strike with 28. Rxf7+ Qxf7 29. Rh7+ Nxh7 30. Nxf7 that allows Black survival chances after 30. ... Re6!. After the text move, Black is utterly defenseless. **28. ... Rc7** Or 28. ... Rh8 29. Rxf7+ Qxf7 30. Qxg5 and White is winning easily. Also, 28. ... Rf8 29. Rh7+ ends the fun for Black. **29. Rxf7+ Qxf7 30. Rxg6+ Qxg6 31. Nxg6** White is winning and soon took home the full point. **31. ... Nf7 32. Qg3 Rd7 33. Nh4 Nd6 34. Qf4 Rf8?** 34. ... Re6 was a better defense, but White is still winning. **35. Qe5+ Kf7 36. g5 Rdd8 37. g6+ Kg8 38. Qe7 Nf7 39. Nf5 Rb8 40. gxf7+** and Black resigned in Krush – Pourkashiyani, ch-USA (women) 2023. **TACTIC 4.** 26. ... d3! This opens up many threats, the immediate ones being to the bishop on e2 along with ... g4-g3, as the f2-pawn is now pinned. Finally, ... Rd8-d4 is also in the air. **27. Rxc5** Or 27. Bxd3 Bb6 and White has no good way of meeting ... g4-g3. **27. ... Rd4 28. Qxb7+** White tries to get material off the board, but it is too little, too late. **28. ... Qxb7 29. axb7 dxe2** There is no helping White's issues on the back rank. **30. Rcc1 Rgd8 31. Re1 Rd1 32. f3 Rxa1 33. Rxa1 Rd1+** and White resigned in Eswaran – Abrahamyan, ch-USA (women)

2023. **TACTIC 5.** 38. Rxe4! In the game, White missed her opportunity and played **38. Qa7? Rc6 39. Qb8+ Rg8 40. Qe5 Qc7 41. Qd4 Rd8 42. Nh5 Qf7** (Pourkashiyani – Yip, ch-USA [women] 2023), and here the best continuation would have been 43. Nf4 and White would have had a large advantage. **38. ... Qd7** Nothing works for Black, e.g., 38. ... Rxe4 39. Qxf6+, or 38. ... dxe4 39. Bxe6 and Black's position falls apart. **39. Rh4+ Kg8 40. Qf4 Rg6 41. Bc2** and White is winning. **TACTIC 6.** 26. ... Kd7!! Black creates coordination between his queen and rook, and thus, all of Black's pieces are participating in the attack. This is much stronger than the game continuation which went **26. ... exf3+ 27. Kf2 Rxh1 28. Rxh1 Kf7 29. Rh4 Qd8 30. Qc5 Bd5** and here, in Tokhirjonova – Abrahamyan, ch-USA (women) 2023, chances are about even according to the engines, but in real life, Black's king is quite vulnerable. **27. Qc5** The alternatives also have issues, for instance, 27. Kf2 Rf8 28. Ra3 and now Black can afford to exchange the queens to seal the deal: 28. ... Qd6 29. Qxd6+ Kxd6 30. Rh7 b4 31. Re3 Bd5 32. Rxc7 c3 33. bxc3 b3 and Black is winning. Or 27. Rxh8 exf3+ 28. Kf2 Qxh8 and Black is winning. **27. ... Qf8 28. Rxh8** Or 28. Qxf8 Rxf8 and Black wins. **28. ... exf3+ 29. Kg1 f2+ 30. Kf1 Qxh8** and Black is clearly better. **TACTIC 7.** 20. ... Kd7! This is the only way for Black's king to survive the attack. In the game, Black went wrong and lost after 20. ... Be6?? **21. Qg7+ Kd6 22. Be5+ Kc5 23. Bd4+ Kd6 24. Be5+ Kc5 25. Bc7 Bf6 26. Rxf6 Rg8 27. Ne4+ Kb5 28. a4+ Kb4 29. Qh6** and Black resigned in Robson – Xiong, ch-USA 2023. **21. Rf7+** Or 21. Qg7+ Kd6 and somehow the king is safe. **21. ... Re7 22. Qg4+ Kd6 23. Qf4+** and White has no more than a perpetual check. **TACTIC 8.** 24. ... Kf7! Clearing the path to h-file for Black's remaining piece, the rook on a8. In the game Black eventually won after **24. ... Ng5 25. Ne4 Nh7 26. a3 Rg6 27. Ra2 Kh8 28. Kg1** when White, if anyone, is better in this position. (Lee – Yip, ch-USA [women] 2023). **25. Ne4 Rh8 26. h3 Nf6 27. Qd2 Nxe4 28. fxe4 Rhg8** and Black is much better. **TACTIC 9.** 51. Rg3+!! The only move to an advantage for White. In the game, White went wrong multiple times and even ended up losing, but the king on the back rank facing two rooks on the second rank is scary situation. **51. Rb3 e4 52. Rd1 e3 53. Re1 Rad2 54. c6 e2 55. Kc1 Rd6 56. b5??** (this loses, but there were several ways to save the draw, for instance, 56. Rb2 Rxc6+ 57. Kd2 Rxd2 58. Rxe2 and the chances are equal.) **56. ... Rf1 57. Rg3+ Kf6 58. Rf3+** (or 58. Rg1 Rd1+) **58. ... Rxf3 59. Rxe2 Rc3+ 60. Kb1 Rb3+** and White resigned in Yip – Yan, ch-USA (women) 2023. **51. ... Kh7** Or 51. ... Kf8 52. Rb3 Ke7 53. b5 e4 54. Rd1 and White is winning. **52. Rb3 e4 53. Rf6** With the king on g7, this move wasn't available for White. **53. ... e3** Or 53. ... Rxh2 54. Rf1 e3 55. c6 and White is winning. **54. Rxf2 exf2 55. Rf3 Re2 56. c6 Re1+ 57. Kc2 f1=Q 58. Rxf1 Rxf1 59. c7** and the c-pawn cannot be stopped.

