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CHESSLIFE

SEPTEMBER 2026 ■ USChess.org

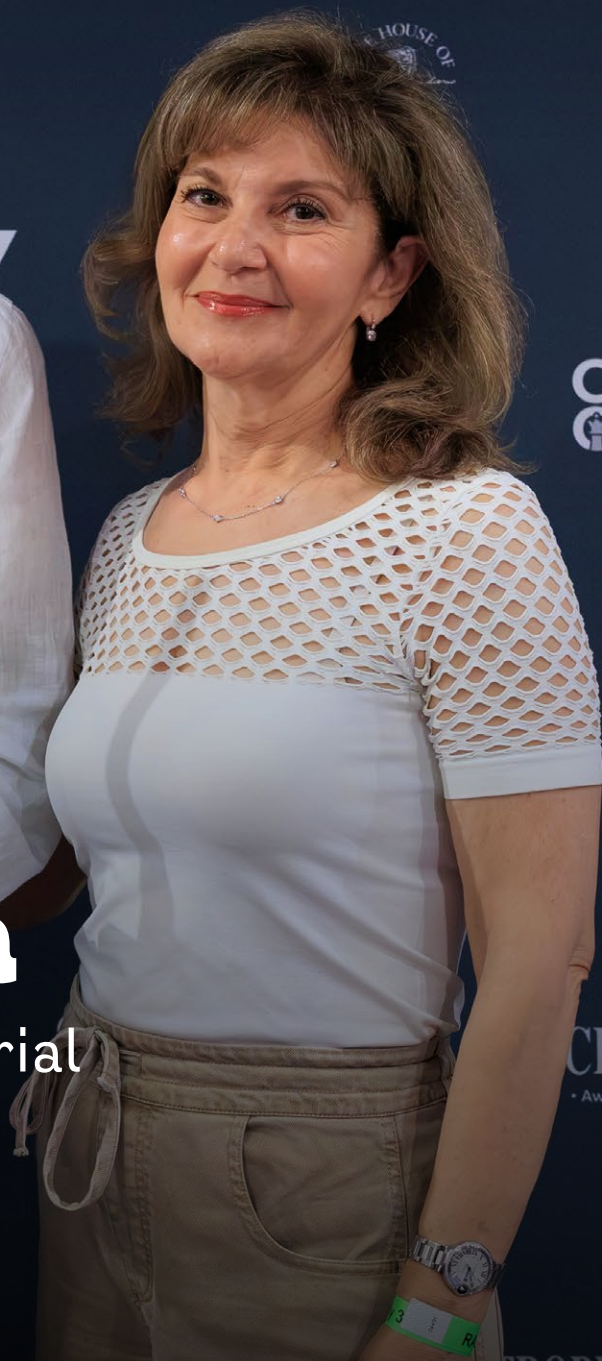
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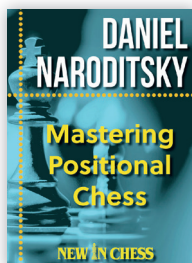
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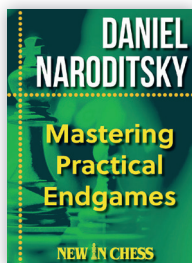
www.USCFSales.com



Mastering Positional Chess

Daniel Naroditsky

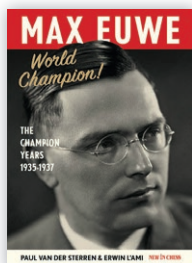
An enhanced and updated edition of the late Daniel Naroditsky's landmark debut book, originally published when he was just fourteen years old. Readers will benefit from the clear, insightful explanations of positional chess concepts offered by this exceptionally gifted future grandmaster and renowned instructor.



Mastering Practical Endgames

Daniel Naroditsky

This book is compiled from online articles that Daniel Naroditsky wrote for *Chess Life* and *Chess.com*. Each article is vintage 'Danya': entertaining, often humorous and always instructive, making for chess instruction of the highest order.



Max Euwe World Champion!

Paul van der Sterren & Erwin l'Ami

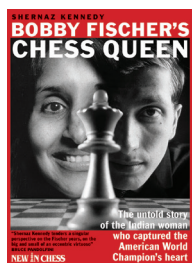
Max Euwe's tenure as World Chess Champion has often been dismissed as a brief intermezzo. This book sets the record straight. Drawing on contemporary sources and modern game analysis, it shows that Euwe truly belonged at the very top – and that for a while he was the strongest player in the world.



