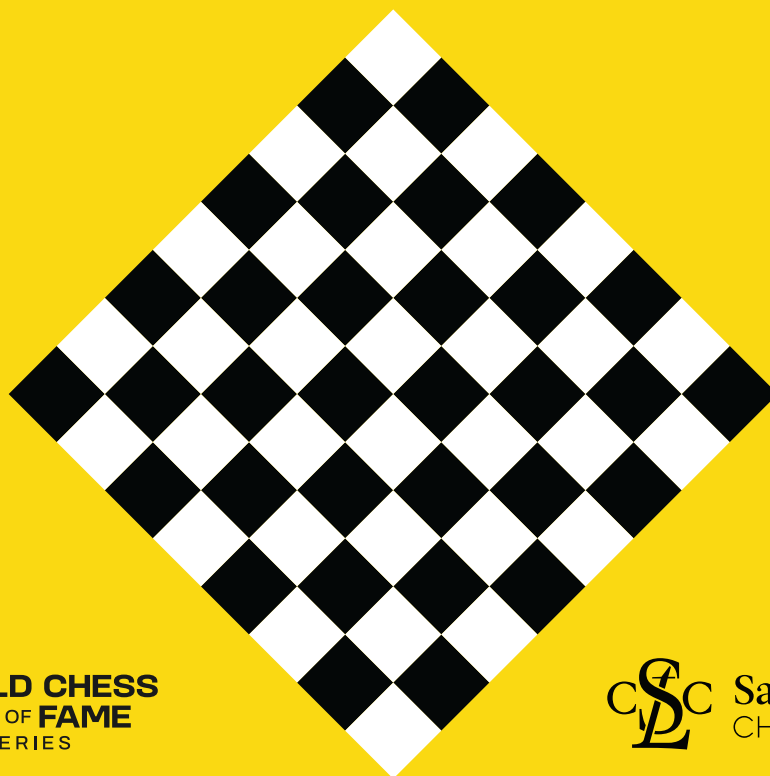


CHESS **LIFE** Kids

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at the **U.S.**
Championships





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By Dr. Jeanne Cairns Sinquefield

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ON THE COVER

People used to think that chess was for old people. Not anymore! Today's best chess players are getting younger every year, and this was particularly apparent at the 2025 U.S. Championships, where teenagers kept up with the best in the world. Some, like Megan Paragua, even got to test their blitz skills at the opening and closing ceremonies!

PHOTO: COURTESY SLCC / SARAH CARMODY

FEBRUARY 2026

CHESSLIFE Kids

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Young players shined at the U.S. Championships.

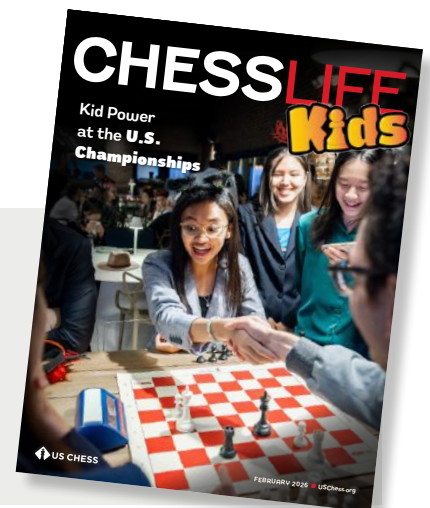
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Building an Attack

Part 1

BY NM TIM MCGREW

WORLD CHAMPION MAX Euwe once reported a complaint from fellow grandmaster Rudolf Spielmann, one of the boldest and most daring players of the time: “I can understand all of Alekhine’s combinations perfectly,” Spielmann said, “but what I find incomprehensible is where Alekhine always gets those attacking positions from, and how it’s possible that he usually obtains lively positions already in the opening. Give me Alekhine’s positions and I will rarely lose. But I usually get drawish positions, even when I play King’s Gambit!”

Maybe you have struggled a bit like Spielmann. You can find the checkmates in the books full of tactics puzzles, but they rarely seem to come up in your games. The games you do manage to win are often trials of endurance — you and your opponent wait to see who falls asleep first and drops a piece or misses a back-rank checkmate.

No need to fear! In this series of columns, we are going to look at complete games and ask ourselves how some of the finest players build up those attacking positions.

This month, our hero is GM Hikaru Nakamura, a frequent World Blitz Champion and certainly one of the most gifted players who has ever lived. We’re going to follow Hikaru around a bit as he plays some crushing chess online, asking how he gets to the point where the fire falls from the sky and consumes the enemy kingside. As a bonus, both games feature the same opening, so if you fancy adding something different to your repertoire for the new year, here is your chance!

Let’s start with a masterclass in building the attack:

COLLE SYSTEM, BY TRANSPOSITION (A40)

Hikaru (3078)
TheLancer (2484)
Chess.com, 2016

1. b3 c6 2. Bb2 d5

Black goes for a modest pawn structure without ... e7-e5. He may be reasoning that a pawn on e5 would just be a target, so they’re playing it safe.

3. e3 Nf6 4. Nf3 g6 5. d4

Hikaru transposes smoothly from Larsen’s Opening to a Colle-Zukertort system.

5. ... Bg7 6. c4

Some Colle-Zukertort players mindlessly play Bf1-d3, 0-0, Nf3-e5, and f2-f4, hoping for a Stonewall sort of attack. Hikaru is willing to take a more balanced approach.

6. ... 0-0 7. Nc3 dxc4 8. Bxc4

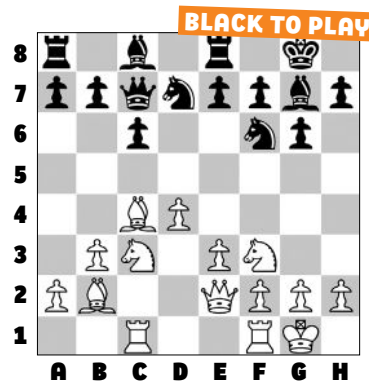
Now the bishop is aiming down the diagonal at the f7-square. Black really should take the opportunity to kick it away with ... b7-b5 sometime soon, but the moment passes and the bishop plays a key role in the coming attack.

8. ... Nbd7 9. 0-0 Re8 10. Qe2

Why does the queen go here rather than to d2? If you can’t answer that question with confidence at the moment, wait until Move 15.

10. ... Qc7 11. Rac1

An old rule of thumb says to put your rook opposite the enemy queen. Often, once the rook and queen are on the same file, there are discovered attacks available even when (as here) there are pawns in between.



11. ... e5??

Any hopes for Black to break out

of his cramp with this “freeing” move are gone. The problem is that the diagonal leading down to f7 is now badly exposed and White can walk right in the door.

12. Nb5!?

This isn't the best move — that would be 12. Ng5 right away — but it doesn't throw away the win. White's position is so good that a little tactical joke (12. ... cxb5? 13. Bxf7+ and 14. Rxc7) doesn't let Black back into the game.

12. ... Qb8 13. dxe5 Ng4 14. Bxf7+ Kxf7 15. Qc4+

Now we see the point of 10. Qe2 — Hikaru was building the assault ratio (remember the assault ratio?) by preparing to bring the queen into the attack via this square.

15. ... Kf8

Miserable: The king cannot get back into his castle and is mercilessly dragged out into the open. Black has perhaps three pieces we could really say are on the defense in a meaningful way here: the king himself, the rook, and the knight. White has five pieces in on the attack. It's over.

16. Ba3+ Re7 17. Ng5 Ndx5 18. Nxb7+ Ke8 19. Qg8+ Kd7 20. Rfd1+, Black resigned.

That game might convince you that Black should adopt a more focused central pawn structure early on. Let's see how one attempt worked out.

LARSEN'S OPENING (A01)

Hikaru (3113)
 7hanat (2542)
 Chess.com, 2017

1. b3 e5 2. Bb2 f6

Well, that's one way to make a statement! Normally, it's considered a bit dodgy to weaken the h5-e8 diagonal and also block your own knight from reaching its best post at f6. But it does definitely block the bishop on b2.

3. e3 d5 4. d4

Hikaru plays simple chess. Black's center is brittle, and now he is more or less forced to go into a reversed French with ... e5-e4.

4. ... Bd6

Which he does not do. Question: Is the black pawn on e5 safe?

5. dxe5 Bxe5?!

If Black had seen what was coming, he might have cut his losses with 5. ... fxe5 6. Bxe5 Nf6 and called it a gambit, kind of.

6. Bxe5 fxe5 7. Qh5+ Kf8 8. Qxe5

OK, so the pawn wasn't safe after all. If this were an opening book, we would stop here. But let's not, because our opponents usually don't resign just because they have dropped a pawn.

8. ... Nf6 9. Nf3 Nc6 10. Qf4

Keeping the queen within reach of the enemy king.

10. ... Be6 11. Bb5

Just getting the bishop out — 11. Bd3 would work about equally well, and the bishop ends up there anyway. What is instructive over the next few moves is that Hikaru neither rushes to trade pieces (yes, he's a pawn up, but the dislocated black king is really a juicy target) nor launches an attack while he still has undeveloped pieces. Develop, then open the position.

11. ... Ne7 12. Nc3 c6 13. Bd3 Bf7 14. 0-0

Nothing special here: Castling on either side would do the job.

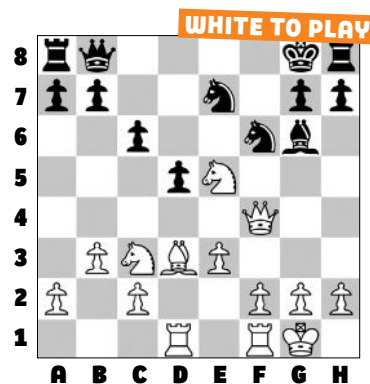
14. ... Bg6 15. Rad1

Hikaru really likes that trick of putting a rook opposite the enemy queen. Here, it lends some spice to the idea of a near-future pawn break with e3-e4.

15. ... Qb8

Running away from that rook. Even though they're a pawn down, Black would love to get queens off the board and drag this whole struggle into an endgame.

16. Ne5 Kg8



Fun fact: When you're missing an f-pawn, your king can be awfully exposed. Try to count the pieces White has in the attack on Black's king. Then play out the finish and see whether you counted them all.

17. e4 dxe4 18. Bc4+ Ned5 19. Rxd5! cxd5 20. Nxd5 Nxd5 21. Bxd5+ Bf7 22. Qxf7 mate.

