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ON THE COVER

It was a great 2023 for GM Fabiano Caruana. A win at the Superbet Chess Classic, a semi-final appearance at the World Cup, a U.S. Championship title, and now dual victories at the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz and the Sinquefeld Cup. Would anyone bet against him winning the Candidates in 2024?

PHOTO COURTESY SLCC / OOTES





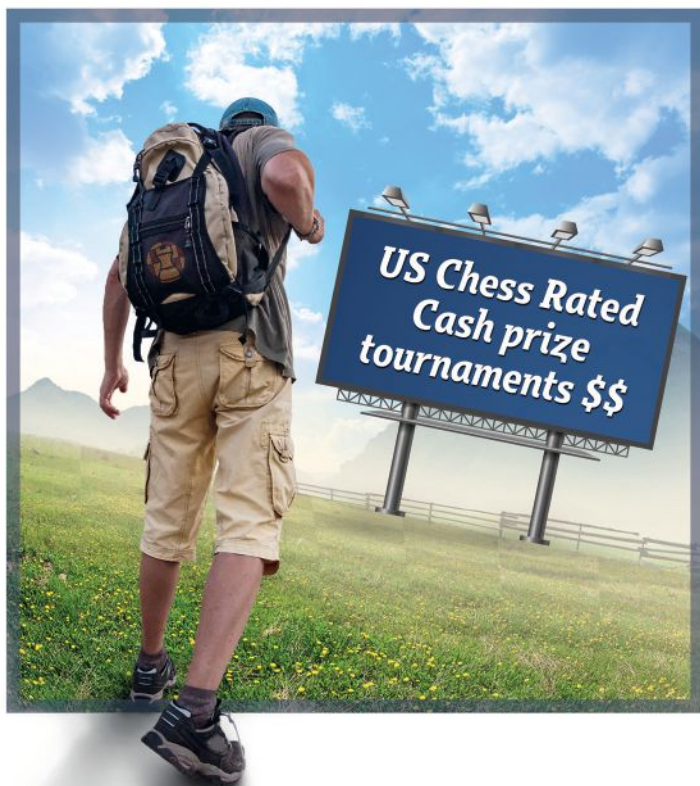
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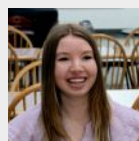
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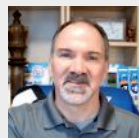
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COUNTERPLAY



Long Think...

Some 40 years ago, GM John Nunn offered a bit of sensational advice: do not think longer than 30 minutes per move. Of course, this advice was ignored, even by the club players to whom it was primarily addressed.

Fast forward to 2024. GM Gregory Kaidanov writes in the January issue: "... 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."

Yes, a player can think for 40 minutes and blunder. One can also, in a complex position, guess the best move in seconds. But those occurrences are exceptions rather than rules, as extensive chess practice confirms.

In the 1982 Olympiad I played against GM Garry Kasparov. After the predictable first moves **1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. Be2 0-0 6. Bg5**, Garry quickly played **6. ... Nbd7**. And I played the prepared novelty, **7. Qc1**, rather than commonly played here **7. Qd2**. White's idea: after **7. ... e5 8. d5 Nc5** to play **9. b4**, which is not good with the queen on d2 because of **9. ... Ncxe4**.

Now Garry, an impulsive young man — but well trained by the great Botvinnik — thought for an hour and eventually continued **7... c5 8. d5 b5**, achieving a decent Benko Gambit-type position. Here, White would rather have his queen on d2, not c1.

Garry violated the "Nunn Rule" twice more in our game. Alas, he was neither tired, nor confused, nor bored. And he most definitely didn't make mistakes. Incidentally, Garry's long deliberations didn't alarm his teammates, who viewed his clock handling as perfectly normal.

Were Kasparov, Geller, Reshevsky, Korchnoi, Bronstein, Browne — all of whom would routinely spend over an hour on a single move — all so wrong by not recognizing the truth which seemed so obvious to Nunn, and now Kaidanov?

Let me conclude with the game Wei Yu – Warmerdam, played [in round 11] in Wijk aan Zee — naturally under today's accelerated time controls: **1. e4 e5 2. Bc4 Nf6 3. d3 Bc5 4. Nc3 c6** (all still very quickly) **5. f4 d5** (after 14 minutes thought; the known theory for Black had ended) **6. exd5 Ng4 7. Nf3**. This was played after 50 minutes, and hardly an error. After "just" 26 minutes of thought — still, per Kaidanov, too long — Black castled in a complex, balanced position.

My advice to players rated above 1600: don't hesitate to spend 30 (or more!) minutes contemplating your next move. This will greatly enhance both your performance and your future growth. Good luck!

GM Lev Albur
Via email

John Hartmann responds:

Readers? What do you think about this debate, especially in a time of rapid time controls?

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

Chess in the Small City

Growing the game in North Dakota

BY **KAMRYN HELLMAN**

Editor's note: The North Dakota Chess Association (NDCA) was the Small State winner of the 2022 Membership Appreciation Program. NDCA official Jason Schoenack says the organization, which has been supporting and promoting chess in cities across North Dakota since 1972, is working to increase interest and involvement in the state. "During this past year, the board, together with other generous volunteers, has been working on social media projects and on becoming a 501(c)(3) organization," Schoenack says.

We didn't know much about the NDCA, or chess in North Dakota, so we reached out to Kamryn Hellman, a streamer and tournament player from the state capital of Bismarck, to fill us in.

structional YouTube videos and exhaled blunder-ridden online games. But even as I saw rapid improvement in my play, I felt like something was missing. After a few months of staring at the green squares and cartoonish two-dimensional pieces on my computer screen, I decided to see if there were any clubs in my area. Chess without community can be a lonely game.

I found my community in the North Dakota chess scene. My local club, now held at a coffee shop, has about 10 regulars who show up for casual games on Sunday afternoons, and these days, we've been happily

welcoming new players almost every week.

Our club games are casual. We pair up with whoever's available when we arrive, usually play two or three games with the same opponent, and then we rotate. Blitz, rapid, clockless — time controls are decided when we sit down. We chat between games. Losses don't end in hurt feelings, but with a sigh, smile, shake of the head, and "Good game. Go again?"

That first over-the-board opponent who invited me to play back in early 2022 was three-time North Dakota state champion and NDCA Vice President, Todd Wolf, and he quickly got me involved in the local chess scene. Within a month, I started volunteering for scholastic events, dabbled in some beginner coaching, and played in my first rated tournament.

Todd has been organizing monthly tournaments ever since. The point is to make chess more accessible, especially to newer players. These are rapid tournaments that finish in a single afternoon, rather than classical ones that take up an entire weekend or more. Classical tournaments are rarer around here, although no less exciting. The North Dakota State Championship, for example, feels much more significant in the big picture, because it's the largest event of the year and often the sole tournament in our state with a true classical time control. For some North Dakota players, it's the only



IT'S A FREEZING SUNDAY afternoon, and a small group of seasoned players are sitting hunched over chess boards in

a quiet vintage mall. Classic rock echoes off the tile, punctuated by the squeaking sneakers of mall walkers. I stroll over to watch the chess games from a distance. I feel like a complete outsider and I'm not even sure if I'm good enough to join them, but soon one of the guys motions to the empty seat in front of him. "Want to play?"

I'd learned how to play chess completely from scratch less than a year earlier. I "got the bug," as they say, after watching "The Queen's Gambit," and with no friends who shared my newfound obsession with a centuries-old board game, I inhaled in-



Kamryn Hellman

PHOTO: COURTESY SUBJECT

tournament they attend.

Because the chess community is so small in North Dakota, I play the same people over and over again in my local club tournaments and others across the state. We get to know each other's openings. We share books and suggest online resources. We're supportive, but also competitive, and we hold each other accountable for improvement. In one recent tournament, my teenage opponent offered a draw, I agreed and shook hands, and then he pointed out how I could have won the pawn endgame three moves earlier. Lesson learned!

The North Dakota community lives up to our statewide "North Dakota Nice" reputation. From the beginning, I've felt welcomed at every event I attend. As one of only a handful of women who compete in my state — often the only woman in the room — I still feel like I belong, because everyone is so kind and supportive. Some of my fondest memories are post-mortems with my opponents, discussing what we were thinking during the game and which candidate moves we'd considered at key moments. I may have gotten my start in online chess, but that face-to-face connection simply isn't replicable with a username on a screen.

The chess isn't all serious around here. Blitz-at-the-bar events, Saturday afternoon mall meetups, and chess pizza parties have started cropping up around the state. These events are fantastic because they make chess more visible in our local communities. Any photographer will tell you that a chess board set up somewhere it doesn't belong is eye-catching. That dissonance is what makes off-beat events so exciting.

Aside from my own tournaments, I've had the privilege of volunteering at several scholastic events. At our 2023 State Scholastic Tournament, there were 113 participants in grades K-12. Smaller events take place in schools and communities during the year. The energy is palpable in these cafeterias, school gyms, and church basements filled with rows of chess boards for a day. Chess teaches kids so many things — focus, emotional regulation, logical reasoning, fair play, independence — and it's inspiring to see them so excited about the game.

One of our goals for the future of North Dakota chess is to continue to grow scholastic participation. Chess is both a social and competitive activity at the scholastic level, and the kids who enjoy playing have great potential to excel. Increased participation is the first step in helping talented kids hone their skills to have strong results at the national level. Many chess kids are in-

volved in multiple other extracurricular activities too, so it's always a matter of finding the time.

Todd is certainly doing his part, traveling to schools around North Dakota to teach chess in classrooms and host community tournaments. "I'm starting to see more kids that are interested in rated chess tournaments," he says. He largely attributes this increase in serious players to online content creators. "They're entertaining. They have that energy that both kids and adults like to watch."

I've started creating chess videos of my own, and as my YouTube channel has grown, I'm constantly amazed that this game has allowed me to connect with folks from all around the world. Three years ago, when I was first learning how the knight moves, I never could have imagined how chess would introduce me to so many new people — including the



friendly chess community right here in my home state. ♠

Learn more about the North Dakota Chess Association at ndchess.com.



2024 Annual Samford Fellowships Announced

THE FRANK P. SAMFORD JR. AND FRANK Samford III Chess Fellowships are pleased to announce the 38th consecutive annual awards. The Fellowships were created by the late Frank P. Samford Jr. of Birmingham, Alabama to advance the game he loved by identifying and assisting the most promising young chess masters in the United States.

Since its inception in 1987 the Samford, under the leadership of Frank Samford III, has been successful in promoting the chess careers of close to three dozen young Americans, many of whom have gone on to become grandmasters, members of the U.S.

Olympiad Chess Team and United States Chess Champions. Four of the five members of the 2018 silver-medal winning U.S. Olympiad team were Samford Fellows.

The Fellowships are open to American chess players who are under the age of 25 at the start of the Fellowships, June 1, 2024, and have been permanent residents of the U.S. for at least one year prior to that date. Leadership of the Fellowship program is provided by Mr. Samford Jr.'s grandson, Paul Samford of Atlanta, Georgia, with the able help of Al Lawrence of the U.S. Chess Trust.

The 2024 Samford Chess Fellows will receive expense money for training by lead-

ing chess coaches, chess books, computer equipment and other study materials as well as opportunities to travel and compete in tournaments and matches at the highest levels. The yearly value of the Fellowships (including training, study materials and tournament travel) is \$70,000. The Fellowships are given for a one-year term. Individuals may apply more than one year and are eligible for maximum funding up to, but not exceeding, \$82,000.

The 2024 Samford Fellows will be selected by the Samford Chess Fellowship Committee ("Committee"), consisting of Paul Samford, GM Yuri Shulman, and IM John Donaldson. Each applicant, who can be of any gender, must be able to demonstrate talent, achievement and commitment to chess. They must be willing to make the effort required to become a leading grandmaster and possible challenger for the world chess championship. For details and an application write to:

John Donaldson, Secretary
Samford Chess Fellowship
1623 ½ Martin Luther King Junior Way
Berkeley, CA 94709
Or: imwjd@aol.com

Completed applications for the 2024 Fellowship must be received no later than **May 15, 2024**. The Committee expects to announce the winner by June 1st, 2024. All decisions by the Committee will be final.

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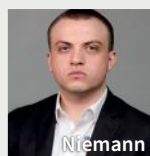
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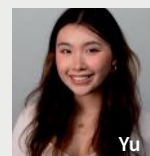
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The database is updated on Mondays, which is why you may not see your name included if you complete the training midweek. If your name is not showing and you believe it should be, please contact Ranae Bartlett at ranae.bartlett@uschess.org.

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BARTLETT NAMED INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

With Carol Meyer's departure to take a position as Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director at another organization, the US Chess Executive Board has named Ranae

Bartlett as the Interim Executive Director effective February 10.

Bartlett will continue in her duties as Director of Operations while also serving as Interim Executive Director. The Executive Board is currently conducting a national search for the Executive Director position, with a desired start date by May 31. 



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DONNA DODSON MATCH OF THE MATRIARCHS AND OTHER AMAZONOMACHIES



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Photo by Brian Wilson



Donna Dodson: Match of the Matriarchs and other Amazonomachies is the first solo exhibition by a woman artist hosted by the World Chess Hall of Fame. Centering on women's stories, women's lives, and their place in the history of chess, the show includes Dodson's monumental, life-sized chess set **Match of the Matriarchs**—32-large scale wooden sculptures representing all-female representations of cephalopods battling cetaceans.

ON VIEW
February 15 –
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Confidence Game

Can a bad opening move be good?

BY GM ANDY SOLTIS

C

HESS IS A GAME OF MANY paradoxes. Here is one more. Strong players have strong self-confidence. Once they've

chosen a move they play it without second-guessing. But:

Strong players are ruthlessly objective. They try to play the absolutely best moves, not the moves they would enjoy playing. So, how is it that Magnus Carlsen can confidently play 1. f3?

Or the other crazy moves he has opened with? This includes 1. h3, 1. a4 and 1. Nh3 as White. And 1. ... h6 as Black.

Watching these games you begin to wonder whether everyone else in the world is wrong about what a bad opening move looks like.

IRREGULAR OPENING (A00)

GM Magnus Carlsen

GM Jan Krysztof Duda

Oslo Esports Cup, 04.22.2022

1. f3? e5 2. Nc3

That "everyone" includes computers. Engines already claim a significant edge for Black.

2. ... Nf6 3. e4 Bc5 4. Na4 Be7



Yet Black's edge quickly vanished.

5. d4 exd4 6. e5 Nd5 7. Qxd4 Nb4 8. Qf2 d6 9. a3 N4c6 10. exd6 Qxd6 11. Ne2 0-0

12. Bf4 Qg6 13. 0-0-0 ...

After Carlsen drew in 62 moves, engines spoke up with their usual "Yes, but" comments. Black would have had the edge he deserved if he had played 6. ... Ng8, instead of 6. ... Nd5, and 7. ... Nb6, instead of 7. ... Nb4, they said.

Nevertheless, Carlsen repeatedly gets away with shocking his opponent on the first move. Against other elite grandmasters Magnus has begun 1. Nc3 and 1. a3. And he's been successful: He defeated GM Teimour Radjabov with 1. a4 and GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave with 1. c3. He nearly beat Chinese GM Wei Yi with 1. h4.

Okay, we should give some credit to the effect a surprise opening has on an opponent. When Ian Nepomniachtchi played 1. f4 against Sergey Karjakin in the 2014 Russian Championship, 64 magazine called it "virtually the winning move!"

Why? Because Karjakin had to start thinking at move one. "Modern grandmasters are not prepared psychologically for this," 64 said. Nepo won smoothly.

But 1. f4 is merely rare while 1. f3? is dubious, if not awful. This raises a question for all serious players:

Are you willing to play an opening move you suspect is bad?

This is not just about the first move of the game. It could be at some later point when there is a very suspicious alternative to the "book" move.

Players with self-assurance may answer that question with a confident "Yes." Bent Larsen was one of them. In a book titled *How to Open a Chess Game*, he admitted he occasionally played a move that "I know how to refute."

Larsen was half-joking when he said playing a bad move can be good strategy. "If you make good moves all the time, the opponent most likely will also play good moves, too." But success comes from "a mix

of good and bad moves that put pressure on the opponent," he said.

Today anyone can ask a computer, after a game, how to refute the strange 10th move his opponent stumped him with. But we can't do it during a game.

So suppose you discover a dubious-looking move in the Sicilian Defense or Queen's Gambit. Your computer says there is only one good reply. The refutation is very hard — for a human — to find. Do you have Larsen-like confidence to play it?

There have been great players who needed to feel their opening moves were the best, beyond any doubt. And when Bobby Fischer did have doubts about his repertoire he rewrote king's pawn theory.

Fischer built his career around the Ruy Lopez, then the most popular 1. e4 e5 opening. But he wrote in *American Chess Quarterly*: "I have a line (and this is no joke) that absolutely equalizes against the Ruy Lopez."

His conviction landed him in a dilemma: He felt morally compelled to tell the world what he found for Black. But once he did, the Lopez would become useless to him when he was White.

As he wrestled with this, Bobby tried to prove White still had advantage after 1. e4 e5. He crushed Reuben Fine with the Evans Gambit in 17 moves in a casual game, for example.

When he was ready, Fischer made the big reveal about his anti-Lopez discovery in the next U.S. Championship, the one made famous by his perfect 11-0 score.

RUY LOPEZ, TAIMANOV VARIATION (C70)

William Addison

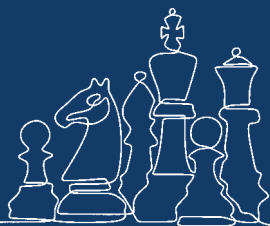
GM Bobby Fischer

U.S. Championship, New York, 12.26.1963

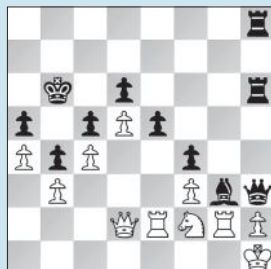
1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 b5 5. Bb3 Na5?!

QUIZ FOR MARCH

► “ALWAYS LOOK FOR CAP-tures and checks, kids.” That was Magnus Carlsen’s recent advice, after he overlooked a forced checkmate in three moves. It was a rule David Bronstein rarely broke. Born 100 years ago, Bronstein came within a few moves of winning the first world championship conducted by FIDE, in 1951. This month’s quiz consists of six sparkling combinations from his nearly 60-year career. In each diagram you are asked to find the fastest winning move. Carlsen already gave you a hint. Solutions on Page 63.



PROBLEM 1
GM Leonid Shamkovich
GM David Bronstein



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 2
GM Wolfgang Unzicker
GM David Bronstein



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 3
GM Paul Keres
GM David Bronstein



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 4
GM David Bronstein
Gunnar Uusi



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 5
David Bronstein
Kuptsov



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 6
David Bronstein
Vytautas Barsauskas



WHITE TO MOVE



This is the dubious move Fischer said “absolutely equalizes.” Earlier he explained in *Chess Life* how he resolved his dilemma: “In the name of progress I feel honor-bound to play it even though it will force a complete reorganization of my opening strategy.” In this tournament he played the King’s Gambit for the first time in a serious game and beat Larry Evans.

6. d4 exd4 7. Qxd4 Ne7

Fischer’s longstanding preference for bishops over knights apparently convinced him White would have no advantage after ... Na5xb3. What he planned after 8. Nc3 or 8. 0-0 is unknown.

8. c3? Nxb3! 9. axb3 Bb7 10. Bf4 d5!

Now 11. exd5 Nxd5 12. Bg3 Qe7+! favors Black, and if 13. Kd1? 0-0-0.

11. e5 c5! 12. Qd3

The queen would be trapped after 13. Qxc5?? Nf5.

12... Ng6 13. Bg3 Be7 14. Nbd2 Nf8 15.

O-O Ne6 16. Rad1 g5 17. h3 h5 18. Rfe1 Qb6 19. Nf1 d4 20. N3d2 g4 21. h4 Qc6!



Addison talked himself out of 22. Ne4 when he saw 22. ... c4! and 23. bxc4 Nc5! 24. Nxc5 Qxg2 mate. But 23. Qb1! was better than the losing endgame he drifted into.

22. Qe4? O-O-O! 23. Qxc6+ Bxc6 24. c4 Kd7 25. Ra1 Ra8 26. Ne4 Bxe4! 27. Rxe4 Ng7 28. Nd2 Nf5 29. Rf4 Ke6 30. Ne4 bxc4 31. bxc4 Rhb8 32. Ra2 Rb4 33. Nd2 Nxh4 34. Bxh4 Bxh4 35. Re4 Bg5 36. f4 gxf3 e.p. 37. Nxf3 Be3+ 38. Kh2 Rxc4, White resigned.

All of Fischer’s games from this tournament were closely studied because of his shutout score. He included four of them in *My Sixty Memorable Games*. But not this one.

It was quickly forgotten. Opening books have continued to shrug off 5. ... Na5 with a note (at most) that says 6. 0-0! d6 7. d4! favors White.

And yet Fischer’s dilemma did have a profound impact on opening theory. After 3. ... a6 4. Ba4 b5 there is no way for White to avoid the 5. Bb3 Na5. Therefore, Fischer had to find another route to the Lopez mid-dlegames he loved.

Three years after the Addison game Fischer revived another discredited move, 4. Bxc6!, the Exchange Variation, at the 1966 Olympiad. He had finessed the paradox: He felt this was the objectively best move — and one he could play with complete confidence. ♠

The Initiative

Demystifying one of chess' most important concepts

BY **WGM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN**

W

E'VE ALL HEARD THE PHRASE "White [or Black] has the initiative" before, and we've all seen positions where one side has

it. But explaining what the initiative is, and then knowing how to use it in our games, is not so easy.

For our purposes, we can define the initiative as a situation where one side commands the game, making threats that cannot be ignored. This is usually a short-term advantage, and it can easily dissipate if not utilized. We can use the initiative to prevent our opponents from doing something useful, or we can convert the initiative into a more long-term advantage. These might include material advantage, a better pawn structure, a space advantage, or saddling our opponents with bad pieces that cannot be improved.

When it comes to playing with the initiative, time is everything. By this, I don't mean the time on your clock — although that is always important! Instead, I'm talking about time on the board. It is of utmost importance to put pressure on your opponent, forcing them to respond to your threats instead of improving their positions.

One typical example of "having the initiative" is being ahead in development. When one side has a lead in development, the other side often needs just a few moves to catch up. So the player ahead in development takes the initiative by creating threat after threat, preventing the opponent from finishing their development. There are many

examples of this kind of play from the old masters. Here's one of my favorites.

FRENCH DEFENSE (C10)

Aron Nimzowitsch

Simon Alapin

Casual game, St. Petersburg, 1914

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. exd5 Nxd5

More common is 4. ... exd5, opening the diagonal for the c8-bishop. But opening theory is not our main focus here.

5. Nf3 c5 6. Nxd5 Qxd5 7. Be3 cxd4 8. Nxd4 a6 9. Be2 Qxg2

This is too greedy. Black is undeveloped and losing precious time by grabbing pawns.

10. Bf3 Qg6 11. Qd2 e5



12. 0-0-0!!

Having just about finished development, White is ready to bring his rooks into play

and hunt the enemy king. Why waste time by moving the knight?

Here's what happens if White plays without gusto. After the sensible-looking 12. Nb3 Be7 13. 0-0-0 Black has the strong 13. ... Qf5!, an intermediate move that helps deal with the upcoming Rh1-g1. Play continues 14. Bd5 0-0 and Black manages to get his king to safety, with queenside development to follow. White has no direct threats, although there is quite a bit of compensation associated with the half-open g-file.

12. ... exd4

Black can try to get his king to safety, but we see why White's move was so brilliant with 12. ... Be7 13. Rhg1! Now that this move comes with tempo, Black lacks time to safeguard the ruler. Play continues 13. ... Qd6 14. Nf5! (every move with force!) 14. ... Qxd2+ (note 14. ... Bxf5 15. Qxd6 Bxd6 16. Bxb7 nets the Exchange) 15. Rxd2 g6 16. Ng7+ Kf8 17. Bh6 Kg8 18. Rgd1 and even with the queens off the board, Black's troubles continue, i.e., 18. ... Nd7 19. Nh5!.

13. Bxd4 Nc6

After 13. ... Be7 the simple 14. Rhe1 is good enough: 14. ... 0-0 15. Rxe7 Nc6 16. Bxc6 bxc6 17. f3 followed by Rd1-g1. White is already attacking and targeting the g7 square, while Black is still not developed.

14. Bf6!! Qxf6 15. Rhe1+ Be7

Or 15. ... Be6 16. Qd7 mate.

16. Bxc6+ Kf8 17. Qd8+ Bxd8 18. Re8, mate.

We can't forget the timeless classic: the Opera Game. I am sure you have seen this game at least once, maybe simply for aesthetic reasons, but there is a reason it is so well known. Morphy's play is an exemplar of energetic chess. He is relentless in optimizing his initiative, move by move.

PHILIDOR'S DEFENSE (C41)

Paul Morphy

Duke of Brunswick and Count Isouard
Paris Opera, 11.02.1858

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 Bg4 4. dxe5 Bxf3
5. Qxf3 dxe5 6. Bc4 Nf6 7. Qb3 Qe7 8. Nc3
c6 9. Bg5 b5



10. Nxb5!

The most natural looking move in the position also gives the advantage away: after 10. Be2 Nbd7 the knight is free to move as there is no longer a b7-pawn under attack. The knight rejoins the game with tempo after 11. 0-0 Nc5 12. Qa3 a5 and it is now the white queen that is awkwardly placed. Black is ready to move their queen, then the bishop, and finally castle. As Black maintains control of the center, there is no way for White to target the uncastled king

10. ... cxb5 11. Bxb5+ Nbd7 12. 0-0-0!

White gets the king to safety and brings another piece into the game. The d7-knight is now hanging due to the pins.

When I show this game to my students for the first time and ask them how else can White pressure the d7-knight, their response is usually 12. Qa4. But this move doesn't really attack d7. White doesn't want to capture the pinned piece, as it is (at least for now) sufficiently defended. It might look like an attacking move to "pile on the pin," but it doesn't create any threats, and it allows Black to trade queens with 12. ... Qb4+ 13. Qxb4 Bxb4+ 14. c3 Be7 followed by ... 0-0-0. This variation is contrary to our goals in attacking play: we did not create any threats, and we allowed our opponents to finish their development.

12. ... Rd8 13. Rxd7! Rxd7 14. Rd1

By giving up the Exchange, White turned the defending d8-rook into a useless pinned piece. White is creating threats with every move.

14. ... Qe6

If 14. ... Qb4 15. Bxf6 Qxb3? 16. Bxd7 mate.

15. Bxd7+ Nxd7 16. Qb8+

The stunning finish!

16. ... Nxb8 17. Rd8, mate.

Now, let's be clear. Just having the initiative does not mean that you are going to inevitably crush your opponent, but it does mean that they will come under some serious pressure. It is entirely possible that with good defense, your opponent can fend off your threats and come out unscathed.

