

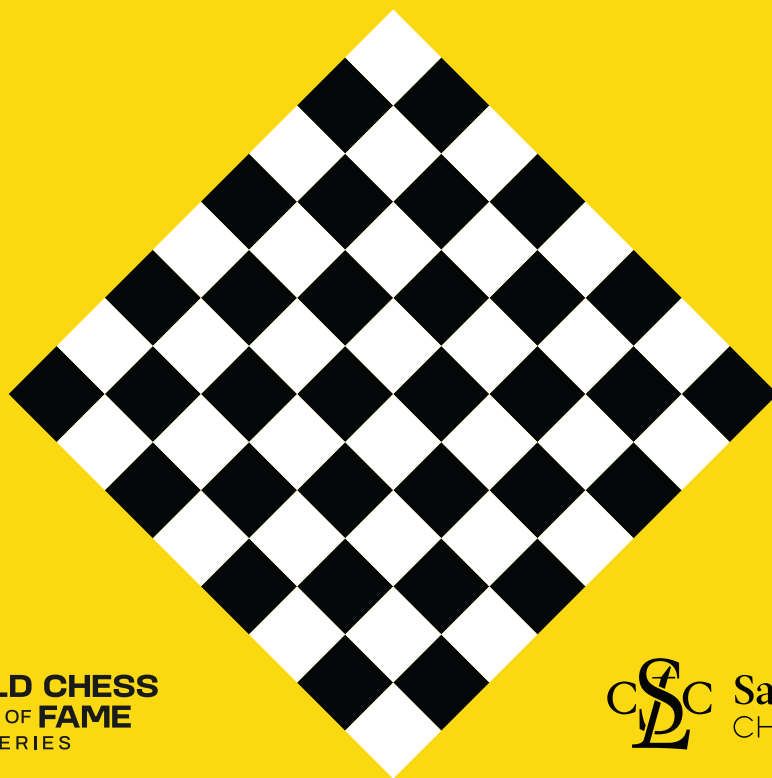
CHESS LIFE

Kids

CHRISTMAS IN SPOKANE

The 2025
K-12 Grade
Championships





————— LEARN TO —————

Read & Write Chess

By Dr. Jeanne Cairns Sinquefield

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CHESS LIFE/CHESS LIFE
KIDS EDITOR
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john.hartmann@uschess.org

ART DIRECTOR
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ON THE COVER

It might not have been the "White Christmas" some were hoping for, but the 2025 K-12 Grade Championships were a lot of fun anyway! More than 1,300 players journeyed from across the country to the Spokane Convention Center in Spokane, Washington, to test themselves against their peers.

PHOTO: HIEDI BULKLEY

APRIL 2026

CHESSLIFE Kids

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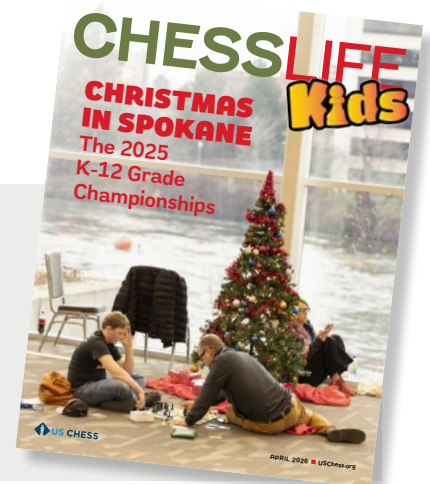
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Building the Attack

Part 2

BY NM TIM MCGREW

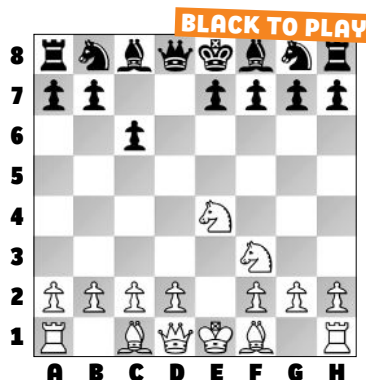
IN A SERIES of articles last year, we covered the different sorts of castles and how they can be attacked. That is a comparatively simple topic, because there are only a few really good castled positions. If an attack is possible, it is usually pretty clear where the attacker wants to put the minor pieces, which defenders to trade off, when a bishop sacrifice is reasonable, and so forth.

The usual counterpart to such a series is one on attacking the uncastled king. There is a simple way to do that: Talk about every possible way to attack f7, give a few examples where Black gets smashed, and proclaim the job done. But in real chess games, things aren't so simple.

There are pawn structures where one side (usually Black) needs to be careful because of a variety of tricks and sacrifices. If Black makes it through the opening and castles, White doesn't necessarily have to abandon the attack; they can shift their focus

to the king's new address. And sometimes, White's plans flow from one into the other pretty much seamlessly.

Like last time, let's follow GM Hikaru Nakamura around a bit and see how he does it. To keep things focused, I want to look at a set of ideas in the Two Knights Variation of the Caro-Kann Defense that Hikaru has employed with lethal effectiveness in his online bullet and blitz games. We'll start with the position after **1. e4 c6 2. Nc3 d5 3. Nf3 dxe4 4. Nxe4:**



Let's listen in on a chess lesson

where a master is explaining what is going on to a somewhat anxious student, Peter, who is a club player.

"In this position," the master says, "White wants to put the bishop on c4, and the Queen usually goes to e2. Then ..." But Peter interrupts him. "Wait, why c4?"

The master shrugs. "It's a good square, aims at the weak spot on f7, and doesn't get in the way of the d-pawn."

Peter has other ideas. "But don't we want to play d2-d4? Why not do that first? Then when Black castles, we can put our bishop on d3 to attack his king!"

"If we wanted to play d2-d4," the master responds, "we could have done it on Move 2. We can — and probably will — do that if Black makes their way through the coming flurry of tactics. But one point of the Two Knights Variation is to start active piece play first. And for that, the bishop stands very well on c4."

"But can't Black just chase the bishop with moves like ... b7-b5 and ... a7-a5?" Peter asks.

"Yes, but the bishop can back up to b3, and ... a7-a5 gets met by a2-a3 or a2-a4, so Black can't really get the bishop off this diagonal so easily."

Peter accepts the answer for now. "Okay. So the bishop goes to c4. But can't Black just close the diagonal with ... e7-e6?"

"Sure. But playing that move too early locks in Black's bishop on c8, leaving us wondering why they didn't just play the French Defense in the first place."

"Um, OK. So what if they bring the bishop out to f5 first, then?"

The master smiles. "I'm so glad you mentioned that. Almost no masters fall for that anymore, but it's one of the classic traps." And then he sets up the pieces.

CARO-KANN DEFENSE (B11)

Hikaru (3078)

LaughingTiger (2326)

Chess.com, 2019

1. e4 c6 2. Nf3 d5 3. Nc3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Bf5 5. Ng3 Bg6 6. h4 h6 7. Ne5

The bishop gets driven back to h7 with a gain of time, as White's knight is now hitting f7 as well. This is one of the advantages of White's having played 2. Nf3 early and delaying d2-d4.

7. ... Bh7 8. Bc4

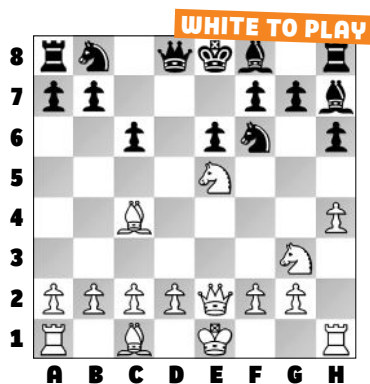
Good enough, though if you want to be a perfectionist, 8. Qh5! is the computer's refutation.

8. ... e6 9. Qe2

Take note — the queen really loves this square in these lines. It turns out that e6 is a vulnerable point in Black's position because f7 is its only defender.

9. ... Nf6??

Just what Hikaru has been waiting for. Black had to crawl with something awful like 9. ... Qe7 instead.



10. Nxf7! Kxf7 11. Qxe6+ Kg6 12. h5+ Kg5 13. d4 mate.

Peter's eyes are wide. "That's — that's incredible! Did Hikaru see all of that?"

"Yes and no. He saw it, but he didn't even have to calculate

it, really. That sacrifice is well known. He just remembered it."

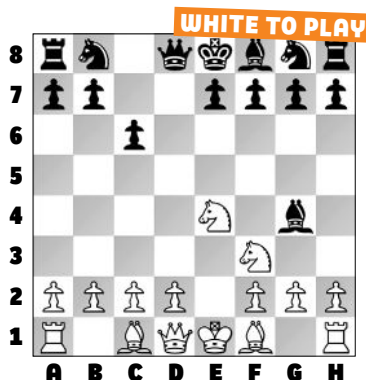
"That's why nobody falls for it anymore?"

"Not exactly nobody, just not many masters. In the *lichess.org* online database, this 4. ... Bf5 line has been played by over half a million victims. I once caught an 1800 player in this line in a rated over-the-board blitz tournament."

"Okay, I get it. So Black has to play 4. ... Bg4, not 4. ... Bf5."

"He can, and it's not quite such a disaster, but Black's difficulties aren't over. What would you play here for White?"

(He sets up the position after **1. e4 c6 2. Nc3 d5 3. Nf3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Bg4.**)



Peter pauses. "Um ... maybe 5. Bc4 now?"

"Actually, that's a very reasonable move. It might even transpose into the game we just saw. For homework, how about if you look into that. But let's pick up the bishop pair right away."