We can take two lessons away from these games. First, if you play a sound but unusual opening, your opponent is more likely to go wrong early. Second, good attackers bring lots of pieces into position before they launch the attack. Having more attackers than defenders is the key. Try it in your next game! 🏆

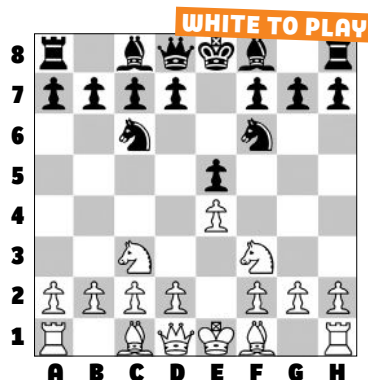


More Four Knights

BY JOHN HARTMANN

WE WRAP UP our coverage of the Four Knights this month with a look at a few fourth moves we haven't yet covered. 4. Bb5 is the most important move to know, but others — especially GM Daniel Naroditsky's pet move 4. Nd5 and the Halloween Gambit with 4. Nxe5 — are popular online and in blitz games. After reading this article, you'll be prepared for them all!

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



4. Bb5

While not as common as 4. Bc4 and 4. d4, 4. Bb5 is seen in one of every five games in this position at the club level. The “threat” is

Bb5xc6 followed by Nf3xe5, but as in the Ruy Lopez, Black has resources against it.

Because the position after 3. ... Nf6 is balanced and without immediate tactics, White can try a lot of moves. Here are some of the others you might face:

(a1) **4. Nd5** was a favorite of GM Daniel Naroditsky. It has some similarities to the Belgrade Gambit, which we discussed in December. As with the Belgrade, you can study the sharp lines and accept the pawn, but it's easier to decline it. Here I recommend **4. ... Bc5** and now:

(a1) **5. Nxe5? Nxd5 6. exd5 (6. Nxc6 dxc6 7. exd5 Qxd5) 6. ... Bxf2+ 7. Kxf2 Qh4+.**

(a2) **5. Bc4 d6 6. d3 Nxd5 7. Bxd5 Bg4.**

(a3) **5. c3 0-0 6. Nxe5?! (if 6. d4 exd4, while 6. d3, looking to play Bc1-g5 with a pin on the knight, should be met by 6. ... Nxd5 7. exd5 Ne7 8. Nxe5 Nxd5 and if 9. d4 d6!) 6. ... Nxe5 7. d4 Nxe4 8. dxc5 Nxc5** leaves Black a pawn up.

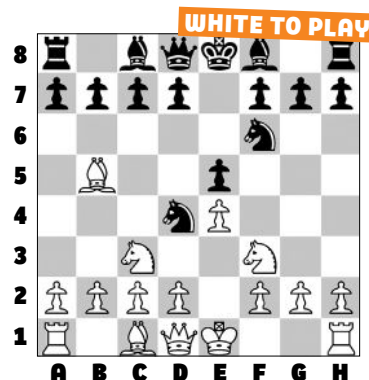
(b) **4. g3** is another Naroditsky specialty. We'll discuss it (by transposition) when we take up the Vienna Game (1. e4 e5 2.

Nc3 Nf6) in April. There we will recommend **4. ... d5 5. exd5 Nxd5 6. Bg2 Nxc3 7. bxc3.**

(c) **4. d3** defends the e-pawn again but is a bit slow. **4. ... Bb4 5. Bd2 d5 6. exd5 Nxd5 7. Nxd5 Bxd2+ 8. Qxd2 Qxd5** is easy equality for Black.

(d) **4. Nxe5?! is the Halloween Gambit**, which isn't as scary as it sounds. I wrote a long article on it for the October 2023 issue of *Chess Life*; if you're interested in learning more, check it out! White's idea is to get their central pawns rolling up the board after **4. ... Nxe5 5. d4** but after **5. ... Ng6! 6. e5 Ng8 7. Bc4 d5!** (freeing the c8-bishop) **8. Bxd5 c6 9. Bb3 Bb4** Black has a knight for two pawns and a solid position.

4. ... Nd4



Black has tried a lot of fourth moves over the years, including the solid 4. ... Bb4, 4. ... Bc5, 4. ... Bd6!?, 4. ... d6, and even 4. ... a6, which seems to force White to do what they want to do! The idea after 4. ... a6 is that Black gets the pawn back after 5. Bxc6 dxc6 6. Nxe5 Nxe4 7. Nxe4 Qd4.

But 4. ... Nd4 gives White the most trouble. It was invented by the legendary GM Akiba Rubinstein more than 100 years ago, and it worked so well that White stopped using 4. Bb5 in must-win games.

Black offers to gambit a pawn in many lines for fast development and counterplay along the e-file or on the b6-f2 diagonal. White has a lot of options, so take a bit of time and look at each one before you play this!

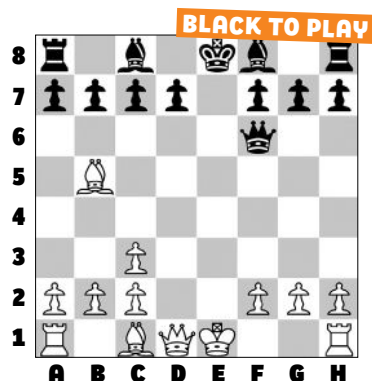
5. Ba4

You'll only see this in about one out of every 10 games, but it's the main line according to theory. It's also one of the bigger challenges to Rubinstein's move.

What are the other moves for White?

(a) If White grabs the e-pawn with **5. Nxe5**, which is seen about 20% of the time, they play into Black's hands. We attack the knight and e-pawn with **5. ... Qe7!** **6. Nf3** (6. f4 Nxb5 7. Nxb5 d6 8. Nf3 Qxe4+ is better for Black) **6. ... Nxb5 7. Nxb5 Qxe4+ 8. Qe2 Qxe2+ 9. Kxe2** and now **9. ... Nd5** defends the c-pawn. If 10. c4? a6! 11. cxd5 axb5 Black has the better pawn structure and the two bishops.

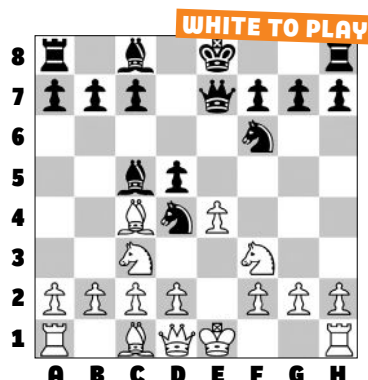
(b) **5. Nxd4** is seen in about a third of games at the club or scholastic level, but it's no challenge at all. After **5. ... exd4 6. e5** (6. Nd5 Nxd5 7. exd5 Qe7+ 8. Qe2 a6 9. Bd3 d6 leaves Black with slightly easier development) **6. ... dxc3 7. exf6 Qxf6 8. dxc3**



The position is equal. White's doubled pawns don't mean much, but Black could try to play for an

endgame where they matter. 8. ... Bc5 9. 0-0 0-0 10. Bd3 is the one thing you need to know: White plans to play Qd1-h5, threatening mate and also the c5-bishop. After 10. ... d6 or 10. ... h6 Black has no real problems and just needs to finish development.

(c) **5. Bc4** is seen about 15% of the time and is one of White's better moves. Black should play the thematic **5. ... Bc5**, developing the bishop and getting ready to castle. If White takes the e-pawn now with **6. Nxe5 Qe7! 7. Nf3 d5!**



Black hits back in the center and equalizes immediately through use of the pin on the e-file. The details are interesting:

(c1) **8. Nxd4?! dxc4 9. Nf3 Nxe4 10. 0-0 0-0;**

(c2) **8. Nxd5 Qxe4+ 9. Ne3 Bg4** gives Black great development for the pawn after **10. Be2** (10. d3 Bxf3! 11. dxe4 Bxd1 12. Kxd1 Nxe4) **10. ... Nxe2 11. Qxe2 0-0-0.**

(c3) White's best move is **8. Bxd5 Bg4 9. d3 0-0-0!**. Here White almost always plays **10. Be3** (10. Bg5 is worse: 10. ... Bb4 and now the threat of ... Rd8xd5 is real) **10. ... Nxd5 11. Nxd5 Rxd5! 12. exd5 Re8** and all Black's pieces are working together!

(d) **5. 0-0** (seen about 10% of the time) gets the white king off the e-file, so it takes away a lot of Black's fun. So now we execute our secondary threat — taking the

bishop! Black plays **5. ... Nxb5 6. Nxb5 c6 7. Nc3 d6** (7. ... Qc7!? first also works) **8. d4 Qc7!**, defending the e5-pawn, is equal. White has a bit more space, but Black has the two bishops. If 9. Bg5 Be7.

(e) Finally, **5. d3** also lets us take the bishop. Chances are equal after **5. ... Nxb5 6. Nxb5 c6 7. Nc3 d6.**

5. ... Bc5

We are happy to give up the e-pawn for quick development and counterplay on the e-file.

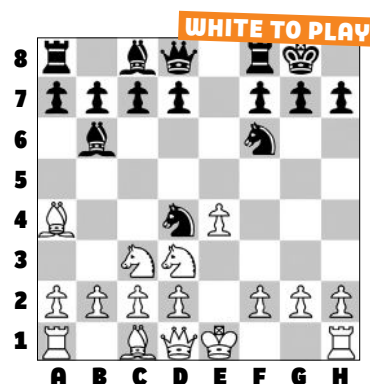
6. Nxe5

The critical move. If White plays slowly with 6. 0-0 0-0 7. Nxe5?! d6 8. Nf3 Bg4 Black has a very useful knight. The same idea works after 6. d3 0-0 7. Nxe5, although this is a better version for White.

6. ... 0-0 7. Nd3

7. 0-0? first is a mistake: 7. ... d6! 8. Nf3 Bg4 when the pin on the f3-knight is a problem that White can't easily fix. For example: 9. h3? Bxf3! 10. gxf3 Nh5 11. d3 Qh4.

7. ... Bb6



This is a key position to study. Black has better development and a powerful bishop on b6 for the pawn, but White is not without resources.

8. e5

a) After **8. 0-0** Black plays **8. ... d5!**

— the move we always want to play in 1. e4 e5 openings! Why does it work here? The point is to play ... Bc8-g4, as White can't block with f2-f3 with the bishop on b6 lurking. Now if **9. e5** (alternatives: 9. exd5 Bg4 and 9. Nxd5 Nxd5 10. exd5 Qh4) **9. ... Bg4 10. Qe1 Nh5!** with huge pressure. Black's threat is 11. ... Nf3+ 12. gxf3 Bxf3 with ... Qd8-g5+ to come.

b) **8. Nf4 d5** looks like it shouldn't work, but after **9. Nfxd5 Nxd5 10. Nxd5 Qg5!** gives White some tough decisions. Note that if White tries 11. Ne3 Black pushes 11. ... f5!.