But always keep practical play, and human moves, in mind. The engine may say that the position is equal, but think about whose moves are easier to find. Do not be afraid of giving up a pawn for long-term, active play. It is very hard for humans to be under pressure for a series of moves and not make mistakes. If the engine evaluates the position as equal when one side is down a clear pawn, imagine how hard it is for your opponent to find the best moves over the board.

As a final example, here's a game where GM Irina Krush used the initiative to good effect against your author. Irina and I have crossed swords many times throughout the years, and normally, I am on the defensive side of some strategic battle with Black, and on the attack with the White. This time, I was on the receiving end of more aggressive play.

MOVE BY MOVE

GM Irina Krush (2432)

WGM Tatevi Abrahamyan (2294)

American Cup (Women) (1), St. Louis,
03.17.2023



17. Be1!

Improving her worst placed piece — always a good idea! The bishop is headed to h4, where it will pin the f6-knight.

17. ... Nc5 18. Bb1

Offering the pawn in order to grab the initiative.

18. ... Rxe3 19. Bh4



It's true that White does not have any direct threats right now, but she has more active pieces. The d4-knight and the f3-pawn are dominating my light-squared bishop. There is no good way to deal with the pin on the f6-knight, and the e2-knight is ready to join the action via the g3-square. And while my dark-squared bishop is quite good, there isn't much happening on the a7-g1 diagonal.

19. ... Re5

I should have recognized the danger and taken quick action with 19. ... Ne6, challenging the centralized knight. After 20. Nf5 Bb5! is the correct way of handling this position, activating my own pieces and giving back some material. Now it would be dangerous for White to grab the Exchange: if 21. Nxe3 (better is 21. Re1 Bxe2 22. Rxe2 Rxe2 23. Qxe2 Nf4 24. Qe7 when White maintains the pressure after 24. ... Qxe7 25. Nxe7+ Kf8 26. Nf5) 21. ... Bxe3 22. Qb3 (hanging on to the rook is inadvisable, i.e., 22. Rc2? d4! and Black takes the initiative!) 22. ... Bxe2 23. Qxe3 Bxf1 24. Rxf1 leaves White with compensation for the pawn via the bishop pair.

20. Ng3 Bc6?

Ceding control of the f5-square was a critical error.

After 20. ... Rc8 21. b4 Na4 (21. ... Ne6? 22. f4) 22. Rxc8 Qxc8 23. Bxf6 gxf6 24. Qd3 the position looks ugly, but at least the game is not immediately over.

21. f4 Re8 22. Nh5 Ncd7 23. Nf5 g6 24.

Nh6+ Kf8 25. Nxf6 Nxf6 26. Ng4 Nxg4 27.

Bxd8 Ne3 28. Bxb6, Black resigned. ♠



What Your Engine is Trying to Tell You

Part 1: What's a pawn?

BY **GM LARRY KAUFMAN**

IT USED TO BE SO SIMPLE. They had different names, but way back in the 20th century, the best chess engines were quite similar. They used the same search method — a tried-and-true programming technique called alpha-beta pruning. They evaluated the terminal positions by counting up the material, and then modifying the scores for hand-coded positional factors like square control, pawn structure, and safety. And they only ran on one core. (Your computer likely only had one core back then.)

Naturally there were some stylistic differ-

ences. Fritz would value things differently than Junior, while Shredder and Hiarcs were not nearly as speculative as CS Tal. But generally speaking, you could just get the top-rated engine and feel confident in your understanding of the evaluations it spit back out. A score of +1.30 meant that White was up a pawn with a bit of an additional positional advantage. The engines were strong tactically, but pretty weak positionally, so their advice could not always be trusted.

Since then, things have changed.

Near the turn of the century the first multi-core processors became available, making search faster but also (because of

parallelization) unpredictable. Repeating a search on multiple cores will often give a different move and evaluation.

Search algorithms were improved. Searches got much deeper with new techniques for pruning unpromising lines, making the engines more “selective” and stronger.

Evaluation functions also became much more sophisticated. Material advantage, for example, started to be treated differently based on game stage. If, for example, you are up a healthy, undoubled pawn in a pawn ending (with at least two pawns for the better side), and there is no compensation for the defender, you’re usually winning quite

easily unless the defender has some obvious tactical save. Often it takes just minimal skill to promote the pawn and deliver checkmate, so the result is that a pawn-up endgame may actually be more easily won than a queen-up middlegame.

This is one of the reasons that strong engines began in those years to show values far above +1.00 for such endgames, while returning scores of below +1.00 for a clean pawn advantage in the opening. While such positions are theoretically winning, all being equal, the defending side always has decent drawing chances, especially in human play.

But the first big breakthrough came in 2017 with AlphaZero. Using a different processor type (GPUs instead of CPUs), neural networks for evaluation instead of human-derived rules, and a radically different type of search (“MCTS” or Monte Carlo tree search) that is probabilistic in nature, it was able to crush the best classical engines of its time.

AlphaZero was never made public, but soon enough an open-source alternative called Leela (Lc0) was launched. Leela was designed on the principles underlying AlphaZero, and was nearly identical, save the fact that it could run on consumer hardware. It played much different chess than the top alpha-beta engines of the day, somewhat weaker tactically but much stronger positionally, and for a couple of years it was the engine of choice for anyone who could afford a computer with a powerful GPU.

Then came the next big breakthrough, the one whose effects we are witnessing now. Programmers in the Shogi (Japanese chess) world developed smaller neural networks suitable for CPUs that replaced their evaluation functions. These “neural networks updated efficiently,” or NNUEs, were remarkably successful for Shogi engines, and it was claimed that this programming technique would add 100 rating points to the top engines.

Most engine enthusiasts were skeptical, but with my experience as one of the top non-Japanese shogi players, I was quickly convinced by the radical strength increase this new technique wrought in Shogi engines. Soon chess programmers began to tinker with NNUEs, and by the end of 2020, both Stockfish and Komodo had seen that predicted 100 Elo point boost. Later enhancements added greatly to that gain.

The NNUE evaluation function can be seen as a hybrid between classic engines and those like AlphaZero or Leela. It runs on the CPU, and uses the traditional alpha-beta search to zoom through analysis, but it uses

neural networks trained on high-quality data over many iterations to work as its evaluative brain, determining the “score” of the position. Using training techniques not unlike those of Leela, the result is a much smaller network that may not be as “smart” as Leela’s, but it does not burden the CPU and slow search down. The result is an engine that retains nearly all the tactical strength of classical engines, while also keeping much of the positional strength of Leela.

These NNUE engines quickly took the lead in engine tournaments and rating lists, and today all the top-ranked engines use neural networks for their evaluation functions. CPU based engines like the open-source Stockfish are currently in the lead, followed by Komodo (which I worked on for years) and Torch, a new, private engine from *Chess.com*. The relative placement of Leela among these three depends greatly on hardware and test conditions.

One of the curious effects of the shift to NNUEs was a disconnection between evaluation and material. By the time of Stockfish 15, for example, users would encounter positions that would have gotten a +1.00 evaluation in the old days — a simple pawn-up with no positional advantage for either side in the opening — and be surprised when Stockfish reported a score of +2.00 or more. Other positions that looked like marginal, difficult wins to the human eye would receive absurd evaluations like +5.

A pawn was no longer a pawn. And users were getting confused.

Starting with version 15.1, the Stockfish community opted for a new standard, one that the other major engines have also adopted. Unmooring a strict relationship between material and evaluation, a score of +1.00 is now defined as a position where White is expected to win 50% of the games from that position, while Black will either draw or win the other half. There is some difference in how this standard is applied — Stockfish pegs this to move 32, while Komodo looks to the opening, and Leela applies it everywhere — but that is just a detail.

The main thing to know is that any evaluation above 1.00 means that the engine believes the position is more likely than not won with perfect play. A score between 0 and 1 means that the position is evaluated with advantage to one side, but more likely than not to be drawn with perfect play. Since it generally takes about a 0.7 pawn advantage to reach this 50/50 dividing line at the super-GM level, we might say that a clean pawn-up should show an evaluation of +1.4 on average — $1/0.7 = 1.43$.

So how do we interpret these new evaluations, now that they are not strictly speaking in pawn units?

I propose a simple way to think about them, one that might not be technically correct, but is good enough for over-the-board use.

If the evaluation is above +1.00, the position is likely already won with perfect play. The number just indicates how certainly this is so, with higher numbers showing increasingly more certainty. Anything above +2.00 indicates high confidence in the winning assessment.

Note that this does not tell us anything about the ease of winning. The engine might report one position to be +10, but you might have to find five consecutive brilliant moves to justify the evaluation! This is especially true with the NNUE engines; with Leela, there is more of an attempt in the search to assess the difficulty in finding the win. (More on this later.)

If the evaluation is between 0.00 and 1.00, you should think of it as representing the probability that the game will likely reach theoretically winning status before reaching total equality status, given that the players are human and likely to err.

For example: if the position is evaluated as +0.50, it should be equally likely to reach 0.00 (totally equal) or +1.00 first, given the random errors made by humans. (This would not be true if the potential errors were tiny, as they are in engine versus engine play.) If the position is +0.80, it is

GM Larry Kaufman



obviously more likely to wander up to +1 than down to 0.00.

One of the practical ramifications of this line of thinking, and one that we will discuss extensively in the second installment of this article, is engine evaluation and opening choice. Someone playing Black in ICCF correspondence chess, where engine use is fully legal, might be willing to play positions that the engine evaluates as -0.70, knowing that it is probably drawable by the engine. A human playing over-the-board chess should avoid such positions, unless they believe that the positions are harder to play in practical terms for the opponent than themselves.

This is where human judgment becomes important. Consider a situation where White sacrifices a pawn for superior development. Is it easier to find the right moves for White with the dynamic advantage, or for Black with the static / material advantage? Is the defending side able to find the best defensive ideas easily, or are they counter-intuitive? There is no general answer; any assessment is necessarily concrete and position-dependent.

It's also important in this context to understand how the top engines are different from one another, and how the hardware used can affect what the engines output.

Most serious players use Stockfish now for analyzing games, since it generally tops the rating lists and wins elite engine tournaments. Because it is open-source software and can run on many different kinds of processors, it's everywhere — on cellphones and iPads, on laptops and “in the cloud.” That kind of ubiquity, however, can obscure the truth. The specific version of Stockfish being used, and the hardware it runs on, can affect the quality of its analysis.

The Stockfish on your cellphone may be

Stockfish 11, which was the last version with a human-crafted evaluation (HCE) and without NNUE. *Chess.com* offers Stockfish 16 lite (using legacy HCE) and “normal” Stockfish 16, along with Komodo lite (HCE only) and two versions of their private engine Torch: one with a full-sized NNUE evaluation, and one with a distilled, smaller version.

It's much the same on Lichess, where users can choose between Stockfish 11 HCE, Stockfish 14 NNUE, and two versions of Stockfish 16: a lite version with a 7 megabyte evaluation network, and one with the standard 40 megabyte NNUE evaluation file.

Users can adjust the number of lines being analyzed on both *Chess.com* and Lichess. They can also modify the number of threads / cores (most modern CPUs offer multi-threading cores) being used for analysis, and the size of a modest hash table, on Lichess. But to do any of this, a user must actively enter the settings dialog, when the fact of the matter is that few users will go to these lengths. Why bother when you can just turn the engine on and watch the analysis start?

Up-to-date engines offer the most accurate analysis, and more powerful hardware allows you to get that accurate analysis faster. The Stockfish that runs on your phone will be very slow compared to what you will get on a PC with four, eight, or 16 cores. It's true that you can get nearly the same quality analysis using one core on your cellphone as you could on a 128-core / 256-thread Threadripper, but it would take about 100 times as long. What would take five minutes to find on your phone would take just seconds on a fast PC.

The number of cores being used can also, in marginal cases, affect the analysis itself. Stockfish is programmed to prune more or

less moves from its search depending on how many threads it has available. When running on just one thread, it will do much more pruning than it will running on 16 threads. With less pruning comes more chance that the engine can accurately assess moves that it would otherwise initially reject.

What does all this mean? Speed is linked to quality in computer chess. More cores means more speed, and up-to-date engines can take full advantage of increased computing power. Stockfish 11 on your iPad is good enough for a tactical game review, but if you want really high-quality positional suggestions, you should be using Stockfish 16 or later, or Dragon 3.3, running on a good PC.

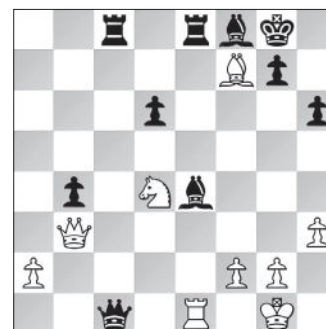
Here's an example where the computing power mattered.

ONE OR THE OTHER

GM Leinier Dominguez (2745)

GM Pranav Anand (2520)

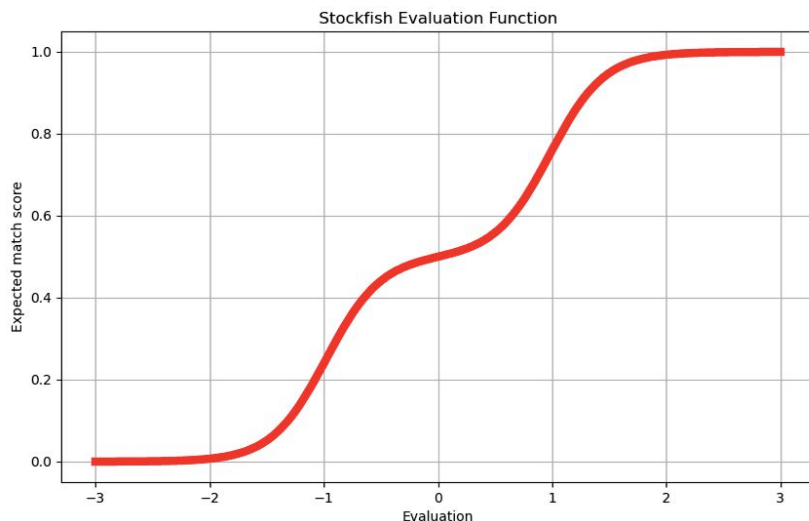
10th Sunway Sitges (5), Sitges, 12.16.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

This is a pivotal moment that two annotators — YouTube's Agadmator and Colin McGourtey for *Chess.com* — overlooked. In both cases I suspect it was because they didn't let the engine run long enough.

It turns out that **28. ... Kh7** is a clear mistake, allowing White to stay in the game after the game continuation **29. Rxc1 Rxc1+ 30. Kh2 d5 31. Qg3 Rc3 32. f3 Rd8 33. Nb5** (compare 33. Qg4 Bd6+ 34. g3 Be5 35. fxe4 Bxd4 36. exd5 is equal, but with the king on h8, Black would be winning) **33. ... Bf5** (compare 33. ... Bd3 34. Nxc3 bxc3 35. f4 Bf5 36. Qxc3 and White wins) **34. Qe1 Rcc8 35. Be6 Bxe6 36. Qxe6 Kh8 37. f4 Bc5 38. f5 d4**



Left: This graph, based on normalized WDL data, shows how Stockfish evaluations map onto expected match scores or outcomes. Scores of +2 or -2 are seen as near-wins!

39. f6 d3 40. fxg7+ Kxg7 41. Qe5+ Kg8 42. Qe6+ Kg7 43. Qe5+ Kg8, draw.

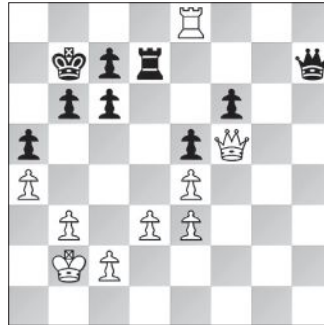
Writing for *Chess Life Online*, JJ Lang discovered that 28. ... Kh8! actually gives Black a significant advantage. The king placement makes a difference in two variations. After 29. Rxc1 Rxc1+ 30. Kh2 d5 31. Qg3 (31. Bxe8? loses to 31. ... Bd6+) 31. ... Rc3 32. f3 Rd8 33. Nb5 (if instead 33. Qg4 Bd6+ 34. g3 Be5 35. fxe4 Bxd4 36. exd5 Be5 and the bishop is safe due to the lack of a check!) 33. ... Bd3! 34. Nxc3 bxc3 35. f4 c2 and with the king on h8, White cannot take the d3-bishop with check!

Here the default engine on *Chess.com*, Torch, initially evaluates both 28. ... Kh7 and 28. ... Kh8 as roughly equal. Only when it gets to depth 34 or higher does it recognize the difference, and reaching that depth takes time on a laptop or portable device. A quick scan or automated analysis would not pick it up.

Moving on: what value are tablebases? (Tablebases are presolved endgame databases that engines can use to accurately assess positions with up to seven pieces in the search.) In general, I think they are overrated, because they don't raise the quality of engine assessments more than a few Elo points — engines play the endgame very well now without them. But they can come in handy. Consider this position from a recent game between Magnus Carlsen and David Anton Guijarro.

TO TAKE OR NOT TO TAKE

GM Magnus Carlsen (2847)
GM David Anton Guijarro (2673)
Carlsen Inv (5), *Chess24.com*,
03.13.2021



BLACK TO MOVE

If you were to analyze this game on *365chess.com* with their embedded version of Stockfish 16, you would (wrongly) believe that White was better but not necessarily winning after either 41. ... Qg7 (+0.37 at depth 42) or 41. ... Qxf5 (+0.72 at depth 42). After testing, I believe that the *365chess* engine has the NNUE evaluation turned off but does not disclose this fact.

The embedded Stockfishes (which do not include tablebases) on Lichess using four threads and a 512 megabyte hash table tell a different story: +0.4 and +2.3 at depth 42 for

Stockfish 16, and +0.3 and +2.9 for Stockfish 16 lite at depth 45. They see 41. ... Qxf5 as a serious mistake.

Running on 16 threads with a 16 gigabyte hash table, the latest Stockfish equipped with six and selected seven-man tablebases is more critical still, deeming 41. ... Qg7 to be well within the drawing range at +0.35 (depth 40), while 41. ... Qxf5 is an egregious error at +4.64 (depth 40).

The point? The accuracy of engine analysis grows with increased resources. The Stockfish embedded in a website might only run on one core with limited hash tables, resulting in misleading output. More processing power and longer search time can overcome these problems, and the NNUE evaluation function adds to analytical accuracy immensely.

(In case you were wondering: in the game Anton Guijarro took the queen with disastrous results.)

What about Leela? Despite it needing specialized hardware for optimal use — an RTX 2060 graphics card or higher — I think it offers two advantages over Stockfish. The first is that it can analyze multiple lines without any cost. Analyzing in “multi-PV” is an important tool, as showing the difference between the first- and second-best moves can immediately point out forced continuations. With Stockfish, this can slow the search significantly. With Leela, there is no computational cost in doing so.

WHAT DOES ALL THAT STUFF MEAN?

Have you ever wondered what the engine window is trying to tell you? Our editor took a screenshot of his ChessBase screen while working on Carlsen – Anton Guijarro after 41. ... Qxf5. Here's what all those numbers actually refer to.

■ evaluation of current position in centipawns; positive scores are good for White, while negative scores favor Black

■ current depth of search in ply (half-moves)

■ ply depth searched in full (first number) and selectively extended (second number)

■ the move currently being evaluated

■ nodes / positions searched per second

■ the total search time elapsed thus far for this move

■ total nodes or positions searched; here, almost 1.2 billion!

■ tablebase hits, or known endgame positions found in the search thus far

Kibitzer: Stockfish 240204 SUPER

Stockfish 240204 SUPER 2 CPUs

+ - 4.64 Depth=40 42.exf5 (1/21) 28845 kN/s

42.exf5 Rh7 43.Re6 Rf7 44.Kc3 c5 45.e4 c6 46.Kd2 b5 47.Ke3 c4 48.bxc4 bxa4 49.Kd2 a3 50.Kc1 Kb6 51.Kb1 Kc5 52.Ka2 Kb4 53.Rxc6 Rb7 54.c5 Ka4 55.Rb6 Rc7 56.c6 Rc8 57.Rb3 Rxc6 58.Rxa3+ Kb5 59.Rb3+ Ka4 60.Kb1 Rd6 61.Rc3 Rb6+ 62.Ka1 Rb7 63.Ka2 Rb8 64.Rc6 Rf8 65.Rc4+ Kb5 66.Ka3 Kb6 67.Rc3 Rg8 68.Rb3+ Kc6 69.Rb2 Rg2 70.Ka4 Rg1 71.Kxa5 Ra1+ 72.Kb4

+ - (4.64) Depth: 39/65 00:00:41 1183MN, tb=2383908

White is clearly winning

The second benefit is potentially more important. Users should understand that Stockfish and Leela are trying to answer different questions in their searches. Stockfish tries to find the strongest moves for both sides (assuming perfect play) at every turn, while Leela, using its “Monte Carlo” style search, inquires after the best moves against good but unpredictable play.

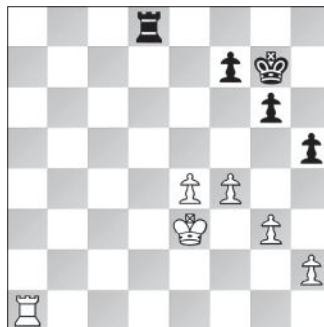
One common way that this difference shows up is the famous 0.00 evaluation from Stockfish, which is given when Stockfish “believes” that best play ends with a draw by repetition. Leela proceeds differently. Even if it expects a repetition, the side that more likely to go wrong will usually show a mildly negative score.

Imagine a situation where White is a rook down, looking for a difficult perpetual that requires accuracy over a number of checks. Leela might evaluate this as -0.10, indicating a probable, if non-trivial, draw where Black is the only one who might win. This is very helpful for a practical player, although it can be annoying to see a -0.03 evaluation when the perpetual is obvious.

Understanding engine output, and how Stockfish is different from Leela, is very helpful for a practical player. With experience, you will learn which evaluations indicate draws you can readily spot, and which are more difficult. There are countless positions in chess that are clearly drawn with perfect play, but which are also clearly

easier for one side to win. Stockfish will show all zeros in such positions, while Leela will usually return a decent plus score for the “easier to play” side, even after a long think. Here is a simple example:

FOUR VERSUS THREE



WHITE TO MOVE

This four versus three rook endgame is known to theory as a draw, but it is well worth White's time to play out, as Black has to keep finding good moves to draw. On my modern laptop, not using tablebases, the current version of Stockfish shows a +0.04 score almost immediately, dropping to 0.00 after a couple of minutes. The current Leela shows +0.19, and +0.18 after a few minutes time.

Stockfish is telling us what the result of the game will be with 3500-level play,

while Leela is telling us the likely result of the game with “only” human GM-level play. Stockfish says “draw,” while Leela says “should be a draw, but Black may lose if they don't play accurately.”

It's for this reason that, for most over-the-board players, I recommend using a Monte Carlo style engine like Leela if you have a modern GPU, and a MCTS-enabled engine like Komodo if you don't. Naturally you can (and should!) consult Stockfish as well, but you will have to make your own judgments about the difficulty of the moves for both sides.

I hope you have learned something about today's chess engines in this article. Next month, we'll apply this knowledge to opening study, learn to interpret what modern engines are telling us about key opening tabiya, and try to deduce some principles of contemporary opening play. ♠

A GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Cores / threads – modern processors differentiate between physical cores and “threads,” or virtual instruction streams. Some cores are singled threaded, and some are dual threaded.

CPU – central processing unit; the calculative engine in your computer.

Evaluation – the part of a chess program that assesses each position in a game tree and assigns it a numerical value.

GPU – graphics processing unit; generally speaking, your graphics card.

Hash table – the memory used by a chess engine to store evaluations and refer to them in search.

HCE – human (or hand) crafted evaluation; the older “brain” for chess engines, using recognizable positional terms to score positions.

Neural network – an AI method of machine learning that trains computers to deal with data inputs through intensive analysis of training data. They are used for evaluation functions in chess engines.

NNUE – “neural network updated efficiently,” the new “brain” for CPU-based chess engines.

Search – the part of a chess program that sorts and chooses moves in a game tree.

Parallelization – a situation where one algorithm or function “runs” on multiple cores or threads.



GM Leinier Domínguez 🇺🇸 in the analysis room checking his game with his coach GM Vladimir Chuchelov and his opponent GM Pranav Anand 🇮🇳. A draw that he will need to recover in the next rounds if he wants to take @GMWesleySo123 spot in the @FIDE_chess Candidates 2024. #SunwaySitges



Left: GM Pranav Anand (L) and GM Leinier Domínguez (R) analyze their game (as discussed on page 18) the old-fashioned way: with no silicon assistance allowed!

MAKE YOUR MOVE

BY **FM CARSTEN HANSEN**

THIS MONTH'S PUZZLES ARE TAKEN FROM VARIOUS OVER-the-board tournaments in December 2023.

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



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 5.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 6.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 7.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 8.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 9.



WHITE TO MOVE

Position 1: NO TRAGEDY; JUST GREEK

Position 2: LOOSE DEFENSE

Position 3: ZIG ZAG DOES THE ATTACK

Position 4: CLOSE AND PRESENT DANGER

Position 5: LOOSEN THE DEFENSE

Position 6: TURN ON THE CROSS FIRE

Position 7: BUILD POWER

Position 8: MAKE AND USE A HOLE

Position 9: THE WILL TO SURVIVE

The last man **STANDING!**



GM Fabiano Caruana "does the double," winning the 2023 Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz and Sinquefeld Cup!

BY **GM ELSHAN MORADIABADI**

GM FABIANO CARUANA ENDED an excellent 2023 with a fantastic double victory in his adopted hometown of St. Louis. With his wins in the 2023 Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz and the Sinquefeld Cup, he not only earned bragging rights for those events, but also claimed the biggest prize of all: the Grand Chess Tour title.

The current American champion began the Rapid and Blitz with a loss to GM Alireza Firouzja, and then struggled for a few rounds.

REMOVE THE GUARD

GM Fabiano Caruana (2868)
GM Alireza Firouzja (2872)
 Saint Louis Rapid (1), St. Louis,
 11.14.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

Things did not exactly start in Caruana's favor. Here he succumbed to Firouzja's kingside attack in an opposite-sided castling Berlin game.

29. ... Rxf3 30. gxf3! Rg3 31. Kh1 Rxf3 32. Rh2 Rf1+ 33. Qxf1 Bxf1 34. Rxf1 f3 35. e5 fxe5 36. Ne4 exd4 37. Nxd6 Qxd6 38. Rxf3 Qxb4 39. Rhf2 Qe1+ 40. Kg2 Qe4 41. Kf1 Qxh4 42. Ke2 c5 43. Kd3 Kb7 44. Rf1 Qg4 45. Rf7 h4 46. R1f4 Qg6+ 47. Kd2 h3, White resigned.

That same round saw one of the best games of the three-week long parade of chess, when GM Sam Sevian took down GM Ian Nepomniachtchi in blistering fashion.