The Sponsor – Part II

Fred Das & Jeroen Terlingen

Godfried Vos and blind detective Gino Cancellara uncover a Mafia plot targeting the famous Marostica chess festival. Their search for answers draws them into the shadowy world of the 'Fourth Mafia' and the local history. This literary thriller blends suspense, history, chess, and Italian cuisine.



Bobby Fischer's Chess Queen

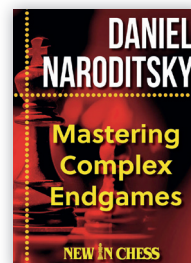
Shernaz Kennedy

When a young woman from India moves to America and reaches out to Bobby Fischer, it sparks a lifelong bond few ever knew existed. *Bobby Fischer's Chess Queen* is a true story of friendship, resilience, and the hidden heart of a genius. Discover the love that defied distance and fame.

Mastering Complex Endgames

Daniel Naroditsky

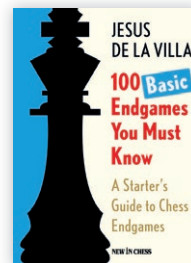
A re-edited and updated edition of his second book. A rich collection of practical endgame examples whose assessments require more than just basic knowledge. Daniel Naroditsky draws heavily on his own experience as a player. The material is lively and instructive, with wonderful practical advice and insights into the minds of the chess greats.



100 Basic Endgames You Must Know

Jesus de la Villa

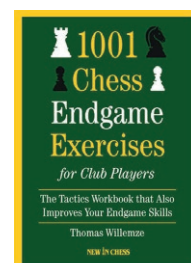
Build an unshakeable endgame foundation and enjoy the confidence that stems from knowing the basics inside out. With clear explanations and a structured, step-by-step approach, these 100 lessons form a complete endgame survival kit.



1001 Chess Endgame Exercises for Club Players

Thomas Willemze

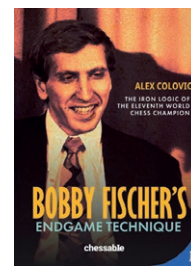
Chess Master Thomas Willemze takes club players beyond the basics with 1001 endgame puzzles. Train advanced tactical patterns, sharpen calculation, and build the intuition and practical skills to win more games in club and tournament play.



Bobby Fischer's Endgame Technique

Alex Colovic

Discover Bobby Fischer's endgame secrets. Alex Colovic reveals how the 11th World Champion applied relentless pressure with engine-like precision. Learn through clear explanations and exercises to improve your chess at every level.



The Grandmaster

Axel Smith

From bestselling chess grandmaster Axel Smith comes *The Grandmaster* – a powerful novel of obsession, ambition, and sacrifice that reveals the human cost of brilliance. Perfect for fans of *The Queen's Gambit*.



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CHESSLIFE

September

20 EVENTS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAMPIONSHIP

Invitation Accepted

GM Baryshpolets takes the Southern California Championship.

BY IM ROBERT SHLYAKHTENKO

26 EVENTS U.S. GIRLS' JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

Pressure, Points

On winning a second straight U.S. Girls' Junior

BY FM ZOEY TANG

32 COVER STORY

LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF FAST CHESS

The greats remember one of their own at the Naroditsky Memorial.

BY GM MARK HEIMANN

40 EVENTS U.S. SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

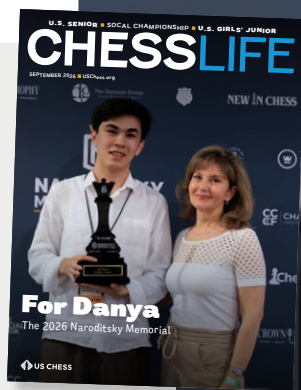
The 2026 United States Senior Championship

BY GM ALEX FISHBEIN

ON THE COVER

GM Daniel Naroditsky has been gone for less than a year, but already his legacy is secure. The Naroditsky Memorial aims to be an annual memorial to a tremendous player, streamer and friend. GM Javokhir Sindarov won both the Rapid and Blitz events. He's seen here with Naroditsky's mother, Lena Schuman.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KELLY CENTRELLI