8. ... Ne8 9. Nd5 c6 10. Ne3

Now Black should break in the center with ... d7-d6 or ... d7-d5 and use their development edge.

10. ... d6

Attacking the e-pawn. 10. ... d5 is another idea that might transpose.

11. c3

11. exd6 Qxd6 gives Black the chance to play ... Bb6-c7 if White castles.

11. ... Nf5 12. 0-0 Bc7

Black looks to regain the pawn with interesting play ahead.

Illustrative Games

FOUR KNIGHTS OPENING (C48)

Ossip Bernstein
Akiba Rubinstein
Vilnius (9), 08.31.1912

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 Nf6
4. Bb5 Nd4 5. Bc4 Bc5 6. Nxe5 Qe7
7. Nf3 d5 8. Bxd5 Bg4 9. d3 c6 10.
Bb3 Nd7 11. Bg5 Qd6 12. Nb1 Qg6
13. Be3 Bxf3 14. gxf3 Qg2 15. Kd2
Nxf3+ 16. Kc1 Rd8 17. h3 Bxe3+ 18.

fxe3 Nde5 19. Qf1 Qg5 20. Qe2 Nd4
21. Qd2 Ndf3 22. Qe2 Nd4, draw.

FOUR KNIGHTS OPENING (C48)

Zdzislaw Belsitzman
Akiba Rubinstein
Warsaw Ch, 03.08.1917

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 Nf6
4. Bb5 Nd4 5. Bc4 Bc5 6. Nxe5 Qe7
7. Nd3 d5 8. Nxd5 Qxe4+ 9. Ne3 Bd6
10. 0-0 b5 11. Bb3 Bb7 12. Ne1 Qh4
13. g3 Qh3 14. c3 h5 15. cxd4 h4 16.
Qe2 Qxh2+ 17. Kxh2 hxg3+ 18. Kg1
Rh1 mate.

FOUR KNIGHTS OPENING (C48)

Rudolf Spielmann
Akiba Rubinstein
Baden-Baden (4), 04.20.1925

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.
Bb5 Nd4 5. Nxe5 Qe7 6. f4 Nxb5 7.
Nxb5 d6 8. Nf3 Qxe4+ 9. Kf2 Ng4+
10. Kg3 Qg6 11. Qe2+ Kd8 12. Re1
Bd7 13. Nbd4 Ne3+ 14. Kf2 Nxc2 15.
Nxc2 Qxc2 16. b4 a5 17. Ba3 axb4
18. Bxb4 Qf5 19. Qe3 h6 20. Rac1
Rg8 21. Kg1 g5 22. Qc3 Rc8 23. fxe5
hxg5 24. Kh1 g4 25. Nd4 Qd5 26.
Qe3 g3 27. Bc3 Ra8 28. Nf3 gxh2
29. Bf6+ Kc8 30. Qc3 Qc5 31. Qd3
Qh5 32. Ne5 Rxg2 33. Kxg2 dxe5 34.
Rxe5 Qg4+ 35. Qg3 Qxg3+ 36. Kxg3
Bd6 37. Kxh2 Rxa2 38. Kg1 Rxd2 39.
Rh5 b6 40. Be5 Bc5+ 41. Kf1 Kb7
42. Bg3 Bb5+ 43. Ke1 Re2+ 44. Kd1
Rg2 45. Rc3 Be2+, White resigned.

FOUR KNIGHTS OPENING (C48)

Max Blau
Edward Lasker
Hastings (6), 01.05.1953

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

4. Bb5 Nd4 5. Ba4 Bc5 6. Nxe5 0-0
7. Nd3 Bb6 8. Nf4 d5 9. Nfxd5 Nxe4
10. Nxb6 axb6 11. Nxe4 Rxa4 12.
0-0 f5 13. Nc3 Ra5 14. f4 Re8 15. d3
b5 16. a3 Ra6 17. Rf2 Rae6 18. Bd2
Qh4 19. Rc1 Bd7 20. Qf1 Bc6 21.
Re1 Rxe1 22. Bxe1 Re6 23. Bd2 Qg4
24. h3 Qg3 25. Bc1 Nf3+ 26. Rxf3
Bxf3 27. Bd2 Bc6 28. Qf2 Rg6 29.
Qxg3 Rxg3 30. Kf2 Rxg2+ 31. Ke3
Rg3+ 32. Kd4 Rxh3 33. Ne2 Rh2 34.
Ke3 h5 35. Be1 h4 36. c4 bxc4 37.
dxc4 h3, White resigned.

FOUR KNIGHTS OPENING (C48)

Marco Jenull
Alexander Nikitin
Bundesliga, Germany, 1997

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nc3 Nc6 4. Bb5
Nd4 5. 0-0 Nxb5 6. Nxb5 c6 7. Nc3
d6 8. d4 Qc7 9. b3 Bg4 10. dxe5 dxe5
11. h3 Bh5 12. Bb2 Bd6 13. Qd3 0-0-
0 14. Qe3 Bxf3 15. Qxf3 h5 16. Qe3
Kb8 17. a3 Rdg8 18. b4 g5 19. b5
h4 20. f3 Rg6 21. bxc6 Qxc6 22. Kh1
Nh5 23. Ne2 f6 24. Rab1 Bc5 25. Qb3
Ng3+ 26. Nxc3 hxg3 27. Bc1 Qc8 28.
Be3 Rxh3+! 29. Kg1 Rh1+ 30. Kxh1
Qh8+, White resigned.

FOUR KNIGHTS OPENING (C48)

GM Francisco Vallejo Pons (2650)
GM Leinier Dominguez Perez (2638)
Young Masters (4), Cuernavaca,
02.06.2006

1. e4 e5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. Nf3 Nc6
4. Bb5 Nd4 5. Bc4 Bc5 6. Nxe5 Qe7
7. Nf3 d5 8. Bxd5 Bg4 9. d3 0-0-0
10. Be3 Nxd5 11. Nxd5 Rxd5 12.
exd5 Re8 13. c3 Nxf3+ 14. gxf3 Qh4
15. Kd2 Rxe3 16. fxe3 Qf2+ 17. Kc1
Bxf3 18. Qe1 Bxe3+ 19. Kb1 Bxh1
20. Qxh1 Qe2 21. a4 Qxd3+ 22. Ka2
Qc4+ 23. Kb1 Qd3+ 24. Ka2 Qc4+
25. Kb1, draw. ♠

Tactics Tune-Up

Our first Tactics Tuneup for 2026 features positions from the Rubinstein variation of the Four Knights. The opening is complicated, but these puzzles are a little more friendly. In the first four positions, you have to deliver mate in one. For the final five positions, you have to find mate in two. Good luck! Answers can be found on page 23.

1. **WHITE TO PLAY**

MATE IN ONE

2. **WHITE TO PLAY**

MATE IN ONE

3. **BLACK TO PLAY**

MATE IN ONE

4. **WHITE TO PLAY**

MATE IN ONE

5. **WHITE TO PLAY**

MATE IN TWO

6. **WHITE TO PLAY**

MATE IN TWO

7. **BLACK TO PLAY**

MATE IN TWO

8. **BLACK TO PLAY**

MATE IN TWO

9. **WHITE TO PLAY**

MATE IN TWO

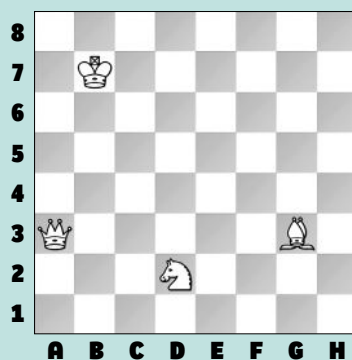
Puzzle Me THIS Puzzle Me THAT

BY JEFF COAKLEY



Watch out, friends! The zebras are on the loose, zigzagging their way across the land with a new load of fun and challenging puzzles. There's a little bit of this and a little bit of that. Some of the problems have special rules. Others are the standard kind of positions that might happen in your games. Good luck!

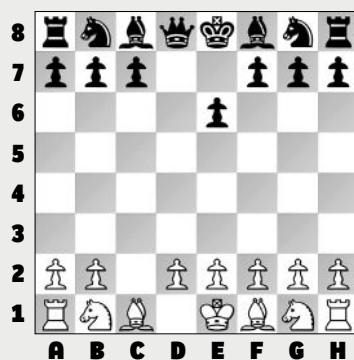
1. Triple Loyd



Place the black king on the board so that

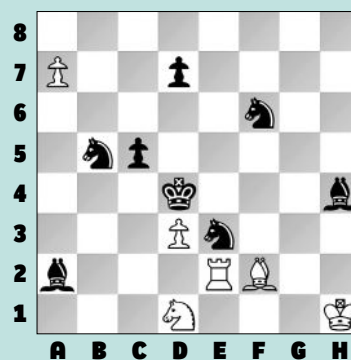
- Black is in checkmate.
- Black is in stalemate.
- White has mate in one.

2. Proof Game



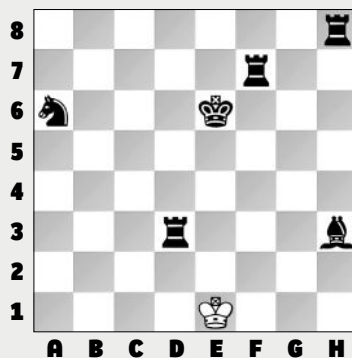
This position was reached after Black's fourth turn. What were the moves?

3. Maze Race



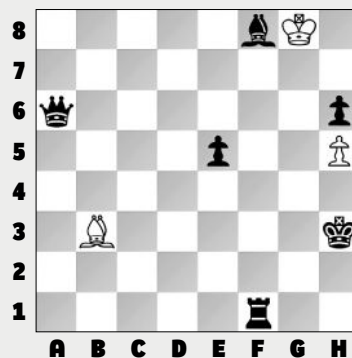
Only one white piece (rook, bishop, or knight) may move. Black does not get a turn. Capture the black king without taking any pieces or moving to a square guarded by Black. Which piece is fastest? Which is slowest?

4. Inverted Loyd



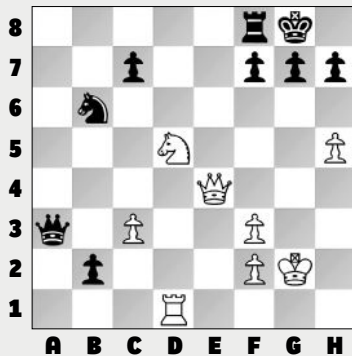
Add two white bishops and two white knights so that White has mate in one.