ENGLISH OPENING (A22)

GM Samuel Sevian (2773)
GM Ian Nepomniachtchi (2714)
 Saint Louis Rapid (1), St. Louis,
 11.14.2023

1. c4 Nf6 2. Nc3 e5 3. g3 Bb4 4. Bg2 0-0 5. e4 Bxc3 6. bxc3 c6 7. Nf3 d5 8. cxd5 cxd5 9. exd5 Nxd5 10. 0-0 Nc6 11. Re1 e4 12. Nd4 Nxd4 13. cxd4 Bf5 14. d3 exd3 15. Qf3 Qa5 16. Bg5 Be6 17. Qxd3

Despite a number of inaccuracies, Black has navigated the opening successfully. However, Nepo's provocative next move sets Sevian on the path to brilliancy.

17. ... h6?



18. Bxh6!

That surely is the first move that comes to mind!

18. ... gxh6 19. Rxe6! Nb4

If 19. ... fxe6 20. Qg6+ Kh8 21. Qxh6+ Kg8 22. Qxe6+ followed by 23. Bxd5. White is winning.

20. Rg6+!?

Forcing. White could also consider the strong 20. Qb1 here.

20. ... fxg6 21. Qxg6+ Kh8 22. Qxh6+ Kg8 23. Qg6+ Kh8 24. Be4! Qc7 25. a3!? Nc6 26. Qh6+ Kg8 27. Bd5+ Rf7 28. Re1!
 There is no rush!

28. ... Ne7 29. Bxf7+ Kxf7 30. Qe6+, Black resigned.

Black resigned in view of 30. Qe6+ Kf8 31. Qf6+ Ke8 32. Qh8+.

Caruana's fortunes picked up in the final game of the second day, when he defeated GM Le Quang Liem.

THE COMEBACK

GM Le Quang Liem (2803)
GM Fabiano Caruana (2868)
 Saint Louis Rapid (6), St. Louis,
 11.15.2023



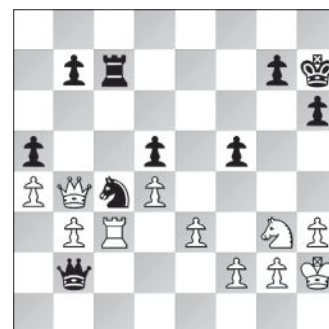
BLACK TO MOVE

White is much better here, in no small part due to the weak b7-pawn. But Le Quang Liem not only failed to win this winning position, he actually ended up losing it!

36. ... Qb2 37. Qb4? Nc4! 38. Ng3 Rd7 39. Nxe4 Rc7!

Caruana maintains the tension in time pressure.

40. Kh2 f5 41. Ng3 a5



42. Rxc4??

Liem succumbs.

White has sufficient counterplay after 42. Qf8 Qxc3 43. bxc4 Qxc4 44. Qxf5+ Kg8 45. Qe6+ Kh8 46. Nf5.

42. ... axb4 43. Rxc7 Qxf2 44. Rxb7 f4 45. Nh1 Qxe3 46. Rxb4 Qd2, White resigned.

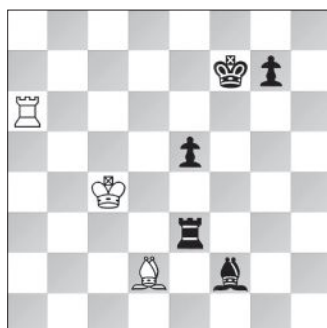
With this turnaround victory under his belt, the top seed at the forthcoming Candidates never looked back. A strong finish in the Rapid was followed by an excellent performance in the Blitz, where he held an unlikely draw against GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (who trailed him by a half-point) in the final round to earn his spot at the top of the final leaderboard.

TICK TOCK

GM Fabiano Caruana (2912)

GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (2917)

Saint Louis Blitz (18), St. Louis, 11.18.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

Up two pawns, Black is objectively on the path to victory, but anything can happen in a blitz game. With just seconds on his clock, MVL uncorked a blunder.

57. ... Re2? 58. Kd3!

Now the rook is trapped, and Black's winning chances are gone.

58. ... Rxd2+ 59. Kxd2 Bd4 60. Kd3 g5 61. Ke4 Ke7 62. Rg6 Kf7 63. Rxg5 Ke7 64. Rxe5+ Bxe5, draw.

Then it was time for the Sinquefeld Cup, perhaps the most prestigious tournament on the calendar. Last year's edition featured more than a bit of excitement, as you may recall, and with three hopefuls for qualification for the 2023 Candidates in this year's field, fans were looking forward to some fighting chess. Firouzja had to boost his rating to earn a spot in the Candidates, while Giri and So were looking to earn points to qualify via their standing in the FIDE Circuit.

But after just one round, a spanner was thrown into the works. GM Jan-Krzysztof Duda was forced to withdraw from the tournament due to illness. Duda's draw with Giri was removed from the standings, and now every player (except Giri) got an extra rest day.

With victories over Rapport and Aronian, So was in the lead and in control after six rounds, but a round seven loss to Caruana proved to be one of the pivotal moments of the event.

RUY LOPEZ, BERLIN VARIATION (C67)

GM Wesley So (2817)

GM Levon Aronian (2797)

Sinquefeld Cup (6), St. Louis, 11.27.2023

1. e4 e5

Another Berlin, another interesting endgame!

2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nf6 4. 0-0 Nxe4 5. Re1 Nd6 6. Nxe5 Be7 7. Bf1 Nxe5 8. Rxe5 0-0 9. d4 Bf6 10. Re1 Re8 11. Bf4 Rxe1 12. Qxe1 Ne8

This is considered the safest way.

Also known to theory is 12. ... Bxd4 13. Bxd6 cxd6 14. Nc3 (14. c3 Bf6 15. Na3 d5 16. Nb5 g6 17. Qd2 d4 18. Nxd4 d5 is equal) and now best is 14. ... Be5! (14. ... Bxc3? 15. Qxc3 b6 16. Qf3 was better for White in Carlsen – Gukesh, Chess.com 2022) 15. Rd1 b6 16. f4 Bxc3 17. Qxc3 Bb7 18. Rxd6 Bc6 19. Rd2 Qf8 20. b4 a6 21. a3 g6 22. Bd3 Re8 23. Re2, and a draw was agreed in Ilyasov – Schakel, ICCF 2017.

13. Nc3 Bxd4

Nearly forced. Nc3-d5 is a major threat.

14. Nd5 c6

Aronian chooses a forcing line.

15. Ne7+ Kf8 16. Nxc8 Qf6! 17. Rd1 Rxc8

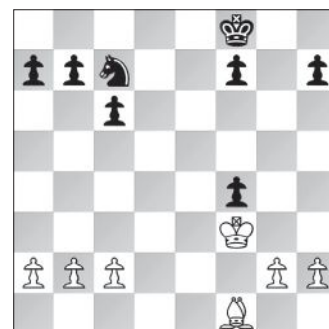
Not 17. ... Qxf4?? 18. Qe7+ Kg8 19. Qxe8 mate.

18. Qe4 Bxf2+

Engines prefer 18. ... Bb6 19. Rxd7 Rd8 20. Rxd8 Qxd8 21. h3 (or 21. Qxh7 Qf6 22. Bg3 Qxb2 with equality) 21. ... Qf6 22. Qb4+ Qe7 23. Bd2 Bc5 24. Qc3 Nf6 when White has two bishops, but Black is not really troubled by them.

19. Kxf2 g5 20. Rxd7 Rc7 21. Rxc7 Nxc7

22. Qe5 Qxf4+ 23. Qxf4 gxf4 24. Kf3



The players blitzed their way to this position, making it fair to assume that they

2023 SAINT LOUIS RAPID AND BLITZ AT A GLANCE

NOVEMBER 12-19, 2023 | SAINT LOUIS, MO

RAPID

1st: GM Ray Robson, 5½/9. **2nd-3rd:** GMs Fabiano Caruana, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, 5. **4th-8th:** GMs Alireza Firouzja, Anish Giri, Le Quang Liem, Ian Nepomniachtchi, Samuel Sevian, 4½. **9th-10th:** GMs Wesley So, Jeffery Xiong, 3½.

BLITZ

1st-3rd: GMs Fabiano Caruana, Le Quang Liem, Ian Nepomniachtchi, 11/18. **4th:** GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, 10½. **5th:** GM Wesley So, 10. **6th:** GM Alireza Firouzja, 9½. **7th:** GM Samuel Sevian, 7½. **8th:** GM Anish Giri, 7. **9th:** GM Jeffery Xiong, 6½. **10th:** GM Ray Robson, 6.

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

1st: GM Fabiano Caruana, 21/36. **2nd:** GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, 20½. **3rd-4th:** GM Le Quang Liem, Ian Nepomniachtchi, 20. **5th:** GM Alireza Firouzja, 18½. **6th-7th:** GMs Ray Robson, Wesley So, 17. **8th:** GM Samuel Sevian, 16½. **9th:** GM Anish Giri, 16. **10th:** GM Jeffery Xiong, 13½.

knew what they were getting themselves into. Theoretically, Black should be able to hold, but there is not a direct, concrete path to do so.

24. ... Nd5?

It was better to play 24. ... Kg7 25. Kxf4 Kf6 26. Bc4 Ne8 and try to build a fortress.

25. c4?

Better is 25. Bd3! h6 26. Be4.

25. ... Nc7

Black missed with a forced draw with 25. ... Ne3!. The position is equal after 26. Be2 Ke7 27. g4 fxg3! *e.p.* 28. Kxe3 gxh2 29. Bf3 Kd6 30. b4 b6 31. Kf4 a6 32. Ke4 (no better were 32. a4 a5 or 32. Be4 c5 33. a3 b5) 32. ... f5+ 33. Kxf5 c5 34. a3 b5.

26. Bd3 h6 27. Kxf4



27. ... c5??

This loses by force. The saving 27. ... a5! is hard to see, but the idea is that it secures the c5-square for the knight. After 28. Ke5 Ke7 29. Bf5 Na6 and ... Na6-c5 next, Black has excellent drawing chances.

28. Ke5 Ke7 29. Bf5 b6 30. h4

Black is in *zugzwang*. White should use his tempi to force the c7-knight to move. For this reason, I would have preferred 30. a3 over 30. h4.

30. ... Ne8 31. Kd5 Nd6 32. Bh3 Ne8 33. Bf5 Nd6 34. Bc2 f6 35. Bg6

Knights cannot lose tempi, but bishops can! Wesley So knows that he has his opponent on the ropes, and he begins to exert psychological pressure.

35. ... Nb7 36. b3 Nd8

The knight cannot stay on d8 for more than a move!

37. Bf5 Nf7 38. Kc6 Nd6 39. Bh7 Nf7 40. Kc7

Perhaps more direct (per the engines) is

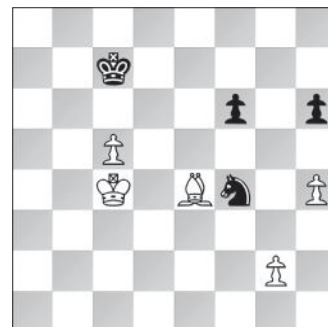
40. Kb7 Kd6 41. Kxa7 Kc7 42. Be4 Ne5 43. Ka6 with the plan of a2-a3, b3-b4-b5, and then a3-a4-a5.

40. ... Ne5 41. Bf5 Nf7 42. a3 Nd6 43. Bd3 Nf7 44. Kb7 Kd6 45. Kxa7 Kc7 46. Ka6 Nd8 47. Be4 Ne6 48. b4 cxb4 49. axb4 Nd4 50. c5 bxc5 51. bxc5 Ne2 52. Ka5 Nf4 53. Kb4 Ne2 54. Kc4 Nf4

(see diagram top of next column)

White is totally winning. Here Wesley chooses one of many ways to make progress by putting Black in continuous *zugzwang*...

55. g3 Ne2 56. g4 Nf4 57. Bf3 Ng6 58. Kd5 Nf4+ 59. Ke4 Ng6 60. Kd5 Nf4+ 61. Kd4 Ng6 62. Be4 Ne7 63. Kc4 Kd7 64. Kb5 Kc7 65. Kb4 Kd7 66. Ka5 Kc7 67. Kb5 Nc8 68.



h5 Ne7 69. c6 Nc8 70. Kc5 Ne7 71. Kb5 Nc8 72. Kc5 Ne7 73. Bg2 f5 74. g5 hxg5 75. h6 Ng6 76. h7 g4 77. Kd5 g3 78. Bh1, Black resigned.

Another example of how opening preparation can extend all the way to a technical endgame. The things we need to learn these days!



NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE (E42)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2867)

GM Wesley So (2817)

Sinquefield Cup (7), St. Louis,
11.28.2023

Not only did this loss cost Wesley his shot at winning the tournament, but it denied him a spot at the 2024 Candidates as well.

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 c5 5. Nge2 d5 6. a3 Ba5 7. dxc5 dxc4 8. Bd2 Nbd7

Another interesting move would have been 8. ... b6 9. Ng3 bxc5 10. Bxc4 0-0 11. 0-0 Nbd7 where White has a small plus thanks to his better pawn structure, but for the most part this advantage is symbolic. Maybe Wesley did not feel confident in this line, or he felt



a bit of accuracy to hold the ensuing middlegame. Play continues 11. Qc2 0-0 12. Rd1 Qe7 13. b4 Ncd7 14. Nce4 and the correspondence game Amico – Kilichenko (ICCF 2013) shows how Black can hold. To be fair, it's not that difficult a practical task for a 2700 player.

10. Qf3!

13. Bxc3 Nxc6 14. Rd1 Qe7 15. Bxc4 b5



Or 15. ... 0-0 16. Bb5 Bb7 17. Bxc6 Bxc6 18. Bb4 and wins.

16. Bxf6!

Timely.

16. ... Qxf6



more confident with the direct approach embodied by 8. ... Nbd7.

9. Ng3 b6?

(see diagram top of next column)

It's also possible that he simply mixed up his lines.

After 9. ... Nxc5 10. Bxc4 Bc7 we reach a symmetrical position where Black needs

Caruana knows how to take advantage of this slip.

10. ... Rb8 11. c6 Ne5 12. Qf4 Bxc3?

This loses easily, but it is hard to suggest anything for Black.

Perhaps best is 12. ... Nxc6 13. Qxc4 Bb7 14. b4 b5 15. Nxb5 Bb6 16. Rd1 0-0 17. Bc3 Qe7 18. Be2 when White is a healthy pawn up, but Black postpones the coming attack for a bit.

Worse is 16. ... gxf6 17. Ne4!.

17. Qd6! e5 18. Bxf7+! Kxf7

Naturally if 18. ... Qxf7 19. Qxc6+ with a crushing position.

19. Qc7+ Qe7

If 19. ... Kg6 20. Rd6 Be6 21. Qxc6 Rhc8 22. Qe4+.

20. Qxc6 Bb7 21. Qxb5 Bxg2 22. Qc4+ Kf8

23. Nf5! Qf6 24. Qc5+ Kg8 25. Qc7, Black resigned.

Perfect play by Caruana, taking advantage of a move-order mishap by So.

After this loss, Wesley still looked as if he would overtake Giri on the FIDE Circuit rankings. (Ultimately, all this was irrelevant after Gukesh won the Chennai Grand Masters just days later, but that's another story!) But in one of his better results of recent years, Leinier Dominguez notched two victories against Rapport and Giri to overtake So.

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B20)

GM Anish Giri (2833)

GM Leinier Dominguez (2816)

Sinquefield Cup (6), St. Louis,

11.27.2023

Giri decided to go a bit off the beaten path

This move dismisses the knight from h3.

7. Nf2

White is in trouble after 7. 0-0? Bg4 8. Qd2 h4.

7. ... e5

Here 7. ... b5 is worthy of attention. Black has counterplay after 8. Nc3 (not 8. e5? Bd7 when the e5-pawn is weak) 8. ... b4 9. Ne2 Qb6 10. 0-0 Rb8.

8. Nc3 Nf6 9. h3

The aggressive 9. f5 gxf5 10. Bg5 f4 11. 0-0 Bh6 leads to a complex position which is not in either of the two player's styles.

9. ... Bh6 10. Ne2

(see diagram below)

If 10. Nd5 exf4 11. Bxf4 Bxf4 12. Nxf4 h4 13. g4

Nh7 14. 0-0 Qg5 15. Qd2 (or 15. Nd5 0-0) 15. ... Nd4 16. Rae1 0-0 17. Nd1 is unclear.

10. ... Nd4?!

I'm not sure that I like this move.

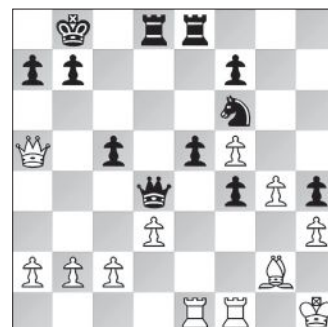
After 10. ... Nh7 11. c3 0-0 12. 0-0 Be6 13. Be3 h4 14. g4 a5 15. Qd2 a4 16. f5 Bxe3 17. Qxe3 Bc8 18. Nd1 b5 19. Qf2 a3 20. b3 b4 Black's queenside play is in time, but just two moves earlier things looked pretty scary. It's hard to see this non-forcing position from so far in advance.

11. 0-0 Ne6 12. fxe5?!

This makes Black's life much easier.

After the stronger 12. f5! gxf5 13. Bxh6 Rxh6 14. exf5 Ng7 15. g4 hxg4 16. hxg4 Ng8 17. Nh3 Qh4 18. Rf3 Bd7 19. Qe1 Bc6 20. Qxh4 Rxh4 21. Rg3 White has a more pleasant position, despite the fact that objectively things are balanced.

12. ... Bxc1 13. Qxc1 dxe5 14. Nd1 h4 15. g4 g5 16. Ne3 Nf4 17. Qe1 Be6 18. Nxf4 gxf4 19. Nf5 Bxf5 20. exf5 Qd4+ 21. Kh1 0-0-0 22. Qa5 Kb8 23. Rae1 Rhe8



So far, so good for both players. Now Giri slips and loses control of the board.

24. c3? Qxd3!

Dominguez rightly calls Giri's bluff!

25. Qxc5 Qg3!

The key move. Black is in control.

26. Qf2

If 26. Qb5 e4 followed by ... f4-f3 and Black wins.

Relatively best was 26. Rd1 but Black is still winning after 26. ... Rd3! 27. Rxd3 (27. Qb5?? f3) 27. ... Qxd3 28. Qf2 Nd5! 29. Re1 f6 30. Qxh4 f3.

26. ... Qxf2! 27. Rxf2 Nh7!

(see diagram next page)

Here g4-g5 was a threat, so Dominguez



A wide-angle view of the sixth round of the 2023 Sinquefield Cup

against Dominguez, obtaining a small edge before things backfired!

1. g3 c5 2. Bg2 Nc6 3. e4 g6 4. d3 Bg7 5. f4 Transposing to the Closed Sicilian. The last time this opening was prominent at elite levels was the 1968 Spassky – Geller match, where Spassky scored 3½/4 with the variation despite being lost in all of the games!

5. ... d6 6. Nh3 h5!?





prevents it. His technique is instructive and worth studying.

28. f6 Ng5 29. Be4 Rd6 30. Kg2 Kc7 31. Bf5 Kd8
Patience!

32. b4 Rxf6 33. Rd2+ Kc7 34. Rd7+ Kb8 35. c4 e4 36. c5 e3 37. Kf1 a6 38. Rd6 Rxf5
Not the only way to win it, but the classiest for sure!

39. gxf5 Nf3 40. Re2 Re4 41. a3 Ne5 42. Rc2 f3 43. Rc1 Rc4 44. Re1 Rc3 45. Rd8+ Kc7 46. Re8 e2+ 47. Kf2 Nd3+ 48. Kxf3 Nxe1+ 49. Kxe2 Ng2 50. Re7+ Kc6 51. Rxf7 Nf4+ 52. Kd2 Rxh3 53. Rf6+ Kd5 54. Rd6+ Ke5 55. f6 Rf3 56. f7 Ne6, White resigned.

Indeed, Dominguez played some of the most interesting games of the tournament. His draws with Caruana and So are both well worth replaying.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B90)

GM Leinier Dominguez (2816)
GM Fabiano Caruana (2867)
Sinquefeld Cup (1), St. Louis,
11.21.2023

First round games are often lackluster, with the players getting into the event and feeling each other out. Not here! This pairing between the eventual winner and runner-up was critical to the final result. Dominguez obtained some chances in a technical English Attack, but Caruana's resourcefulness was enough to save the day.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. f3

Dominguez is a master of the English Attack. He plays it masterfully with both colors.

6. ... e5 7. Nb3 Be6 8. Be3 Be7

Currently 8. ... Nbd7 9. Qd2 h5 10. Nd5 Bxd5 11. exd5 g6 is the most popular continuation.

9. Qd2 h5

Based on extensive testing in correspondence play, we now know that this h-pawn push is good after the inclusion of ... Bf8-e7. Beginning in the 90s — Kasparov was the pioneer — the ... Nb8-d7 and ... h7-h5 setup has been the main trend in this line.

10. Nd5!

Now ... Be6xd5 makes no sense, as Black's bishop is committed to e7, meaning that ... g7-g6 and ... Bf8-g7 is no longer in the cards. As a result, Black loses a tempo with his light-squared bishop.

10. ... Nxd5 11. exd5 Bf5 12. Be2 a5!

Another essential move. White wants to play c2-c4 and Qd2-a5 at some point.

13. a4 Bh4+

Flicking in a check to dissuade White from castling kingside.

14. g3 Be7 15. Bb5+

Largely untested but worth considering is 15. f4 Nd7 16. Bd3 exf4 17. Bxf4 Bh3 18. 0-0-0. We might see this being played at the highest levels in the near future.

15. ... Bd7 16. Qe2 0-0



17. Nd2!

A beautiful move by White! Dominguez improves his worst piece before castling queenside.

17. ... Bxb5 18. Qxb5 Bg5!

And Caruana trades his worst minor piece as well!

19. Bxg5 Qxg5 20. 0-0-0

The pawn is untouchable. If 20. Qxb7?? Na6 21. Qb3 Rab8 White is faced with a decisive attack due to the lost tempi with the queen.

20. ... Rc8 21. Kb1 Na6

Here 21. ... Qe7 is probably more accurate because after 22. Ne4 (22. Rhe1 Qc7 23. Rc1 is probably the way to go) 22. ... f5 23. Nc3

Na6 the f5-pawn is hardly a weakness while White's c3-knight is a target for an Exchange sacrifice.

22. Ne4 Qd8 23. f4!

Accurate play.

23. ... Nc5

We see one of the points behind White's last move after 23. ... f5 24. Ng5 Nc5 25. Rhe1 e4 26. Re3 with an edge for White.

24. Rhe1 Nxe4 25. Rxe4 f5 26. Re3 e4 27.

Qe2 Qd7 28. Qxh5

After 28. Rd4 Rab8 29. Rb3 g6 Black will play ... Rc8-c5 and the position is pretty much locked up.

28. ... Qxa4 29. Rd2



29. ... Rf8?

After near-perfect moves, Caruana makes the first mistake at a critical juncture.

The right move was 29. ... Qb5! 30. Qxf5 (or 30. Rd1 Qa4) 30. ... Qf1+ 31. Ka2 Qc4+ 32. b3 Qb4 33. c3 Rxc3 34. Rxc3 Qxc3 35. Qe6+ with equality.

30. g4!

A natural response.

30. ... Qe8! 31. Qg5 Qd8 32. Qh5

I believe 32. gxf5 is more testing. After 32. ... Qxg5 33. fxg5 Rxf5 34. Rxe4 Rxg5 35. Re7 Rb8 36. Rd7 Rg6 37. Ka2 b5 38. Rd3 Rc8 39. c3 Rc5 Black has enough play to make a draw, but the endgame is surely unpleasant.

32. ... Qe8 33. Qh3 Qg6 34. Rg2 Qh7!

A timely trade offer.

35. Qxh7+

After 35. Qg3 Rf7 36. g5 g6 followed by ... Qh7-h5, Black should be fine here.

35. ... Kxh7 36. gxf5 Rxf5 37. Rxe4 Raf8 38. Rg4 b5!

Accurate defense by Caruana. The greedy 38. ... Rxd5?? is met by 39. Re7.

39. b3 b4 40. Rd4 Rh5



Black is active, making the extra pawn pretty much irrelevant. Now Dominguez forces Caruana to prove he can manage the position before splitting the point.

41. h4 Rf6 42. Re4 Rxd5 43. Rg5 Rdf5 44. Re7 Rxd5 45. fxd5 Rf4 46. h5 Rf5 47. h6 Rxd5 48. hxd7 Rxd7 49. Re1 Rg5 50. Rd1 d5 51. Re1 Kg7 52. Re6 Kf7 53. Ra6 d4 54. Rd6 Rg1+ 55. Kb2 Rd1 56. Rd5 d3 57. cxd3 Ke6 58. Rxa5 Rd2+ 59. Kc1 Rxd3 60. Ra4 Rxb3 61. Kc2 Rc3+ 62. Kb2 Rc4 63. Kb3 Rd4 64. Rxb4 Rxb4+ 65. Kxb4, draw.

A neat game. Dominguez was never close to any real chances, but he missed the possibility of exerting a little more pressure on Caruana.

RUY LOPEZ, BERLIN VARIATION (C67)

GM Leinier Dominguez (2816)

GM Wesley So (2817)

Sinquefeld Cup (5), St. Louis, 11.25.2023

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nf6

I was only 15 when Kramnik famously employed the Berlin Defense against Kasparov in their 2000 World Championship match. With its strategic clarity, the opening had a profound effect on me. It is like listening to Mozart!

4. 0-0 Nxe4 5. d4 Nd6 6. Bxc6 dxc6 7. dxe5 Nf5 8. Qxd8+ Kxd8 9. h3 Ke8 10. Nc3 b6 11. Rd1 Bb4 12. Ne2 Bb7 13. Ned4 Nxd4 14. Nxd4 Rg8!?

Here 14. ... Bc5 seems easier. Here's a summary of top-level practice: 15. Nf5 Rg8 16. Be3 (16. g4 h5 17. Be3 g6 18. Nh6 Rh8 19. Bxc5 bxc5 20. g5 Bc8 21. h4 Ke7 22. f4 Be6 23. Rf1 Rad8 was equal in Anand – Topalov, St. Louis 2016) 16. ... Bc8! 17. Nd4 Bxd4 (17. ... Bd7 18. Rd3 Bxd4 19. Rxd4 c5 20. Rd2 Bc6 21. Rad1 was a bit better for White in Vachier-Lagrave – Anand, St. Louis 2018) 18. Rxd4 c5 19.

Rd2 Be6 20. Rad1 h6!. Here the extra tempo dries out White's play; after ... Ke8-e7 and ... Rg8-d8, it's time to shake hands in peace.

15. Bf4 g5 16. Bg3 Rd8?!



Asking for trouble.

17. e6!

Now or never!

17. ... Bc5 18. c3 Bxd4 19. exf7+ Kxf7 20. cxd4 Rd7

Now Black has some issues to deal with.

21. Be5 h5 22. Re1

After 22. b4 g4 23. h4 Ra8! followed by ... a7-a5 equalizes. Perhaps ... Rg8-a8 is not a hard move to find, but I consider this more testing than the game continuation.