CARO-KANN DEFENSE (B11)

Hikaru (3120)

JayRx (2303)

Chess.com, 2021

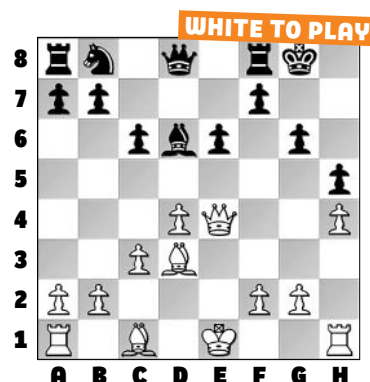
1. e4 c6 2. Nc3 d5 3. Nf3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Bg4 5. h3 Bxf3 6. Qxf3 e6 7. Bc4 Nf6 8. c3 Nxe4 9. Qxe4 Bd6 10. d4 0-0?

Giving White the king's permanent address in a position where the bishops rule the open board isn't a good life choice. Once the bishop has done its work on c4, it is free to shift to a more useful diagonal.

11. Bd3 g6 12. h4!

Black is already lost. The assault ratio — the comparison of the available attackers to defenders — is overwhelming, with White's queen and bishops against Black's lone king.

12. ... h5



13. g4!

Hikaru pries open lines without a moment's hesitation. The point is to increase the assault ratio even more by involving the rook on h1 in the attack.

13. ... hxcg4 14. h5 Qf6 15. Qxcg4 Kg7 16. Bg5

Oops! Where's she going?

Black resigned.

"OK!" Peter says. "I get it now. Can we look at what happens if Black plays 4. ... Nf6 instead of moving his bishop?"

"Yes, certainly," the master replies. He glances at the old-fashioned clock on the wall, then turns back apologetically. "But I'm afraid that will have to wait for the next lesson." ♦♦



The Vienna Opening

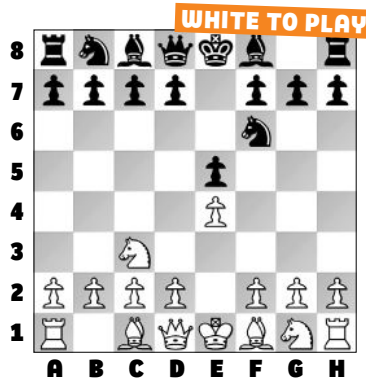
BY JOHN HARTMANN

ONE OF THE toughest things about playing 1. e4 e5 with Black is handling the transpositions. Your opponents will try to get to their favorite opening systems by playing with move orders, and if you're not careful, you might end up in a position you've never seen before!

We studied the Four Knights (1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 Nf6) in our last two columns, and we saw there were lots of ways for White to use move orders to slide into specific lines. White can head for the Four Knights with 2. Nc3 as well, but it can also lead into a number of other openings, including the Vienna Opening.

The Vienna (1. e4 e5 2. Nc3) is another flexible approach that can branch off in many different directions. After 2. ... Nf6, 3. f4 is the main move we need to know, but please also pay attention to 3. d4, which can create a bit of mischief if we're not careful. After studying this month's column, you'll be prepared for both. Let's dig in!

1. e4 e5 2. Nc3 Nf6



I think this is best, developing a piece and preparing ... d7-d5.

3. f4

This is like a deferred King's Gambit, and the tactics can get sharp if Black is careless. But White can shift into other systems here:

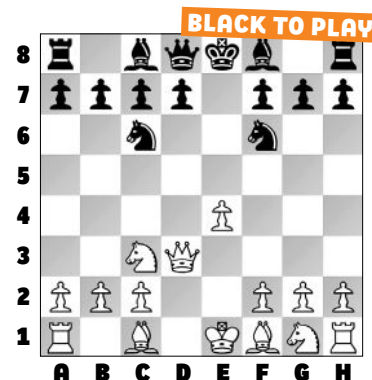
(a) 3. Nf3 Nc6 transposes to the Four Knights.

(b) 3. Bc4 can transpose to the Two Knights with 3. ... Nc6 (b1) 4. Nf3 when we said to go for the "fork trick" with 4. ... Nxe4, or White can head for a version of the Bishop's Opening with (b2) 4. d3.

This is a popular way to try to get Italian-style games without all the theory, and we'll address it in a future column. For now, let's say that the lack of pressure on

the e-pawn lets Black try to take White's bishop with 4. ... Na5 or pin the c3-knight with 4. ... Bb4.

(c) 3. d4 wasn't played much until recently at the master level, and it's still pretty unknown among club players. The idea is that after 3. ... exd4 4. Qxd4 Nc6 5. Qd3:



White has a clear plan to develop the c1-bishop and castle queenside before launching kingside pawns forward to attack. Black's most natural developing plan is (c1) 5. ... Bb4 6. Bd2 0-0 7. 0-0-0 and now Black usually plays some combination of ... Rf8-e8 and ... Nc6-e5. But beware! It's easy to get in trouble after something like 7. ... Re8 8. Nge2 Ne5 9. Qg3 d6?! (9. ... Nh5!) 10. Bg5! h6?? 11. Bxf6 Qxf6 12. Nd5.

So that's why I like the more active (c2) 5. ... Bc5!? when White can get in trouble easily. For example, if (c2a) 6. Bg5? we win a pawn immediately with 6. ... Bxf2+ 7. Kxf2 Ng4+ 8. Ke1 Qxg5. Other lines include (c2b) 6. Be3 Nb4 7. Qd2 Bxe3 8. fxe3 0-0, (c2c) 6. Nf3 Ng4, and (c2d) 6. Bf4 d6 7. Qd2 (7. 0-0-0!? Bxf2!) 7. ... Be6.

(d) 3. g3 is a slow, positional approach that won't be seen much at club level. White's idea is to put the bishop on the long light-squared diagonal where it might influence the center. But after 3. ... d5 4. exd5 Nxd5 5. Bg2 Nxc3 6. bxc3

both sides have what they want — easy development and some imbalances to work with. Now Black should play **6. ... Nc6 7. Nf3** (7. Ne2?! allows 7. ... Be6! followed by ... Be6-d5 to try and trade the bishops, weakening White's light squares) **7. ... Bc5 8. 0-0 0-0** and the position is balanced.

Note that this system can also be reached by the 3. Nf3 Nc6 4. g3 move order. The ideas are the same.

(e) **3. d3** is unambitious, locking in the f1-bishop. After **3. ... d5 4. exd5 Nxd5 5. Nxd5?** (5. g3 Nxc3 6. bxc3 Bd6 is at least equal for Black) **5. ... Qxd5** the queen can't easily be kicked away from the center. Black is better.

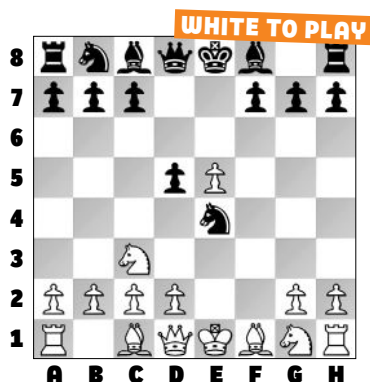
3. ... d5!

Punching back in the center thematically. (You always want to push ... d7-d5 in 1. e4 e5 openings!) We'll see something similar in our response to the King's Gambit later.

4. fxe5

4. exd5 is met by 4. ... Nxd5! 5. fxe5 (5. Nxd5 Qxd5 6. fxe5 Nc6 and Black completes development with the initiative) 5. ... Nxc3 6. bxc3 Qh4+! with an edge; if 7. Ke2 Bg4+ 8. Nf3 Nc6.

4. ... Nxe4



More or less forced. Now White

has a few moves, but only two are critical.

The bad ideas

The first moves you might think in this position are the two d-pawn pushes and taking the knight. But all three are bad for White.

5. d3 and 5. d4

5. d3?! tries to force the knight trade, but it turns out that Black is happy to do this! **5. ... Nxc3 6. bxc3 d4!** A key idea to know. Black pushes the pawn forward, gaining space and preparing to attack the weak dark squares in White's camp. Some sample lines: **7. Nf3 Nc6** (7. ... dxc3!? 8. d4 Qd5) **8. cxd4** (8. Be2 dxc3 followed by ... Qd8-d5 and ... Bc8-g4) and now **8. ... Bb4+!** is a very nice idea. After **9. Bd2 Bxd2+ 10. Qxd2 Nxd4** White has weaknesses and Black has none. Any knight exchange leaves White's position full of holes.

5. d4? allows **5. ... Bb4 6. Qd3 c5!** (or 6. ... Bf5) grabbing the initiative and the advantage. If **7. a3** (7. dxc5 Nc6!) **7. ... Bxc3+ 8. bxc3 Nc6 9. Nf3 0-0**. It's like being a move up on our 5. Nf3 lines, where we were willing to burn a tempo to play ... Bf8-c5-b4 with an important pin.

5. Nxe4

5. Nxe4?

This is a mistake that is played way more than it should be. After ...

5. ... dxe4

... the black pieces are ready to spring into action. Play might continue:

6. d4

After 6. Qe2 comes 6. ... Bf5! and

if 7. Qb5+ Nd7 8. Qxb7? Rb8 9. Qxa7 Bc5 Black's development advantage is overwhelming.

6. ... exd3 7. Qxd3 Qh4+ 8. g3 Qe7!

Attacking the e-pawn and threatening ... Qe7-b4+. If White tries to defend the e-pawn with ...

9. Nf3 Nc6 10. Bf4 Qb4+!

A double attack on the king and b2-pawn.

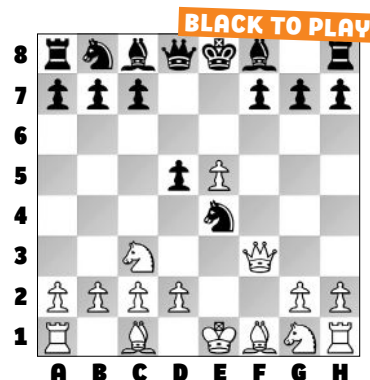
11. Qc3 Qxc3+ 12. bxc3 Ba3!