5. Series-Mate in 12



White plays 12 moves in a row to checkmate Black. Only the final move may give check. Captures are allowed. Black does not get a turn. White may not place their own king in check, even if they get out of check on the next move.

6. Mate in 6



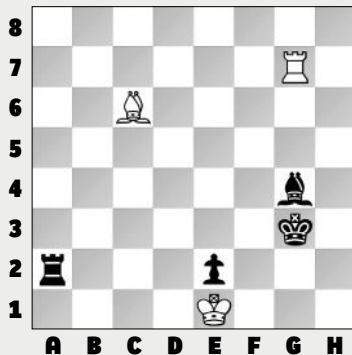
White to play. Mate in six.

7. Combo



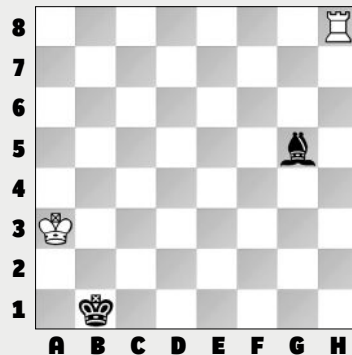
White to play and win material.

8. Defense



White to play and not lose.

9. Endgame



White to play and win.

10. Synthetic game

Make up a game where Black wins with the move 4. ... Qe1 mate.

Answers:

1) A. Ka1 mate. B. Kb5 stalemate. C. Kd5, allowing 1. Qd6 mate. 2) 1. c4 e6 2. c5 Bxc5 3. Qb3 Bf8 4. Qxe6+ dxe6. The black bishop comes out to play, then goes back home. 3) The rook is fastest. The bishop is slowest. Here are the lines: Re2-e1-g1-g6-h6-h8-b8-b6-a6-a4xd4 (10 moves), Nd1-b2-a4-b6-c8-e7-g6-f4-h3-g1-f3xd4 (11), Bf2-g1-h2-f4-h6-f8-e7-d8-a5-d2-c1-b2xd4 (12). 4) Add Bb7 Bd6 Ne7 Ne8 for 1. Bc8 mate. 5) 1. Bf7 2. Kxf8 3. Kg7 4. Bc4 5. Bxa6 6. Kxh6 7. Kg5 8. h6 9. h7 10. h8=B! A queen or rook would

give check. 11. Bxe5 12. Bxf1 mate. In a *criss-cross mate*, one bishop crisses, the other crosses. 6) 1. Nf6+ The knight *deflects* the black g-pawn, exposing the black king along the open g-file. 1. ... gxf6 (1. ... Kh8 2. Qxh7 mate) 2. Qg4+ Kh8 3. h6 Threatening 4. Qg7 mate. 3. ... Rg8 The only defense. 4. Rd8 The final *finesse*, *pinning* the black rook! 4. ... Qf8 (4. ... Rxd8 5. Qg7 mate) 5. Rxf8 Rxf8 6. Qg7 mate. 7) 1. Rxc6 The rook *decoys* the black queen into a *pin*. 1. ... Qxc6 Black loses less material with 1. ... Rd8

(not 1. ... 0-0? 2. Nf6+ Bxf6 3. Qxd7) but their position is still terrible after 2. Rc7 Qa4 3. Re7+ Kf8 4. Rc7. 2. Bb5 The bishop *pins* the queen, *decoying* her into a *fork*. 2. ... Qxb5 Equally bad is 2. ... Rc8 3. Bxc6+ Rxc6 4. 0-0. 3. Nc7+ Ke7 4. Nxb5 White is up a queen for a rook. 8) Black threatens 1. ... Ra1+ 2. Kd2 e1=Q+. If White defends with 1. Re7?, Black still wins by 1. ... Ra1+ 2. Kd2 Rd1+! 3. Kc2 e1=Q. White draws by *reducing material* to rook against bishop. 1. Rxc4+ Kxc4 2. Kf2! White will now capture the black pawn without allowing their king to be trapped on the first rank. An example of how things can go wrong is 2. Bf3+?, hoping for 2. ... Kxf3? stalemate. But Black plays 2. ... Kf4! instead and wins after 3. Bxe2 (3. Kf2 e1=Q+! 4. Kxe1 Kxf3) 3. ... Ke3 4. Bg4 Ra1+ 5. Bd1 Rb1. 2. ... Kf4 3. Bb5 Ke4 4. Bxe2 Rook against bishop is drawn if the defending king is not stuck in a corner that is the same color that the bishop moves on. 9) 1. Rc8 To beat the *dark-squared* bishop, the rook must keep the black king by the *dark* corner a1. If the king gets free (1. Kb3? Kc1), the game is drawn. The following line shows how Black can lose quickly. 1. ... Be7+ 2. Kb3 Bf6 3. Rf8 Bg5 4. Rf1+ Bc1 5. Re1 Ka1 6. Rxc1 mate. Black lasts longer with 1. ... Be3 2. Kb3 Bb6 3. Rb8 Ba7 4. Rb7! Forcing the bishop off the a- and b-files. 4. ... Be3 5. Re7 Bd2 6. Rh7 Bf4 (6. ... Kc1 7. Rh1+ Be1 8. Rxe1+) 7. Rh1+ Bc1 8. Rg1 Ka1 9. Rxc1 mate. Note that Black would draw easily with a *light-squared* bishop on g6. Then the *dark* square a1 is a safe corner. For example, 1. Kb3 Ka1 2. Rh1+ Bb1 is equal. 10) 1. d4 e6 2. Qd3 Qh4 3. Kd1 Bb4 4. f3 Qe1 mate. The moves can be played in different orders. 1. ... e5 or 4. f4 are also possible. ♠

Sign Me Up!

This Kentucky kid got a front-row seat in St. Louis.

BY **BEATRICE GABBARD**

Kentucky sixth-grader Beatrice Gabbard visited the Saint Louis Chess Club and World Chess Hall of Fame last October during a family vacation, and got to attend the opening ceremony of the U.S. Championships and World Chess Hall of Fame induction ceremony with her dad. Sounds like a primo autograph opportunity, and she took full advantage. It's not the only time she's done that though — let's let her tell you about that, and the rest of her trip to St. Louis, herself:

OWN A CHESS board where I collect signatures from famous players and other chess stars. Thirteen players signed my board at the opening ceremony!

I started collecting signatures in March 2022 at the Queen City Classic, in Cincinnati, where GMs Maurice Ashley, Irina Krush, and Gregory Kaidanov played simul. I now have 38 signatures, including Garry Kasparov and 16 other grandmasters!

Some popular content creators have signed my board as well, including IM Levy Rozman, FM James Canty, and the Botez sisters. Some of my favorite signatures are from Kasparov, GM Elshan Moradiabadi, IM Daniel Rensch, and GM Yasser Seirawan. Daniel Rensch actually signed my board twice: once with his own name, and once with a doodle of a bear, since Poppa Bear is his name on *ChessKid.com*!

My favorite chessplayers are IM Alice Lee, IM Tanitoluwa Adewumi, IM Carissa Yip, GM Awonder Liang, GM Wesley So, GM Irina Krush, and GM Fabiano Caruana. I have all of their signatures on my chessboard except Tani's. In the future I would like to meet and get autographs from Tani, former World Champion Vishy Anand, GM Hikaru Nakamura, former World Champion Magnus Carlsen, and GM Judit Polgar. Recently I have had to start using a silver permanent marker to get autographs on the dark squares, because all the light ones are filled up!

Getting It Backwards

The opening ceremony of the U.S Championships at Busch Stadium was one of my favorite things I did on my trip. To select the pairing numbers, they did a drawing of lots, where all the players selected boxes that on one side had a puzzle of the St. Louis skyline and on the other had their pairing number. After each player received their box, the photographers wanted to take a picture of them, but the players always held the box facing the wrong way, and the photographers had to correct them every single time. When Awonder Liang got his, he also had it backwards, but when the photographer asked him to switch it, he turned it upside down!

Big Blitz

Later that week, my family spent a day at the Saint Louis Chess Club and World Chess Hall of Fame. We arrived at the WCHOF five minutes before they opened, so my younger brother and I played a game of blitz with the giant chessboard and a normal-sized clock. My favorite exhibit at the Hall of Fame was all about



PHOTO: JOHN HARTMANN

different chess variants. My favorite was Seirawan chess, where there are two new pieces, the Hawk (Knight + Bishop) and the Elephant (Knight + Rook). There was also an exhibit about Literature and Chess and an exhibit about art by Charles Houska, who really likes including fish in his paintings. I counted at least 27 fish in his exhibit!

Fabi Alert?

While we were walking from lunch to the chess club my dad, who had gone ahead, texted my mom to say that Fabiano Caruana was walking down the street towards us, and 30 seconds later, there he was! The chess club was quite large, and I liked it a lot. At that time only the downstairs was

Left: Beatrice and her dad. Top: so many autographs! Below: Fun in STL and at SN8 (with Liang and Yip)!



open to the public because of the championships. While we were there, Awonder Liang and two GMs

who were not playing in the championships were analyzing the games, and after she had finished her game Carissa Yip also joined them. It was really interesting to watch them analyse, even if sometimes it was a bit confusing.

Do You Smell Popcorn?

Besides the chess club and Hall of Fame, I enjoyed going to the St. Louis City Museum, which has more than 30 slides in it and a large fake cave system, which my family and I

accidentally got lost in. Luckily we could use the smell of popcorn from the lobby to find our way out! I also liked watching the perpetual motion machine and a cow eye dissection at the St. Louis Science Museum.

The Love of the Game

I've been playing chess since my dad first taught my three brothers and me in 2020, and I got to play in my first OTB chess tournament in 2021. I'm the Kentucky state co-champion for fifth grade. Outside of chess I enjoy reading, writing my family newspaper, building LEGO, board games, programming, and playing with my brothers. One fun fact about me is that I have been on the *Chess Life Kids* cover twice without winning any championships! The first time was from the *ChessKid* / US Chess Online Elementary Championships in 2020; the second one was a picture of a simul at the Girls Club at Elementary Nationals 2024.

One of my favorite things about chess is that nowadays you can instantly play chess with someone anywhere in the world. In fact, almost every week I play chess with a friend I met at Elementary Nationals who lives in Georgia!

Going to St. Louis was really fun. In my opinion it's not just the chess capital of the United States, but of the whole world! 🍷





Next-Gen

Young players shined at the U.S. Championships.