22. ... Re8 23. Re3 c5!

This pawn sacrifice is correctly timed.

24. dxc5 Kg6 25. Rc1 Bd5 26. a3 g4 27. cxb6 cxb6 28. Kh2

White is a healthy pawn up, but the opposite-colored bishop ending offers Black excellent drawing chances.

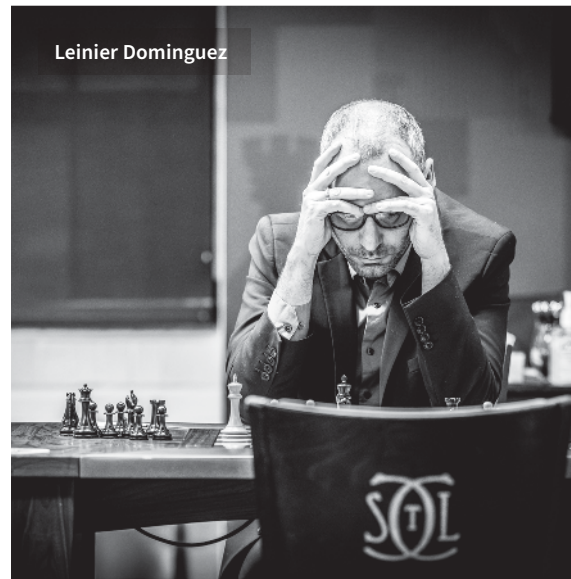
28. ... Kf5 29. Bd4 Re4

More to the point was 29. ... Rxe3 30. Bxe3 Be6.

30. Rxe4 Kxe4



31. Be3



Leinier Dominguez



Alireza Firouzja



Wesley So

I don't really understand why, but after 31. Bh8!! the engines give White excellent winning chances. I believe it is because this move denies ... Bd5-e6 and does not give Black time to regroup his pieces for a fortress, but it's a bit of a mystery! 31. ... Rd8 (the point: if 31. ... Be6? 32. Re1+ Kd5 33. Re5+ and White should win) 32. Re1+ Kf4 33. Bf6 Rd7 34. Re5 Bf7 35. h4 Bg6 (35. ... Rd2? 36. Re7) 36. Re3 (36. Rg5 Bf7) 36. ... Be4 37. Bg5+ Kf5 38. Rc3 and while White can't do much, Black doesn't have a fortress either. I think White has solid winning chances in this position.

31. ... Be6
Now Black has achieved the optimal set up. The rest is "basic" technique for Wesley!

32. hxg4 hxg4 33. Kg3 Rd3 34. Rc7 Rb3 35. Rxa7 Rxb2 36. Ra6 Rb3 37. Kh4 Bc8 38. Ra8 Be6 39. Ra6 Bc8 40. Ra8 Be6 41.



a4 Rb4 42. Kg5 Kd5 43. g3 Bd7 44. Ra7 Ke6 45. Bf4 Rxa4 46. Rb7 Ke7 47. Rxb6 Ra5+ 48. Kg6 Bf5+ 49. Kg7 Be4 50. Bd6+ Kd7 51. Bb4 Rf5 52. Rd6+ Kc7 53. Rd4 Bf3 54. Kg6 Rd5 55. Rf4 Kc6 56. Kf6 Bd1 57. Kg6 Bc2+ 58. Kh6 Bd1 59. Ba3 Kd7 60. Re4 Bf3 61. Re7+ Kc6 62. Bc1 Kd6 63. Re1 Kc5 64. Re8 Kc4 65. Bg5 Kd4 66. Kh5 Re5 67. Rd8+ Rd5 68. Rf8 Kd3 69. Re8 Ra5 70. Re3+ Kd4 71. Kh4 Ra2 72. Re7 Kd3 73. Be3 Ke2 74. Re5 Kf1 75. Kg5 Kg2 76. Rc5 Ra8 77. Re5 Rg8+ 78. Kf4 Rf8+ 79. Kg5 Rg8+ 80. Kf4 Rf8+ 81. Kg5 Rg8+, draw.

Dominguez's round seven win over Rapport left him in a tie for first place with Caruana, after the latter won a complex game in the Two Knights against Firouzja.

TWO KNIGHTS DEFENSE (C58)

GM Alireza Firouzja (2867)
GM Fabiano Caruana (2867)
Sinquefield Cup (6), St. Louis, 11.27.2023

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. Ng5 d5 5. exd5 Na5 6. Bb5+ c6 7. dxc6 bxc6 8. Bd3 Nd5 9. h4 h6 10. Qh5 Qf6 11. Ne4 Qe6 12. b3 g6 13. Qe2 f5 14. Nec3 Bg7 15. Bb2 0-0 16. Na3 e4 17. Bc4 Nxc4 18. Qxc4 Rb8 19. 0-0-0 Rb4 20. Qe2 a5 21. Rhe1 a4 22. g3 axb3 23. axb3 Qd6 24. f3 Qc5 25. Nab1 Re8 26. fxe4 fxe4 27. Ba3 Qa5 28. Bxb4 Nxb4 29. d4 e3 30. Kb2 h5 31. Na3 Bg4 32.

Qc4+ Kh7 33. Qf7 Rf8 34. Qe7 Bxd1 35. Rxd1 Rf2 36. Ne4 Rxc2+ 37. Kb1 Rf2 38. Ng5+ Kh8 39. Qe8+ Rf8 40. Qxg6 Qf5+ 41. Qxf5 Rxf5 42. Re1 Bxd4 43. Nc2 Bc3 44. Nxe3 Rxe5, White resigned.

It all came down to the final round, when Caruana overtook Dominguez by defeating Rapport, while the Cuban-American could only draw (with Black) against Aronian.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT, SEMI-SLAV (D45)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2795)
GM Richard Rapport (2748)
Sinquefield Cup (9), St. Louis, 11.30.2023

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 c6 3. Nf3 d5 4. Nc3 e6 5. e3 g6 6. Bd3 Bg7 7. 0-0 0-0 8. e4 dxe4 9. Bxe4 b5 10. Bd3 bxc4 11. Bxc4 Ba6 12. Bxa6 Nxa6 13. Qa4 Qb6 14. Bf4 Rfd8 15. Be5 Nb4 16. Rfd1 Nbd5 17. Qc2 Bf8 18. Ng5 Ng4 19. Bg3 Bg7 20. Nf3 Rac8 21. Ne4 c5 22. dxc5 Qxb2 23. Qxb2 Bxb2 24. Rab1 Bg7 25. Rdc1 Bh6 26. Rc4 Bf8 27. c6 f5 28. Neg5 Re8 29. Rb7 Ne7 30. h3 Nf6 31. Nd4 h6 32. Ngxe6 Nxc6 33. Nxf8 Nxd4 34. Rxc8 Rxc8 35. Nxg6 Rc1+ 36. Kh2 Nc6 37. Bf4 Rc2 38. Bxh6 Ne8 39. Ne7+ Kh7 40. Be3, Black resigned.

This gave Caruana sole possession of the Sinquefield Cup, and with it, the overall Grand Chess Tour title! ♠



2023 Sinquefield Cup

ST. LOUIS, NOVEMBER 19-DECEMBER 3, 2023

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	GM Fabiano Caruana	2867	*	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	U	5½/8
2	GM Leinier Dominguez	2816	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	U	5/8
3	GM Wesley So	2817	0	½	*	½	½	1	½	½	1	U	4½/8
4	GM Ian Nepomniachtchi	2719	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	U	4/8
5	GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	2847	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	U	4/8
6	GM Levon Aronian	2797	½	½	0	½	½	*	½	1	½	U	4/8
7	GM Anish Giri	2833	½	0	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	D	3½/8
8	GM Alireza Firouzja	2867	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	*	½	U	3/8
9	GM Richard Rapport	2827	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	U	2½/8
10	GM Jan-Krzysztof Duda	2731	U	U	U	U	U	U	D	U	U	*	W/D

KCF 19th ANNUAL 2024 ALL-GIRLS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Presented by



APRIL 12-14, CHICAGO, IL



The Champion in each age category, qualifies to represent the USA at the World Cadets, and World Youth Championships

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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30

Grade-Level National Champions Crowned in Orlando

Parity prevails; only **five** of the 13 grade levels did not have co-champions.

BY **"COACH JAY" STALLINGS**



OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF decades, I have seen many future grandmasters cruise to victory at the National K-12 Grade Championships. Sometimes the rating of the top player in each section would

be 300-400 points above the second-ranked competitor.

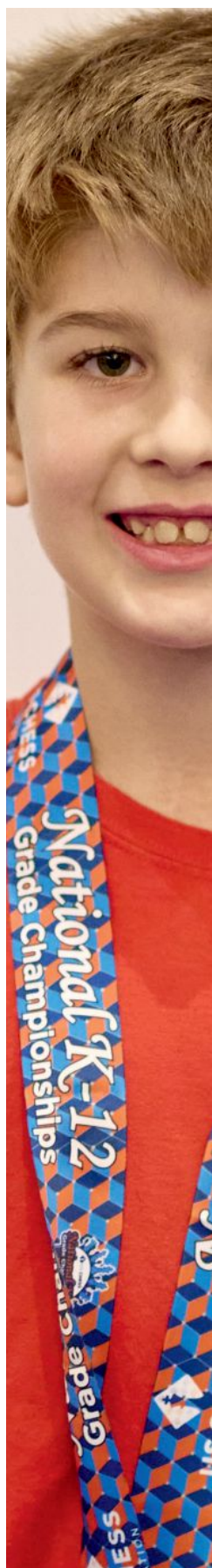
In the 2023 event, held from December 15-17 in Orlando, Florida, most sections did not have an elite player or group way above the others. Competition was *tough*! On the

top boards, there were over two dozen games in the final round in which both players were rated over 2000. And most sections had multiple champions crowned.

Perhaps only the fire marshal's limiting of players prevented a new attendance record in Orlando this year. There was a total of 2,405 players from 41 states (plus some from the territories and foreign countries), who played in 13 different sections. The largest section was the 277-player 5th Grade section. The kindergarten section was the smallest, with only 87 playing.



Left to right: Mehmet Ylianli, Sasha Schaefer, Kyle Wang, FM Eric Liu, and Avi Kaplan stood alone in their respective sections.



A STREAK, A BOLD PREDICTION, AND AN IMBALANCE IN STATE ATTENDANCE

Before making my cross-country trip to Orlando, several stories started to form:

- Nate Shuman, Gus Huston, and their team from Dalton would be vying to win their 10th straight National Grade Level Championship (it started in third grade, and they are now seniors!).
- Oak Park School from Gainesville, Florida looked like the favorite in a couple of the younger grades and their coach confirmed it. "I would be sorely surprised if we did not win the kindergarten section," Tim Tusing predicted. "And third grade is our strongest grade. It should be a lock."
- New York teams comprised over half of the total teams registered, but would they be able to dominate the final standings as in years past?

GRADE BY GRADE RESULTS 12TH GRADE

Co-Champions: IM Gus Huston (NY) and IM Max Lu (CT), 6½/7.

Team: Dalton (NY), 17 points.

IM Gus Huston (NY) and IM Max Lu (CT) drew their round six encounter and won their other games to finish where they started — at the top of the standings. Just a half-point back were Juan Pablo Lyon (FL) and Jessica Hyatt (NY).

The Dalton seniors completed their "decade of dominance," as their team won their grade level for the 10th consecutive year. Their total of 17 points out of a possible 21 landed them a full three points ahead of the second and third place teams: Success Academy HS Liberal Arts (NY) and Whitney Young HS (IL), which each tallied 14 points. Dalton's three-point margin of victory was equaled only by the Speyer second grade team.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

IM Maximillian Lu (2436)

IM Gus Huston (2481)

2023 K-12 Grade Champs (6), Orlando, 12.17.2023



WHITE TO MOVE

25. Nxd4 Bf5!



GENEROUS GM GEORGIEV!

GM Vladimir Georgiev served as the guest GM with the usual trifecta: Simul, lectures, and All-Comers Blitz sessions. It was evident right from the start that GM Georgiev loved the game and enjoyed playing against any and all who asked. His giving nature seemed to spill onto the board during his extended simul.

SIMUL

GM Georgiev gave up some entertaining draws, while others... those he just handed out for free!

As games finished, eager chess fans pleaded to jump in and play on boards that were now clear, and, consistent with his generous spirit, GM Georgiev shrugged affirmatively. In one of these "bonus" games, he continued his casual draw-giving with a Legal's Mate-style queen sacrifice.



CONSUMATE SHOWMAN

GM Georgiev

Random player

2023 K-12 Grade Champs (simul), 2023



WHITE TO MOVE

7. Bxf7 Kd7 8. Be6+ Ke8 9. Bf7+, draw.

ALL-COMERS BLITZ

Later, GM Georgiev played blitz against all-comers, but the line was long, so he cut it in half by constantly playing two games at once for the entire two hours! Oh, and he gave five minute to three minute time odds on both boards! He truly is "the generous GM!"

With this move Gus finds a clever way to (in effect) offer a draw.

26. Nxf5 Qc5+ 27. Kh1 Nf2+, draw.

The knight will bounce back and forth between f2 and h3 for the repetition.

11TH GRADE

Champion: Avi Kaplan (IL), 6½/7.

Team: Columbia Grammar & Prep School (NY), 16 points.

IM Nico Chasin had been tied with others at 4½ at the start of the day, but gave up a draw to Avi (see “Misses that Mattered” for the game) and Avi’s final round opponent missed an equally difficult drawing line late, making Kaplan the deserving winner.

CGPS overtook Stuyvesant on the final day, finishing two full points ahead of the field.

10TH GRADE

Co-Champions: Marvin Gao (FL) and IM Bach Ngo (FL), 6/7.

Team: American Heritage (FL), 15½ points.

A final round draw between leaders Marvin Gao (FL) and IM Bach Ngo (FL) translated into a co-championship between the two Floridian masters. Their six points led to no fewer than six players at 5½ points.

9TH GRADE

Co-Champions: FM Brewington Hardaway (NY), Aiden Reiss (NY), and Erick Zhao (PA), 6/7.

Team: Columbia Grammar & Prep School (NY), 16 points.

FM Hardaway drew with Black in round seven against Aiden Reiss, leaving an opening that Erick Zhao seized. His final round win leveled him up with the former players at six points, giving us three 9th Grade co-champions.

SOONER OR LATER

Aiden Reiss (2260)

Jerry Yao (2004)

2023 K-12 Grade Champs (6) Orlando, 12.17.2023

(see diagram next page)

Aiden Reiss’s sixth round win put him on board one in the final round.

49. Re6 Rd8 50. Rh4?

White leaves no doubt with 50. Rxb4! axb4 51. d6 Rcc8 52. Kb3 g6 53. Kxb4 gxf5 54. Re7+ Kg6 55. Kc5 Kg5 56. d7 Rc7 57. Kd6.

BUGHOUSE AND BLITZ BUGHOUSE K-12

Columbia Grammar (NY) teammates FM Brewington Hardaway and IM Nico Chasin cruised to victory in the K-12 bughouse with a perfect score of 10/10, sweeping the two-game sets from five different opposing teams. It was not their first time playing bughouse, but it was their first time playing together. Nico matter-of-factly observed, “We were the two strongest players, together on a team. Yes, there’s often more to it in bughouse, but we played quickly, and...” Here Brewington interjected, “We dropped pawns on h6 a lot!”

Three teams garnered eight points each. Finishing second, third, and fourth respectively were Nate Ziegler and Brian Bird (FL), Aaron Marian and Advait Nair (FL), and Chase Bellamy and Akshay Rajagopal (NC).

BLITZ K-12

FM Brewington Hardaway swept two games from IM Gus Huston in the sixth and final round of the K-12 Blitz tournament. At 11½/12, he finished a full point ahead of his bughouse partner, IM Nico Chasin. A third Columbia Grammar student made it a trio at the top as fifth grader WFM Megan Paragua was just a half-point behind Chasin. When asked if she was surprised by her result, she shrugged with a smile: “Not really. I finished third last year, too!” Nico told me that Paragua is very strong at blitz, adding with a smile, “I’m afraid of her.”

IM Max Lu and Will Moorhouse equaled Megan’s 10/12 score, earning the fourth and fifth spots, respectively.

Special mention for Texas freshman, Logan Shafer, who was the only player rated under 2000 (1984) to finish in the top 31 places — he earned his spot in 20th place. Tough field!

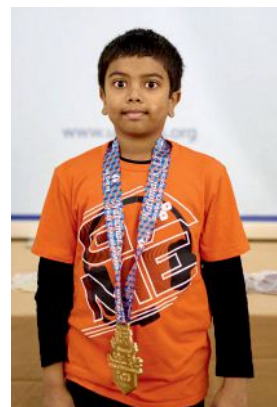
New York City’s Columbia Grammar scored 31½ points, giving them an impressive five-point margin of victory in the team standings. Dalton and Hunter (both NY) were second and third with 26½ points.

BLITZ K-6

Santhosh Ayyappan (NJ) took first on tie-breaks over Nehanraj Ramesh (IA) at 11/12. Five players finished 10/12 with tie-breaks landing them in this order: Tariq Yue, Kushagra Bhargava, and Oliver Rana, followed by the alliterative pair of Sivavishnu Srinivasan and Liam Liu.

PS77 Lower Lab (NY) won the team championship with 24½ points. Just one stalemate, perpetual, or maybe a dual flag drop behind was Speyer Legacy with 24 points.

Top: PS77 Lower Lab won the K-6 blitz. Middle: FM Brewington Hardaway. Bottom: Nehanraj Ramesh (L), Santhosh Ayyappan (R).

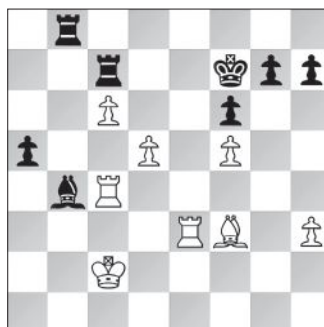




Saikaruyna Kesireddy



Erick Zhao



WHITE TO MOVE

50. ... Kg8 51. Rd4 Rd6?? 52. Rxb4! Rxe6
53. Rb8+ Re8 54. Rxe8+ Kf7 55. d6 Rxc6+
56. Bxc6 a4 57. d7, Black resigned.

CONVERSION

Erick Zhao (2441)

Saikaruyna Kesireddy (1901)

2023 K-12 Grade Champs (7), Orlando,
12.17.2023

(see diagram top of next column)

36. Bxc5!

With this move, White indicates that he is confident that he can win the resulting bishops of opposite colors endgame. A brave decision, especially in a final round game!



WHITE TO MOVE

36. ... dxc5 37. Rxd7+ Kxd7 38. Bxf7 Kd6

It initially looks like Black could have put up more resistance with a setup that would prevent f3-f4 and also keep White's king from getting to the fifth rank, but after 38. ... g5 39. Kf2 Be5 40. Ke3 Bd4+ 41. Ke2 Be5 42. Kd3 Kc6 43. Kc4 h6 44. Bd5+ Kb6 45. Ba8 Ka7 we see an idea that reminds me of the fourth game of the Fischer – Taimanov match from 1971: 46. Kxc5!! and wins.

39. f4 Ke7 40. Bc4 a5 41. e5 g5 42. Kf2,
Black resigned.

At first glance, Black's resignation looks premature, but looking ahead a few moves you can see that the e- and f-pawns will roll as White's king marches up the board.

8TH GRADE

Champion: FM Eric Liu (TX), 6½/7.

Team: Hunter College (NY), 15 points.

FM Eric Liu leapfrogged the previously unscathed Nikash Vemparala in this impressive Italian Pianissimo miniature to finish alone at the top.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

FM Eric Chang Liu (2377)

Nikash Vemparala (2232)

2023 K-12 Grade Champs (7), Orlando,
12.17.2023

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. c3 Nf6 5. d3 0-0 6. Nbd2 a6 7. 0-0 d6 8. Bb3 Ba7 9. h3 Be6 10. Bc2 Qd7 11. Re1 Rfe8 12. Nf1 d5 13. exd5 Bxd5 14. Ng3 h6 15. Nh4 Rad8 16. Nh5

White has achieved exactly what he intended. From here, most tactical themes involve the knight sacrificing at either g7 or h6, as you will see!

16. ... Qe6

My databases have not seen this move, and despite the result maybe they should!

DALTON (NY) SENIORS COMPLETE THEIR "DECADE OF DOMINANCE!"

In 2014, the 3rd grade team from Dalton won the national title. The next year, those same young players did it again. As the years went by, the national grade level titles continued to accumulate for this same group, without a single gap year.

Nate Shuman scored at least 5½ points (out of 7) in each of those years, earning three national champion titles. IM Gus Huston earned four national champion titles, including a shared title this year. Veda Safranek was also there every year. Pippa Lee missed only the online version in 2020. Julia Miyasaka made it to eight out of the 10 years. Ryan Peterson joined the team for the final four years. Along the way, others were also there as part of this history-making team.

David MacEnulty acted as lead coach until he retired a few years ago. Now, WIM Beatriz Marinello runs the program.



Fun fact: The average rating of the four team members who attended every in-person year from 3rd grade to 12th grade went from 1539 to 1969.

17. d4 Qc8?

I'd prefer 17. ... e4, cutting off the bishop that supported the invading knight. After 18. Ne3 (stronger is 18. f3) 18. ... Bxa2! 19. b3? Nxd4! 20. cxd4 Bxd4 21. Rxa2 Bxe3 play looks imbalanced and fun for both sides!

18. Bxh6!! gxh6

Putting up a bit more of a fight is 18. ... g6 19. Bg5 Qe6 but White is still winning.

19. Qd2 Re6 20. Qxh6 Ne8



Now it's White to move and mate in five. (Don't move until you see it!)

21. Ne7+ Nxe7

White will now execute a textbook "bishop

back-out mate." (I also call it a "Yates Mate" after a famous Alekhine – Yates win by the underdog in 1923).

22. Bh7+ Kh8 23. Bg6+, Black resigned.

Sometimes this thematic retreat guards the f7/f2 escape square. Sometimes it supports a mate there, and sometimes it blocks attacks against the queen on the 6th/3rd rank. Here it does two out of three jobs. Nice!

7TH GRADE

Co-Champions: Aditeya Das (NY), Bobby Qian (NJ), Andrew Jiang (GA), Vihaan Saxena (NJ), and Alexander Sukhiashvili (NJ), 6/7.

Team: Milburn HS (NJ), 17 points.

A statistically improbable situation occurred on Sunday afternoon when a total of 14 (!) players found themselves knotted at the top of the standings heading into the final round of the 7th Grade section. Perhaps just as improbable was the fact that six of the 14 players were from the great state of New Jersey!

A draw would not be enough to finish as a co-champion, so there were a lot of hard-fought games in that final round. In the end, five of the seven critical games ended with a decisive result.

PASSERS

Andrew Jiang (2314)

David Zhang (1834)

2023 K-12 Grade Champs (5), Orlando, 12.16.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

24. ... Rxb5?

Unfortunately we must call this a mistake even though it looks like White's next move simply loses a pawn.

Better was the simple 24. ... Kf8, activating the king.

25. axb5 Be7?

Black does not see the zinger coming.

THE GIRLS ROOM

The most happening spot outside the tournament hall was definitely the Girls Room. A tandem simul by GM Irina Krush and WIM Carolina Blanco in the late morning, pizza for the teen girls at lunch time, and a

live chess game in the afternoon were part of the ongoing activities.

The Altons (Krista and Arthur) continued to bring their positive energy and encouraging words, while Kimberly Doo greeted with a smile and was quick with a camera. Many girls consider the Girls Room the highlight of the weekend.



26. b6!

Here is the point of White's previous move.

26. ... Rb8

The originally-planned move 26. ... Bxc5 would have been destroyed by 27. b7!.

27. Bxa5 Nf4+ 28. Ke3 Bg5 29. Rc4 Rd8 30. Rxf4!

Nice simplification. At first glance, you might think that White did not see that he would not net Black's bishop, but the connected passers are the only important story line here.

30. ... e5 31. b7 Bxf4+ 32. Ke2 Rb8 33. c6 e4 34. Nb5 exf3+ 35. Kxf3 Be5 36. Bc7, Black resigned.

6TH GRADE

Champion: Kyle Wang (TX), 7/7.

Team: Collegiate School (NY), 15 points.

If New Jersey made an impact in the 7th Grade section, it was the Lone Star State that gave notice to the Union in the 6th Grade section. Top-ranked Kyle Wang won all seven of his games, with fellow Texan Srikar Kandikayala as the official runner-up, but tied with four others a full point behind Kyle. The others at 6/7 were

Anmay Chaudhury (GA), Jagadeeshwar Sri-dhar (VA), Vijay Anandh (TX), and Ishaan Rajendran (NY).

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B94)

Kyle Wang (2078)

Yuze Luke Ji (1952)

2023 K-12 Grade Champs (7), Orlando, 12.17.2023

Board one. Round seven. A title on the line. Nerves? Black overlooks a "biggie" on the 10th move of the game and White closed it out nicely from there.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Bg5 Nbd7 7. Bc4 b5 8. Bd5 Nxd5 9. Nxd5 Bb7 10. 0-0 h6??



11. Ne6! Bxd5

A quick death would have been the punishment if the knight had been captured. 11. ... fxe6?? 12. Qh5+ g6 13. Qxg6 mate.

12. Nxd8 hxg5 13. Qxd5 ...

Black resigned on move 37.

5TH GRADE

Co-Champions: Tariq Yu (PA), WFM Megan Paragua (NY), Kyle Dong (NJ), Yuvraj Sawhney (CA), Glenn Zhang (CA), Derek Zhang (NY), and Phineas Weingarten (NY), 6/7.

Team: Speyer (NY), 16 points.

DIAGONALS

Alan Chen (1943)

Tariq Yue (2047)

2023 K-12 Grade Champs (5), Orlando, 12.16.2023

(see diagram top of next column)

In round five, eventual co-champion Tariq Yu finished his game quickly with a nice two-move tactic.

55. ... d4+! 56. Kxd4, and White resigned.

Naturally White foresaw 56. ... Bf6+ 57. Kc4 Qb5 mate, while no better was 56. Qxd4+ Bf6.

OAK HALL SCHOOL – HOW DO THEY DO IT?

Coach Tim Tusing predicted “almost certain” team wins in the Kindergarten and 3rd Grade sections, and suspected that they would take 1st Grade as well. Nailed it.

Oak Hall School, the only non-New York team to finish in the Top 10 in each of the five sections from Kindergarten through 4th Grade, finished on top in three of those sections. Only Speyer (NY) matched their three national team titles.

How does a school in Gainesville, Florida compete with schools with long chess traditions that have titled players as coaches?

It all comes down to hard work and dedication leading up to the tournaments, and a determination to play your best once at the event.

During the school year, Coach Tusing hosts nightly online tournaments for his students at Oak Hall. Attendance ranges from five or six players to as many as

20. On Saturdays, he offers several tournaments. During the school week, he reviews the students' online games in their classrooms. This gives near instant feedback on how they could improve their play.