PAGE 47 ABCS OF CHESS

PROBLEM 1. Mating net: It's mate in one: **1. Rxc6 mate. PROBLEM 2. Mating net:** White mates in one move with **1. Rxb8 mate. PROBLEM 3. Mating net:**

White mates in two: **1. Rb8+ Kxb8 2. Rb1 mate. PROBLEM 4. Mating net:** It's mate on the move: **1. Rxh7 mate. PROBLEM 5. Mating net:** Black loses in two: **1. Nc6+ Kb6 2. Qa5 mate. PROBLEM 6. Mating net:** White wins in two moves: **1. Be5+ Kg8 2. Rh8 mate.**

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MY BEST MOVE

FM WESLEY WANG STUDENT AND FILMMAKER



I STARTED PLAYING COMPETITIVE chess at the age of five. Since then I have accumulated 11 national championship titles, made the

All-American chess team six years in a row, and obtained the FM title in 2018. I'm now a sophomore at Harvard University, and plan to pursue a career in filmmaking. You can check out my latest film "nothing, except everything," on YouTube, where it has now garnered over 2.4 million views and counting.

My transition from chessplayer to filmmaker has taken place over many years, and it was perhaps more evident to those around me than it was to myself. No less than GM Garry Kasparov sensed it when I attended his "Global Young Stars" program in St. Louis! While it's true that most of my time in front of the computer is now spent with Adobe Premiere Pro instead of ChessBase, I have not lost my love for the game; nor, I think, will I ever.

Below is a game from 2017 against Akira Nakada. We're now close friends at Harvard, but in when we played this game six years ago, we were battling for first place in the last round of Amateur Team East. My team won the event in 2016, and we were aiming to be only the second team in 46 years to repeat.

This was a big game at the biggest stage, and I knew I had to play to the limits of my abilities. And sure enough, I won perhaps my best game yet:

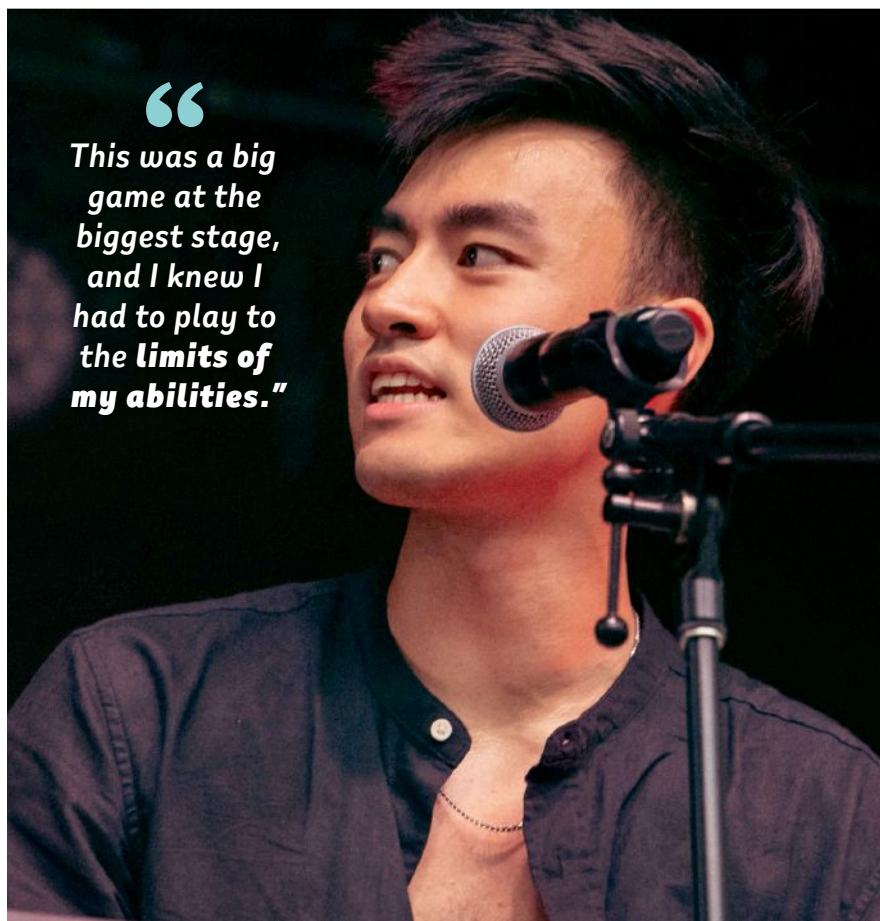
FRENCH DEFENSE, TARRASCH VARIATION (C07)

Wesley Wang (2251)

Akira Nakada (2252)

U.S. Amateur Team East (6), 02.20.2017

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nd2 c5 4. exd5 Qxd5
5. Ngf3 cxd4 6. Bc4 Qd6 7. 0-0 Nf6 8. Nb3
Nc6 9. Nbx d4 Nxd4 10. Nxd4 a6 11. Bb3
Qc7 12. Qf3 Bd6 13. h3 0-0 14. Bg5 Nd7
15. c3 h6 16. Be3 b6 17. Rad1 Bb7 18. Qe2



Nf6 19. a4 Rfd8 20. Kh1 Nd5 21. Qg4 Nxe3
22. fxe3 Bc8 23. Rf2 Ra7 24. Rdf1 Qc5 25.
Qe4 Bb7 26. Qh4 Rf8?



This natural-looking move actually allows me to find a beautiful combination. Under the pressure-filled circumstances, with a prestigious championship and history on the line, I uncorked **MY BEST MOVE**.

27. Rxf7!!

This is not my best move just for its initial flash of brilliance, but I also like it because of the required foresight in how none of

Black's possible defensive resources work.

27. ... Rxf7 28. Qd8+ Kh7 29. Bc2+!

An important insertion. 29. Rxf7? would lose to 29. ... Bxg2+ 30. Kxg2 Rxf7.

29. ... Be4! 30. Bxe4+ g6 31. Bxg6+!!

The second fireworks.

31. ... Kxg6 32. Qg8+ Rg7 33. Rf6+!!

The final blow, and possibly the most satisfying move I've ever played. The key here is to lure the king away from its escape square on h7.

33. ... Kh5

Satisfying is 33. ... Kxf6 34. Qxe6+ Kg5 35. Nf3+ Kh5 36. g4+, leading to mate.

34. Qxe6 Kh4 35. Qe4+ Kg5 36. h4+ Kh5
37. Rf5+ Qxf5 38. Qxf5+ Kxh4 39. Nf3+
Kg3 40. Kg1!

The final finesse, trapping the king and preparing 41. Qh3 mate.

40. ... Rg4 41. Qh5, Black resigned. ♠

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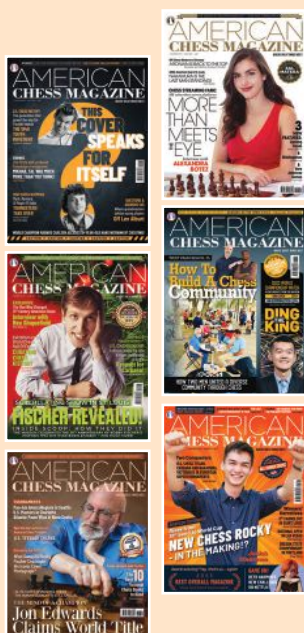
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