A great move by Black. The bishop stops queenside castling, threatens ... Ba3-b2 attacking the rook and c3-pawn, and allows Black to castle next and get the h1-rook into action. Black is much better.

The good ideas

Levy's 5. Qf3

5. Qf3



What was once a sideline is now played 46% of the time in the Lichess statistics. One reason for its newfound popularity is the videos of IM Levy Rozman, who plays the Vienna with 5. Qf3 a lot! So how should we handle it?

5. ... Nc6!

Attacking the e5-pawn and threatening ... Nc6-d4.

6. Bb5

This is the most common move, stopping both of our threats. Now we have to do something about the e4-knight.

6. Nxe4? is played a quarter of the time, but it allows our knight to jump: 6. ... Nd4! 7. Qc3 dxe4 8. Ne2 Nc6! with an advantage. If 9. Ng3 Qd5.

6. ... Nxc3 7. dxc3

7. bxc3 is a worse version of the same thing after 7. ... Qh4+ 8. g3 Qe4+ 9. Qxe4 dxe4 10. Bxc6+ (10. d4 should usually be met by 10. ... exd3 breaking up the central pawn wedge) 10. ... bxc6 11. Ne2 Bc5 and Black has excellent bishops on an open board.

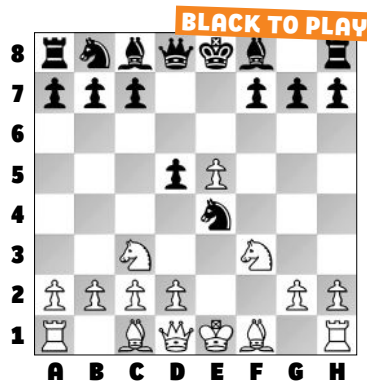
After 7. dxc3 we disrupt White's plans:

7. ... Qh4+ 8. g3 Qe4+ 9. Qxe4 dxe4 10. Bxc6+

10. Ne2 Bd7 11. Bxc6 Bxc6 is equal; if 12. Nd4 Bd7.

10. ... bxc6 11. Ne2 c5!

Black controls the d4-square and prepares to develop the bishops as needed. It's very unbalanced and both sides can play for the win.

5. Nf3**5. Nf3**

Played about 27% of the time according to the database. Black

has plenty of options, but I like:

5. ... Bc5

Developing the bishop to a good diagonal, but also trying to encourage White to play a logical-looking mistake.

Now Black wins after (a) **6. Nxe4 dxe4 7. d4 exf3 8. dxc5 f2+**.

Meanwhile, (b) **6. Qe2** is met by **6. ... Bf5** and now:

(b1) **7. d4** allows our standard

7. ... Bb4.

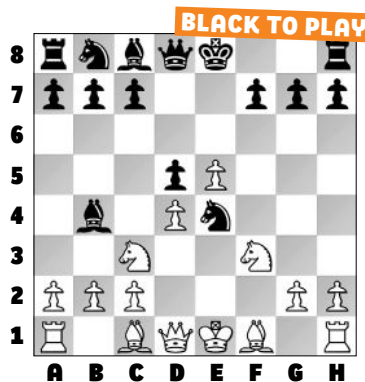
(b2) **7. d3? Bf2+! 8. Kd1 Bb6!** when ... Ne4-f2+ is a big problem — **9. dxe4 dxe4+ 10. Nd2 e3!** lets Black regain their material with interest.

(b3) **7. Qb5+ Nc6 8. Qxb7** (8. Nxe4 dxe4 9. Qxc5 exf3) **8. ... Nb4!**.

But why can't White just grab the center and attack our bishop?

6. d4

This pawn push looks strong, but now Black now gets a powerful pin at the price of one tempo.

6. ... Bb4**7. Bd2**

Breaking the pin.

7. Qd3 is also met with 7. ... c5! 8. dxc5 Nc6! 9. Bd2 Bg4 10. Nxe4? (10. 0-0-0? Nf2) 10. ... dxe4 11. Qxd8+ Rxd8 and White loses material.

7. ... c5!

White's center is a little fragile.

WHITE TO PLAY**8. Bb5+**

(a) One key idea is **8. Nxe4 dxe4!**

9. Bxb4? (9. c3 exf3! 10. Qxf3! is a little dangerous, so Black should play it safe and return the material with 10. ... 0-0! 11. cxb4 Nc6) **9. ... cxb4!**.

This is an important move — the d4-pawn is very weak, and the tactics favor Black after **10. Bb5+** (10. Ng1 Nc6 11. Bb5 0-0!) **10. ... Nc6 11. d5 exf3!**.

(b) **8. a3 Bxc3 9. bxc3 Nc6 10. Bd3 Bg4 11. 0-0 0-0** is fully equal.

(c) **8. Bd3** attacks the knight, but after **8. ... Nxd2! 9. Qxd2 cxd4 10. Nxd4 0-0** the e-pawn is weaker than the d-pawn.

(d) **8. dxc5 Bxc5** leaves the white king a little drafty. **9. Nxe4?** is an important blunder to remember: After **9. ... dxe4 10. Ng5 e3!** cuts off the g5-knight's support.

8. ... Nc6

More pressure on the white center.

9. 0-0

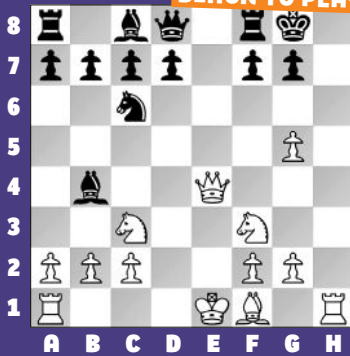
Other ideas: (a) 9. **Bxc6+ bxc6 10. 0-0 0-0**. (b) **9. Nxe4 dxe4! 10. c3 exf3 11. Qxf3 0-0 12. Bxc6 bxc6 13. cxb4 Qh4+ 14. Qf2 Qe4+ 15. Qe3 Qxe3+ 16. Bxe3 cxb4** is equal. (c) **9. a3 Bxc3 10. bxc3 0-0** (or 10. ... c4!). Black is at least equal everywhere.

9. ... 0-0

Black is slightly better. White can't take the c-pawn: 10. dxc5? Nxd2 11. Nxd2 Bxc5+ 12. Kh1 Nxe5. ♠

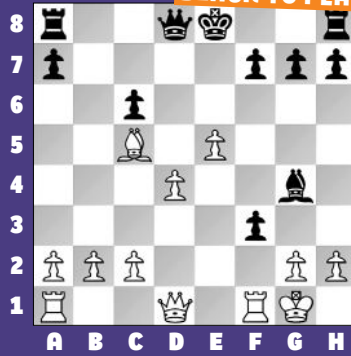
1.

BLACK TO PLAY



2.

BLACK TO PLAY



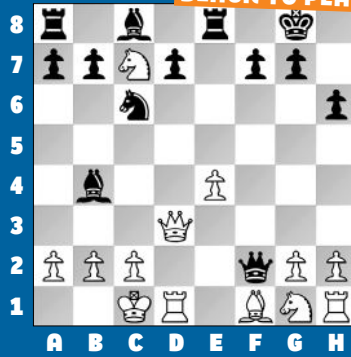
3.

WHITE TO PLAY



4.

BLACK TO PLAY



5.

WHITE TO PLAY



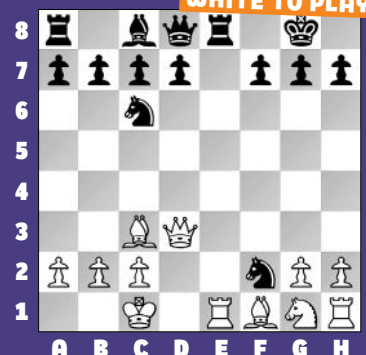
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WHITE TO PLAY



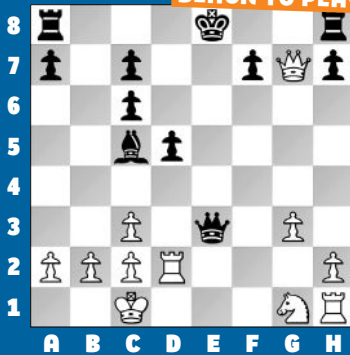
7.

WHITE TO PLAY



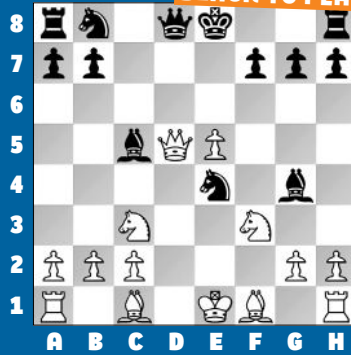
8.

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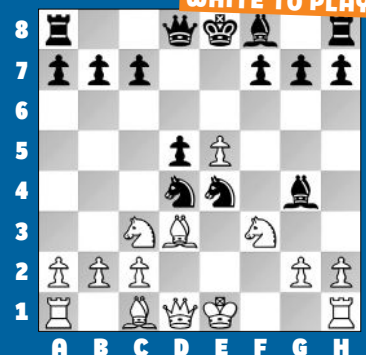
9.

BLACK TO PLAY



10.

WHITE TO PLAY



THE VIENNA OPENING

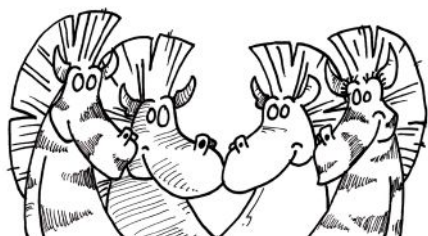
The Vienna Opening is one of the most fluid opening systems for White against 1. e4 e5. It can be played positionally or tactically, and Black needs to be ready for all possibilities.