BY **RICK MASSIMO** WITH ANNOTATIONS BY **WGM KATERINA NEMCOVA** AND **FM DAVIS ZONG**



PHOTOS: COURTESY SLCC / OOTES (LEE, PARAGUA); SLCC / CARMODY (BLITZ); HARTMANN (WOODWARD)

YOU CAN'T SAY there were a lot of surprises at the top of the U.S. Championships, held last October at the Saint Louis Chess Club: GM Fabiano Caruana won his fourth straight Open championship and fifth overall, while IM Carissa Yip won her third straight Women's championship and fourth overall.

But you don't have to place first to have a successful tournament, and some of the youngest competitors in St. Louis made moves that are likely to put them in the championship conversation for years to come.

These annotations are shortened; for the full notes, visit our coverage at Chess Life Online.

Open

GM Andy Woodward is still only 15, but after winning last year's U.S. Junior Championship he was seeded into his first U.S.



PHOTO: JOHN HARTMANN

Championship, and he showed he belonged by responding with an even score, tying for fifth and winning \$17,000.

Woodward's highlights were a draw with Caruana in the second round, and wins over GM Sam Sevian and Hans Niemann, who both outrated him by more than 100 points.

ENGLISH OPENING (A25)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2789)
GM Andy Woodward (2590)
US Ch (2), St. Louis, 10.13.2025
Annotations by WGM Katerina Nemcova

1. c4 e5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. e3 Nc6 4. Qb3!? Bc5!

A strong response by Andy to Fabiano's unusual move. He realizes that this square for the bishop is quite safe because White cannot easily chase it away with the typical a2-a3 and b2-b4, as the queen is already on the b3-square.

5. g3

The light-squared bishop already has an open diagonal for development, and wasting so many moves can backfire.

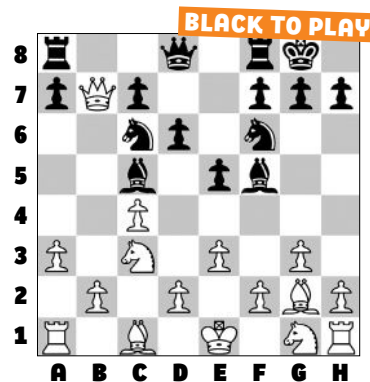
5. ... d6 6. a3

White needs to control the b4-square. Developing the bishop immediately with 6. Bg2?! would bring trouble after 6. ... Nb4! when Black targets the d3-square.

6. ... 0-0 7. Bg2 Bf5! 8. Qxb7

Fabiano has to take the pawn. Otherwise, what is the queen doing on b3 at all?

Facing page: Lee, Paragua, Woodward, plus Paragua in blitz mode! Right: Caruana deep in thought.



8. ... Nd4!!

Spectacular move! As he mentioned in the post-game analysis, he believed this plan was sound given his active pieces and the open e-file.

9. exd4?

Recapturing is too ambitious, and Fabiano will need to work very hard to survive the following attack on his king. The engine recommends exchanging queens to keep the white king safe with 9. Qxa8! Qxa8 10. Bxa8.

9. ... exd4 10. Qf3!?

Not 10. Qxa8?? Qe7+! 11. Nge2 Rxa8 12. Bxa8 dxc3 when Black has a queen for two passive, stuck rooks, and a continued attack on the king.

10. ... Bg4! 11. Qd3 dxc3! 12. dxc3 Re8+ 13. Kf1 Nd7 14. Nf3 Ne5 15. Nxe5 Rxe5 16. Bf4!?

Not 16. Bxa8?? — White's squares are so weak on the kingside that losing the light-squared bishop, even for the Exchange, would mean the end for the white king: 16. ... Qxa8 17. Rg1 Bh3+ 18. Rg2 Qxg2 mate.

16. ... Re2! 17. Qxe2!

Fabiano is bailing out of the position.

17. ... Bxe2+ 18. Kxe2 Rb8 19. b4 Bb6 20. Bc6!? Qf6 21. Rac1 Rd8 22. Rhe1 Qf5 23. h4 h6 24. Be3 Bxe3

25. Kxe3 Qc8?!

The engine is not a fan of this, and would rather Black fight to keep the king in the center with 25. ... Qe6+!.

26. Kf3!

What a relief for the king to reach safety after such a stressful time in the center.

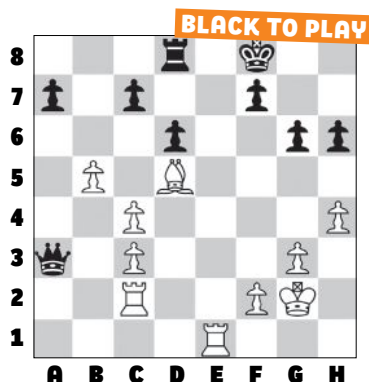
26. ... Qa6 27. b5 Qxa3 28. Bd5 Kf8 29. Kg2 g6 30. Rc2



IM Carissa Yip



FM Rose Atwell

**30. ... Re8!**

It's necessary to trade off one pair of rooks so Black doesn't get into trouble. If 30. ... a5? 31. Rce2!! and White will invade the seventh rank.

31. Rxe8+ Kxe8 32. Re2+ Kf8**33. Re3**

The game continued, but both players played accurately.

33. ... h5 34. Rf3 f5 35. Re3 a5 36. bxa6 e.p. Qxa6 37. Re6 Qa4 38. Rxc6 c6 39. Bf3 Ke7 40. Rg7+ Kd8 41. Rg5 f4 42. g4 hxg4 43. Rxc4 Qxc4 44. h5 Qxc3 45. h6 Qh8 46. Rh4 Qh7 47. Bxc6 Ke7 48. Bf3 Qg6+ 49. Kh2 Qc2 50. Rxf4 Qxf4+ 51. Kh3 Qd2 52. Kg4 Qxf4+ 53. Kxf4 Kf7 54. Kf5 Kg8 55. Kg6 Kh8 56. Bd5 stalemate.

ENGLISH OPENING (A20)

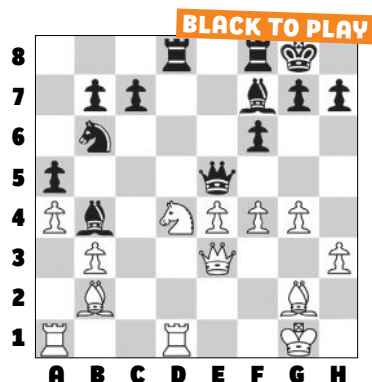
GM Samuel Sevian (2698)

GM Andy Woodward (2590)

US Ch (5), St. Louis, 10.17.2025

Annotations by WGM Katerina Nemcova

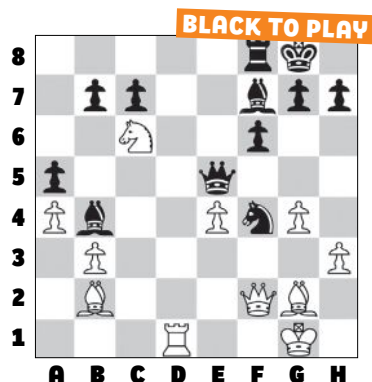
1. c4 e5 2. g3 Nf6 3. Bg2 d5 4. cxd5 Nxd5 5. Nf3 Nc6 6. 0-0 Nb6 7. b3 Be7 8. Bb2 f6 9. Na3 Be6 10. Nc2 Qd7 11. e4 Bc5 12. d4 exd4 13. Ncx4 Nxd4 14. Nxd4 Bg4 15. Nf3 0-0 16. Qc2 Bd6 17. a4 a5 18. Rfe1 Bb4 19. Red1 Qe7 20. h3 Bh5 21. g4 Bf7 22. Nd4 Rad8 23. Qe2 Qe8 24. Qe3 Qe5 25. f4??



The position was slightly better for White until this move. This big oversight from Sam handed the game to Andy.

25. ... Nd5!! 26. Qf2 Nxf4 27. Nc6

It is unclear whether this was a hail-mary move, or if Sam planned this from the start and miscalculated Black's continuation.

27. ... Rxd1+! 28. Rxd1**28. ... Qxe4!! 29. Nxb4**

Black just ends up three pawns up after 29. Bxe4 Nxh3+! 30. Kg2 Nxf2 31. Kxf2 bxc6.

29. ... Nxc2 30. Rd4 Qb1+ 31. Kxc2 axb4 32. Qd2 c6! 33. Rd7 Re8 34. g5 Bd5+! 35. Rxd5 Qe4+! 36. Kf2 Qxd5, White resigned.

It didn't take long for Woodward to show his result was no joke: Since the U.S. Championship, he's won the Challengers Section at the Tata Steel tournament in Wijk aan Zee,

Holland. Part of the prize for that is that next year he'll play in the Masters Section with the legends!

GM Abhimanyu Mishra tied for last, but actually scored more points than last year. And he tied for second in his first U.S. Championship, so it's easy to believe he'll be back. It's hard to remember he's still only 16 — he became a grandmaster at age 12, the youngest in the world at the time.

Women's

The Women's Championship saw even more young players in high places.

FM Rose Atwell, who's 17 now but was 16 at the time of the tournament, had been here before — this was her second U.S. Women's. She improved from last place to an even score, good for eighth place and \$6,000.

CATALAN OPENING (D02)

FM Rose Atwell (2353)

WGM Atousa Pourkashiyan (2291)

US Women's Ch (4), St. Louis

10.12.2025

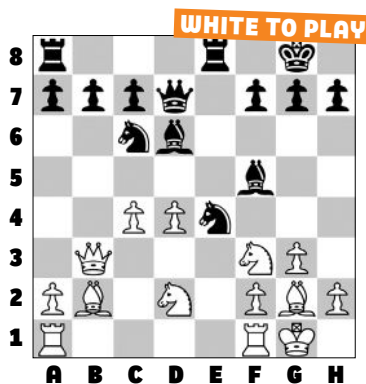
Annotations by FM Davis Zong

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. g3 d5 4. Bg2 Bd6

A pugnacious variation of the Catalan, leading to dynamic pawn structures in contrast to the variations beginning with taking on c4 or pushing ... c7-c6.

5. Nf3 0-0 6. 0-0 Nc6 7. b3 dxc4 8. bxc4 e5 9. e3 exd4 10. exd4 Bf5 11. Nbd2 Re8 12. Bb2 Qd7 13. Qb3 Ne4?! (see diagram top of next column)

The side playing against the hanging pawns often wants to



trade pieces to get closer to an endgame, but here it costs Black the bishop pair.

14. Nxe4 Bxe4 15. c5 Bf8 16. Ne5!

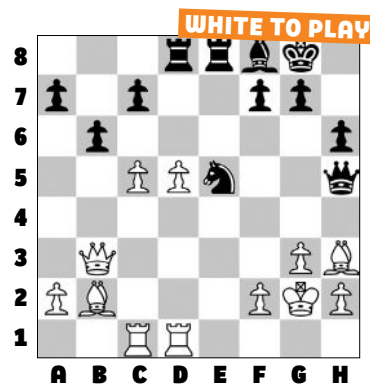
A good find by Atwell, securing the bishop pair.