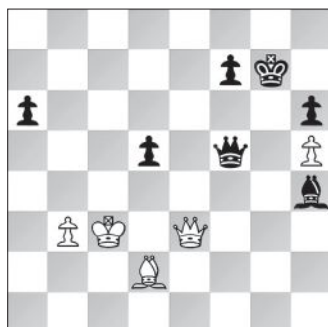
In the team room at Nationals, Coach Tusing connects with every student. Assistant Coach Kevin Sevilla is there to review games as well. In a seven-minute speech before one of the later rounds, Coach Tusing told his students, “Your eyes are your

windows to your brain. Open them so you can use your brain! If you don't, you are going to lose.”

AMAZING ACCOMPLISHMENT!

In the 3rd Grade section, Oak Hall's top three players combined for 14 wins and seven draws. They did not lose a single game out of their 21 games played! What are the chances of that?





BLACK TO MOVE

LPDO

Samuel Nemiroff (1840)

WFM Megan Althea Paragua (2173)

2023 K-12 Grade Champs (4), Orlando, 12.16.2023



WHITE TO MOVE

After Black's 28. ... Rxd4, another 5th Grade co-champion, Megan Paragua, benefitted from an oversight by White.

29. Rxb5?? Rxd1 30. Nxd1 Ba6!

Call it a *zwischenzug*, an intermezzo, or simply an in-between move, but the result is the same — a free piece for the young WFM.

31. Rxa5 Rxd1 32. Rxa6 Rxb1 33. Ra7 Rb4 34. a4 Rxe4 35. a5 Ra4 36. a6 Kh7 37. Rf7 Ng6 38. a7 h5 39. Kg1 Ra2 40. Kf1 e5 41. Ke1 e4 42. Kf1 e3, White resigned.

4TH GRADE

Co-Champions: Linxi Zhu (NY) and Santhosh Ayyappan (NJ), 6½/7.

Team: Speyer (NY), 16½ points.

US Chess Experts Linxi Zhu (NY) and Santhosh Ayyappan (NJ) drew their round six encounter but beat everyone else.

3RD GRADE

Champion: Sasha Schaefer (NY), 6½/7.

Team: Oak Hall (FL), 17½ points.



Sasha Schaefer defeated co-leader Advik Manchanda on board one in the final round so there would be no need to even discuss the tie-break systems. Oak Hall's team championship was a no-doubter as their margin of victory was 2½ points over the next closest team.

2ND GRADE

Co-Champions: Sriansh Katta (NC) and Samanyu Alluri (MA), 6½/7.

Team: Speyer (NY), 16½ points.

Sriansh Katta and Samanyu Alluri each defeated higher-rated players in the final round.

Speyer's three-point margin of victory in 2nd Grade tied with the Dalton 12th Grade team for the largest among the sections.

1ST GRADE

Co-Champions: Darren Wu (NY) and Mustafa Muhammad (NC), 6½/7.

Team: Oak Hall (FL), 14 points.

Darren Wu and Mustafa Muhammad drew their final round encounter after having won their first six games.

KINDERGARTEN

Champion: Mehmet Yilani (OH), 7/7.

Team: Oak Hall (FL), 14½ points.

Pre-tournament favorite Mehmet Yilani (OH) swept the Kindergarten section to earn the title of 2023 National K-12 Grade Kindergarten Chess Champion. Matthew Wang (CA) and Luke Larochelle (RI) tallied six points each to finish in shared second and third place.

Huge thanks to the staff and volunteers who worked so hard during this holiday

season to bring cheer to over 2,400 young chess players!

MISSED MOVES!

While reviewing over 100 games, and with the engine constantly sharing its non-subjective evaluations, your author stumbled across some fun moves that were NOT played.

Sometimes the "misses" would not have changed the final result of the game, but in others, it most certainly would have added at least a half-point to the score of the "misser." Let's take a look at eight positions — four where the miss didn't matter, and four where it did.

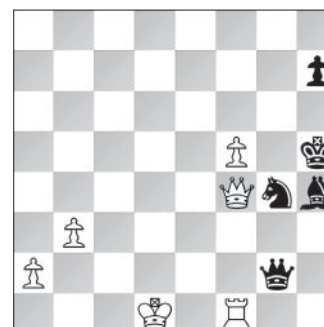
MISSED, BUT NO MATTER

NO HARM

Erick Zhao (2441)

FM Brewington Hardaway (2457)

2023 K-12 Grade Champs (5), Orlando, 12.16.2023



BLACK TO MOVE



Black eventually won this game, BUT he played over 30 more moves to do it. (White resigned on move 107.) Black played **73. ... Ne3+** instead of **73. ... Bg5!** and now White must give up the queen, the rook, or be mated.

NO FOUL

WFM Megan Althea Paragua (2173)
Mason Li (1980)
2023 K-12 Grade Champs (5), Orlando,
12.16.2023

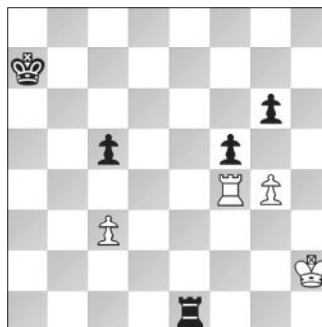


WHITE TO MOVE

White actually won this game by resignation after just six more moves, but Black could have put up more resistance. White played **27. Bb3** which could be answered with an activation of the black king (this did not happen!) instead of **27. Bd5! Bd7 28. e4 Kf8 29. f4 Re8** (blocking Black's king from helping out) **30. Rc1**, etc.

NO WORRIES

Advik Manchanda (1695)
Sasha Schaefer (1754)
2023 K-12 Grade Champs (7), Orlando,
12.17.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

Black was victorious after 37 more moves and some inaccurate moves by White. Here Black played the automatic recapture **38. ... fxg4?** instead of **38. ... Re4!** winning either the g-pawn or the resulting pawn race after the exchange of rooks. After **39. Rxe4 fxe4 40. Kg3 Kb6** Black promotes in time to stop White from doing so.

NO PROBLEMS

Marvin Gao (2306)
Kalia Wang (1810)
2023 K-12 Grade Champs (2), Orlando,
12.15.2023



WHITE TO MOVE

Here White played **29. Re2** with a winning game. The engine's choice seems superficial until an innocuous-looking pawn push reveals the evil nature of this continuation: **29. Re8!** (threatening 30. Qxf8+) **29. ... Qd6 30. Qxd6 Nxd6 31. Rxb8 Rxb8** and now **32. h3!!** with 33. Be5 coming, and all lines win big for White.

THE MISS MATTERED

REGRETS

Abigail Zhou (1701)
Samanyu Alluri (1651)
2023 K-12 Grade Champs (7), Orlando,
12.17.2023



WHITE TO MOVE

This game continued **28. Re8+ Kh7 29. Qf5+ Qxf5 30. Nxf5 Rxb4** and Black won on the 54th move of this final round showdown. If found, White's clever resource would have led play into a very equal-looking endgame: **28. Nf5!**, threatening mate and the fork on

DID YOU SEE THIS?

In a somewhat reversed symmetrical statistic, there were **five** co-champions in the 7th Grade section, while **seven** co-champions shared the 5th Grade title!

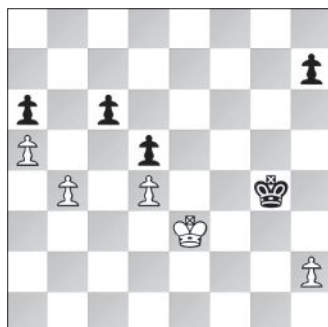
the e7-square. A likely line: **28. ... Rxc4 29. Ne7+ Kf8 30. Nxd5 Rc4** with equality.

IF ONLY

Alexander Sukhiashvili (1785)

Bobby Qian (2131)

2023 K-12 Grade Champs (6), Orlando, 12.17.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

Here Black was likely low on time and blundered away the win with **39. ... Kh3??**. The game finished **40. Kf4 Kxh2 41. Ke5 Kg3 42. b5 cxb5 43. Kxd5 h5 44. Kc5 h4 45. d5 h3 46. d6** with a draw on move 61. Winning



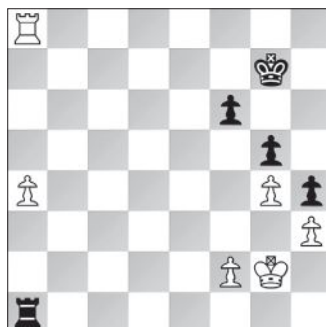
rather easily was **39. ... h6!** and Black would have outflanked or outraced White.

NO TAKEBACKS

IM Bach Ngo (2446)

William Wu (2144)

2023 K-12 Grade Champs (5), Orlando, 12.16.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

This is a very common pattern that requires vastly different winning/drawing plans depending on the kingside pawn structure. Now after **42. ... Ra3** White skillfully won by leaving the a7-square open and getting his king to b5 via b1. Black's king missed his opportunity to sprint for the f4-square with **42. ... Kf7** followed by ... Kf7-e6-e5-f4, changing the game into a three pawn versus two pawn situation on the kingside. White's king is as useful as an icepick in a desert.

BAD GEOMETRY

IM Nico Chasin (2514)

Avi Kaplan (2306)

2023 K-12 Grade Champs (5), Orlando, 12.16.2023

SCENES WE'VE SEEN

During round two, a teary-eyed girl asked me what time it was as she approached the exit. She was holding her completed scoresheet, so I knew exactly what was going on. "It's 5:25," I replied, to which she groaned as she turned slowly back towards the room full of players. It hurt me to tell her, but I said, "Sorry, I know your coach will be upset that you're out so soon, but you'll do better next round. ... Unfortunately, you can't stay in here." Bigger groan. Slumped shoulders. Slow walk out the door.



WHITE TO MOVE

White's defensive task looks impossible. If Black's rook is captured, ... Qd2xe2 threatens mate at f1 and h2. White played **36. Qb5 Ra2 37. Qd7 Qh6** and a draw was agreed. White had a geometric-looking win with **36. Rxc7+! Kxc7 37. Qb7+!!** and Black's king has to cooperate one way or another, i.e., **37. ... Kh6 38. Qxa8 Qxe2 39. Qh8+ Kg5 40. Qh3** and the white king is safe, while the passed d-pawn decides matters. ♠



Paparazzi would be at the K-12 Grades — who knew?!

A Normal Result

Performances in Zagreb and London indicative of a player growing in strength

BY GM JACOB AAGAARD



HANS NIEMANN HAD A career-best result in the “Tournament of Peace,” held in Zagreb, Croatia. With a score of 8/9 and a tourna-

ment performance of 2946 — the best performance of the year — the wind was in his sails as never before.

Niemann’s opponents were predominantly older players, many of whom have moved from active playing into coaching. With their solid, technical playing styles, they allowed his strengths to show in full — just as Magnus Carlsen did at the Sinquefeld Cup in 2022. These strengths include strong opening preparation and a great feeling for natural moves, coming from his long hours of chess study each day. His weaknesses were not probed, and thus did not cause him problems.

It is almost inevitable that a 2700-level player will have a great result if he plays 30+ tournaments a year. That Niemann is at this level is not in doubt; but as with most people, he plays above and below his typical strength from time to time.

Hans started well, scoring 1½/2 with Black, before playing a great technical game against one of the greats of yesteryear.

PETROFF DEFENSE (C42)

GM Hans Moke Niemann (2659)

GM Vasyl Ivanchuk (2653)

Zagreb (3), 11.24.2023

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nxe5 d6 4. Nf3 Nxe4 5. d4 d5 6. Bd3 Nc6 7. 0-0 Be7 8. Nbd2

This has proven to be the most consistent way to play against the Petroff lately. No

doubt Hans was theoretically well prepared here.

8. ... Nxd2 9. Bxd2 Bg4 10. c3 0-0 11. h3 Bh5! 12. g3 Qd7 13. Kg2 Bg6 14. Bf4 Bxd3 15. Qxd3 Bd6



16. Ng5!?

A small novelty. It should not put great fear into Petroff players, but it’s a good practical chance. 16. Bxd6 had previously been played.

16. ... g6! 17. Bxd6 Qxd6 18. Rae1 Rae8 19. h4 Nd8 20. h5 Ne6 21. Nf3



21. ... c6?!

My friend IM Renier Castellanos has pointed out the great frequency with which even strong grandmasters are reluctant to play a move like 21. ... gxh5!. In this case White is slightly better after 22. Re5 Ng7 23. Qb5!?, but Black’s position is quite defensible all in all.

22. Rh1?!

This move keeps the pressure on, but stronger was 22. hxg6! hxg6!? (22. ... fxg6 is positionally undesirable, yet still what Black must play) 23. Ne5. Now White is ready to play Rf1-h1 with a winning attack. Black has to try 23. ... Kg7, when it would be quite fantastical to play 24. f4! f5 25. g4! with a winning attack. The computer line continues 25. ... Nd8 26. Re3 fxg4 27. f5 gxf5 28. Rxf5 etc.

22. ... g5?

This leaves the Black position full of weaknesses. Instead 22. ... Ng7! was necessary.



After 23. hxg6 fxg6 24. Ne5 White's position is pleasant, but Black's position is not too uncomfortable.

23. Ne5 h6 24. Qf5!

This is a logical move, invading the Black position. Stockfish wants 24. b4, but who would decide to play on the queenside at this moment?

24. ... Ng7 25. Qd7 Qxd7 26. Nxd7 Rxe1 27. Nf6+!

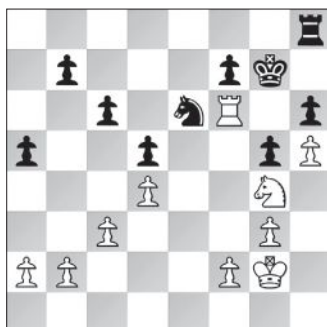


Keeping Black tied down.

27. ... Kh8 28. Rxe1 Ne6 29. Re5 a5 30. Ng4 Kh7?!

Here 30. ... Kg7 would invite 31. Ne3, which is indeed very unpleasant for Black. But what happened in the game ends up being even worse.

31. Rf5! Kg7 32. Rf6 Rh8

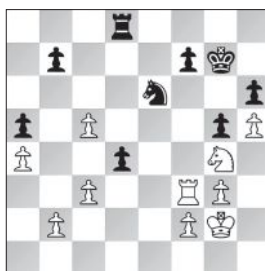


33. a4!?

This looks like a natural technical move, fixing the a5-pawn. In truth, it exposes the pawn for counterplay. The strongest plan would be to bring the king to a better square with 33. Kf1!.

33. ... b6?

Black misses his last chance to fight with 33. ... c5! 34. dxc5 d4, when White would have to prove his advantage with 35. Rf3! (35. cxd4? Rd8! would offer Black great counterplay) 35. ... Rd8 and now:



POSITION AFTER 35. ... Rd8

36. c6!! bxc6 37. Ne5 f6 38. Nxc6 Rd6 39. Ne7! and White wins. It's not clear that Niemann would have found this continuation at the board. Given how he got into trouble against Bartel later in this article, we can see that it is in such complexities that he becomes most prone to errors.

34. f4!?

Again strongest was 34. Kf1!. There is no reason to act immediately, as Black's position is devoid of counterplay.

34. ... gxf4 35. gxf4 Rc8?!

White would also be winning after 35. ... b5!? 36. f5 Nf4+ 37. Kf3 Nxh5, where taking on c6 is most natural, but Stockfish gives the odd 38. Rd6! bxa4 39. Rxc6! as even stronger. Black is in a surprising *zugzwang*.

36. f5

White wins easily now.

36. ... Ng5

Hopeless is 36. ... Nf4+ 37. Kf3 Nxh5 38. Rxh6.

37. Rxh6 Ne4 38. Kf3 Rc7 39. Kf4 Nd2 40. Rd6 Nc4 41. h6+ Kh7 42. Rd8, Black resigned.

ENGLISH OPENING (A29)

GM Ivan Cheparinov (2649)

GM Hans Moke Niemann (2659)

Zagreb (6), 11.27.2023

1. c4 Nf6 2. Nc3 e5 3. Nf3 Nc6 4. g3 Bb4 5. Nd5 e4 6. Nh4 0-0 7. a3 Bc5 8. Bg2 d6 9. 0-0 Re8



I have the feeling that Hans was slightly surprised in the opening and risked falling into danger. Unfortunately for Cheparinov, it appears that he was no better prepared here, quickly getting into trouble.

10. d3?!

This allows Black to get active.

A famous game went: 10. e3 g5 11. b4 Bb6? (11. ... gxh4 12. bxc5 Ne5!? with a complex game was needed) 12. Bb2 Nxd5 13.

Tournament of Peace

ZAGREB, NOVEMBER 22-30, 2023

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	GM Hans Moke Niemann	2659	*	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	8/9
2	GM Ante Brkic	2622	½	*	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	5/9
3	GM Anton Korobov	2667	0	½	*	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	5/9
4	GM Vasyl Ivanchuk	2653	0	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	1	5/9
5	GM Alexander Motylev	2619	0	½	½	½	*	½	½	1	½	½	4½/9
6	GM Ivan Sokolov	2588	0	0	½	½	½	*	½	1	½	1	4½/9
7	GM Hrvoje Stevic	2549	½	½	0	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	4/9
8	GM Zdenko Kozul	2531	0	½	½	½	0	0	½	*	1	½	3½/9
9	GM Robert Zelcic	2478	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	*	½	3/9
10	GM Ivan Cheparinov	2649	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	*	2½/9

cx d5 Nd4 14. d3!! gxh4 15. dxe4 Ne6 16. dxe6 Rxe6 17. e5 hxg3 18. hxg3 Qg5 19. exd6 Rxd6 20. Qb3 h5 21. Rad1 Rh6 22. Rd5 Qe7 23. Qc4 Bg4 24. Qf4 Rg6 25. Re5 Qd6 26. Be4 and Black resigned in Nakamura – Anand, Moscow 2016.

But perhaps even stronger is 10. b4! Bd4 (10. ... Bb6!?) 11. Rb1 g5 12. e3 gxh4 13. exd4 Nxd4 14. Bb2 when White is fighting for an advantage.

10. ... exd3 11. Qxd3 Ne5 12. Qc2 c6



13. Nc3?

The root of all of White's problems in this game. After 13. Nxf6+ Qxf6 14. Ra2!? a5 15. b3 White would still be fine.

13. ... Nxc4 14. Na4 Be6! 15. Rd1

Walking into a simple tactic, but White would also be a clear pawn down after 15. Nxc5 dxc5 16. b3 Nd6.



15. ... Bxf2+!

Amusingly Stockfish suggests that the unnatural 15. ... Bb6 is just as good, if not better!

16. Kxf2 Ng4+

A natural follow-up, but 16. ... b5! was stronger, leaving White in serious trouble.

17. Ke1?

White misses the chance to fight with 17. Kg1! b5 18. Bxc6 bxa4 19. Nf3! and although Black's game is easier, it does not provide him with an overwhelming advantage.

17. ... b5 18. Rd4 Nce3 19. Bxe3 Nxe3 20. Qc3



20. ... Bd5!

A nice solution.

21. Be4

White would also have to resign after 21. Bxd5 cxd5 22. Rd3 d4!.

21. ... Bxe4 22. Qxe3 Bd5 23. Qd2 bxa4 24. Rxa4 Re5

Setting up a simple threat of trapping the other white knight.

25. Rd4?! g5, White resigned.

A game played below Cheparinov's usual level, making it easier for Hans than it would be in London.

Towards the end of the tournament there were some strange, half-spoken accusations made towards Niemann. Statistics of his playing at "98% accuracy" were thrown around, and the organizers made public statements about a player giving "indications of cheating."

Let me begin my comments by noting that I was not in Zagreb, and it's hard to speak with authority on something you have not witnessed first-hand. I am also friends with some of the players raising concerns about the integrity of the event, and I trust their judgment immensely.

That said, the tournament had a 15-minute delay from its start, which was later expanded to 30 minutes. A study of the games themselves shows that Hans' play was not marked by single moments of brilliance, but continuous, high-level consistency. To cheat in such a way, a stream of moves would have to be fed to the player.

Another friend of mine — one even closer to those concerned about the integrity of the event — came to a similar conclusion. These were entirely human games. When there was only one good move, Hans would find it, unless it was too difficult. The games were all contested on his home court of

simple positional play, an area of the game where (as he displayed in a training camp with me two years ago) he has great feeling and talent. In situations where there were many good options, his choices were a bit random, and at times not all that inspired. The only thing missing from his play were big mistakes — there were certainly little ones.

Take the following game, where Hans failed to exert maximum pressure on moves 15 and 16. Sokolov then made a horrible mistake on move 21, losing the game.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

GM Hans Moke Niemann (2659)

GM Ivan Sokolov (2588)

Zagreb (7), 11.28.2023

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. c3 Nf6 5. d3 d6 6. 0-0 h6 7. Nbd2 a5 8. Re1 0-0 9. Nf1 Ne7 10. d4 exd4 11. cxd4 Bb6

I suspect that Hans was out of preparation around here.

12. h3 d5 13. e5 Ne4 14. Bd3 c5



15. Ng3?!

An odd decision. The doubled pawns do not make a good impression. Either 15. N1d2!? or 15. dxc5! Nxc5 16. Be3 would both put the onus on Black to prove the viability of his position.

15. ... Bf5?!

Here the correct 15. ... Nxg3 16. fxxg3 Bf5 provided Black with easy equality.

16. Nxf5?!

A clumsy move order. It was stronger to play 16. Bxe4! dxe4 17. Nxe4 cxd4 18. Nd6 d3 19. Nh4 Bh7 20. Qg4 with some pressure.

16. ... Nxf5 17. Bxe4 dxe4 18. Rxe4 Qd5 19. Rg4 Kh8

Here 19. ... cxd4! was simpler, but Black is still fine after the game continuation.

Now Hans thought for 40 minutes in this

position, trying to find a path forward. He came up with an interesting idea.

20. Qd3!? Nxd4 21. Ng5!



21. ... hxg5??

A tough mistake.

Finding the path for Black was not easy, but the first move was 21. ... g6. The position looks porous after 22. Ne4! and Black has to find 22. ... h5! 23. Rg5 Bd8! 24. Nf6 Bxf6 25. exf6 Qd6 when things would be level after something like 26. Qe3 Qxf6 27. Rxc5 Rad8.

22. Bxg5 Nf3+

Played after five minutes. It appears Sokolov might have had other plans, but lost his faith in them. Here 22. ... f5 23. exf6 e.p. Kg8 24. Bh6 ends with Black's death as well.

23. Qxf3 Qxf3 24. gxf3 Bd8?!

The last chance to provide resistance was 24. ... Bc7! 25. f4 f6.

25. Be3 Be7 26. Kh1 Rfe8 27. f4 Bf8 28. a4!

A nice technical move, but not a difficult one.

28. ... Ra6 29. Bd2!

A sound rerouting of the bishop. Black's position is hopeless.

29. ... c4 30. Bc3 Rh6 31. Kh2 Bb4 32. Rag1 g6 33. Rd1 Bxc3 34. bxc3 Re7 35. Rd5 b6 36. Rd4 Rc7 37. Rd6, Black resigned.

The final game of the tournament was probably Niemann's best; at the same time, it was the one where his moves found the least affection from Stockfish! His strategic play was focused and sharp.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, MOSCOW VARIATION (B51)

GM Hans Moke Niemann (2659)
GM Anton Korobov (2667)
Zagreb (9), 11.30.2023

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. Bb5+ Nd7 4. 0-0 a6 5. Bd3 Ngf6 6. Re1 e6 7. Bf1 b6 8. c4 Bb7 9. Nc3 Ne5 10. d4 Nxf3+ 11. gxf3 g6 12. Be3
A natural looking move, but not the most testing according to the digital overlords.

12. ... Bg7 13. Qd2 0-0 14. Rad1 Bc6!



Brilliant play by Korobov. Now Niemann took a long think.

15. Bg5

We see the point of Black's last move with 15. d5 exd5 16. cxd5 Bb5! and great counterplay.

15. ... Qb8?

Black had to solve his problems before they became structural. After 15. ... cxd4 16. Qxd4 h6! 17. Qxd6 Qxd6 18. Rxd6 hxg5 19. Rxc6 Nd7 Black would by no means be worse. His play on the dark squares is venomous.

16. d5 exd5 17. cxd5 Bd7

Now 17. ... Bb5?! no longer works, as 18. Nxb5 axb5 19. Bxb5 Rxa2 20. e5! dxe5 21. d6 would give White a winning positional advantage.

18. Ne2!

More aggressive is 18. f4!? but this is a move that can feel somewhat risky. Niemann is not a natural attacking player, and decides to maneuver his pieces into position before taking such risks.

18. ... Re8 19. Bg2 b5 20. Kh1?!

Stronger was 20. Ng3!, but Niemann's way of playing also makes sense.

20. ... a5 21. Ng3 h5?!

This creates extra weaknesses in the black position. Preferable was 21. ... Qd8, bringing assistance to the kingside.

22. Rg1 Ra7?

It is not easy to see how this should help Black.

23. Bf1!?

Niemann cautiously regroupes before initiating the attack. Stockfish highly recommends 23. Nf5!, and it also quite likes 23. f4!?, both with potent attacks.

ing the attack. Stockfish highly recommends 23. Nf5!, and it also quite likes 23. f4!?, both with potent attacks.

23. ... c4 24. Be2

Here 24. Nf5! was still strong.

24. ... Bc8 25. Bxf6 Bxf6 26. Nxh5 Bh8 27. Qh6 Qb6 28. Rg2 Ree7



29. f4! Rxe4 30. Rxc6+! fxg6 31. Qxc6+ Kf8 32. Qh6+!

It's totally unclear after 32. Qxe4? Qxf2.

32. ... Bg7



After 32. ... Kf7 33. Rg1 White wins.

33. Nxc7! Rxc7 34. Rg1 Bg4

If 34. ... Qd4 35. Qh8+ Kf7 36. Bh5+ and mate is imminent.

35. Bxc4!

Not a difficult move to find. Note that 35. Rxc7? would fail to 35. ... Qd4!.

35. ... Qd4 36. Be6 Qxb2 37. Qh8+ Ke7 38. Rxc7+ Kf6 39. Qh6, mate.

Niemann faced another type of opposition in London. The players were younger and stronger. They did not seek to play in the classical style that suits Niemann so very well, but instead, they put difficult problems to him that he resolved according to his strengths, but without the glorious outcomes of Zagreb.



The field for the 2023 London Chess Classic

Here GM Matusz Bartel did what he did in every game of the London Classic — he went bananas. The aggressive Polish GM had just one draw in London!

B-A-N-A-N-A-S

GM Hans Moke Niemann (2667)

GM Matusz Bartel (2659)

London (7), 12.08.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

32. ... Nh4!?

Not correct, but White has to play a lot of accurate moves to refute the attack.

33. gxh4 Nf3+ 34. Kh1 Nxh2 35. cxd5! g3

36. dxe6 g2+ 37. N3xg2! hxg2+



38. Kg1!

After 38. Nxc2? Qf3 39. Bxe4 Qh3! White is mated. For example: 40. Kg1 Nf3+ 41. Bxf3 Qxf3 42. Kf1 Rxc2! 43. Qd2 Qh3 and mate cannot be postponed for long.