Try your hand at these positions, all of which come out of the variations we analyzed on the previous pages. You might note an emphasis on double attacks, where one piece attacks two targets at the same time. Sometimes you need to create the double attack with a preparatory move which makes the tactic possible.

The answers are on page 23. Good luck with your solving!

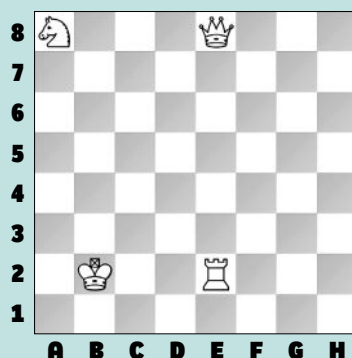
Puzzle Me THIS → Puzzle Me THAT

BY JEFF COAKLEY



Hey there kids, what's your favorite chess piece? We zebras like the knights best. They look a lot like us! We hope you enjoy our 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!

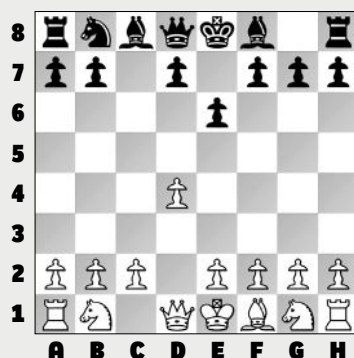
1. Triple Loyd



Place the black king on the board so that

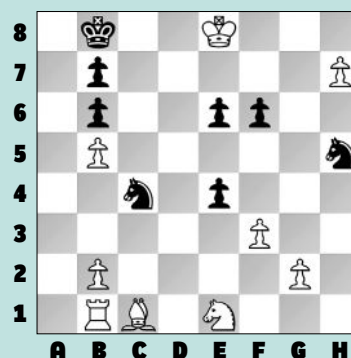
- Black is in checkmate.
- Black is in stalemate.
- White has mate in one.

2. Proof Game



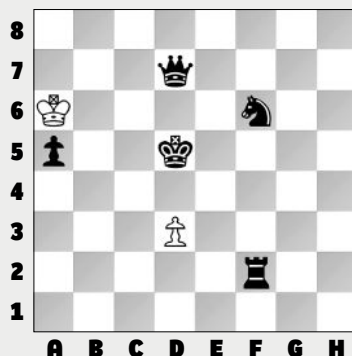
This position was reached after Black's fourth turn. What were the moves?

3. Maze Race



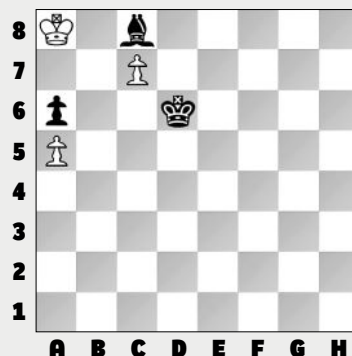
Only one white piece (rook, bishop, or knight) may move. Black does not get a turn. Capture the black king without taking any pieces or moving to a square guarded by Black. Which piece is fastest? Which is slowest?

4. Inverted Loyd



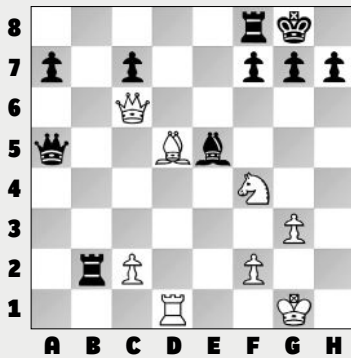
Add a white rook, bishop, and knight so that White has mate in one. *Part B:* The same task with the black rook on h4 instead of f2.

5. Series-Mate in 10



White plays 10 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. *Part B:* Replace the piece on c8 with a black knight for a series-mate in 9.

6. Mate in 4



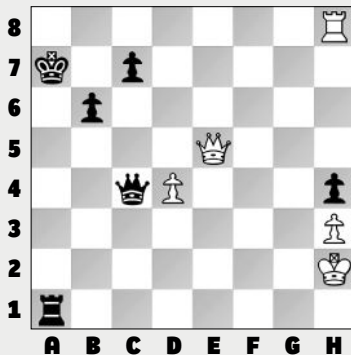
White to play. Mate in four.

7. Combo



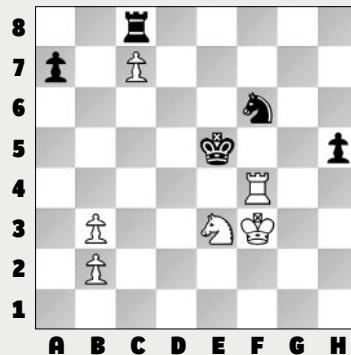
White to play and win material.

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 5. ... Rh4 mate.

Answers:

1) A. Kd8 mate. B. Kd1 stalemate. C. Kd3, allowing 1. Qe4 mate. 2) 1. d4 e6 2. Bf4 Ne7 3. Bxc7 Nec6 4. Bxb8 Nxb8. The black knight on b8 is an *impostor*. 3) The bishop is fastest. The rook is slowest. Here are the lines: Bc1-h6-f8-b4-c3-d4-g1-h2xb8 (8 moves), Ne1-c2-b4-a2-c3-d1-f2-g4-h6-f7-h8-g6-f8-d7xb8 (14), Rb1-a1-a4-b4-b3-c3-c2-f2-f1-h1-h4-g4-g8-f8-f7-d7-d8xb8 (17). 4) Add Re6 Bb5 Nb3 for 1. Bc4 mate. Part B: Add Rg5 Bf5 Nb5 for 1. Bxd7 mate. 5) 1. Kb8 2. Kxc8 3. Kd8 4. c8=B 5. Bxa6 6. Bc4 7. a6

8. a7 9. a8=Q 10. Qd5 mate. Part B (black knight on c8): 1. Kb7 2. Kxa6 3. Kb7 4. a6 5. a7 6. a8=Q 7. Qxc8 8. Qf5 9. c8=N mate. In both parts, the piece promoted on c8 is the same kind of piece taken on c8! 6) 1. Bxf7+ Black has three choices now. The obvious 1. ... Rxf7 is met by 2. Rd8+ Rf8 3. Qe6+ Kh8 4. Rxf8 mate. And 1. ... Kxf7 loses immediately to 2. Qe6 mate. The tricky line is 1. ... Kh8 2. Ng6+ hxc6 3. Qh1 mate. An unusual last move. 7) 1. Ne7+ The knight is sacrificed to *clear* square d5 and

to *deflect* the black queen from the last rank. 1. ... Qxe7 It's game over if Black doesn't take the knight. 1. ... Kh8 2. Ng6+ Kg8 3. Qd5 mate or 1. ... Kf8 2. Rf1+ Kxe7 3. Qf7 mate. 2. Qd5+ The queen *forks* the king and the now unguarded rook on a8. After 2. ... Qf7 (or 2. ... Kf8) 3. Qxa8+, White is up a rook for a bishop. 8) The white king is wide open to an attack by the black queen and rook. 1. Rxh4? wins a pawn but loses the game. One quick disaster is 1. ... Qc2+ 2. Kg3 Rg1+ 3. Kf4 Qf2+ 4. Ke3 Re1+. But there is a way to draw with two bold sacrifices. 1. Ra8+! Kxa8 (2. ... Kb7? 3. Rxa1) 2. Qd5+! Qxd5 **stalemate** (2. ... Kb8? 3. Qxc4). 9) Black is about to capture the pawn on c7. The position is equal after 1. Rc4 Kd6 or 1. Rf5+ Ke6 2. Ra5 Kd7 (not 2. ... Rxc7? 3. Ra6+ Ke5 4. Rxf6! Kxf6 5. Nd5+). But White has a clever tactic to gain material. 1. Nc4+ Ke6 2. Rxf6+! Do you see the *fork* ahead? 2. ... Kxf6 3. Nd6! Rxc7 No better is 3. ... Rh8 4. c8=Q Rxc8 5. Nxc8 with a position similar to the main line. 4. Ne8+ Ke5 5. Nxc7 White is winning, but accurate play is still required. Black will try to draw by capturing the remaining white pawns. The game might go 5. ... Kd4 6. Na6 6. Ke2 is also good but Black holds the draw after 6. Nb5+? Kc5 7. Nxa7 Kb4. 6. ... Kd3 7. Nb4+ Kd2 (7. ... Kd4 8. Kg3 Kc5 9. Nc2) 8. Nc6! Kc2 (8. ... a6 9. Nb4 a5 10. Nc6 Kc2 11. Nxa5) 9. b4 (9. Na5? Kxb2 is equal.) 9. ... Kb3 (9. ... Kxb2 10. Nxa7 Kb3 11. b5) 10. b5 Kc4 11. Nxa7 Kc5 12. Kg3 Kb6 13. Nc6! Kxb5 14. Ne5! (14. Nd4+? Kc4) 14. ... Kb4 15. Nd3+ Kc4 16. b4 The knight guards the pawn from behind. The rest is easy as 16. ... Kxd3 allows 17. b5. 10) 1. f3 h5 2. g4 hxc6 3. Kf2 e6 4. Kg3 Bd6+ 5. Kxg4 Rh4 mate. The moves can be played in different orders. ♠



Spokane Showdowns



The 2025 K-12 Grade Championships

BY **JOHN HARTMANN**

IT TOOK A long time, but it was worth the wait. After more than three decades away, the 2025 K-12 Grade Championships returned to the West Coast — and the West Coast showed up!