16. ... Nxe5 17. Bxe4 Nc6 18. Qd3 h6 19. Rfe1 Ne7

Better was 19. ... Rad8!, because if 20. d5? Nb4!.

20. d5 Rad8 21. Red1 Ng6 22. Bf5 Qe7 23. Rac1 Qe2 24. Qb3 Ne5 25. Kg2 Qh5 26. Bh3 b6?

The critical moment! 26. ... a6! was more solid. Black is off the hook if White trades, but Atwell finds a key breakthrough.



27. d6!

No matter what happens, a passed c-pawn will be created, and along with the bishop pair, it will prove decisive.

27. ... cxd6 28. c6 g5 29. Bxe5 g4 30. Bxg4 Qxg4 31. c7 Rc8 32. Bxd6 Bg7 33. Bf4 Qg6 34. Re1 Rxe1 35. Rxe1 Bf8 36. Qd5 Qc2 37. Qd7 Ra8 38. Rc1 Qe4+ 39. Kg1, Black resigned.

FM Megan Paragua was only 12 at the time of the tournament. She got off to a rough start in her Championship debut, but finished with two points in her last three games, including a last-round win in a back-and-forth battle with WGM Atousa Pourkashiyan. Paragua took home \$4,750.



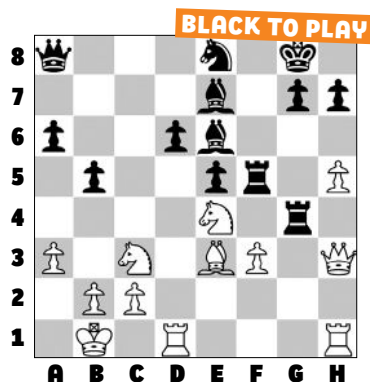
SICILIAN DEFENSE (B45)

WGM Atousa Pourkashiyan (2291)

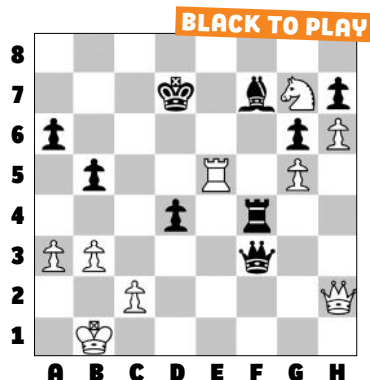
FM Megan Paragua (2259)

US Women's Ch (11), St. Louis,
10.24.2025

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 Nc6 6. a3 d6 7. Be3 Be7 8. Qe2 e5 9. Nf3 Be6 10. 0-0-0 Rc8 11. Bg5 0-0 12. Qd2 Ne8 13. h4 a6 14. Bd3 f6 15. Be3 Na5 16. Kb1 b5 17. h5 Nc4 18. Bxc4 Rxc4 19. Qd3 f5 20. exf5 Rxf5 21. Nd2 Rg4 22. Nde4 Qa8 23. f3 Rxc2 24. Qf1 Rg4 25. Qh3



25. ... Rh4 26. Qg2 Rxh1 27. Rxh1 d5 28. Ng5 Bxg5 29. Bxg5 Qc6 30. h6 g6 31. Re1 Nd6 32. f4 Nf7 33. Qg1 Nxg5 34. fxg5 Qc7 35. Qg3 Kf7 36. Nd1 d4 37. Nf2 Bc4 38. Ng4 Ke6 39. Nf6 Qb7 40. Ne8 Kd7 41. Ng7 Rf4 42. b3 Bf7 43. Rxe5 Qf3 44. Qh2



44. ... Bxb3 45. Re1 Bd5 46. Ne8 Qxa3 47. Nf6+ Rxf6 48. gxf6 Qb4+ 49. Kc1 Qxe1+ 50. Kb2 Qb4+ 51. Kc1 Qa3+ 52. Kd1 Qe3, White resigned.

And IM Alice Lee, already playing in her fourth Women's Championship, lost in the first round in her last game as a 15-year-old, but celebrated her 16th birthday by starting a 6/7 streak that put her at the top of the pack. She faltered at the end, but still finished tied for fourth, winning \$11,000.

CATALAN OPENING (E06)

IM Alice Lee (2409)

FM Jennifer Yu (2256)

US Women's Ch (2), St. Louis, 10.13.2025
Annotations by WGM Katerina Nemcova

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. g3 e6 4. Bg2 Be7 5. 0-0 0-0 6. c4 a5!?

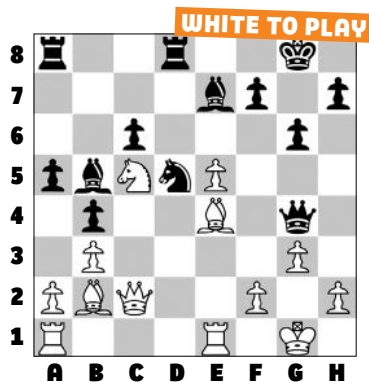
This is a side variation often played by GM Magnus Carlsen. 6. ... dxc4 is the most popular continuation.

7. Ne5 c6 8. Nc3 Nbd7
8. ... Nfd7!? is more popular.

9. e4 dxc4 10. Nxc4 b5 11. Ne3 b4 12. Na4 Ba6 13. Re1 Bb5 14. b3 Qc7 15. Nc4 e5 16. Nxe5 Nxe5 17. dxe5 Qxe5 18. Bb2 Qe6 19. Qc2 Rfd8 20. e5 Nd5 21. Be4! g6 22. Nc5!

It's time to activate the knight, especially now, since Black may be unwilling to trade it for her dark-squared bishop given the weakened dark squares around her king.

22. ... Qg4?!



This move isn't terrible on its own, but it heads in the wrong direction. I would recommend getting rid of the active knight and simplifying the position: 22. ... Bxc5 23. Qxc5 Qe7 24. Qc2 a4!.

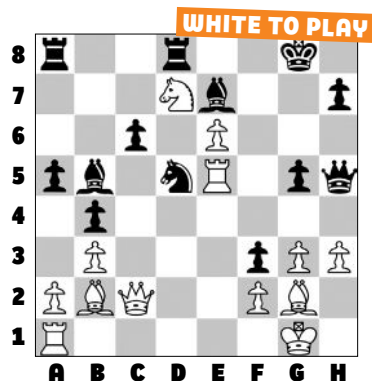
23. e6!

Alice will give up this pawn any day if it opens up her b2-bishop. Here it's also less dramatic, as she can recapture later.

23. ... f5??

A big error in time trouble. Leaving the white pawn on e6 with that master of a dark-squared bishop lurking can lead to only one result. After 23. ... fxe6 24. Bxd5 Rxd5 25. Nxe6 White certainly enjoys an advantage, but it's far from decisive.

24. Bg2 f4 25. Nd7! f3 26. h3 Qh5 27. Re5! g5



28. Rxd5!

A beautiful sacrifice highlighting the power of the wonderful bishop on b2. There were other ways to win, but this one is the most direct.

28. ... cxd5 29. Qf5! Rxd7

Or 29. ... fxg2 30. Qe5! Qg6 31. Qh8 mate.

30. exd7, Black resigned.

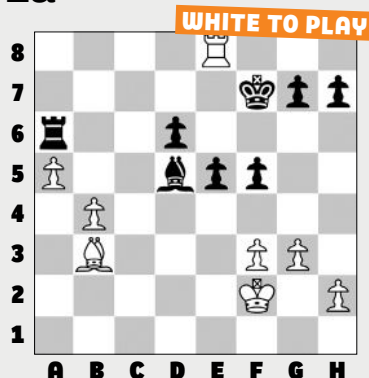
One threat is 30. ... fxg2 31. Qxd5+ and 32. Qxa8+; if 30. ... Rd8 31. Bxf3 will force eventual mate. ♖

Igor's DOUBLES

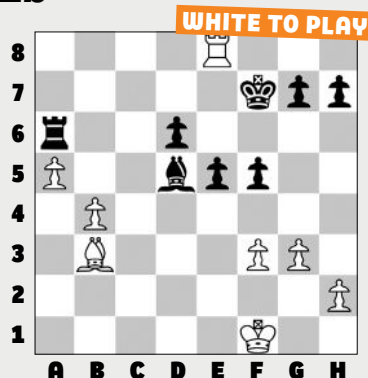
BY IM IGOR KHMELNITSKY

Below are three pairs of positions. Each pair has one key difference between them. Find that difference and figure out why it matters. Use the side of the page for notes, and find the solutions on page 23. Good luck!

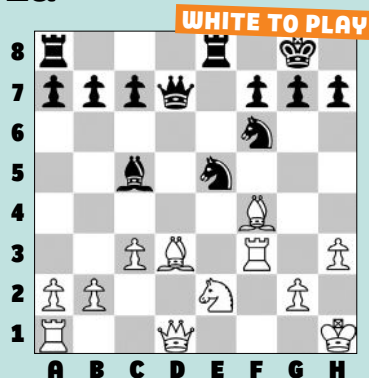
1a



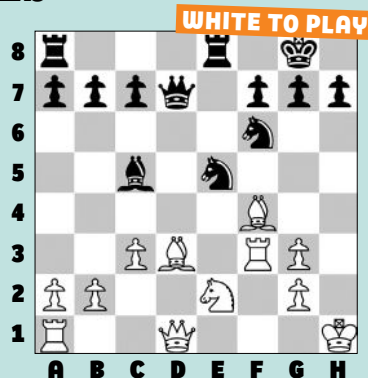
1b



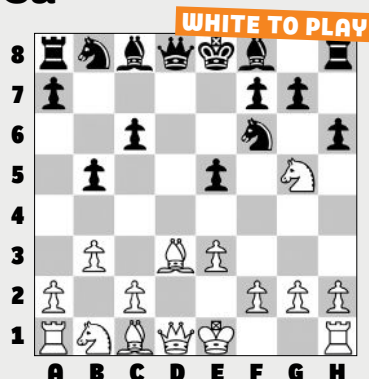
2a



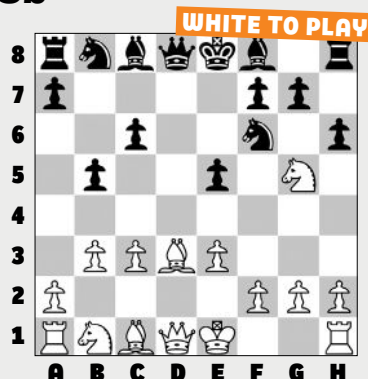
2b



3a



3b



JOIN THE FUN

Open to all girls under 18 as of 1/1/26. This prestigious event is your chance to shine and connect with your peers



Hyatt McCormick Place
2233 S. Dr Martin Luther King
Jr Dr, Chicago, IL 60616



Main Event

6-SS, G/90,d5

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

Friday: Round 1

Saturday: Rounds 2, 3, & 4

Sunday: Rounds 5 & 6



Entry Fee

\$100 by 2/23, \$130 by 3/16,
\$180 by 3/30, \$230 by 4/9



Side Events on 4/10

Blitz: 5 double rounds, G/3 +2,
EF \$50 by 3/30, \$65 after

Bughouse: # Rds TBD, G/5,d0,
\$50 per team



Hotel Reservations

single-quad: \$195 + tax
reserve early hotel may sell out



**APRIL
10-12
2026**



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

Details / Registration: www.allgirls.rknights.org

www.kasparovchessfoundation.org

TOURNAMENT LIFE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Effective April 30, 2024, the Executive Board moved to remove the temporary change to US Chess Grand Prix rules implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic and to return to previous Grand Prix requirements. The Executive Board also moved to allow tournaments limited to seniors, juniors, women, or college students to be eligible for the US Chess Federation Grand Prix, provided they satisfy the other Grand Prix requirements, effective immediately. Please refer to the Tournament Life Announcement section in *Chess Life* for more information.