38. ... Qf4 39. Rxe4!

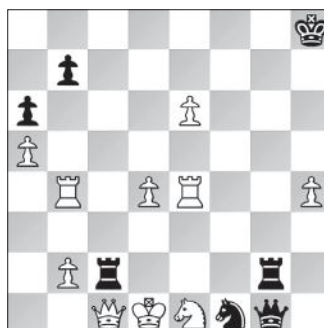
The other recapture 39. Bxe4? would allow Black to play 39. ... Ng4 40. Nf3 Nxf2! (40. ... Rc1? 41. Qxc1 Qxc1+ 42. Re1 Qf4 43. Rxb7 is hopeless for Black), where there is enough counterplay to make a draw.

39. ... Qxf2+ 40. Kxf2 g1=Q+ 41. Ke2 Nf1

42. Qc1!?

Stronger was 42. d5!, with the key idea being a queen check on d4.

42. ... Rg2+ 43. Kd1 Rxc2



44. Qxc2?

Played after just over two minutes of thought.

White had two winning continuations. Neither can really be calculated to the end, which is part of the problem for White. Instead Hans went for what seemed like the simplest win.

After 44. e7!? Rxc1+ 45. Kxc1 Rg8 46. e8=Q Rxe8 47. Rxe8+ Kg7 48. Rxb7+ Kf6 49. Nf3 White is winning, but there is a lot of work

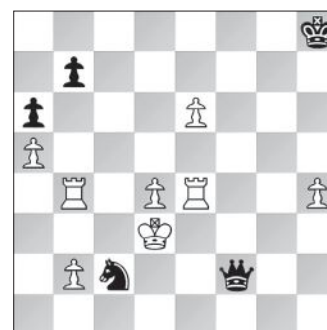
left to be done.

The most convincing win was 44. Qh6+! Kg8 45. e7 Rgd2+ 46. Qxd2 Rxd2+ 47. Kc1, but even here, it is easy to think you may have missed something. After 47. ... Rd1+ 48. Kxd1 Ne3+ 49. Kd2 Qf2+ 50. Kc3! Nd5+ 51. Kc4 Ne3+ 52. Kb3 Qf7+ 53. Ka3 White wins.

44. ... Rxc2 45. Nxc2

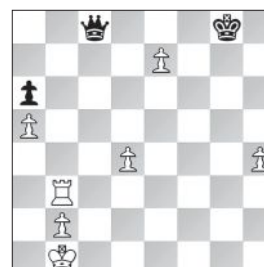
Hans definitely intended to play 45. e7? but would only now have seen that Black has 45. ... Qg4+!! 46. Rxg4 Ne3 mate!

45. ... Ne3+ 46. Kd2 Qf2+ 47. Kd3 Nxc2



48. d5?

White had a fantastic draw with 48. Rxb7! Qf3+ 49. Kd2! Qxe4 50. e7 Qg2+ 51. Kc1! Qg8 52. Kxc2 Qc8+ 53. Kb1 Kg8 54. Rb3!



POSITION AFTER 54. Rb3

The position is a theoretical draw. You can remove the a5-, d4-, e7-, and h4-pawns. White will still shuffle Rb3-a3-c3, and there is no zugzwang!

48. ... Nxb4+ 49. Rxb4 Qc5?

Black could have won with something like: 49. ... Qf3+ 50. Kc4 Qf4+!, where the winning idea is rather exceptional: 51. Kc5 Qc7+ 52. Kd4 Qe7 53. Kc4 Kg7 54. h5 Kf6 55. h6 Ke5 and the black king eliminates the pawns. The key point is that the b7-pawn remains. There are no fortresses on the horizon.

50. Rd4 Qd6 51. Ke4 Kg7 52. Rd3?

The engine suggests that 52. h5, but the practical difficulty looked too difficult for Hans.

52. ... Qh2

The white pawns get picked off, one by one. The game could have ended now.

53. Rc3

Here 53. d6 Qe2+ 54. Re3 Qc4+ 55. Kf3 Qd5+ 56. Ke2 Kf8! is another winning line for Black.

53. ... Qxh4+ 54. Kf5 Qh5+ 55. Ke4 Qh4+ 56. Kf5 Qh2 57. Ke4 Kg6 58. Rc8 Qd6 59. Rc2 Qg3 60. Rc8 Kg7 61. Kd4 Qf4+ 62. Kd3 Qd6 63. Kc4 Kf6 64. Rh8 Qc7+ 65. Kd4 Qg7 66. Rh1 Ke7+ 67. Kc5 Qg6 68. Rc1 Qd3 69. Rc4 Qe3+ 70. Rd4 Qc1+ 71. Rc4 Qxb2 72. Re4 Qb5+ 73. Kd4 Qxa5 74. Ke5 Qc7+ 75. Kf5, and White resigned.

A last-round triumph saved the tournament for Niemann.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

GM Hans Moke Niemann (2667)

GM Gukesh D (2720)

London (9), 12.10.2023

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. d3 Nf6 5. 0-0 d6 6. c3 a6 7. a4 Ba7 8. Re1

In this position 8. a5 h6 9. Be3 might be better, although admittedly I am not a great expert in the complexities of the Italian Game.

8. ... h6 9. a5



9. ... g5!

The variations with ... g7-g5 have proven to be just as dangerous for White as for Black. For players looking to win, it's worth the risk.

10. Be3 g4 11. Nfd2 Bxe3 12. fxe3?!

This move does not make sense after having put the rook on e1. White had to play 12. Rxe3 h5 and now something like 13. d4!?, with a complicated game where Black's advance on the kingside is double-edged.

12. ... Nh7 13. Nf1?!

This maneuver looks a bit odd. Here 13. Rf1

Ng5 14. d4 was probably better, but Black's position is quite comfortable.

13. ... h5 14. Ng3



14. ... Qg5?

This is the moment where Gukesh errs.

I don't think Hans would have missed 14. ... h4! with a simple advantage after 15. Nf5 Bxf5 16. exf5 d5 17. Bb3 Nf6!. This is the type of play he excels at.

15. Nd2 Ne7 16. Qa4+ c6 17. Qb4!

With this move White manages to create counterplay.

17. ... h4 18. Nf5 Bxf5 19. exf5 d5 20. Bb3

(see diagram top of next column)

20. ... 0-0?

Black should have played something like 20. ... 0-0-0, when the position is messy indeed. Now White takes over the position and the game.



21. Ra4!

Perhaps this is not a difficult move to find... but you do have to see it!

It would appear that Gukesh had missed this idea, or something connected to it. Now White is winning.

21. ... g3

It's true that 21. ... Nf6 would defend the pawn, but the drawback is that it also hangs the e7-knight. Not much else recommends itself for Black.

22. Qxh4 Qxh4 23. Rxh4 gxh2+ 24. Rxh2 f6 25. e4 Rf7 26. Nf3 Rg7 27. d4 exd4 28. Nxd4 Ng5 29. exd5 Nxd5 30. Rh6 Kf7 31. Kf1 Rag8 32. c4 Nc7 33. c5+ Nd5 34. Bxd5+ cxd5 35. Ne6, Black resigned. ♠

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London Chess Classic

LONDON, DECEMBER 1-10, 2023

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	GM Michael Adams	2670	*	1	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	6/9
2	GM M. Amin Tabatabaei	2694	0	*	½	1	½	1	0	½	1	1	5½/9
3	GM Gukesh D	2746	½	½	*	1	0	1	½	0	½	1	5/9
4	GM Andrei Volokitin	2660	½	0	0	*	1	1	1	½	½	½	5/9
5	GM Hans Moke Niemann	2659	½	½	1	0	*	0	1	½	½	½	4½/9
6	GM Mateusz Bartel	2651	0	0	0	0	1	*	1	1	½	1	4½/9
7	IM Shreyas Royal	2404	½	1	½	0	0	0	*	1	½	½	4/9
8	GM Jules Moussard	2639	0	½	1	½	½	0	0	*	1	½	4/9
9	GM Nikita Vitiugov	2712	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	*	½	3½/9
10	GM Luke McShane	2626	½	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	*	3/9

Dr. Tarrasch's Way

A fine showing from one of the game's great theoreticians

BY BRUCE PANDOLFINI



DR. SIEGBERT TARRASCH (1862-1934) was, during his heyday of the 1890s, among the strongest players in the world. He made some of Steinitz's ideas part of his overall approach. Tarrasch emphasized space and mobility, underscoring the two bishops and control of open files. His games and writings featured principles that surely helped spread public interest in chess. If there's a downside to over stressing generalities, it's to make one less aware of specifics that might outweigh bromides and oversimplifications. In an 1893 game played at Nuremburg against Hugo Haeusler (White), we see Tarrasch relying on a general approach that worked nicely.

ITALIAN GAME (C50)

Hugo Haeusler
Siegbert Tarrasch
Nuremburg, 1893

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. 0-0



Now ensure that the position above is set up on your chessboard. As you play through the

remaining moves in this game, use a piece of paper to cover the article, exposing Black's next move only after trying to guess it. If you guess correctly, give yourself the par score. Sometimes points are also awarded for second-best moves, and there may even be bonus points — or deductions — for other moves and variations. Note that ** means that Black's move is on the next line. **

4. Par Score 5 Nf6
Tarrasch loved development and playing for the center. You may accept *full credit* for 4. ... d6.

5. d3
White continues with his own development, leading to a familiar position. **

5. Par Score 5 d6
Black solidifies his e-pawn. No need to castle yet, but you may accept *full credit* for 5. ... 0-0.

6. Be3
Ostensibly, White threatens to double Black's pawns, but Black needn't fear the idea. **

6. Par Score 6 Bb6
This is the usual response here, though you may accept *full credit* for 6. ... Bg4. If now 7. Bxb6, Tarrasch would confidently take back toward the center, opening the a-file.

7. h3
White prevents pinning the f3-knight by stopping 7. ... Bg4. **

7. Par Score 5 h6
Tarrasch in turn prevents his own knight

from being pinned. The move also has an attacking plan behind it.

8. Nc3
White gets out his last minor piece. **

8. Par Score 6 g5
Now we see another point to 7. ... h6. Tarrasch launches a kingside initiative.

9. Bxb6
There was no pressing need for this exchange. White might have tried 9. Nd5. **

9. Par Score 5 axb6
Tarrasch naturally takes back toward the center, opening the a-file for his queen-rook.

10. Qd2
White connects his rooks, while getting his queen off the d1-h5 diagonal. **

10. Par Score 6 g4
Tarrasch sticks to his plan. He opens the g-file for attack against the white king.

11. hxg4 **

11. Par Score 5 Bxg4
White must now worry about his kingside becoming busted up.

12. Nh2
The threat is averted with this counterattack to the bishop. The position is about equal. **

12. Par Score 5 Qd7
Tarrasch opts for queenside castling. More sensible was 12. ... Bh5, keeping the bishop for attack (accept *full credit* if you played it).

13. Nd5
Hoping to trade off attacking pieces. Also worthy was 13. f4. **

13. Par Score 4 Nh5
Still trying to fuel his kingside assault, Tarrasch takes a big risk. Does he get enough play to justify allowing 14. Nxg4 Qxg4 15. Nxc7+?

14. Bb5
Showing perhaps too much respect for his opponent, White follows a less complicated course. **

14. Par Score 4 Rg8
Tarrasch goes all out for attack. But steadier was 14. ... 0-0-0 (accept *full credit*).

15. f3

ABCS OF CHESS

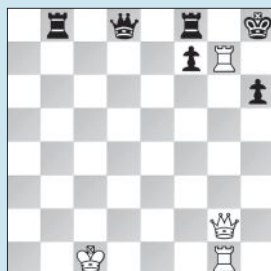
THESE PROBLEMS ARE ALL related to key positions in this month's game. In each case, White is to move. The answers can be found in Solutions on page 63.

MARCH EXERCISE:

When initially playing through an annotated game, we are tempted to consider every single note fully before moving ahead. Rather than being so exhaustive at first, it makes greater sense to play through the game one time without stopping to analyze much. Once we've gotten an appreciation for where the game is going, then we can play through it a second time more intensively. Like magic, some of the more intricate variations will suddenly become easier to grasp.

PROBLEM 1

Mating net



PROBLEM 2

Mating net



PROBLEM 3

Mating net



PROBLEM 4

Mating net



PROBLEM 5

Mating net



PROBLEM 6

Mating net



This advance prepares lateral defense of g2. Perhaps White didn't like 15. Qxh6 Bh3, but after 16. Qxh5 Rg2+ 17. Kh1 White survives with the extra piece. Instead 15. ... 0-0-0 is best, bringing the queen-rook into play. (**1 bonus point** if you so analyzed). **

15. Par Score 5 Bh3

Such an intrusion looks ominous for White, but he can defend, while retaining a slight edge.

16. Rf2
So far, White is definitely holding the fort. **

16. Par Score 5 0-0-0
Black finally has all his pieces activated.

17. Nf1
This redeployment seemingly made sense, so 17. Qxh6 was rejected. After 17. ... Rh8 18. Qd2 Rdg8, White feared Black's pressure against his kingside. **

17. Par Score 5 Rg6
The text defends the h-pawn and readies doubling rooks on the g-file.

18. Kh2
White gets out of the pin, but more consistent was 18. Nfe3. **

18. Par Score 7 Rdg8

The g2-pawn is seriously menaced.

19. gxh3
White's move deals with the threat, but at the cost of compromising the g-file. Again, more logical was 19. Nfe3. **

19. Par Score 6 Rg1
Naturally, Tarrasch invades, with several potential threats if White gets careless.

20. Qxh6
It's now too late for Tarrasch's opponent to get greedy. It's going to cost him. **

20. Par Score 7 Rh1+
Finally, Tarrasch has a forced win. His general approach has worked once again.

21. Kxh1 **

21. Par Score 5 Qxh3+

22. Nh2
Add **1 bonus point** for seeing that 22. Rh2 would have led to 22. ... Qxf3+ and mate. **

22. Par Score 4 Ng3+
After White realized there was a discovered attack on his queen, he chose to...

23. White resigned.
Many of us would have done the same. ♠



POSITION AFTER 22. ... Ng3+

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

Opposite Attraction

With bishops of opposite colors, know when to trade and when not to.

BY GM JOEL BENJAMIN

B

ISHOPS OF OPPOSITE COLORS are known to increase drawing chances for the inferior side.

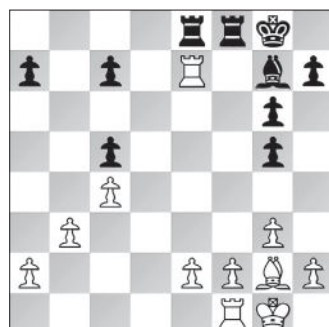
Many a passed pawn finds itself

blockaded on the color complex patrolled by the enemy bishop. When other pieces like knights and/or rooks accompany the bishops, the general rule is for the stronger side to mitigate blockade attempts by avoidance of trades.

The first example was rather easy to win with a vast superiority in pawn structure as well as the extra pawn.

CAN I GET A CONNECTION?

GM Joel Benjamin
FM Jacob Chudnovsky
Chicago Open (4), 1995



WHITE TO MOVE

19. Rxe8!

Amateur players, especially kids, are often tempted to win endgames by taking everything that isn't nailed down. In this case White can frustrate the opponent by denying counterplay.

After 19. Rxc7 Rxe2 either capture is met by 20. ... Bd4 converging on the suddenly vulnerable f2-pawn.

19. ... Rxe8 20. e3 Rd8

Masters naturally seek out activity, but Black digs a deeper hole. It's better to wait with 20. ... Bf6.

21. Bd5+ Kf8?!

The same comment can be applied here. The text move is too dangerous, though sliding the king into the corner with 21. ... Kh8 would be depressing. I would probably continue 22. f4 gxf4 23. gxf4. White already has a passed pawn, and a potentially protected one at that.

22. f4

We see another rule that usually applies in middlegames — opposite bishops can intensify an initiative.

22. ... g4

After 22. ... gxf4 23. Rxf4+ Ke8 24. Rh4 h6 25. Re4+ Kd7 26. Re6 g5 27. Rg6 Bf8 28. Kf2 Black is completely disorganized and will likely shed more pawns soon.

23. f5 g5

Or 23. ... Bh6 24. fxg6+ Kg7 25. gxh7 Bxe3+ 26. Kh1 Kxh7 27. Re1 Bd4 28. Be6 and the connected passers appear just the same.

24. f6

This is as easy a decision as you'll see in any Capital One commercial. You cannot let pawns get blocked with bishops of opposite colors! After 24. e4 Rd6 White's winning chance have instantly vanished.

24. ... Bh8 25. Rf5!

White should still win after 25. e4 c6! 26. Bxc6 Rd6 27. Bb5! (not 27. Bd5? Rxf6 bottling up White's rook) 27. ... Rxf6 28. Rd1, but it's better not to sell the asset on f6 so cheaply.

25. ... c6

If 25. ... Rd6 26. Rxc5! (time to sell high — 26. f7? h6 27. e4 Rf6 28. Re5 Rf1+! is a dead draw) 26. ... Bxf6 27. Rxc4 c6 and two extra pawns provide a winning cushion.

26. Bxc6 Rd1+

Here 26. ... Rd6 27. Rxc5 Rd1+ 28. Kf2 Bxf6 29. Ke2 leaves a whole mess of passed pawns.

27. Kg2 Rd2+ 28. Kf1 Rxa2



29. Ba4!

Blocking off the rook buys time to get the pawn to e5, effectively ending the game. Here 29. e4?! Ra6! would keep the game going.

29. ... Ra1+ 30. Ke2 Ra2+ 31. Kd3 Rxh2 32. e4 Rg2 33. e5 Rxc3+ 34. Ke4 Rf3 35. Rxc3

It's true that 35. Rxf3 gxf3 36. Kxf3 Kf7 37. Ke4 Ke6 38. Bc6 is good enough to win, but I would rather eliminate more pawns first.

35. ... Kf7 36. Rxc3 Rh3 37. Kf5

Of course White is easily winning after 37. Bc6 Bxf6 38. exf6 Kxf6, but my choice leaves Black nothing to fight on with.

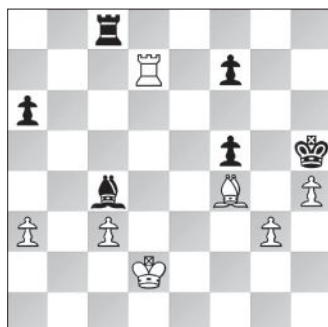
37. ... Rf3+ 38. Rf4 Rxf4+ 39. Kxf4 Ke6 40. Bc6, Black resigned.

The pawns will cost Black his bishop.

The next diagram seems to promise a protracted struggle, but White's two assets enable shortcutting.

CASHING IN

GM Andrei Volokitin (2660)
GM Mateusz Bartel (2651)
London Chess Classic (8), 2023



WHITE TO MOVE

White is technically ahead one pawn, but effectively owns a two-pawn advantage. His well-separated passers are well-guarded, and Black can never afford to trade rooks. The passed pawns prevent his bishop from coordinating any potential blockade. So White uses the rook trade as a weapon.

60. Rc7! Rd8+ 61. Kc2 Bd5 62. c4 Be6 63. Kc3 Kg4 64. Rc6 a5 65. Rc5 Ra8 66. Rb5 Rc8 67. c5 a4 68. Bd6 Ra8 69. Rb8!

Now both pawns run free, so the end is approaching.

69. ... Ra7 70. Rg8+ Kf3 71. h5 f6 72. Re8 Bf7 73. Rh8 Rb7 74. c6 Rb3+ 75. Kd4 Ke2 76. c7 Be6 77. Re8, Black resigned.

Normally piece trades are to be avoided when prosecuting advantages with opposite-colored bishops. Our final example was a much tougher conversion, with many fits and starts!

PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

GM Joel Benjamin (2534)

IM John Bryant (2442)

U.S. Championship (7), St. Louis, 10.05.2013



WHITE TO MOVE

Black's pawn structure is a mess, with isolated and doubled pawns galore. It would be foolish to cash in with 29. Nxe6 Bxe6 30. Bxc7

a4, when the extra pawn doesn't mean much with opposite-colored bishops on the board.

29. Na4

It's the first of many times this crucial piece will have to bide its time on the sidelines.

29. ... h5 30. Be5 Kh7 31. Kf2 Kg6 32. g3 f6 33. Bc3 Ng5 34. Rd2 Nf7 35. Re2 Ng5 36. Nc5 Kf7 37. Rd2 Ne6



38. Na4

Here my engine advocated 38. Nd7 which seemed problematic to me for two reasons. Black can try to liquidate the weak a-pawn 38. ... a4 39. b4 (39. Bxf6 axb3 40. axb3 Ra3 is not out of the question, but Black has achieved some annoying activity) and then pin my knight with 39. ... Rd8. Stockfish may not be concerned with this problem, continuing calmly with 40. Ke3, but over the board I could hardly entertain this risky "horseplay."

38. ... Ke7 39. Ke3 Kf7

White's advantage is stabilized, but working out the breakthrough will be complicated. Along the way, White can afford temporizing moves. There are several benefits to this strategy: 1) Every move puts 30 precious seconds back on my clock. 2) I get insight into my opponent's defense and can see how he reacts to certain moves. 3) I can wait for a favorable opportunity to strike while working out details.

40. Rd7+ Ke8 41. Rd1 Kf7 42. Rd2 Ke7 43. Rh2 Bg6

I felt that I could potentially break with g3-g4 and attack the f6-pawn. But it seemed that my king would always be a problem. On e3 or d2 it will be harassed by his rook, and on f2 it would be in the way of my rook. So I eventually realized that I needed to run my king to b2 to have the freedom to execute my plan.

(see diagram top of next column)

44. Kd2!

I'm not sure if I timed this homage to Petro-



sian correctly, but I had the feeling that Bryant was going to continue to wait in any case. The engine suggestion is 44. ... Rd8+ 45. Kc1 Rd3 46. Rf2 c5 47. Bxa5 Be8 48. Nb2 Rd8. It is not easy to commit to jettisoning material for activity, but when progress is visible it's often a good time to take the plunge.

44. ... Kf7 45. Kc1 Ng5 46. Rf2

Stockfish 14 likes 46. Nc5 Ne6 47. Nxe6 Kxe6 48. a4, but I was reluctant to trade knights before a single pawn has dropped.

46. ... Ne6 47. Kb2 Ra7 48. Rh2 Ng5 49. Rf2

Better was 49. Nc5 Ne6 50. Nd7.

49. ... Ne6 50. Rd2 Ra8 51. Rd7+ Ke8 52. Rd1 Kf7 53. Re1 Ra7 54. Rh1 Ng5?

If 54. ... Ra8 55. g4, getting the ball rolling.



55. Nc5 Ne6 56. Nd7

The first pawn drops without Black getting any counterplay, and the collapse is swift.

56. ... a4 57. Bxf6 axb3 58. axb3

Another benefit of my king maneuver is that my queenside is now perfectly defended.

58. ... Nc5

Waiting will not help Black any longer, but now I can forget about opposite colored bishops!

59. Nxc5 Kxf6 60. Re1 Bf7 61. Nd7+ Kg5 62. Re5+ Kh6 63. Rc5 Kg7 64. Ne5, Black resigned. ♠

Another World

Genna Sosonko evokes players and places from the past in *The Essential Sosonko*.

BY IM JOHN WATSON

G

ENNA SOSONKO WAS BORN in 1943 in St. Petersburg and grew up in the extraordinary chess culture of the Soviet

Union in the 1950s and 1960s. He became a strong player and specialized as an elite chess trainer with advanced players, most notably Tal and Korchnoi. In 1972 he left the Soviet Union and moved to the Netherlands, which gave him expanded playing opportunities so that he soon became an IM, then a GM, and ultimately reached #17 in the world.

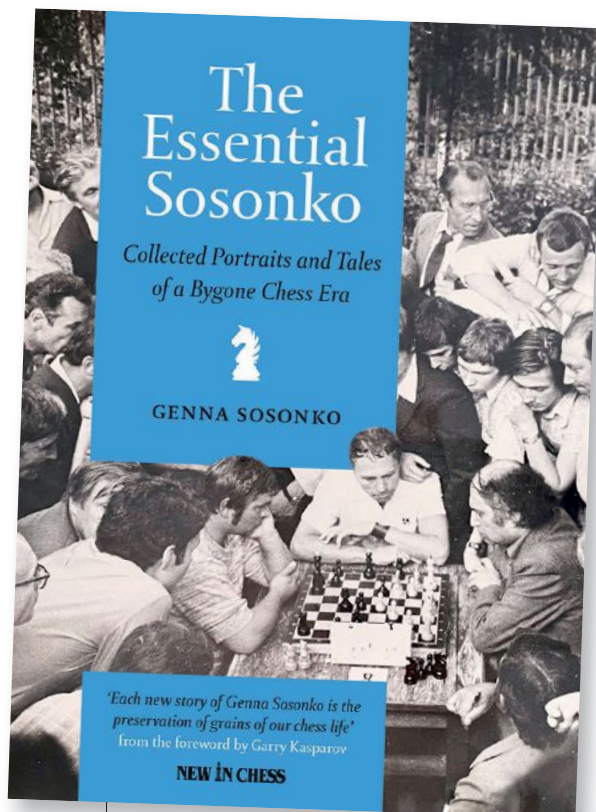
That is impressive enough, but what has truly distinguished Sosonko has been his chess writings, mostly lengthy historical/biographical essays, in the Dutch magazine *New in Chess*, beginning in 1992 and continuing through the present. These essays have been reprinted in the collections *Russian Silhouettes* (2001, 2009), *The Reliable Past* (2003), *Smart Chip from St. Petersburg* (2006), and *The World Champions I Knew* (2013). *The Essential Sosonko* is a massive 840-page hardback with a selection of these and more recent writings, and excerpts from other Sosonko works such as *The Rise and Fall of David Bronstein* (Elk & Ruby, 2017). There are 15 pages of black-and-white photographs, quite a few of players in their final years, with no less than eight of Tal and several of Korchnoi and Bronstein.

The 69 pages of material on Tal, Sosonko's favorite subject, by itself constitutes a compelling mini-biography. Sosonko's prose is highly readable and down to earth, but in almost every essay he permits himself excursions into literary, even romantic imagery. For example, "To this day the figure of Tal stands alone in the elite ranks of the World Champions. His intrusion into the settled, regulated world of chess most reminds one of a punitive expedition: he took the greatest peak by storm, shaking up his sleeping

contemporaries. Tal burst into the stagnant air of that era, returning to chess what was already well known in it, but which had gone away forever with modern methods of defence, as was thought... At that time only one man lived a full life in the chess world, and the others tried to fill their lungs with the air he exhaled. Tal injected a joyful, reckless spirit into a game which was more and more turning into a science. He achieved a revolution in chess in that era, whereby unwritten law defeated written law and established authority, which couldn't last long (and didn't), but which gave the game a new impulse."