Of the 1,350 players who registered for the K-12 last Dec. 12-14 in Spokane, more than 400 were from Washington. Some 168 Californians were in attendance along with another 100+ from Oregon and Idaho. For many Pacific Northwest players this was their first national event.

Lots of teams traveled to Spokane too. More than 250



competitors made the cross-country journey from New York, while more than 100 came all the way from Florida! Unfortunately for our Sunshine State attendees, who might have been hoping to see snow, the weather in Spokane was rather mild.

Trophies and Trends

No fewer than 38 players from around the country were named champions or co-champions. (Everyone who ties for first place at a national scholastic is considered a co-champion.) New York and California took the lion's share of individual titles with 11 each, while New York dominated the team competition with eight wins. And in what feels very fitting for a 2025 national championship, more than half of the individual winners finished with scores of — cue the memes — 6/7.

Congratulations to all our champions! There's a complete list of individual and team champs at the end of this article.

A Chess Festival

While the tournament is the centerpiece of a US Chess national scholastic like the K-12 Grade Championships, there's lots more to do and see. For those who got to Spokane a day early, there were blitz and bughouse tournaments, and FunMasterMike (FM Mike Klein) was on hand for the second ChessKid National Puzzle Solving Championship!

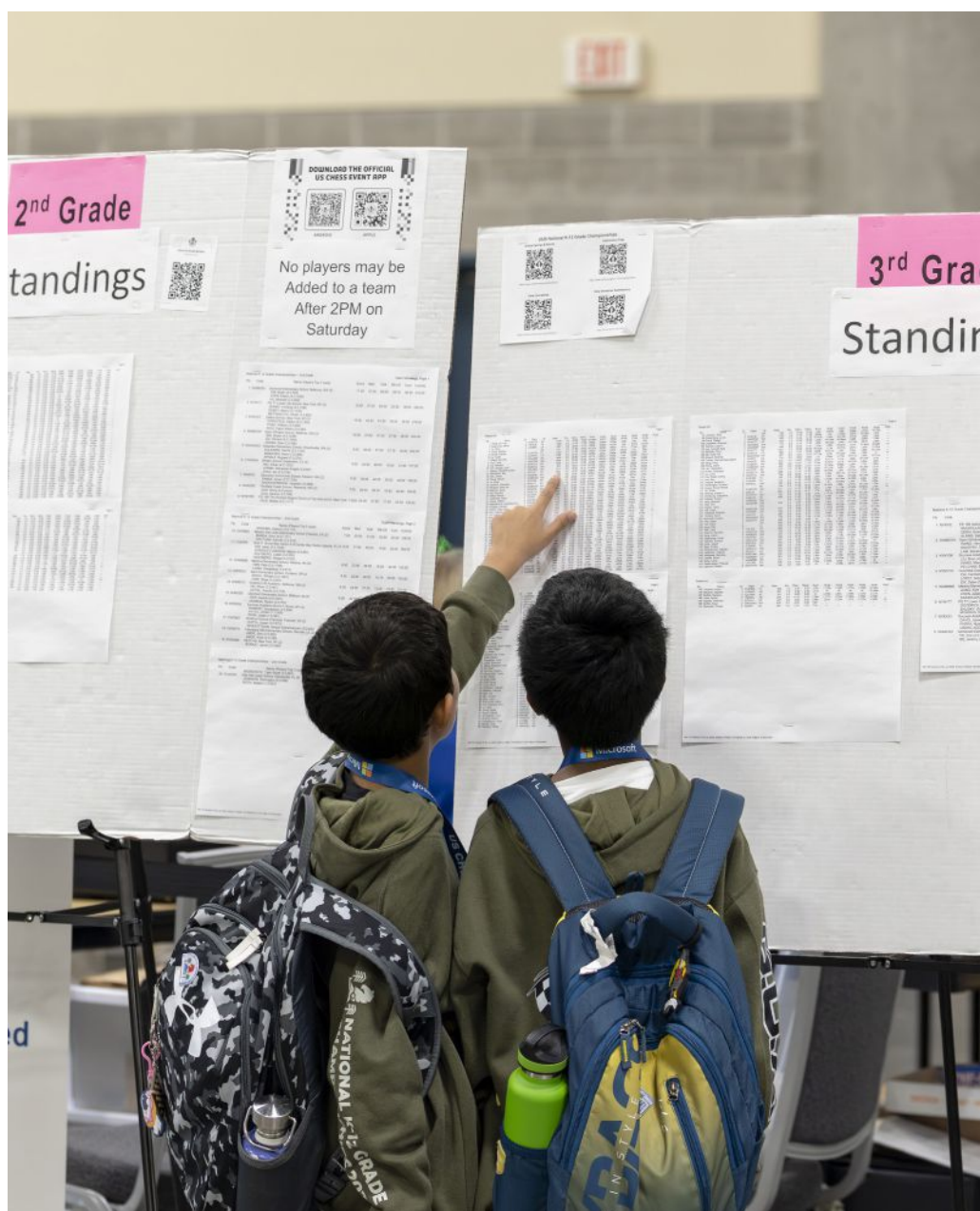
The Girls Club was in full swing all weekend. Special guest WGM Zoey Tang did a simul and played blindfold games! There was also “human chess,” game analysis, and

plenty of nail-painting stations.

GMs Magesh Panchanathan and Michael Rohde were on hand for lecturers, simuls, and all-comers blitz. FunMasterMike also took his spot in the hot seat, and lots of kids lined up to try to beat him. In the Skittles Room, the Silver Knights Chess Academy booth was a popular spot for game analysis. Silver Knights and Microsoft were two key sponsors for the K-12; big thanks to them both.

Your Turn

If this all sounds fun to you, maybe you'd like to play in a US Chess national scholastic championship. In that case, you're in luck! The 2026 National Elementary (K-6) Championships are coming up May 1-3 in Baltimore, Maryland, while the 2026 National Middle School (K-8) Championships are two weeks





L, top to bottom: WGM Zoey Tang;
Coach Will Osborne analyzes;
FunMasterMike in play. Top: great hat!

later (May 15-17) in Round Rock,
Texas. Maybe we'll see you there?

The Spokane Saunter

We couldn't leave without presenting a game from the K-12, and this one's a doozy. In this key Round 5 battle from the 8th grade section, Connor Wang's king wanders to the dead center of the board and lives to tell the tale. Wang, who won the 8th grade title with 6½/7, annotated the game for *Chess Life Kids*.

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B45)

Connor Wang (2127)

Austin Zhao (2092)

2025 8th Grade Ch (5), Spokane,
12.13.2025

Annotations by Connor Wang

1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3. Nf3 e6 4. d4
cxd4 5. Nxd4 Nf6 6. Nxc6 bxc6 7. e5
Nd5 8. Ne4 Qc7 9. f4 Rb8?!

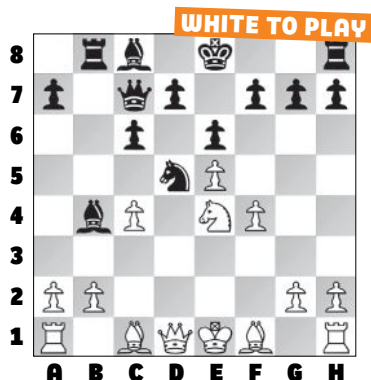


The main line is 9. ... Qb6 10. c4 when there's still lots of theory.

10. c4!

This dynamic move leads to complex and sharp positions. I was very prepared for this line.

10. ... Bb4+



11. Ke2!

The first of many amazing king moves in this game. 11. Bd2 does not work because of 11. ... Nxf4 and Black is winning.

11. ... 0-0 12. a3 Be7 13. cxd5

I am up a piece, but the position is sharp and unclear with my king so loose.

13. ... cxd5 14. Nd6 f6 15. Nxc8 Rfxc8 16. exf6 Bxf6 17. Rb1! Qc4+ 18. Kf2 Qa2 19. Bd3! Bd4+



20. Be3?!

OK, but White is winning after the non-intuitive 20. Kg3! Rb3 21. Kh3. The king is safe on the kingside

and I have time to untangle my pieces.

20. ... Bxb2 21. Qe2 Qxa3 22. Rhd1 Rb3 23. Rd2?! d4!

An important move to find.

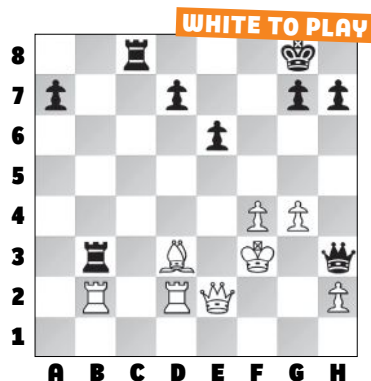
24. Rbxb2 dxe3+ 25. Kxe3 Qc5+!

Black's best chance is to land a perpetual check.

26. Kf3 Qh5+ 27. Ke3 Qc5+ 28. Kf3 Qh5+ 29. g4!?

Fighting for the win! Why play on? The clock had a lot to do with it: My opponent had only seven minutes while I had 36.

29. ... Qh3+



30. Ke4!

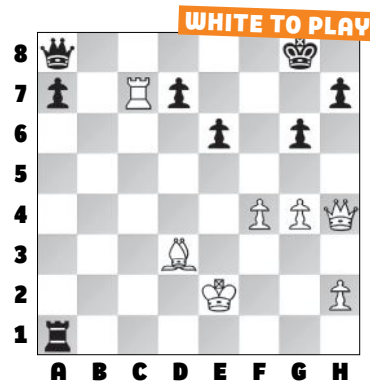
My king walks itself to the center of the board with all the

major pieces still on the board! Surprisingly, the position is still equal!

30. ... Ra3 31. Ra2 Rcc3?