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

2026 US Amateur Team South

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
Site: Westgate Lakes Resort & Spa Address: 9500 Turkey Lake Road, Orlando, FL 32819 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Charles W Hatherill • kingsgambit50@earthlink.net • 7027430305 • thevillageschessclub.org

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 U.S. Amateur Team-North

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026 — IL TLA# 50285
Site: Hyatt Regency Schaumburg Address: 1800 E. Golf Rd., Schaumburg, IL 60173 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Glenn Panner • glenn@chessweekend.com • chessweekend.com

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

21st Annual KCF All-Girls National Championships

APRIL 10-12, 2026 — IL TLA# 52639
Site: Hyatt Regency McCormick Place Address: 2233 S Dr Martin Luther King Jr Dr., Chicago, IL 60616 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: N Residency: N Org: Renaissance Knights Chess Foundation • david.heiser@renaissanceknights.org • allgirls.rknights.org

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

2026 National Open

JUNE 10-14, 2026 — NV TLA# 52540
Site: Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino Address: 3000 Paradise Road, Las Vegas, NV 89109 Overall Prize Fund: \$125,000 GP Pts: 200 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Vegas Chess Festival • vegaschess@gmail.com • 702-930-9550 • vegaschess-festival.com

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

2026 U.S. Women's Open

JUNE 10-11, 2026 — NV TLA# 53257
Site: Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino Address: 3000 Paradise Road, Las Vegas, NV 89109 Overall Prize Fund: \$5,000 GP Pts: 60 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Vegas Chess Festival • vegaschess@gmail.com • 702-930-9550 • vegaschess-festival.com

Grand Prix

AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

17th annual Southwest Class Championships

FEBRUARY 12-16, 2026 — TX TLA# 52346
Site: Westin Dallas Fort Worth Airport Hotel Address: 4545 W John Carpenter Freeway, Irving, TX 75063 Overall Prize Fund: \$35,000 GP Pts: 200 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 PA State Game/75 Championship - West

FEBRUARY 14, 2026 — PA TLA# 53598
Site: William Pitt Union, Univ. of Pittsburgh Address: 5th Ave. & Bigelow Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15213 Overall Prize Fund: \$695 GP Pts: 6 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Tom M Martinak • martinak_tom_m@hotmail.com • 412-908-0286 • pscfchess.org/clearinghouse/

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

10th annual George Washington Open

FEB. 27-MAR. 1, 2026 — VA TLA# 52348
Site: Washington Dulles Marriott Hotel Address: 45020 Aviation Dr., Dulles, VA 20166 Overall Prize Fund: \$17,000 GP Pts: 120 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Pennsylvania Quick Chess Championship

MARCH 6, 2026 — PA TLA# 53595
Site: Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg Hershey Address: 47151 Linden Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111 Overall Prize Fund: \$750 GP Pts: 6 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Tom M Martinak • martinak_tom_m@hotmail.com • 412-908-0286 • pscfchess.org/pascho-lasticchamp

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

33rd annual Western Class Championships

MARCH 6-8, 2026 — CA-S TLA# 52914
Site: Hilton Orange County Airport Hotel Address: 18800 Macarthur Blvd, Irvine, CA 92612 Overall Prize Fund: \$20,000 GP Pts: 120 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

23rd annual Southern Class Championships

MARCH 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 54208
Site: Delta Hotels By Marriott Orlando Celebration Address: 2900 Parkway Boulevard, Kissimmee, FL 34747 Overall Prize Fund: \$17,000 GP Pts: 80 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

30th annual Mid-America Open

MARCH 20-22, 2026 — MO TLA# 52913
Site: Clayton Plaza Hotel St. Louis-Clayton Address: 7750 Carondelet Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105 Overall Prize Fund: \$20,000 GP Pts: 120 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Atlantic City Open (Replaces Continental Chess Open At Foxwoods and Princeton Open, During Easter Weekend)

APRIL 1-5, 2026 — NJ TLA# 52908

Site: Tropicana Casino And Resort Hotel Address: 2831 Boardwalk, Atlantic City, NJ 08401 Overall Prize Fund: \$40,000 GP Pts: 200 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

7th Colonial Open

APRIL 2-5, 2026 — VA TLA# 53535
Site: Executive Conference and Training Center Address: 22685 Holiday Park Dr Ste 60, Sterling, VA 20166 Overall Prize Fund: \$10,000 GP Pts: 50 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Anand Dommalapati • co2026@capitalareachess.com • 703-627-5314 • capitalareachess.com/colonialopen

GRAND PRIX

13th Annual Reno - Larry Evans Memorial Open

APRIL 3-5, 2026 — NV TLA# 54080
Site: J Resort Casino Hotel Address: 345 N. Arlington Avenue, Reno NV 89501 Overall Prize Fund: \$27,500 GP Pts: 150 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Jerome V. Weikel • wackyvk@aol.com • 775-747-1405 • https://sites.google.com/site/renochessclub/

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 PA State Game/29 Championship - West

APRIL 4, 2026 — PA TLA# 53599
Site: William Pitt Union, Univ. of Pittsburgh Address: Room 548, 5th Floor, William Pitt Union, Univ. of Pittsburgh, 5th Ave. & Bigelow Blvd., Pittsburgh PA 15213 Overall Prize Fund: \$690 GP Pts: 6 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Tom M Martinak • martinak_tom_m@hotmail.com • 412-908-0286 • pscfchess.org/clearinghouse/

GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

5th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Saturday Action Chess

APRIL 11, 2026 — CA TLA# 54197
Site: UC Davis Conference Center Address: 550 Alumni Lane, Davis, CA 95616 Overall Prize Fund: \$2,560 GP Pts: 20 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Michael Aigner • michael@fpawn.com • sosnickchess.com

GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

5th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Sunday Rapid Chess

APRIL 12, 2026 — CA TLA# 54199
Site: UC Davis Conference Center Address: 550 Alumni Lane, Davis, CA 95616 Overall Prize Fund: \$2,560 GP Pts: 20 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Michael Aigner • michael@fpawn.com • sosnickchess.com

GRAND PRIX

2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
Site: Bridges Conference Center, Bridges Campus Address: 13 Lane Lane, Sheridan, WY 82801 Overall Prize Fund: \$9,000 GP Pts: 100 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Brian Kuehl • admin@sheridan-chess.com • 202-679-6779 • SheridanChess.com

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

35th Annual Chicago Open

MAY 21-25, 2026 — IL TLA# 53431
Site: Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel Address: 601 North Milwaukee Ave, Wheeling IL 60090 Overall

Prize Fund: \$100,000 GP Pts: 200 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
Site: Fort Lauderdale Marriott North Address: 6650 N. Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309 Overall Prize Fund: \$10,600 GP Pts: 50 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Boca Raton Chess Club • jon@bocachess.com • 561-302-4377 • bocachess.com

GRAND PRIX

Walter Browne Memorial National Open Blitz Championship

JUNE 13, 2026 — NV TLA# 52998
Site: Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino Address: 3000 Paradise Road, Las Vegas, NV 89109 Overall Prize Fund: \$5,000 GP Pts: 40 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Vegas Chess Festival • vegaschess@gmail.com • 702-930-9550 • vegaschess-festival.com

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

54th Annual World Open (Open through Under 1400 Sections)

JULY 1-5, 2026 — DC TLA# 53565
Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel Address: 2500 Calvert St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 Overall Prize Fund: \$208,000 GP Pts: 300 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

Regional

ALABAMA

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017

2026 US Amateur Team South

See Nationals.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

See Grand Prix.

ARIZONA

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147

SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls

Site: Coconino High School Address: 12801 N Izabel St, Flagstaff, AZ 86004 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: N Residency: N Org: Bill Cheney • chessnacc@gmail.com • 9282662122 • nazchesscenter.org

ARKANSAS

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017

2026 US Amateur Team South

See Nationals.

CALIFORNIA

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147

SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls

See Arizona.

MARCH 6-8, 2026 — CA-S TLA# 52914
33rd annual Western Class Championships
 See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

APRIL 11, 2026 — CA TLA# 54197
5th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Saturday Action Chess
 See Grand Prix.

APRIL 12, 2026 — CA TLA# 54199
5th Stephen Sosnick Memorial Chess Festival Sunday Rapid Chess
 See Grand Prix.

COLORADO
FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147
SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls
 See Arizona.

CONNECTICUT
MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

DIST. OF COLUMBIA
JUNIOR GRAND PRIX
JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC TLA# 53577
54th Annual World Open, Under 1200 And Under 1000 Sections
Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel **Address:** 2500 Calvert St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$17,000 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • [director@chess.us](#) • [chesstour.com](#)

FLORIDA
JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
 See Nationals.

FEB. 8, 2026-MONTHLY — FL TLA# 53499
954Chess Scholastic Chess Open
Site: Spanish River Library **Address:** 1501 Spanish River Blvd., Boca Raton, FL 33431 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** 954Chess INC • [info@954chess.com](#) • [954chess.com](#)

APRIL 11, 2026 — FL TLA# 52390
2026 FSCL Super Championship Tournament
Site: Hialeah Gardens High School **Address:** 11700 Hialeah Gardens Blvd., Hialeah Gardens, FL 33018 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Florida Scholastic Chess League • [liz@fscchess.org](#) • 786-755-FSCL (3725) • [fscchess.org](#)

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

GEORGIA
JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
 See Nationals.