1st Place
Masters - Blitz



GARRY KASPAROV VS. VESELIN TOPALOV

SEPTEMBER 11-13

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FRIDAY - 9/11: GAMES 1-4 | SATURDAY - 9/12: GAMES 5-8
SUNDAY - 9/13: GAMES 9-12



Saint Louis
CHESS CLUB



CHESSLIFE

September

COLUMNS

16 CHESS TO ENJOY

Three Modes

BY GM ANDY SOLTIS

18 GETTING TO WORK

Falling Just Short

BY IM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN

48 SOLITAIRE CHESS

Strategy and Tactics

BY BRUCE PANDOLFINI

50 ENDGAME SCHOOL

From the Attack to the Endgame

BY GM JOEL BENJAMIN

52 BOOKS AND BEYOND

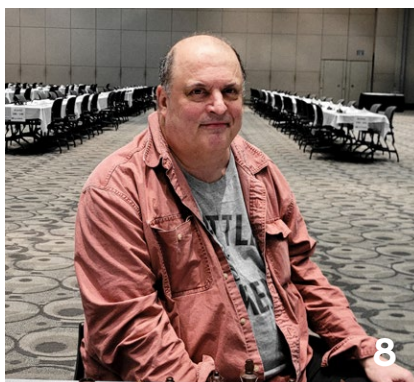
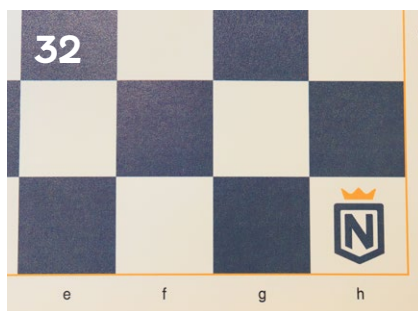
A Strong Opening

BY IM JOHN WATSON

64 PUZZLES

Practical Tasks

BY IM ROBERT SHLYAKHTENKO
AND MATAN PRILLELTENSKY



DEPARTMENTS

5 COUNTERPLAY

READERS RESPOND

6 US CHESS AFFAIRS

NEWS FOR OUR MEMBERS

8 IN THE NEWS

12 FOREIGN REPORT

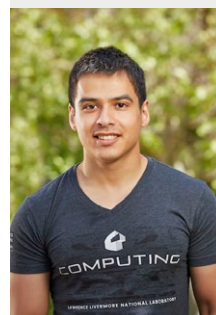
15 TACTICS TESTS

55 TOURNAMENT LIFE

62 CLASSIFIEDS

63 SOLUTIONS

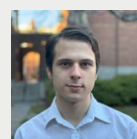
CONTRIBUTORS



GM MARK HEIMANN

(Cover Story) is a staff scientist in the Center for Applied Scientific Computing at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. He earned a Ph.D. in computer science

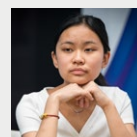
from the University of Michigan in 2020. Now a grandmaster, Mark is a competitive powerlifter and a musician who plays multiple instruments, including the hammered dulcimer.



IM ROBERT SHLYAKHTENKO

(Southern California Championship) is beginning his fourth year of

undergraduate work in mathematics and computer science at Brown University. He is ranked 69th on the August 2026 US Chess ratings list.



WGM ZOEY TANG

(U.S. Girls' Junior Championship) is a two-time U.S. Girls' Junior champion and a 2026 Samford Fellow.

She is ranked 10th among women on the August 2026 US Chess ratings list.



GM ALEX FISHBEIN

(U.S. Senior Championship) was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, but moved to Wyoming at age

11. Taught chess by his father and later by GM Dmitry Gurevich, he won the first Denker Tournament of High School Champions in 1985 and the U.S. Senior title 40 years later in 2025.

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e4 e5 Nf3 Nc6 Bb5



Magnus Carlsen

World Number 1
& Former World
Chess Champion

GM Magnus Carlsen
Playing Soccer, 2019
Courtesy of Lennart Ootes

THE STRATEGY OF CHESS & SPORTS

Guotong Li
Chess Boxer

Guotong Li Chess Boxing, 2023,
Courtesy of Stev Bonhage



Game Plan: The Strategy of Chess & Sports

is an expansive exhibition spanning three galleries that explores how discipline and strategy unite the physical and mental arenas of play. Discover how elite athletes use chess to sharpen their tactics, and how chess players participate in athletics to increase their mental focus and physical endurance. This year-long celebration also highlights hybrid sports like chessboxing, Missouri sports legends, and the dynamic Saint Louis chess scene fostered by Dr. Jeanne Cairns Sinquefield and Rex Sinquefield.