Allowing a rook trade was the decisive mistake. The engine says keeping the pressure on with 31. ... Rb3! draws.

32. Rxa3! Rxa3 33. Qf3! Qh4 34. Qg3 Qe7 35. Ke3 Qc5+ 36. Ke2 Ra1 37. Qh4 g6 38. Rc2 Qf8 39. Rc7 Qa8



40. Ke3!

Smart, avoiding all checks.

40. ... Qb8 41. Rxd7 Qb6+ 42. Rd4! Ra2 43. Qd8+

After trading queens, the game is practically over. I have an extra piece and Black has no counterplay.





2025 K-12 GRADE CHAMPIONSHIPS AT A GLANCE

DECEMBER 12-14, 2025 | SPOKANE, WASHINGTON

INDIVIDUAL WINNERS

K: Zayn Shanmuganathan (TX), 7/7. **1:** Baoshuo Yao (WA), Lavin Donadi (NJ), 6½. **2:** Mehmet Yilanli (OH), Dario Neshvadian (FL), Matthew Wang (CA), Aiden Huang (CA), Dalton Gorczyca (NY), 6. **3:** Brian Ye (CA), Taylor Liu (CA), Max Mulholland (NY), Jordan Kim (NY), 6. **4:** Alexander Joseph (GA), Samanyu Alluri (MA), Aayansh Samanta (PA), Chase Wang (CA), 6. **5:** Aakash Jani (FL), Vivaan Pavuluri (CA), Srihas Sai Sarvesh Maddipati (TX), Jack Boyer-Olson (NY), 6. **6:** Liam Liu (CA), 6½. **7:** Mason Jin Li (PA), Vidip Kumar Kona (WA), Sivavishnu Srinivasan (CA), Ethan Guo (CA), Elliott Goodrich (NY), Phineas Hugo Weingarten (NY), Anson Leong (NY), Miransh Purven Vyas (TX), Glenn Zhang (CA), Tarun Sankar (AZ), 5½. **8:** Connor Wang (NY), 6½. **9:** Aditeya Das (NY), Nitesh Cherukuri (MD), 6. **10:** Sebastian Suarez (CA), 6½. **11:** Erick Zhao (PA), 6½. **12:** William Safranek (NY), Jed Sloan (NY), 6.

TEAM WINNERS

K: Oak Hall (FL), 13. **1:** Oak Hall (FL), 14. **2:** Somerset Elem (WA), Dalton (NY), 13. **3:** P.S. 198 (NY), 14. **4:** Dalton (NY), 14. **5:** Success Academy Midtown West (NY), 15. **6:** JHS 167 (NY), 15. **7:** Dalton (NY), 16. **8:** Success Academy Midtown West (NY), 14½. **9:** Millburn Sr HS (NJ), 15. **10:** Success Academy HS Manhattan (NY), 13. **11:** The Frazer School (FL), 15. **12:** Stuyvesant HS (NY), 15.

For complete results and additional photos,
visit new.uschess.org/k12-2025-championships

Above: Stuyvesant HS, the 12th grade team champs; William Safranek and Jed Sloan; Connor Wang.

43. ... Qxd8 44. Rxd8+ Kg7 45. Rd7+ Kg8 46. Bc4 Rxd2 47. Bxe6+ Kf8 48. Rxa7 Rh1 49. Ke4 Re1+ 50. Kd5 Rd1+ 51. Ke5 Rf1 52. Rxd7 Rf2 53. Rf7+ Ke8 54. Rg7 Re2+ 55. Kf6 Kd8 56. Rxd6, Black resigned.

A fun game that demonstrates an important lesson: Time management is super important. ♠

Woodward wins in Wijk!

► GM ANDY WOODWARD, OF TEXAS, is still only 15 years old, but he took a big leap forward in the chess world when he won the Challengers section of the Tata Steel Tournament, held in Wijk aan Zee, the Netherlands, earlier this year.

They've changed the name of the Wijk aan Zee tournament over the years, but they've been holding it since 1936. People call it "the Wimbledon of chess" because the top section attracts the greatest players in the world every year — every world champion since the tournament's inception has played there at some point.

And now Andy's going to be a part of that Wijk aan Zee history — winning the Challengers section means he gets to play in the big-league Masters section next year!

Andy wrote about his experience, and annotated several games from the tournament, in this month's *Chess Life*. Check it out!

Brilliant!!

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CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Baltimore  **US CHESS** May 1-3, 2026



For full information please see new.uschess.org/national-events-calendar

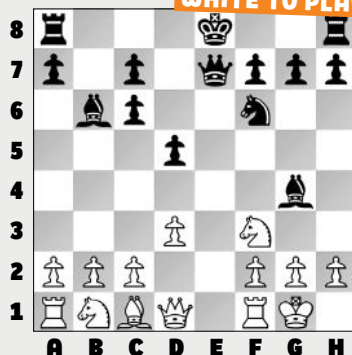
Igor's DOUBLES

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!

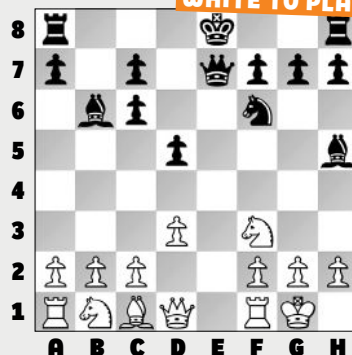
1a

WHITE TO PLAY



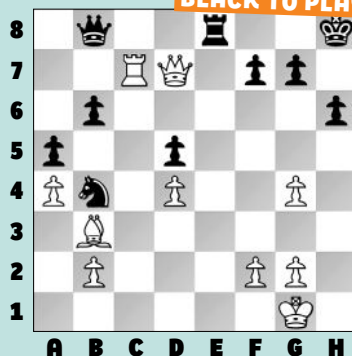
1b

WHITE TO PLAY



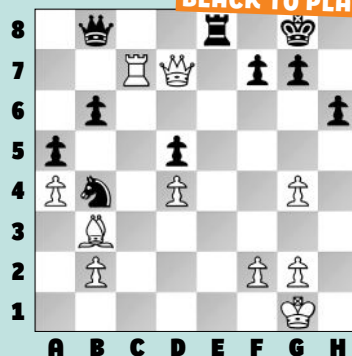
2a

BLACK TO PLAY



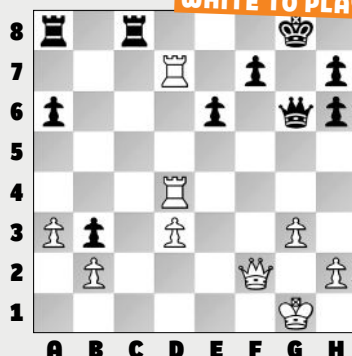
2b

BLACK TO PLAY



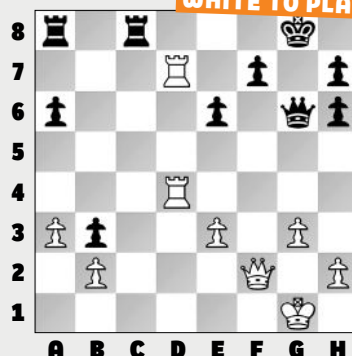
3a

WHITE TO PLAY



3b

WHITE TO PLAY



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

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@renaissancerknights.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 • vegaschessfestival.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 • vegaschessfestival.com

Grand Prix

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Phillip O'Neal Taylor Georgia State Championship
APRIL 10-12, 2026 — GA TLA# 55493
Site: Courtyard by Marriott Atlanta Dunwoody Address: 4401 Chamblee Dunwoody Road, Chamblee, Georgia, 30341 Overall Prize Fund: \$10,000 GP Pts: 80 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Charles

Hatherill • kingsgamit50@earthlink.net • 7027430305 • georgiachess.org

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

Bill Wright Saint Louis Open 2026

APRIL 17-19, 2026 — MO TLA# 55376
Site: Saint Louis Chess Club Address: 4663 Maryland Avenue, St. Louis MO 63108 Overall Prize Fund: \$7,500 GP Pts: 60 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Saint Louis Chess Club • tournaments@saintlouischessclub.org • 3143612437 • saintlouischessclub.org

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Connecticut Open, \$5,000+ in Guaranteed Prizes!!!
APRIL 24-26, 2026 — CT TLA# 55494
Site: Connecticut College Address: 270 Mohegan Avenue, Crozier Williams, New London, CT 06320 Overall Prize Fund: \$5,000+ GP Pts: 50 FIDE: N Accessible: N Residency: N Org: Connecticut State Chess Association • chess.CSCA@gmail.com • 8605930225 • ChessCT.org

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open

APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665
Site: The East End Address: 1200 E. Market St., Ak-

ron, OH 44305 Overall Prize Fund: \$5,000+ GP Pts: 30 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Kalanithi Bagley • kalanithi@discoverychess.org • 330 475 2964 • discoverychess.org

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 • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

34th Massachusetts G/60 Championship

MAY 3, 2026 — MA TLA# 55484
Site: Renaissance Framingham Hotel and Conference Center Address: 1657 Worcester Rd., Framingham, MA 01701 Overall Prize Fund: \$3,000 GP Pts: 15 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Massachusetts Chess Association • info@masschess.org • 603-891-2484 • masschess.org

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 • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

13th Cherry Blossom Classic

MAY 21-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 54412
Site: Executive Conference and Training Center, Address: 22685 Holiday Park Dr, Ste 60, Sterling, VA 20166 Overall Prize Fund: \$25,000 GP Pts: 200 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: IA/O Anand Domalapati • cb2026@capitalareachess.com • 1-703-627-5314 • capitalareachess.com/cherryblossom