FEB. 8, 2026-MONTHLY — FL TLA# 53499
954Chess Scholastic Chess Open
 See Florida.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

ILLINOIS
STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
MARCH 6-8, 2026 — IL TLA# 50286
2026 Illinois K-8 State Championship
Site: Hyatt Regency Schaumburg **Address:** 1800 E. Golf Rd., Schaumburg, IL 60173 **Overall Prize Fund:**

n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Glenn Panner • [glenn@chessweekend.com](#) • [chessweekend.com](#)

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

KENTUCKY
JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
 See Nationals.

LOUISIANA
JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
 See Nationals.

OKLAHOMA
FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147
SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls
 See Arizona.

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.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

MASSACHUSETTS
JAN. 1, 2026-WEEKLY — MA TLA# 47199
FMCA
Site: Clock Tower Center, Future Masters Chess Academy **Address:** 200 Homer Avenue, Mezzanine Level, Suite 200, Ashland, MA 01721-1716 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Future Masters Chess Academy • [Info@FutureChessMasters.com](#) • (508)622-5388 • [futurechessmasters.com](#)

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

MISSISSIPPI
JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
 See Nationals.

MISSOURI
MARCH 20-22, 2026 — MO TLA# 52913
30th annual Mid-America Open
 See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NEVADA
FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147
SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls
 See Arizona.

NEW JERSEY
FEBRUARY 22, 2026 — NJ TLA# 53223
2026 New Jersey Elementary and Junior High School Championships

Site: Brookdale Community College - Student Life Center **Address:** Arena Dr. (Park in lot #7), Lincroft, NJ 07738 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** New Jersey State Chess Federation • [tournaments@njscf.org](#) • [njscf.org](#)

APRIL 1-5, 2026 — NJ TLA# 52908
Atlantic City Open (Replaces Continental Chess Open At Foxwoods and Princeton Open, During Easter Weekend)
 See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

NEW MEXICO
FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147
SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls
 See Arizona.

NEW YORK
FEBRUARY 22, 2026 — NJ TLA# 53223
2026 New Jersey Elementary and Junior High School Championships
 See New Jersey.

HERITAGE EVENT • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
FEB. 28-MAR. 1, 2026 — NY TLA# 52920
58th annual New York State High School Championship
Site: Saratoga Hilton Hotel **Address:** 534 Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$2,550 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • [director@chess.us](#) • [chesstour.com](#)

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
MARCH 7-8, 2026 — NY TLA# 52923
58th annual New York State Scholastic Championships, OPEN TO GRADES K-8 ONLY
Site: Saratoga Hilton Hotel and 3 other nearby locations **Address:** Hilton Hotel: 534 Broadway; Saratoga City Center: 522 Broadway; Saratoga Courtyard Marriott: 11 Excelsior Ave, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • [director@chess.us](#) • [chesstour.com](#)

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

NORTH CAROLINA
JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
 See Grand Prix.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 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

FEBRUARY 22, 2026 — NJ TLA# 53223
2026 New Jersey Elementary and Junior High School Championships
 See New Jersey.

HERITAGE EVENT • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
MARCH 7-8, 2026 — PA TLA# 53596
2026 Pennsylvania State Scholastic Championships
Site: Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg Hershey **Address:** 4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Tom M Martinak • [martinak_tom_m@hotmail.com](#) • 412-908-0286 • [pscchess.org/pascholasticchamp](#)

APRIL 3-5, 2026 — PA TLA# 51915
2026 World Chess Festival - Malvern
Site: Desmond Malvern by Hilton Hotel **Address:** 1 Liberty Road, Malvern, PA 19355 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Joe Hanley • [hanleychessacademy@gmail.com](#) • [hanleychessacademy.com/2026WCFMalvern.html](#)

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

PUERTO RICO
MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

SOUTH CAROLINA
JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
 See Nationals.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

TENNESSEE
JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
 See Nationals.

DEC. 28, 2025-WEEKLY — TN TLA# 54477
Spring Hill Weekly Chess-Off
Site: Just Roll With It! Cards and Games **Address:** 2001 Campbell Station Pkwy Ste C11, Spring Hill, TN 37174 **Overall Prize Fund:** see online TLA **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Jared McDonald • [Jaredmcdco@gmail.com](#) • 9097259605

TEXAS
JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017

PLEASE NOTE

DEADLINE FOR PRINT TLA SUBMISSIONS

TLAs appearing in *Chess Life Kids* 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.

2026 US Amateur Team South

See Nationals.

FEBRUARY 12-16, 2026 — TX TLA# 52346
17th annual Southwest Class Championships
 See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147
SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls
 See Arizona.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

UTAH

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — AZ TLA# 54147
SW Regional Chess Tournament for Women and Girls
 See Arizona.

VIRGINIA

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
 See Nationals.

FEB. 27-MAR. 1, 2026 — VA TLA# 52348
10th annual George Washington Open
 See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

FEBRUARY 28, 2026 — VA TLA# 52398
George Washington Saturday 11 AM Satellite Octos
Site: Washington Dulles Marriott Hotel **Address:** 45020 Aviation Dr, Dulles, VA 20166 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • [director@chess.us](#) • [chesstour.com](#)

HERITAGE EVENT • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 6-8, 2026 — VA TLA# 52708
2026 Virginia Scholastic & College Chess Championships
Site: Thomas Jefferson High School for S&T **Address:** 6560 Braddock Rd., Alexandria VA 22312 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** Y **Org:** Mike Hoffpauir, NTD/IA • [mhoffpauir@aol.com](#) • 757-846-4805 • [vachess.org](#)

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

WEST VIRGINIA

JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026 — FL TLA# 53017
2026 US Amateur Team South
 See Nationals.

HERITAGE EVENT • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 21, 2025 — WV TLA# 53693
55th Annual WV Scholastic Chess Championships
Site: Harrison County Senior Center **Address:** 500 W Main St., Clarksburg, WV 26301 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Harrison County Chess Club • [greerlaw@aol.com](#) • 3046419241 • [wvsca.com](#)

WISCONSIN

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211
13th Annual Summer Solstice Open
 See Grand Prix.

WYOMING

MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 52295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
 See Grand Prix.

Solutions

PAGE 9 TACTICS TUNE-UP

(1) Let's start off easy. **9. Qxf7 mate.** reyesjuanma – ALSNKRE, Lichess blitz 2025. (2) **14. Rd8 mate.** Echoes of Morphy against the Duke and Count! ZSG2025007 – Andrex1x, Lichess blitz (analysis) 2025. (3) **17. ... Ng3 mate.** Knights are tricky! Brumoso – Leandri90, Lichess blitz 2025. (4) **14. Ba6 mate.** So are bishops! Abati2319 – creotile, Lichess blitz 2025. (5) **12. Bc4+ Kg6 13. Qg4 mate.** Did you notice that h6 is guarded by the c1-bishop? PLT83 – chocolato93, Lichess rapid 2025. (6) **14. Qxf7+ Rxf7 15. Re8 mate.** Sneaky! Good thing we had that pin. Ali19840 – burgundus, Lichess blitz (analysis) 2025. (7) **29. ... Qxd1+ 30. Nxd1 Rf1 mate.** Removing the defense of the f1-square. Oleksandr1961 – almoravide, Lichess rapid 2025. (8) **26. ... Rxh2+ (26. ... Qg3?? is fun but one move slower: 27. h3 Rxh3+ 28. gxh3 Qxh3 mate) 27. Kxh2 Qh4 mate.** Nice! Andresaegle – geor1990, Lichess rapid (analysis) 2025. (9) **20. Qxh6+ Kg8 21. Qxg7 mate.** Good use of the pin on the g7-pawn! magnus_calicharan – BlunderWonder006, Lichess blitz (analysis) 2025.

PAGE 19 IGOR'S DOUBLES

#1 (Easy)

Difference: In 1a, the white king is on the f2-square, while in 1b, it's on f1.

Significance: White's both pieces are under attack. Luckily, White has a striking idea: 1. Ra8! The black bishop can't take the rook on a8; it's pinned. If the black rook takes on a8, 2. Bd5+ and 3. Bxa8 leads to an extra bishop for White. The other moves seem hopeless

for Black. In 3b, the white king's unfortunate placement means that Black can meet 1. Ra8 with 1. ... Bxb3! 2. Rxa6 Bc4+ and 3. ... Bxa6. Black wins the rook back, and is up a bishop. Therefore, in 3b White must play 1. Ba4 with a dynamically balanced position and mutual chances for victory.

Conclusion: White wins in 1a; a dynamically balanced position in 1b.

#2 (Intermediate)

Difference: In 2a, the white pawn is on the h3-square; in 2b, this pawn is on the g3-square.

Significance: When the queens are lined up like this, you should always check out the idea of Bd3xh7+ and Qd1xd7. However, Black's queen is well defended ... or is it? Not in 2a, where White can quickly dispose of the defenders: 1. Bxe5 Rxe5 2. Rxf6. Now, if Black takes back with 2. ... gxf6, White wins the queen with 3. Bxh7+; otherwise, the white rook will retreat, and White will be up a piece. The story is different in 2b, since the white king's position is compromised. After 1. Bxe5 Rxe5, White can't play 2. Rxf6?? due to 2. ... Rh5 mate. Black is significantly better, close to winning, even if White doesn't blunder a checkmate. For example, after 2. Nf4 Qg4, Black has well-placed pieces and a very strong attack along the h-file.

Conclusion: White wins in 2a; Black is likely winning in 2b.

#3 (Challenging)

Difference: In 3a, the white pawn is on the c2-square, while in 3b, it's on the c3-square.

Significance: White's tricky idea here is to decoy the black king away from the queen and then unleash a discovered attack with the d3-bishop. The idea works great in 3b: After 1. Nxf7! Kxf7 2. Bg6+! (not 2. Bc4+? Nd5 and Black

wins) 2. ... Kxg6 (2. ... Ke7 3. Ba3+) 3. Qxd8, White wins the queen for two minor pieces. However, with the pawn still on c2 (3a), Black has the last punch with 3. ... Bb4+! when the h8-rook is ready to take the queen. White can only get one piece back — the b4-bishop, after 4. Qd2, or 4. Bd2 or 4. c3. Ultimately, White would end up down in material. Thus in 3a, instead of 1. Nxf7, White should play 1. Ne4 with a balanced position.

Conclusion: White is winning in 3b; the position is approximately equal in 3a.



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