**ON VIEW MAY 7, 2026
THROUGH APRIL 4, 2027**



**WORLD
CHESS
HALL OF
FAME
& GALLERIES**



EDITORIAL

CHESS LIFE/CLK EDITOR **John Hartmann** (john.hartmann@uschess.org)GRAPHIC DESIGNER **Wendy Macomber**ASSISTANT EDITOR **Rick Massimo**TECHNICAL EDITOR **IM Ron Burnett**

EXECUTIVE BOARD

PRESIDENT **John Fernandez** (president@uschess.org)VICE PRESIDENT **John Rockefeller** (vp@uschess.org)VICE PRESIDENT OF FINANCE **Daniel Serna** (vpfinance@uschess.org)SECRETARY **Anand Dommalapati** (secretary@uschess.org)MEMBER AT LARGE **David Hater** (dhater1@aol.com)MEMBER AT LARGE **Kevin Pryor** (kevinpryor@icloud.com)MEMBER AT LARGE **Lakshmana "Vish" Viswanath** (vish@viswanath.us)EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **Fred Arousleman**(fred.rousleman@uschess.org)

Contact membership@uschess.org or call 1-800-903-8723 for assistance and see uschess.org for the full staff listing.

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**Youngest-Ever USA
Female to Earn the IM Title!**

Alice Lee

"I'd like to thank the U.S. Chess Trust for their support in my chess career. I have had the honor of receiving the prestigious Samford Fellowship, which has given me encouragement and support for my chess."



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Editor's Note:

Whew! Matthew Wilson kicked the hornet's nest! Here's a sample of responses to his letter.

Minimum Games

I've often thought that there needs to be a Super GM title. But a lot of very good 2670 players jump over the 2700 barrier for awhile, dip back under, and bounce back. Rinse and repeat.

I think you should need to hold on to a 2700+ (or maybe a 2750+) rating for a decent number of games before you can earn the Super GM title.

Mike Runyon
Via email

The Old Guys

I like the idea of an SGM title. As Andy Soltis points out, rankings favor the brilliant but erratic player, so nothing's perfect. But I argue with the reader's list. It gives short shrift to the great players of the past.

Studies have been done to rank champions who lived and died prior to the inception of the Elo rating system, so those players left out of the award system should be given retroactive title recognition.

Is there already an S(enior) GM title for Seniors? If not, the over-65 crowd should be given as much recognition as the ju-

niors.

While we're at it, why not also create titles for contributions to chess culture? Surely C.J.S. Purdy deserves something more to recognize his contribution to the game. But what do we do with the likes of Greco and Philidor? When you're the only player remembered in your generation, you win every title automatically.

Bob Avery
Via email

Enough's Enough

Regarding Matthew Wilson's letter: none of the quintet of original grandmasters on the list. I guess Alekhine, Capablanca, Lasker, Marshall and Tarrasch were not worthy? The list also omits Max Euwe, but then again, many players do not consider him to be a "real" world champion.

The Super GM title would be superfluous in my opinion. What good does it do? Just consider which players get invited to the elite tournaments again and again. It's all about rating.

The requirements for the highest chess title are adequate and people who have reached this summit do not deserve to have a new peak added above theirs.

William H. Stokes
Via email

Excellent Source

Matthew Wilson seems to think that chess began with Botvinnik, as no one who played prior to 1947 makes the list. I have no argument against anyone on his list, but can one really say that Ribli and Gheorghiu are "super" while Alekhine and Capablanca (among many others) are not?

To quote John Hartmann, "I'm not convinced."

Thomas Frazier
Via email

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

2026 Chess Journalists of America Awards

WRITERS, COLUMNISTS, PHOTOGRAPHERS, AND ANALYSTS from US Chess had much to celebrate at the annual Chess Journalists of America meeting on Aug. 6 in Grand Rapids, Mich. US Chess took home 23 awards, including two of the “big three” — FM Mike Klein won Best Story of the Year for his December 2025 obituary of GM Daniel Naroditsky, while GM Joel Benjamin was awarded the Best Column prize.