GRAND PRIX

46th Annual Lina Grumette Memorial Day Classic

MAY 23-25, 2026 — CA TLA# 55550
Site: Sonesta Los Angeles Airport LAX Hotel Address: 5985 W. Century Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90045 Overall Prize Fund: \$20,000 GP Pts: 30 FIDE: Y Accessible: N Residency: N Org: SCCF • chucnglo@aol.com • 858-432-8006 • scschess.com

GRAND PRIX

Cohen Woodworking Rapid Open 2026

MAY 23, 2026 — MO TLA# 55377
Site: Saint Louis Chess Club Address: 4663 Maryland Avenue, St. Louis MO 63108 Overall Prize Fund: \$1,000 GP Pts: 10 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Saint Louis Chess Club • tournaments@saintlouischessclub.org • 3143612437 • saintlouischessclub.org

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

94th Massachusetts Open

MAY 23-25, 2026 — MA TLA# 55489
Site: Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel Address: 181 Boston Post Rd, Marlborough MA 01752 Overall Prize Fund: \$7,500 GP Pts: 50 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y

Residency: N Org: Massachusetts Chess Association • info@masschess.org • 603-891-2484 • masschess.org

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

Edward Jones Classic 2026

JUNE 5-7, 2026 — MO TLA# 55382
Site: Saint Louis Chess Club Address: 4663 Maryland Avenue, St. Louis MO 63108 Overall Prize Fund: \$5,000 GP Pts: 40 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Saint Louis Chess Club • tournaments@saintlouischessclub.org • 3143612437 • saintlouischessclub.org

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

15th Annual Hartford Open

JUNE 5-7, 2026 — CT TLA# 55518
Site: Sheraton Hotel Address: 1 Bradley Airport (visible at airport entrance), Windsor Locks CT 06096 Overall Prize Fund: \$10,000 GP Pts: 60 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

19th Continental Chess Cleveland Open

JUNE 5-7, 2026 — OH TLA# 55596
Site: Wyndham Independence Cleveland Hotel Address: 6200 Quarry Ln, Independence, OH 44131 Overall Prize Fund: \$15,000 GP Pts: 120 FIDE: Y Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.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 • vegaschessfestival.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

2026 Chicago Summer Open

JUNE 19-21, 2026 — IL TLA# 55511
Site: Hyatt Regency Schaumburg Address: 1800 E Golf Rd, Schaumburg, IL 60173 Overall Prize Fund: \$10,000 GP Pts: 50 FIDE: Y Accessible: N Residency: N Org: Wilson's Chess & King Registration • bill@kingregistration.com • kingregistration.com/event/Chisummeropen26

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

30th annual New York State Open and Senior Amateur

JUNE 19-21, 2026 — NY TLA# 54808
Site: Tiki Resort Address: 2 Canada St., Lake George, NY 12845 Overall Prize Fund: \$3,300 GP Pts: 20 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

World Open Game/50 Championship

JUNE 25, 2026 — DC TLA# 55312
Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel Address: 2500 Calvert

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St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$2,200 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

The DC Open (in cooperation with the DC Chess Association)

JUNE 26-28, 2026 — DC TLA# 54842

Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel **Address:** 2500 Calvert St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$15,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

15th annual World Open Women's Championship

JUNE 29-30, 2026 — DC TLA# 55310

Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel **Address:** 2500 Calvert St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$2,000 **GP Pts:** 30 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessstour.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 • chessstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

15th annual World Open Game/7 Blitz Championship

JULY 1, 2026 — DC TLA# 55315

Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel **Address:** 2500 Calvert St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,500 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessstour.com

GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

27th annual Pittsburgh Open

JULY 17-19, 2026 — PA TLA# 55352

Site: Courtyard Marriott University Center Hotel **Address:** 100 Lytton Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15213 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$13,000 **GP Pts:** 80 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessstour.com

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

34th annual Southern Open

JULY 17-19, 2026 — FL TLA# 55402

Site: Holiday Inn Resort Kissimmee By The Parks **Address:** 3011 Maiting Lane, Kissimmee, FL 34747 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$20,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessstour.com

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

19th annual Chicago Class Championships

JULY 17-19, 2026 — IL TLA# 55299

Site: Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel **Address:** 601 N Milwaukee Avenue, Wheeling IL 60090 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$30,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessstour.com

GRAND PRIX

Kent Family Classic 2026

JULY 24-26, 2026 — MO TLA# 55383

Site: Saint Louis Chess Club **Address:** 4663 Maryland Avenue, St. Louis MO 63108 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$5,000 **GP Pts:** 40 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Saint Louis Chess Club • tournaments@saintlouischessclub.org • saintlouischessclub.org

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

31st Annual Bradley Open

JULY 24-26, 2026 — CT TLA# 55353

Site: Sheraton Hartford Hotel at Bradley Airport Ad-

dress: 1 Bradley Airport, Windsor Locks CT 06096 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$15,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessstour.com

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

31st annual Pacific Coast Open

JULY 31-AUG. 2, 2026 — CA TLA# 55399

Site: Hilton Orange County Airport Hotel **Address:** 18800 MacArthur Blvd, Irvine CA 92612 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$30,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Illinois Open

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517

Site: DoubleTree by Hilton Lisle-Naperville **Address:** 3003 Corporate W Dr, Lisle, IL 60532 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$15,000 **GP Pts:** 80 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Wilson's Chess & King Registration • bill@kingregistration.com • kingregistration.com/ event/ILopen26

GRAND PRIX

Thanksgiving Open 2026

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55379

Site: Saint Louis Chess Club **Address:** 4663 Maryland Avenue, St. Louis MO 63108 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$10,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Saint Louis Chess Club • tournaments@saintlouischessclub.org • 3143612437 • saintlouischessclub.org

Regional

ALABAMA

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

See Grand Prix.

CALIFORNIA

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.

APRIL 18-19, 2026 — CA TLA# 54801

2025-26 CalChess Super States: K-3 & K-8 Championship and K-12 Sections

Site: Sonesta Silicon Valley Event Center **Address:** 1800 Barber Ln, Milpitas, CA 95035 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** BayAreaChess • events@bayareachess.com • bayareachess.com

MAY 23-25, 2026 — CA TLA# 55550

46th Annual Lina Grumette Memorial Day Classic

See Grand Prix.

CONNECTICUT

APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665

3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open

See Grand Prix.

MAY 17, 2026 — MA TLA# 55442

3rd Greater Baystate Spring Classic

See Massachusetts.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

See Grand Prix.

DELAWARE

APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665

3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open

See Grand Prix.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 54412

13th Cherry Blossom Classic

See Grand Prix.

DIST. OF COLUMBIA

APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665

3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open

See Grand Prix.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 54412

13th Cherry Blossom Classic

See Grand Prix.

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 • chessstour.com

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

JUNE 29-30, 2026 — DC TLA# 55308

18th annual World Open Under 13 Championship

Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel **Address:** 2500 Calvert St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessstour.com

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

JUNE 29-30, 2026 — DC TLA# 55309

5th annual World Open Amateur Championship

Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel **Address:** 2500 Calvert St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$3,000 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessstour.com

JUNE 30, 2026 — DC TLA# 55313

13th annual World Open Action!

Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel **Address:** 2500 Calvert St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 **Overall Prize Fund:** see online TLA **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessstour.com

FLORIDA

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

See Grand Prix.

GEORGIA

APRIL 10-12, 2026 — GA TLA# 55493

2026 Phillip O'Neal Taylor Georgia State Championship

See Grand Prix.

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

See Grand Prix.

ILLINOIS

APRIL 24-25, 2026 — IL TLA# 55649

Caveman April 3x4 Open Avec Prix \$900/40

Site: Signature Regus **Address:** 222 South Prospect, Floor R, Park Ridge, IL 60068 **Overall Prize Fund:** see online TLA **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Kevin Bachler • kevin.bachler@cavemanchess.com • (224) 985-5244 • cavemanchess.com

APRIL 24-25, 2026 — SD TLA# 55179

Upper Midwest Regional Girls K-12 Championship

See South Dakota.

APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665

3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open

See Grand Prix.

APRIL 26, 2026 — IL TLA# 55650

12th Habilis U19 Play & Learn!

Site: Signature Regus **Address:** 222 South Prospect, Park Ridge, IL 60068 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Kevin Bachler • kevin.bachler@cavemanchess.com • (224) 985-5244 • cavemanchess.com

MAY 29-31, 2026 — FL TLA# 54211

13th Annual Summer Solstice Open

See Grand Prix.

JUNE 19-21, 2026 — IL TLA# 55511

2026 Chicago Summer Open

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517

2026 Illinois Open

See Grand Prix.

INDIANA

JUNE 19-21, 2026 — IL TLA# 55511

2026 Chicago Summer Open

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517

2026 Illinois Open

See Grand Prix.

IOWA

APRIL 24-25, 2026 — SD TLA# 55179

Upper Midwest Regional Girls K-12 Championship

See South Dakota.

KANSAS

APRIL 24-25, 2026 — SD TLA# 55179

Upper Midwest Regional Girls K-12 Championship

See South Dakota.

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.

APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665

3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open

See Grand Prix.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 54412

13th Cherry Blossom Classic

See Grand Prix.

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

APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665
3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open
 See Grand Prix.

MAY 17, 2026 — MA TLA# 55442
3rd Greater Baystate Spring Classic
Site: Northampton Center For the Arts - Flex Room
Address: 33 Hawley Street, Northampton, MA 01060
Overall Prize Fund: \$2,675 b/40 GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Greater Baystate Chess • greaterbaystatechess@gmail.com • 4133560303 • greaterbaystatechess.com

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

📍 MICHIGAN
APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665
3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open
 See Grand Prix.