Wonderful. Too much of this could get a bit tiresome, but Sosonko only indulges himself occasionally, and is primarily a journalist with a great eye for physical details and ambience. He continues: "But even playing through these early Tal games, you can only really feel them by turning back time, by plunging yourself into the atmosphere of the turbulent tournament hall, hearing the intakes of breath of hundreds of fans, the applause and the audible responses after his moves, despite the warning sign 'Keep quiet'. Seeing Botvinnik adjusting his glasses in a professorial manner on the stage of the Estrada Theatre and insisting on moving the game to a room behind the stage because of the noise in the hall. The leading lights of the time, paralyzed by the bewildering question that was so clearly phrased by Korchnoi: 'Why? Why him? Does he really understand chess better than I do?'"

Compare this description about Efim Geller in 1974:



"I can picture well the Geller of that time. A man of few words, with a characteristic facial expression, frequent rocking of the head, accompanied by a sceptical raising of the eyebrows, his checked jacket, which he carefully hung on the back of his chair, and the ashtray, full of cigarette-ends, always alongside him. ... Obstinate, with a dimpled chin and a slow waddle, Geller's entire appearance was more that of a former boxer, or an elderly boatswain who had come onshore, rather than the world-class grandmaster he was."

The first of Sosonko's two essays on Petrosian is mostly about his adored status among

the Armenian community, and a good deal of the second one is about his wife Rona, but you can sense throughout Sosonko's admiration of the man himself. One nice Petrosian quote:

"My doctor says I shouldn't get too excited when I'm watching ice hockey or football matches, because iron nerves are needed to play chess. Don't get too excited! It's easy to say. But what's the point of life then? What do I get out of it? What does life give me then?..."

Sosonko concludes: "A lively natural intelligence and narrow-mindedness, common sense and mistrustfulness, openness and suspiciousness, charm and eastern craftiness, the ability to extract the maximum from the institutions of Soviet power, and irony in his attitude towards the reality around him, all this was thoroughly mixed in the complex cocktail called 'Tigran Petrosian'."

In Sosonko's essays about the super-grandmasters, a common feature is their obsessiveness. "Geller himself said: 'If I feel anxious or uncomfortable, I sit down at the chess board for some 5-6 hours and gradually come to.' According to those who knew him closely, he could be in such a state for days... Chess did not leave him day or night. 'Sometimes in his sleep he would whisper chess moves', his widow Oksana remembers, 'or, on waking up at night, he would go over to the table to write down some variation that had suddenly come to mind.'"

Sosonko wrote an entire book about Bronstein, and some wonderful excerpts are included in *The Essential Sosonko*. I was interested in the old controversy about whether Bronstein was forced to throw the 1951 World Championship match to Botvinnik. There's a good deal of talk about that but not much new information. Sosonko makes one interesting point that seems relevant to me:

"An entry from Botvinnik's diary — 'He knows little about simple technical endings' — corresponded to reality: Bronstein lost three completely drawn endings in the match. He gave his own explanation for each loss, but the fact was obvious: in positions where queens disappeared from the board, the art of calculating variations did not play such a role, and his wild imagination was redundant. Bronstein could never get rid of this shortcoming throughout his entire career."

"The Paris Years" describes facets of Alekhine's life in Paris from 1927 into the 1930s (the essay stops at about 1937). It covers the World Champion's membership at the Astrea Masonic Lodge, his political views, his two marriages, and his on-and-off desire to visit the Soviet Union. The most entertaining quote won't surprise those familiar with Alekhine's ego:

"Lev Lyubimov, who subsequently returned to the Soviet Union, recalled that 'Alekhine was a man of great passions, but with some flaws. He considered himself not only the number one chess player, to which claim he had every right, but also a man with a colossal all-embracing intellect, which, of course, raised him above other mortals. The expressions 'a man such as myself', 'with my gifts', and so on, frequently emanated from him.' ... In other regards he was a real chess player: in lively mixed company he talked exclusively about chess, and not only about tournaments, prizes and colleagues. Sometimes he didn't hesitate to come up with blindfold variations, if he had a suitable person to talk to, of course, paying no attention to the fact that the other people listening to him didn't even know the rules of the game."

Sosonko writes brilliantly about the elite players, especially those he knew best, but he also has a keen interest in less famous players who had their own stories and struggles. Life was often difficult for chess players, and certain themes recur that reflect this. Poverty, for one.

Levenfish, a major figure in his time, descended into destitution, and even Euwe faced financial pressures in his early career, although he certainly wasn't desperately poor in the fashion of the players above. Sosonko refers to this and adds a typically light touch: "Before the match against Alekhine, little Elsje Euwe was asked in school: 'What will happen if your Daddy becomes World Champion?' 'Then we'll have chicken for dinner that night', the child replied."

Drinking seems to have been a major part of Soviet-era chess culture, although I should say that I observed heavy drinking among chess players of many countries up to about 20 years ago. The chapters on Tal are full of drinking escapades, and Sosonko states outright that Tal was an alcoholic; interestingly, he feels that Tal drank to enjoy life, not to escape from it. In general, late

night drinking parties during tournaments were frequent occurrences, as well as players turning up for games sleepless and hung over. Similarly with smoking. Tal, for example, smoked two or three packs a day, Sosonko notes, "but when he was playing a further two could be added."

Sosonko devotes an essay to Alvis Vitolins, first describing his considerable talent and achievements at length, and then turning to the mental illness and depression that led to his suicide. Vitolins' good friend IM Karen Grigorian had similar problems and also took his own life, and Sosonko mentions Lembit Oll, the Estonian grandmaster who did the same. He speculates about the relation of chess to mental issues, referring to the cases of Torre, Rubinstein, Morphy, and Fischer. Adopting his dramatic literary mode, he concludes: "Giving the joy of creativity, and sometimes prizes and money, chess at the very highest levels demands a trifle in return — the soul." I myself think that the increased economic security of chess players today has made coping with stress a lot easier, but of course it's an open question.

An attractive feature of these retrospective essays is that Sosonko doesn't spend a great deal of time complaining about the obvious drawbacks of living in the Soviet Union or the Soviet chess bureaucracy, despite his intimate knowledge of these subjects. In general, he is extremely generous in discussing the compromises and concessions his fellow players needed to make in order to survive in this politicized and ultra-competitive environment, and only criticizes in the case of a few characters who actively worked for the secret services and informed upon the players. Overall, the emphasis is always on the remarkable personalities and character of his subjects.

The Essential Sosonko is a huge tome touching upon a vast number of topics of interest to the chess fan. If you already own the earlier collections of Sosonko's essays, or have read them faithfully over the years, you might not need this new collection. For those who've read only a moderate number of these essays, or none, you've got a wonderful treat in store. Take a break from those online blitz games, settle down with this book, and remember what you love about chess! ♠

Sosonko, Genna. The Essential Sosonko: Collected Portraits and Tales from a Bygone Chess Era. Alkmaar: New in Chess, 2023. ISBN 9789083311289, 840pp (HB). (Available from uscsales.com, product code B0294NIC, \$59.95.)

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

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

Nationals

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • HERITAGE EVENT • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

2024 National High School (K-12) Championships

APRIL 5-7, 2024, MARYLAND

Event site: Baltimore Convention Center Address: 1 West Pratt Street, Baltimore, MD 21201 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: Y Organizer: Boyd Reed Email: nationalevents@uschess.org Phone: n/a Website: <http://www.uschess.org/tournaments/2024/hs> TLA ID: 41883

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.rknights.org/TLA ID: 40277>

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • HERITAGE EVENT • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

2024 National Elementary (K-6) Championships

APRIL 26-28, 2024, OHIO

Event site: Greater Columbus Convention Center Address: 1400 North High Street, Columbus, OH 43215 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: Y Organizer: Boyd Reed Email: nationalevents@uschess.org Phone: n/a Website: <http://www.uschess.org/tournaments/2024/elem> TLA ID: 41941

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • HERITAGE EVENT • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

2024 National Middle School (K-8) Championships

MAY 10-12, 2024, GEORGIA

Event site: Hyatt Regency Atlanta Address: 265 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA 30303 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: Y Organizer: Boyd Reed Email: nationalevents@uschess.org Phone: n/a Website: <http://www.uschess.org/tournaments/2024/ms> TLA ID: 41971

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

78th Annual U.S. Amateur East Championship

MAY 25-27, 2024, NEW JERSEY

Event site: Hyatt Regency New Brunswick Address: Two Albany Street New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: Y Organizer: Aaron Kiedes Email: akiedes@gmail.com Phone: n/a Website: <https://njscf.org> TLA ID: 42115

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

2024 National Open

JUNE 5-9, 2024, NEVADA

Event site: Flamingo Las Vegas Hotel & Casino Address: 3555 Las Vegas Blvd S Las Vegas NV 89109 Overall prize fund: \$125,000 GP Points: 200 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Vegas Chess Festivals Email: vegaschess@gmail.com Phone: 702-930-9550 Website: <https://vegaschessfestival.com> TLA ID: 41728

Grand Prix

The Grand Prix point totals reflect all rated event information as of December 31, 2023 for the 2023 Grand Prix.

FINAL 2023 GRAND PRIX STANDINGS

Congratulations to the 2023 Grand Prix Champion

GM JIANCHAO ZHOU

Name	State/Ctry	Pts
1. GM JIANCHAO ZHOU	MA	562.94
2. GM FIDEL CORRALES JIMENEZ	NY	481.29
3. GM MIKHAIL ANTIPOV	MO	194.33
4. GM ARMAN MIKAELIAN	--	157.10
5. GM RAHUL P SRIVATSHV	--	128.74
6. FM SHARVESH R DEVIPRASATH	TX	121.10
7. IM SAFAL BORA	MI	115.33
8. GM ALEXANDER FISHBIEIN	TN	111.47
9. IM JUSTIN WANG	TX	108.62
10. GM VIKTOR MATVIISHEN	TX	106.09

2023 Awards

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

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

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

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: daceanandjohn@aol.com Phone: 302.312.4526 Website: <http://delawarechessassociation.org> TLA ID: 41065

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Bearcat DKC Daylight Saving Time

MARCH 10, 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: 919.422.2535 Website: <http://www.chesstour.com> TLA ID: 41603

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

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight St. Patrick's Day Classic

MARCH 17, 2024, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall prize fund: \$630 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Center Email: jon@dragonknightchess.com Phone: 919.422.2535 Website: <http://www.chesstour.com> TLA ID: 42075

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 Phone: director@chess.us Website: <http://www.chesstour.com> TLA ID: 40663

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

10th Annual Mid-America Open Blitz Championship

MARCH 23, 2024, MISSOURI

Event site: Clayton Plaza Hotel St. Louis-Clayton

Address: 7750 Carondelet Ave., St. Louis MO 63105 Overall prize fund: \$500 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N 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: 42124

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: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Downriver Chess Club of New Orleans Email: info@downriverchess.com Phone: 202.656.9754 Website: <https://www.downriverchess.com> TLA ID: 40688

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Palm Sunday Classic

MARCH 24, 2024, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall prize fund: \$630 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Center Email: jon@dragonknightchess.com Phone: 919.422.2535 Website: <http://www.chesstour.com> TLA ID: 42081

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: director@chess.us Website: <http://www.chesstour.com> TLA ID: 40673

GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

5th Colonial Open

MARCH 28-31, 2024, VIRGINIA

Event site: Washington Dulles Airport Marriott Address: 45020 Aviation Dr., Dulles, VA 20166 Overall prize fund: \$16,000 GP Points: 120 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Anand Dommalapati Email: co2024@capitalareachess.com Phone: 703-627-5314 Website: <https://www.capitalareachess.com/colonialopen> TLA ID: 41614

PLEASE NOTE

DEADLINE FOR PRINT TLA SUBMISSIONS

TLAs appearing in *Chess Life* must be uploaded online on the 10th, two months prior to the issue cover date in which the ad is to appear. (For example, October TLAs must be uploaded no later than August 10th.) TLAs uploaded past this deadline cannot be published without special approval by US Chess.

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

PA State Game/29 Championship - West MARCH 30, 2024, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: William Pitt Union, Univ. of Pittsburgh Address: Univ. of Pittsburgh, 5th Ave. & Bigelow Blvd., Pittsburgh PA 15213 **Overall prize fund:** \$690 **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/> **TLAID:** 40872

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Easter Classic MARCH 31, 2024, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall prize fund:** \$630 **GP Points:** 10 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Dragon Knight Chess Center Email: jon@dragonknightchess.com **Phone:** 9194222535 **Website:** <http://dragonknightchess.com> **TLAID:** 42082

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

2024 Ambush & Dragon Knight Chess Open APRIL 12-14, 2024, NORTH CAROLINA

Event site: Best Western Plus Burlington Address: 770 Huffman Mill Road, Burlington, NC 27215 **Overall prize fund:** \$9,675 b/130 **GP Points:** 15 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Charles Wayne Roberson Email: jrober-sonmcs@gmail.com **Phone:** 3364370592 **Website:** <https://aigames.net/2024ADKCO.html> **TLAID:** 42097

GRAND PRIX

2024 Sacramento Senior Championship APRIL 20-21, 2024, CALIFORNIA, N.

Event site: Holiday Inn Express & Suites Address: 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821 **Overall prize fund:** \$2,400 b/40 **GP Points:** 10 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** John P McCumiskey Email: saccoachess@sbcglobal.net **Phone:** 916-524-9479 **Website:** <https://sacramentochessclub.org> **TLAID:** 42059

GRAND PRIX

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #24

APRIL 20-21, 2024, CALIFORNIA, N.

Event site: Holiday Inn Express & Suites Address: 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821 **Overall prize fund:** \$4,800 b/60 **GP Points:** 10 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** John P McCumiskey Email: saccoachess@sbcglobal.net **Phone:** 916-524-9479 **Website:** <https://sacramentochessclub.org> **TLAID:** 42060

GRAND PRIX

Midwest Open 2024

APRIL 27-28, 2024, NEBRASKA

Event site: Omaha Marriott Regency Hotel Address: 10220 Regency Cir, Omaha, NE 68114 **Overall prize fund:** \$1,600 **GP Points:** 20 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Steven Cusumano Email: scusumano90@gmail.com **Phone:** 402-301-6365 **Website:** <http://nebraskachess.com/event/midwest-open-2024/> **TLAID:** 41920

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

32nd Massachusetts G/60 Championship

APRIL 28, MASSACHUSETTS

Event site: Westford Regency Inn & Conference Center Address: 219 Littleton Rd., Westford MA 01886 **Overall prize fund:** \$3,000 **GP Points:** 15 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Massachusetts Chess Association Email: info@masschess.org **Phone:** n/a **Website:** <http://www.masschess.org> **TLAID:** 42101

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

11th Annual Reno Larry Evans Memorial Open

MAY 3-5, 2024, NEVADA

Event site: Circus Circus Hotel Casino Reno Address: 500 North Sierra Street, Reno, NV 89503 **Overall prize fund:** \$27,500 **GP Points:** 150 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Jerome V. Weikel Email: wackyykl@aol.com **Phone:** 775-747-1405 **Website:** <http://www.renochess.com> **TLAID:** 41754

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

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

11th Cherry Blossom Classic

MAY 22-27, VIRGINIA

Event site: Washington Dulles Airport Marriott Address: 45020 Aviation Dr., Dulles, VA 20166 **Overall prize fund:** \$26,000 **GP Points:** 200 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Anand Dommalapati Email: dbc2024@capitalareachess.com **Phone:** 703-627-5314 **Website:** <https://www.capitalareachess.com/cherryblossom> **TLAID:** 41988

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

33rd Annual Chicago Open

MAY 23-27, 2024, ILLINOIS

Event site: Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel Address: 601 North Milwaukee Ave, Wheeling, IL 60090 **Overall prize fund:** \$100,000 **GP Points:** 200 **FIDE Rated:** Y

Handicap accessible: Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us **Phone:** director@chess.us **Website:** <http://www.chesstour.com> **TLAID:** 41785

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

4th Annual Niagara Falls Open

MAY 31-JUNE 2, 2024, NEW YORK

Event site: Sheraton Niagara Falls Address: 300 3rd St, Niagara Falls NY 14303 **Overall prize fund:** \$10,000 **GP Points:** 80 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us **Phone:** director@chess.us **Website:** <http://www.chesstour.com> **TLAID:** 42173

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

17th Annual Philadelphia International

JUNE 27-JULY 1, 2024, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: Philadelphia Sheraton Downtown Hotel Address: 201 North 17th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103 **Overall prize fund:** \$20,000 **GP Points:** 200 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us **Phone:** director@chess.us **Website:** <http://www.chesstour.com> **TLAID:** 41569

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

18th Annual Philadelphia Open

JUNE 28-30, 2024, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: Philadelphia Sheraton Downtown Hotel Address: 201 North 17th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103 **Overall prize fund:** \$20,000 **GP Points:** 200 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us **Phone:** director@chess.us **Website:** <http://www.chesstour.com> **TLAID:** 41570

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections

JULY 3-7, 2024, PENNSYLVANIA

Event site: Philadelphia Sheraton Downtown Hotel

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.

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.

Address: 201 North 17th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103
Overall prize fund: \$208,000 GP Points: 300 FIDE
Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction:
N Organizer: Continental Chess Association
Email: director@chess.us Phone: [2155551234](tel:2155551234)
Website: <http://www.chesstour.com> TLA ID: 41566

Regional

ALABAMA

MARCH 15-17, 2024

21st annual Southern Class Championships (FL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

ALASKA

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

AMER. SAMOA

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

ARIZONA

MARCH 23, 2024

SW Regional Chess Championships for Women and Girls

Event site: Sinagua Middle School Address: 3950 E Butler Ave, Flagstaff, AZ 86004 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Bill Cheney
Email: chessnacc@gmail.com Phone: 9282662122
Website: <https://nazchesscenter.org> TLA ID: 41919

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 20-21, 2024

2024 Sacramento Senior Championship (CA-N)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 20-21, 2024

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #24 (CA-N)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 5-9, 2024

2024 National Open (NV)
See National Events.

ARKANSAS

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

CALIFORNIA

JANUARY 8, 2024-WEEKLY

Yorba Linda Open

Event site: Travis Ranch Activity Center Address: 5200 Via De La Escuela, Yorba Linda, CA 92887 Over-

all 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 TLA ID: 41339

MARCH 1-3, 2024

31st annual Western Class Championships (CA-S)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 2, 2024

Western Class Blitz Championships (CA-S)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

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 Bellevue 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/> TLA ID: 41035

APRIL 20-21, 2024

2024 Sacramento Senior Championship (CA-N)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 20-21, 2024

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #24 (CA-N)
See Grand Prix

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 5-9, 2024

2024 National Open (NV)
See National Events.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

COLORADO

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 5-9, 2024

2024 National Open (NV)
See National Events.

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.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DELAWARE

MARCH 9-10, 2024

Delaware State Open Championship (DE)
See Grand Prix.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 28-30, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DIST. OF COLUMBIA

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

FLORIDA

MARCH 9, 2024

Pinecrest Spring Open

Event site: Evelyn Greer Park, Leslie Bowe Hall Address: 8200 SW 124th St, Pinecrest, FL 33156 Overall prize fund: \$425 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Diego Milla Email: southmiamicc@gmail.com Phone: 7862265514 Website: <http://www.southmiamichessclub.com> TLA ID: 42311

MARCH 15-17, 2024

21st annual Southern Class Championships (FL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 13, 2024

Pinecrest Easter Open

Event site: Evelyn Greer Park, Leslie Bowe Hall Address: 8200 SW 124th St, Pinecrest, FL 33156 Overall prize fund: \$425 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Diego Milla Email: southmiamicc@gmail.com Phone: 7862265514 Website: <http://www.southmiamichessclub.com> TLA ID: 42312

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-JULY 1, 2024

17th Annual Philadelphia International (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

GEORGIA

MARCH 15-17, 2024

21st annual Southern Class Championships (FL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 19-20, 2024

3rd Annual Bolivar Morales Memorial Club Championships

Event site: Winterville Chess Club at the Winterville Cultural Center Address: 371 North Church Street, Winterville, GA 30683 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Tomas Ramirez Email: tram110@verizon.net Phone: 4014407416 Website: n/a TLA ID: 41950

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

GUAM

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

HAWAII

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

IDAHO

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 20-21, 2024

2024 Sacramento Senior Championship (CA-N)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 20-21, 2024

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #24 (CA-N)
See Grand Prix

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 5-9, 2024

2024 National Open (NV)
See National Events.

ILLINOIS

MARCH 22-24, 2024

28th Annual Mid-America Open (MO)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 23, 2024

10th Annual Mid-America Open Blitz Championship (MO)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 20, 2024

Chicago Wolves Scholastic & Open

Event site: Allstate Arena Skyline Room Address: 10351 Lunt Ave, Rosemont, IL 60018 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: David Heiser Email: david.heiser@renaissanceknights.org Phone: n/a Website: <http://rknights.org/wolves/> TLA ID: 41548

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

INDIANA

MARCH 22-24, 2024

28th Annual Mid-America Open (MO)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

IOWA

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

KANSAS

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

KENTUCKY

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

LOUISIANA

MARCH 23-24, 2024

The New Orleans Open (LA)
See Grand Prix.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAINE

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MARYLAND

MARYLAND CHESS TOURNAMENTS (NORTH PENN CHESS CLUB)

Maryland Chess runs 21+ annual K-12 tournaments every other Saturday from September through June & 12+ annual 1-day or multi-day open tournaments for adults & K-12 players on weekends. See www.MD-Chess.org for tournament announcements, registration for tournaments, updated wallcharts, live standings, sign up for K-12 & open e-newsletters, lists of coaches & clubs, camp announcements, & news. K-12 MD players who compete in the Varsity section (for players rated 1600+) of 1 of 8+ annual MD-Sweet-16 Qualifiers can qualify for the \$48,000+ scholarship to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County awarded annually. UMBC is a perennial top-10 contender for the collegiate national chess championship.

MARCH 17, 2024

Charm City Chess Club 2024 Spring Action Tournament

Event site: The DoubleTree Hilton Hotel **Address:** 4 W University Parkway, Baltimore, MD 21218 **Overall prize fund:** see TLA **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Alan Horowitz **Email:** charmcitychess@gmail.com **Phone:** 9175735775 **Website:** http://www.charmcitychess.com/new_tournament/ **TLAID:** 42049

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 27-JULY 1, 2024

17th Annual Philadelphia International (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 28-30, 2024

18th Annual Philadelphia Open (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 28-30, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 27-31, 2024

16th Annual Open At Foxwoods (CT)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 28, 2024

32nd Massachusetts G/60 Championship (MA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 27-JULY 1, 2024

17th Annual Philadelphia International (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 28-30, 2024

18th Annual Philadelphia Open (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us. \july 3-7, 2024

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

33rd annual CHICAGO OPEN

May 23-27, 24-27 or 25-27, 2024 - Memorial Day weekend - see chessevents.us
7 sections, prizes \$100,000 unconditionally guaranteed!
Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel, 601 North Milwaukee Ave., Wheeling IL 60090

Open section, 5/23-27: 9 rounds, 40/80, SD/30, d30.
U2300 through U1300 sections: 5/24-27 or 25-27: 7 rounds, 40/80, SD/30, d30 (3-day option, rds 1-2 G/60 d10). All merge & play for same prizes in section. Free parking.

Open: \$10000-5000-2500-1300-1000-900-700-600-500-500, clear or tiebreak first \$300 bonus, top FIDE U2400/unr \$2000-1000-400. FIDE rated, GM and IM norms possible.

U2300, U2100, U1900, U1700 Sections:

Each \$5000-2500-1200-800-600-500-400-400-400-300.

U2300 & U2100 sections are also FIDE rated.

U1500: \$4000-2000-1000-700-500-400-400-400-300.

U1300: \$3000-1500-1000-700-500-400-400-400-300, top rated Under 1100 \$1000-600-400.

FIDE ratings used for Open, May 2024 Official USCF for others. Unofficial USCF ratings usually used if otherwise unrated. **Cannot play below** Online Regular Rating - 100 points.

If post-event Regular OTB or Regular Online rating posted 5/23/23-5/23/24 or current Regular Online rating is more than 40 pts over section maximum, prize limit \$800.

Under 26 games prize limit (as of May 2024 Official Rating list): U1300 \$1000, U1500 \$1500, U1700 \$2000, U1900 \$2500.

Unrated prize limits: U1300 \$300, U1500 \$400, U1700 \$600, U1900 \$800, U2100 \$1200.

Mixed Doubles: male/female combined score, any section \$2000-1000-500-400-300. See chessevents.us.

Entry fee: \$207 at chessaction.com by 3/19, \$227 by 5/22, \$250 online later or at site until 1 hour before round 1 (no checks). Open Section \$500 extra to US players below 2200 USCF and below 2000 FIDE. Senior 65+/up \$100 less. Online EF \$5 less to ICA members (join ICA at il-chess.org). Titled player entry: see chessevents.us. **Refunds,** \$15 service charge. **Re-entry** \$100 (no Open to Open).

Open titled minimum prizes: see chessevents.us. **1/2-pt byes:** limit 3 (2 last 4 rds); must commit before rd 3.

5-day schedule (Open only): enter Thu to 6 pm, rds Thu 7 pm, Fri 1 & 7, Sat 11 & 5, Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 4.

4-day schedule (U2300 to U1300): enter Fri to 6 pm, rds Fri 7, Sat 11 & 5, Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 4.

3-day schedule (U2300 to U1300): enter Sat to 9 am, rds Sat 10, 1:30 & 5, Sun 10 & 4, Mon 10 & 4.

Hotel rates: 1-4 in room \$130, use link at chessevents.us or 847-777-6500, reserve by 5/11, may sell out before.

USCF membership required, see chessevent.us for special dues rates if paid online with entry.

Bring set, board, clock if possible- none supplied. No cellphone possession during play (in bag near table OK). See devicerules.com for more electronic device rules.

Email: director@chess.us.

Entry: chessaction.com. No mailed entry.

\$2500 Blitz tournament, Sunday 10 pm (enter by 9:00).

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.

MICHIGAN

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 23-24, 2024

2024 Michigan Junior Championships
Event site: Radisson Hotel Detroit Southfield Address: 26555 Telegraph Rd, Southfield, MI 48033 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Michigan Chess Association Email: jeffchess64@gmail.com Phone: 8109557271 Website: <https://www.michess.org/> TLA ID: 41915

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MINNESOTA

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MISSISSIPPI

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MISSOURI

MARCH 22-24, 2024

28th Annual Mid-America Open (MO)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 23, 2024

10th Annual Mid-America Open Blitz Championship (MO)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MONTANA

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)
See Grand Prix.

NEBRASKA

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

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.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 20-21, 2024

2024 Sacramento Senior Championship (CA-N)
See Grand Prix.

APRIL 20-21, 2024

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #24 (CA-N)
See Grand Prix

MAY 3-5, 2024

11th Annual Reno Larry Evans Memorial Open (NV)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)
See Grand Prix.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
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 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: edmendou@aol.com Phone: 609- 351- 2437 text Website: <http://hamiltonchessclub.com> TLA ID: 40988

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.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-JULY 1, 2024

17th Annual Philadelphia International (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 28-30, 2024

18th Annual Philadelphia Open (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 28-30, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NEW MEXICO

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 5-9, 2024

2024 National Open (NV)
See National Events.

NEW YORK

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 Court-yard 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.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 31-JUNE 2, 2024

4th Annual Niagara Falls Open (NY)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-JULY 1, 2024

17th Annual Philadelphia International (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 28-30, 2024

18th Annual Philadelphia Open (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 28-30, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NORTH CAROLINA

MARCH 17, 2024

Dragon Knight St. Patrick's Day Classic (NC)
See Grand Prix.