📍 MINNESOTA
APRIL 24-25, 2026 — SD TLA# 55179
Upper Midwest Regional Girls K-12 Championship
 See South Dakota.

📍 MISSOURI
APRIL 24-25, 2026 — SD TLA# 55179
Upper Midwest Regional Girls K-12 Championship
 See South Dakota.

📍 NEBRASKA
APRIL 24-25, 2026 — SD TLA# 55179
Upper Midwest Regional Girls K-12 Championship
 See South Dakota.

📍 NEW HAMPSHIRE
APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665
3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open
 See Grand Prix.

📍 NEW JERSEY
APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665
3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open
 See Grand Prix.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
APRIL 26, 2026 — NJ TLA# 55395
2026 NJ State Scholastic Qualifiers
Site: Crowne Plaza Princeton Conference Center Address: 900 Scudders Mill Road, Plainsboro, NJ 08536
Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: N Residency: N Org: Anand Mishra • njscfqualifiers@gmail.com • njscf.org

MAY 21-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 54412
13th Cherry Blossom Classic
 See Grand Prix.

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

📍 NEW YORK
APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665
3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open
 See Grand Prix.

MAY 17, 2026 — MA TLA# 55442
3rd Greater Baystate Spring Classic
 See Massachusetts.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 54412
13th Cherry Blossom Classic
 See Grand Prix.

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

📍 NORTH CAROLINA
MAY 21-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 54412
13th Cherry Blossom Classic
 See Grand Prix.

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

📍 NORTH DAKOTA
APRIL 24-25, 2026 — SD TLA# 55179
Upper Midwest Regional Girls K-12 Championship
 See South Dakota.

📍 OHIO
APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665
3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open
 See Grand Prix.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 54412
13th Cherry Blossom Classic
 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

APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665
3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open
 See Grand Prix.

MAY 21-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 54412
13th Cherry Blossom Classic
 See Grand Prix.

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

📍 SOUTH DAKOTA
APRIL 24-25, 2026 — SD TLA# 55179
Upper Midwest Regional Girls K-12 Championship
Site: Abiding Savior Middle School Campus Address: 308 W 37th St, Sioux Falls, SD 57105
Overall Prize Fund: \$1,600 GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Elliott Neff • elliott.neff@chess4life.com • chess4life.com

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

📍 VIRGINIA
APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665
3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open
 See Grand Prix.

APRIL 26, 2026 — VA TLA# 55339
MVP Chess K-12 Quads (FREE for US Chess Members)
Site: Mount Vernon Rec Center Address: 2017 Belle View Blvd, Alexandria, VA 22307
Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: MVP Chess • info@mvpchess.org • mvpchess.org

MAY 21-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 54412
13th Cherry Blossom Classic
 See Grand Prix.

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

📍 WEST VIRGINIA
APRIL 25-26, 2026 — OH TLA# 55665
3rd Annual CHESS FOR CURE Open
 See Grand Prix.

📍 WISCONSIN
APRIL 24-25, 2026 — SD TLA# 55179
Upper Midwest Regional Girls K-12 Championship
 See South Dakota.

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

JUNE 19-21, 2026 — IL TLA# 55511
2026 Chicago Summer Open
 See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517
2026 Illinois Open
 See Grand Prix.

📍 WYOMING
MAY 1-3, 2026 — WY TLA# 55295
2026 Wyoming Community Foundation Open
 See Grand Prix.



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* parents and children under age 19, may include college students up to age 24
 **all children under age 19 living in a household at the same address

Solutions

PAGE 9 TACTICS TUNE-UP

(1) King and queen lined up on an open file? That's a signal to find a pin! **10. ... Re8! 11. 0-0-0 Rxe4** wins the queen for the rook. faruciinaar – Pjatoba, Lichess 2021. (2) **13. ... f2+** is a nice discovery. White has to deal with the check but after **14. Rxf2 Bxd1** Black is up material. Spekikay – JLEnamorado, Lichess 2021. (3) Loose pieces are always targets for tactics. Here the undefended queen on a3 is quickly lost after **14. Bxd5+ cxd5 15. Qxa3**. PillsMorphy – Chrobry1, Lichess 2023. (4) Here the c7-knight is a target that we can reach with **11. ... Qf4+!** and a double attack: **12. Kb1 Qxc7** nabs the knight. refresher – Weetik, Lichess 2022. (5) This is a very typical tactic in our Vienna lines. The undefended b4-bishop is lost after **11. Bxf6! Qxf6 12. Nd5 Qd8 13. Nxb4**. doreality – LucaBrazzi, Lichess 2022. (6) Did you notice the loose e4-rook? White can take advantage of it with **15. Bxf7+ Kxf7 16. Qf5+** (double attack!) **16. ... Qf6 17. Qxe4** winning the Exchange. Benefactorr – SUSAL, Lichess 2021. (7) There are three kinds of targets in chess: the king, material, and squares — places that have to be defended to avoid catastrophe. Here White creates a double attack against the undefended f2-knight and also the g7-square. **11. Rxe8+!** 11. Qg3? immediately fails to 11. ... Rxe1+. **11. ... Qxe8 12. Qg3!** and since stopping mate on g7 is more important than the knight, White wins it after **12. ... Qf8 13. Qxf2**. Krinst – alone_men, Lichess 2019. (8) **14. ... Qe1+** kicks off a nice mate in three: **15. Rd1 Be3+! 16. Kb1 Qxd1 mate**. Moaamo – Ari-

traDAS_1, Lichess 2023. (9) How can Black use a removing the defender idea to win the queen? **8. ... Bf2+!** This pushes the king onto a bad square. **8. ... Nxc3?** immediately just trades pieces after **9. Qxd8+ Kxd8 10. bxc3 9. Ke2 9. Kd1 Nxc3+** is similar. **9. ... Nxc3+!** Only now! White doesn't have time to play **Qd4xd8+** because of the check. **10. bxc3 Qxd5** and Black is winning. f_mauriac – scatchman, Lichess 2025. (10) Careful calculation wins material after **8. Bxe4! dxe4 9. Qxd4! exf3** (or **9. ... Qxd4 10. Nxd4**) **10. Qxg4!** — the key move to see when you play **8. Bxe4!** as **10. Qxd8+? Rxd8 11. gxf3 Bxf3** leaves Black way ahead. Hasetal – LifeSense, Lichess 2022.

PAGE 19 IGOR'S DOUBLES

#1 (Easy)

Difference: In 1a, the black bishop is on g4; in 1b, it's on h5.

Significance: Black's king and queen are lined up on the open e-file — easy targets for the white rook. White can pin the queen with the direct **1. Re1!** In 1a, the bishop on g4 can retreat to e6 and break the pin — after **1. ... Be6**, the position remains balanced. With the bishop on h5 in 1b, Black's only attempt to avoid losing the queen is **1. ... Ne4**. After **2. dxe4 dxe4**, it looks like Black may have a chance: The white knight on f3 is pinned now and under attack. Unfortunately for Black, their e4-pawn is also pinned and can't take the knight. After **3. Qd2**, the knight is no longer pinned and White has a significant material advantage.

Conclusion: The position is approximately equal in 1a; White has a winning position in 1b.

#2 (Intermediate)

Difference: In position 2a, the

black king is on h8, while in 2b, the king is on g8.

Significance: The position 2a is from a game played in Manila in 1976 by two elite players of the 20th century: GM Lev Polugaevsky had white against GM Vlastimil Hort. White had just played **33. Qd7** (from d6) in order to free his rook, which was in what we call a “relative” pin — it could still move, **33. Rd7** for example, but it wasn't a good idea. Unfortunately, after **33. Qd7 Re1+ 34. Kh2** the rook on c7 ended up in an “absolute” pin — it literally can't move. So, after **34. ... Rc1**, Black won the rook and the game. In 2b, with the king on g8, White is threatening **34. Qxf7+** and **35. Qxg7 mate**. The fact that **34. Qxf7** is with check means Black has no time for attacking moves: For example, after the reckless **33. ... Re1+ 34. Kh2**, the threat of **35. Qxf7+** can't be solved. Note how the white rook, while pinned, can still support the white queen's mating threats. And if Black abandons the pin, for example with **34. ... Qf8**, the white rook can strike at once with **35. Rc8**, winning the queen. Thus, Black should settle for a defensive move such as **33. ... Rf8**, protecting the weak f7-pawn. This position is nearly equal: White has an active queen and rook, but Black's knight is better than White's bishop and the black king is better protected. White must be mindful of counterattacking moves — for example, if **34. Rb7**,

Black can unleash the queen with **34. ... Qf4**.

Conclusion: Black has a winning position in 2a; it's approximately equal in 2b.

#3 (Challenging)

Difference: In 3a, the white pawn is on d3, while in 3b, this pawn is on e3.

Significance: White is eyeing the target on f7 and its only defender, the black queen. The theme of decoy can be executed via **1. Rg4!** when the rook can't be captured: **1. ... Qxg4 2. Qxf7+** and **3. Qxh7 mate**. The black queen is also pinned and thus can't really move out of danger. Fortunately, Black has a chance for a counterattack, since White also has trouble with the alignment of their king and queen. After **1. ... Rc1+ 2. Kg2 Rc2** the black rook pins the white queen, stopping the **Qf2xf7+** idea. In 3a White has no better option than to seek an equal rook endgame after **3. Rxg6+ hxg6 4. Rxf7** or **3. ... fxg6 4. Qxc2 Rxc2 5. Rc7**. A draw is the likely outcome. However, in 3b, White has a way to break the pin along the second rank: After **3. Rxg6+ hxg6 4. Rd2**, White saves the queen. After **4. ... Rac8**, White just needs to make a careful move to get the King off the 2nd rank, for example **5. Kf3**, when White has a significant material advantage.

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

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