MARCH 24, 2024

Dragon Knight Palm Sunday Classic (NC)
See Grand Prix.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MARCH 31, 2024

Dragon Knight Easter Classic (NC)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JUNE 27-JULY 1, 2024

17th Annual Philadelphia International (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 28-30, 2024

18th Annual Philadelphia Open (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 28-30, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NORTH DAKOTA

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)
See Grand Prix.

N. MARIANA ISL.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

OHIO

MARCH 22-23, 2024

March 22 & 23, 2024 23rd Annual Queen City Classic Chess Tournament
Event site: Paycor Stadium Address: 1 Paycor Stadium, Cincinnati, OH 45202 Overall prize fund: Trophies GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Cris Collinsworth ProScan Fund Email: aonell@proscan.com Phone: 5137038270 Website: <https://ccpforg/> TLA ID: 42052

MARCH 22-24, 2024

28th Annual Mid-America Open (MO)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

HERITAGE EVENT

APRIL 12-14, 2024

Cincinnati Open
Event site: Embassy Suites Hotel Address: 4554 Lake Forest Drive, Blue Ash, OH 45242 Overall prize fund: \$18,000 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Cincinnati Scholastic Chess Email: info@chesscincinnati.com Phone: 5136009915 Website: <https://www.chesscincinnati.com/> TLA ID: 41595

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 31-JUNE 2, 2024

4th Annual Niagara Falls Open (NY)
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OKLAHOMA

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

OREGON

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 20-21, 2024

2024 Sacramento Senior Championship (CA-N)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 20-21, 2024

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #24 (CA-N)

See Grand Prix

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.

MARCH 9-10, 2024

Delaware State Open Championship (DE)

See Grand Prix.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • HERITAGE EVENT

MARCH 16-17, 2024

2024 Pennsylvania State Scholastic Championships

Event site: Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg Hershey Address: 4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Tom Martinak Email: dmartinak_tom_m@hotmail.com Phone: 412-908-0286 Website: <http://psdcchess.org/pascholasticchamp/> TLAID: 41578

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MAY 31-JUNE 2, 2024

4th Annual Niagara Falls Open (NY)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-JULY 1, 2024

17th Annual Philadelphia International (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 28-30, 2024

18th Annual Philadelphia Open (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

JUNE 28-30, 2024, PENNSYLVANIA

52nd Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections

Event site: Philadelphia Sheraton Downtown Hotel Address: 201 North 17th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103 Overall prize fund: \$17,000 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Rob Harker Email: utahchessknight@gmail.com Phone: n/a Website: <https://www.vachess.org> TLAID: 42320

ed: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us Phone: director@chess.us Website: <http://www.chesstour.com> TLAID: 41567

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

PUERTO RICO

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

RHODE ISLAND

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

SOUTH CAROLINA

MARCH 16, 2024

Columbia Tunnelvision XVII (SC)

See Grand Prix.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

SOUTH DAKOTA

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

TENNESSEE

MARCH 22-24, 2024

28th Annual Mid-America Open (MO)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

TEXAS

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

MARCH 1-3, 2024

2024 North/Central Texas State Scholastic Championships

Event site: Houston Marriott Westchase Address: 2900 Briarpark Dr, Houston, TX 77042 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: Y Organizer: Barbara Swafford Email: info@dallascchess.com Phone: 214-533-0061 Website: <http://dallascchess.com/2024Texas-Scholastic/index.htm> TLAID: 41619

MARCH 22-24, 2024

28th Annual Mid-America Open (MO)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 5-9, 2024

2024 National Open (NV)

See National Events.

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

US MIN OUTLYING ISL

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

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 TLAID: 39726

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

JUNE 5-9, 2024

2024 National Open (NV)

See National Events.

VERMONT

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

VIRGIN ISLANDS

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

VIRGINIA

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 9-10, 2024

2024 Virginia Scholastic Championships

Event site: William Fleming High School Address: 3649 Ferncliff Ave. NW, Roanoke, VA 24017 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: Y Organizer: Mike Hoffpauir, NTD/IA Email: mhoffpauir@aol.com Phone: 757-846-4805 Website: <http://www.vachess.org> TLAID: 41767

MARCH 23, 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: diyans-hu@chessacademy.com Phone: n/a Website: <https://chessacademy.com/tournaments> TLAID: 39038

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 6, 2024

MCA Fairfax County Quads for K-12

Event site: Pozee Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia Address: 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax, 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: diyans-hu@chessacademy.com Phone: n/a Website: <https://chessacademy.com/tournaments> TLAID: 39033

APRIL 10, 2024-MONTHLY ON SATURDAYS

Henrico Chess Second Saturday: Rapid and Scholastic

Event site: Publix Super Market at John Rolfe Commons Address: 2250 John Rolfe Pkwy, Upstairs Meeting Room, Henrico, VA 23233 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Homer Eugene Gateley Email: eugene.gateley@gmail.com Phone: 8043508280 Website: <http://www.HenricoChessAcademy.com/tournaments> TLAID: 42280

APRIL 13, 2024

Quads at the Meadowdale Public Library

Event site: Meadowdale Public Library Address: 4301 Meadowdale Blvd, North Chesterfield, VA 23234 Overall prize fund: \$110 per quad GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Mike Hoffpauir, NTD/IA Email: mhoffpauir@aol.com Phone: 7578464805 Website: <https://www.vachess.org> TLAID: 42320

APRIL 13, 2024

Scholastic Chess Tournament at the Meadowdale Public Library

Event site: Meadowdale Public Library Address: 4301 Meadowdale Blvd, North Chesterfield, VA 23234 Overall prize fund: Trophies & Medals GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Mike Hoffpauir, NTD/IA Email: mhoffpauir@aol.com Phone: 7578464805 Website: <https://www.vachess.org> TLAID: 42319

MAY 22-27, 2024

11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 23-27, 2024

33rd Annual Chicago Open (IL)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 27-JULY 1, 2024

17th Annual Philadelphia International (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 28-30, 2024

18th Annual Philadelphia Open (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

JUNE 28-30, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, Under 1200 and Under 1000 Sections (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us

JULY 3-7, 2024

52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

WASHINGTON

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 20-21, 2024

2024 Sacramento Senior Championship (CA-N)

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 20-21, 2024

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #24 (CA-N)

See Grand Prix

MAY 4-5, 2024

2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)

See Grand Prix.

WEST VIRGINIA

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 16, 2024

53rd Annual WV Scholastic Chess Championship

Event site: Harrison County Senior Center Address: 500 W Main St., Clarksburg, WV 26301 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Harrison County Chess Club Email: ggreerlaw@aol.com Phone: 13046419241 Website: n/a TLAID: 41597

MARCH 28-31, 2024

5th Colonial Open (VA)

See Grand Prix.

MAY 22-27, 2024
11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

WISCONSIN
MARCH 28-31, 2024
5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
APRIL 6, 2024
2024 Wisconsin Rapid and Blitz State Championship

Event site: Courtyard by Marriott Madison West **Address:** 2266 Deming Way, Middleton, WI 53562 **Overall prize fund:** \$1,300 **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Mike Nietman **Email:** mike.nietman@charter.net **Phone:** 16084678510 **Website:** <https://www.wisChess.org/> **TLAID:** 42035

APRIL 13, 2024
Manitowoc Tornado 4

Event site: Manitowoc Holiday Inn **Address:** 4601 Calumet Ave., Manitowoc, WI 54220 **Overall prize fund:** \$1,110 **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Terran Chess Federation **Email:** TerranChess@gmail.com **Phone:** 9202795688 **Website:** n/a **TLAID:** 41755

MAY 22-27, 2024
11th Cherry Blossom Classic (VA)
See Grand Prix.

JULY 3-7, 2024
52nd Annual World Open, top 6 sections (PA)

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

WYOMING
MARCH 28-31, 2024
5th Colonial Open (VA)
See Grand Prix.

MAY 4-5, 2024
2024 Sheridan Wyoming Open (WY)
See Grand Prix.

THANK YOU TO OUR BENEFACTORS

Thank-you for being the sustaining force behind all our initiatives, and for making all of our programs possible.



For a full list of our Benefactors please visit

<https://new.uschess.org/benefactor-members>


(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

Sparta Chess Club (NJ)

www.spartachessclub.org

TLA Chess (VA)

jack.scheible@verizon.net

For all information on becoming a Gold or Silver Affiliate, please visit <https://new.uschess.org/gold-and-silver-affiliates>.

CORRESPONDENCE CHESS

Check out these US Chess Rated Events!

Two ways to enter:

- Visit us online at uschess.org
- Mail in the form below

ICCF
Server

7-Player Championship Events

2024 Golden Knights (Postal) | 2024 Electronic Knights

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as single round robin, groupings based on order entries received. Players start in Preliminary round and qualify for Semi-final and then Final rounds based on scores in previous round. **ENTRY FEE:** \$35 per entry. Players can enter up to a maximum of 10 times per event. **PRIZES:** Prize fund of \$2300 based on 200 entries. \$15 correspondence chess gift certificate to players knocked out in Preliminary round.

7-Player Round Robins

Victor Palciauskas Tournament (ICCF Server)

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as single round robin, groupings based on ratings. **ENTRY FEE:** \$5 per entry. **PRIZES:** 1st place receives a signed certificate.

4-Player Quads

John W. Collins Memorial (Postal) | Walter Muir E-Quads (ICCF Server)

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as double round robin, groupings based on ratings. **ENTRY FEE:** \$10 per entry. **PRIZES:** 1st place receives \$25 correspondence chess gift certificate and signed certificate.

2-Player Matches (Postal or Email)

FORMAT: Players play either 2, 4, or 6 games against the same opponent. Selecting multiple options may facilitate faster pairings. Pairings based on ratings or players may name their own opponent. **ENTRY FEE:** \$5 per entry. **PRIZES:** None.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- US Chess membership must remain current for the duration of all events.
- Postal events are open only to US Chess members who reside on the contiguous USA, Alaska, Hawaii or have an APO/ FPO postal address.
- Email events are open to all US Chess members with an accessible email account.
- ICCF Server events are open to all US Chess members with access to the ICCF internet based correspondence chess server and an ICCF account (free to create) in good standing.
- For events with groupings based on ratings, the following rating classes will be used:

o Class A: 1800 and above	o Class C: 1200-1699
o Class B: 1500-1999	o Class D: 1399 and below
- If you do not have an existing correspondence rating, please estimate your playing strength when submitting your entry.
- Correspondence chess gift certificate prizes can be used on correspondence chess entries only. They cannot be used for membership renewals or at US Chess Sales.

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Solutions

PAGE 13 CHESS TO ENJOY

PROBLEM 1. 1. ... Qxh2+! 2. Rxh2 Rxh2+ 3. Kg1 Bxf2+ 4. Rxf2 Rh1+ 5. Kg2 R8h2 mate. **PROBLEM 2.** 1. ... Qxg2+! and 2. ... Re2(+) wins. **PROBLEM 3.** 1. ... Ra4+! 2. Kxa4 Ra8+ 3. Kb4 Bf8+! 4. Kc4 b5+ and 5. ... Ra8-d8 mate. **PROBLEM 4.** 1. Rxf6+! Kxf6 2. Bg5+! Kxg5 3. Qxe7+ Kh6 4. Re4 and mates. Also 3. ... Kf5 4. f4! wins. **PROBLEM 5.** 1. Rxe6! fxe6 2. Qxb7 threatens Qb7-h7 mate, e.g. 2. ... Rfe8 3. Qh7+ Kf8 4. Bg6 Bg7 5. Nf6! and Qh7-g8+. **PROBLEM 6.** 1. Ne5+! fxe5 2. Qh5+ Ke7 3. Bg5+ or 2. ... Kg8 3. Bh6 and mates. The game went 1. ... Ke7! 2. Bd2 (also winning are 2. Qh5 and 2. Qg4) 2. ... Kf8 3. Qh5 fxe5 4. Bh6+, Black resigns.

PAGE 21 MAKE YOUR MOVE

TACTIC 1. 15. Bxh7+, Black resigned. The continuation would have been: 15. Bxh7+ Kxh7 16. Qh4+ Kg6 (or 16. ... Kg8 17. Ng5 and it is curtains) 17. Qg5+ Kh7 18. Qh5+ Kg8 19. Ng5 and Black cannot prevent mate. (Stremavicius – Lahaye, Groningen 2023) **TACTIC 2. 8. Ba6!** After this move, it is already over for Black; there is no satisfactory way to meet White's threat of Ba6xb7. 8. ... bxa6 9. Qxc6+ Ke7 10. Qb7+ Nd7 11. Bxd6+ Kxd6 12. Ne5 Nxe5 13. dxe5+ Kxe5 14. Qxf7 Bf5 15. g4 and Black resigned in Dubov – Orozbaev, Qingdao 2023. **TACTIC 3. 17. Nf6+! gxf6 18. Qg4+ Kh8 19. Qh4** and having to give up the queen to avoid mate, Black resigned in S. Atalik – Ilincic, Arandjelovac 2023. **TACTIC 4. 17. Qg6!** White threatens the devastating Nf4-h5 and Black has no good way of meeting this threat nor preventing it. 17. ... Kh8 18. Bxf7 cxd4 19. Bd5 and Black resigned in Dudin – Vanczak, Hungarian Ch, 2023. **TACTIC 5. 19. Qa3!** White has determined that after the exchange of queens, Black will have no adequate way of defending against the mounting pressure on the pinned knight on c6. 19. ... Qxa3 Or 19. ... Qf8 20. Qxf8+ Kxf8, and now both 21. e4 and 21. Nb4 are completely decisive. 20. bxa3 f5 Here 20. ... a5 21. e4 also wins for White. 21. Nf4 Played with the threat of Nf4xd5. Black resigned in Woodward – Wang Tianqi, Chesterfield 2023. **TACTIC 6. 13. ... Qa5! 14. d5** The alternatives were: 14. f3 Bxa2 15. Nxa2 Qxa4 16. Nec3 Rfc8 and Black is much better. Also, 14. Bxf6 Bxf6 15. Kb1 Rb4 16. Bc2 Nc7 17. b3 Rc8 is a disaster for White. 14. ... Nxe4! 15. Nxe4 Bxb2+ 16. Qxb2 Rxb2 17. Kxb2 Qxa4 18. dxe6 Qxe4 White is completely lost and could have resigned at this point, but carries on for some additional moves. 19. Nd4 Nc5 20. exf7+ Kxf7 21. Ka1 Nd3 22. Be3 Rb8 23. Nf3 Qc4 24. Bd2 Rb2 and facing mate in two, White resigned in Ioannidis – Mamedov, European Rapid 2023. **TACTIC 7. 14. Nh5! f6** It was stronger to play 14. ... Bh3 15. Ng3 Be6 16. Rb5 Qg6 17. f4 f5 18. c4 and while White is temporarily distracted from his attack, his advantage is still massive. 15. Rb3! The point behind the previous move; now, the threat is Rb3-g3. 15. ... Ng6 16. Rb5 This is the secondary point; now, Black's queen is trouble. 16. ... Qh4 17. f4 Re8 18. g3 Or 18. Nxf6+ gxf6 19. Rh5 and White is winning. 18. ... Qh3 19. f5 Kh8 20. Bg4 and, losing the queen, Black resigned. (Gavrilescu – Maurizzi, European Rapid 2023) **TACTIC 8. 15. c6! bxc6 16. Bd3!** The threat is Bd3-a6 with

mate to follow. In the game, White instead continued: 16. Bxa7 Bxf3?? (16. ... Bf5 would have kept White's advantage to a minimum) 17. gxf3 Bg5+ 18. Kb1 f5 19. Bd3 (White is completely winning) 19. ... Qe7 20. Bxb8 Kd7 21. Ba7 Ra8 22. Bc4 Reb8 23. Rhe1 Qf6 24. Be6+ Kd8 25. Qxc6 and Black resigned in Dominguez Aguilar – Shivakumar, Sunnyvale 2023. 16. ... Rxe3 17. fxe3 Kb7 18. Rhf1 and White is clearly better. **TACTIC 9. 19. Kf1!!** In the game, White crashed and burned after 19. Bxd5+?? Qxd5 20. Ngf3 Nf4 21. Qb3 Rxe2+ 22. Kf1 Ne7 23. Re1?? Qxb3 24. axb3 Nf5 and White resigned in Krsnik Cohar – Lagarde, European Rapid 2023. 19. ... Nf4 Or 19. ... Rxd2 20. Bxd5+ Qxd5 21. Qxd2 hxe5 22. Qxg5 and White has the advantage in the endgame. 20. Bxd5+ Qxd5 21. Qh7+ Kf8 22. Qh8+ Qg8 23. Qxg8+ Kxg8 24. Ngf3 Rxe2 25. Re1 and White has an edge in the endgame.

PAGE 49 ABCS OF CHESS

PROBLEM 1. Mating net: White mates in two moves: 1. Rh7+ Kxh7 2. Qg7 mate. **PROBLEM 2. Mating net:** White mates in two: 1. Rg8+ Nxe8 2. Qg7 mate. **PROBLEM 3. Mating net:** Black loses in two: 1. Rxa8+ Kxa8 2. Qxa6 mate. **PROBLEM 4. Mating net:** It's mate in two after 1. Rb8+ Kxb8 2. Qb7 mate. **PROBLEM 5. Mating net:** Black is mated in two: 1. Rc8+ Kxc8 2. Qb8 mate. **PROBLEM 6. Mating net:** White mates in two: 1. Qxh6+ Kxh6 (or 1. ... gxh6 2. R5xf7 mate) 2. Rh8 mate.

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MY BEST MOVE

MICHAEL MULFORD

ACCOUNTANT, AMATEUR,
AFICIONADO, ADMINISTRATOR

W

HILE STUDENTS COULD THEORETICALLY play in adult tournaments before the Fischer boom, I was unaware of this possibility

until I graduated from high school. Neither my adoptive father, who was a near-expert before the rating system existed, nor my adoptive mother encouraged me to play outside of school. My mother said chess wasn't a social game. I ran through her stop sign, and throughout college I played in everything in sight.

Once I got married and started a family, however, I realized that I would never have the time and energy to become a master, despite peaking tantalizingly close to expert. Family was more important.

I knew I would always love the game, and I enjoyed most of the people, too. Accordingly, my first strong move was deciding to make my contributions to chess in volunteer capacities and leave the brilliancy prizes to others. Chess would always give me great pleasure, whether I was playing or serving the chess community.

Since my chess abilities in no way resemble fine wine, they did not improve with age. Yet my joy for the game never diminished. My service opportunities expanded: from state chapter officer and columnist, to my current roles with the Senior Committee and as treasurer for the Castle Chess Camp.

“

I knew I would always love the game, and I enjoyed most of the people too.”

Another strong move! I now get to meet and serve players of my generation, as well as the ambitious youngsters of today and their parents, and I enjoy interacting with the fine instructors at Castle. My mother was wrong; chess is quite social for me!



Along with the Castle Grand Prix and an occasional U.S. Open, I especially love playing in senior tournaments. As a retired accountant now, I can play more. My best over-the-board games and moves may be mostly in the past and lost to posterity. But, as Steinitz said, “I may be an old lion, but I can still bite someone's hand off if he puts it in my mouth.” Witness the following encounter.

CARO-KANN DEFENSE (B18)

Andres Hortillosa (1900)

Michael Mulford (1719)

Minnesota Senior Open, 10.24.2021

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. Nd2 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Bf5 5. Ng3 Bg6 6. h4 h6 7. h5 Bh7

So far all book, but his next move left me to my own devices.

8. Bc4 e6 9. N1e2 Nf6 10. c3 Nbd7 11. Bf4 Nb6 12. Bd3 Bxd3 13. Qxd3 Bd6 14. Bd2 c5 I'm at least equal here.

15. 0-0-0 c4 16. Qf3 Nbd5 17. Rde1 Qa5 18. Kb1 0-0-0 19. Ne4 Nxe4 20. Qxe4 Kb8 White's response increases my edge, though

it still isn't serious.

21. f4 Nf6 22. Qf3 Qf5+ 23. Ka1 Bc7

The attacking plan is clearly in view, but White's response exposes his hand further.

24. Rb1 Rd5 25. Ng3 Qc2

My mouth has been pried open, and his next two moves prime the force of my jaw.

26. Rhd1 Ra5 27. Qe2

Here he picked up his queen, then paused because he too saw **MY BEST MOVE**.



27. ... Rxa2+, White resigned.
Chomp! ♠

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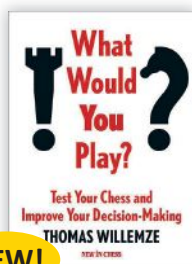


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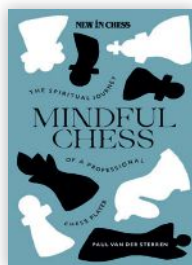


NEW!

Test Your Decision-Making

Thomas Willemze

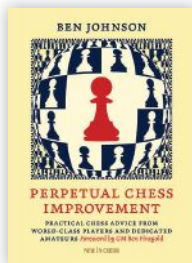
The best chess training closely resembles the activity you're training for. This book provides a chess player with an essential component – decision-making in the crucial positions of a real chess game, played by club players rather than grandmasters. You have to answer the same questions that you face when you stare at the chessboard and have to find a move.



Mindful Chess

Paul van der Sterren

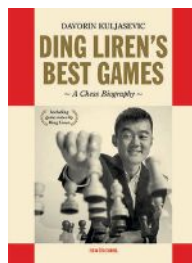
Dutch GM Paul van der Sterren was a professional chess player for more than twenty years. He met with both victory and defeat, joy and suffering. When, later in life, he discovered vipassana meditation, he approached meditation with the same devotion as his chess. The reader follows his two journeys, asking the same questions: What is chess? What is meditation? Who am I? What is I? What can we know?



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.



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

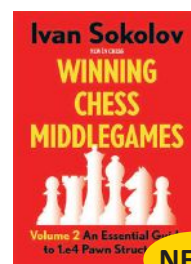
Magnus Carlsen and David Howell show how to win a seemingly equal chess position. Their first book tells you how to keep a game alive, keep posing problems, recognize the first small mistakes, and grind your opponent down until he cracks.

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.

Winning Middlegames with 1.e4

Ivan Sokolov

In his 2010 bestseller *Winning Chess Middlegames*, GM Ivan Sokolov focused on 1.d4 openings. Now, with Volume 2, 1.e4 players get their turn. A dozen topical structures are covered (in the Ruy Lopez, the Italian, the Petroff, the Rauzer Sicilian, the Maroczy Bind, the Hedgehog, the Sveshnikov, the French Winawer and more). Deeply analyzed top-level games illustrate the motifs in all these structures.

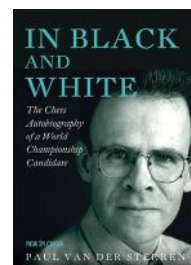


NEW!

In Black and White

Paul van der Sterren

The very honest autobiography describing Van der Sterren's rise to the chess elite and his struggle to get better, with all the uncertainties and difficulties on his path. From his very first moves to his match against Gata Kamsky, everything is described in great detail and with the greatest frankness by the Dutch GM. The final part describes his decline and his shift to meditation and mindfulness.



A Rich and Dynamic Opening Repertoire for White

Christof Sielecki

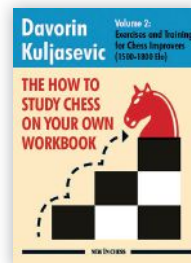
Coach Christof Sielecki has thoroughly revised and updated his 2018 chess opening manual, one of New In Chess' all-time bestselling opening books. This new 632-page hardcover edition contains everything you need to know to play 1.e4 with confidence. The repertoire is suited for players of all levels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



Exercises and Training for Improvers, Volume 2

Davorin Kuljasevic

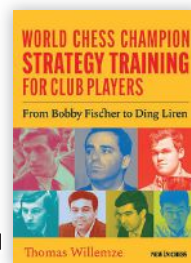
This second workbook in Davorin Kuljasevic's *How to Study Chess on Your Own* series is optimized for chess players with an Elo rating between 1500 and 1800 but is helpful for anyone between 1200 and 2000. The astounding success of his series made clear that thousands of chess players want to improve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



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.



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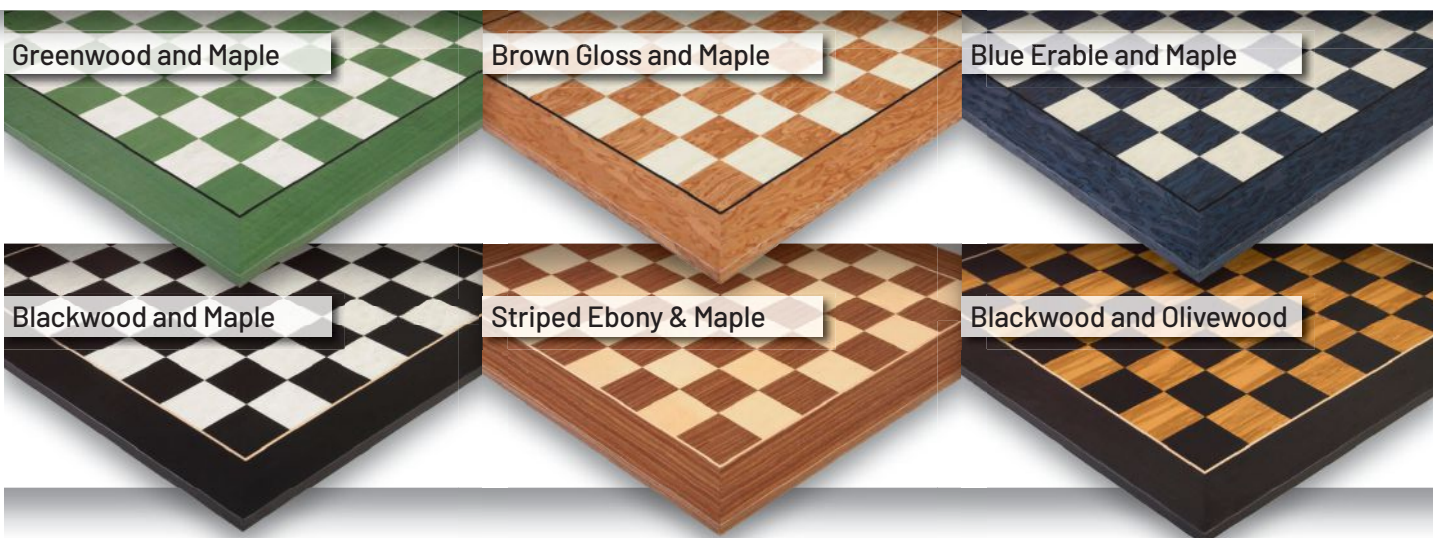
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