Here is the full list of awards won by US Chess. For complete results, visit chessjournalism.org. Congratulations to all!

TOP AWARDS

Best Story of the Year, Winner

FM Mike Klein, “Danya”
(*Chess Life*, December 2025)

Best Column, Winner

GM Joel Benjamin, “Endgame School”
(*Chess Life*)

PRINT

Best Feature Article, Winner

Jon Jacobs, “The Underdog Who Scraped the Sky” (*Chess Life*, June 2025)

Best Historical Article, Winner

Jon Jacobs, “The Underdog Who Scraped the Sky” (*Chess Life*, June 2025)

Best Local Interest, Winner

Irene Bantigue, “A Sporting Chance”
(*Chess Life*, September 2025)

Best Analysis, Winner

Nikos Ntirlis, “The Slippery Steinitz”
(*Chess Life*, February 2026)

Best Review, Honorable Mention

IM John Watson, “Good Thinking”
(*Chess Life*, August 2025)

Best Tournament Report (National/International), Honorable Mention

WGM Jennifer Yu, “Doubled Over”
(*Chess Life*, April 2026)

Best Personal Narrative, Winner

IM Tatev Abrahamyan, “Fighting Back”
(*Chess Life*, August 2025)

Best Tournament Report (State/Local), Co-Winner

Andrew Squitiro, “A Rail Good Time” (*Chess Life*, January 2026)

Best Instructive Lesson, Winner

Rick Massimo and Alexander Chernin, “Coaching Counts”
(*Chess Life*, May 2026)

Best Humorous Contribution, Honorable Mention

Nathan Smith, “My Pandemic Gambit” (*Chess Life*, February 2026)

VISUAL ARTS

Best Cartoon, Winner

Naved Mahdavian, “The Scholar’s Mate”
(*Chess Life*, April 2026)

Best Single Chess Magazine Cover, Winner

Natasha Roberts, “Chess on Broadway”
(*Chess Life*, January 2026)

ONLINE

Best Feature Article, Honorable Mention

David Heiser, “Cops and Kids: Community Engagement Event with UFC”

Best Tournament Report (National), Winner

JJ Lang, “USA Ties for 6th at 2nd FIDE Olympiad for People with Disabilities”

Best Tournament Report (National), Honorable Mention

JJ Lang, “Memorial Day Weekend Wrap-Up”



Best Tournament Report (State/Local), Co-Winner

JJ Lang, “Nebraska Hall of Fame Tournament Celebrates Past, Present, and Future of Midwest Chess”

Best Podcast, Winner

WGM Sabina Foisor, “Class in Session”

Best Podcast, Honorable Mention

Bryan Tillis, “One Move at a Time”

Best Single Podcast Episode, Winner

WGM Sabina Foisor, “Class In Session: FM Alisa Melekhina, Part 1”

Best Single Podcast Episode, Honorable Mention

Bryan Tillis, “One Move at a Time: IM John Donaldson, Part 1”

JUNIOR

Best Online Article by a Junior, Winner

IM Max Lu, “Bearing Down in Brazil”
(*Chess Life*, August 2025) ♡

NATIONAL CHESSDAY

National Chess Day is Saturday, Oct. 10. For any event that includes "National Chess Day" in the event title and is held that day, US Chess is offering:

- ▶ A free email blast. Make sure that "National Chess Day" is part of your subject line. On the payment screen, select "No charge." Also, make sure the demographic you are sending this to is reasonable; generally, this will be local or regional. Do not send to the entire membership.
- ▶ Free rating fees. Use the payment code NCD2026FREE. This is case-sensitive. Be sure to rate the event by 11:59 p.m. Central on Wednesday, Oct. 14 to ensure the waiver of fees.
- ▶ Free online TLA. Online TLAs are always free, of course, not just for National Chess Day. But we want to make sure you are aware of this option too as you promote your event. See "How to Create a TLA" at new.uschess.org/information-new-members.

Another way to celebrate National Chess Day is by making a gift to US Chess! What better way to celebrate National Chess Day than by sharing your passion and love for the game? Your donation will help ensure that the chess programs and events that you care so much about will continue for years to come and advance our mission to "empower people, enrich lives, and enhance communities through chess."

To make a tax-deductible gift to US Chess, just click on DONATE at uschess.org, and choose the program or fund that you would like to support. Thank you for the impact you are making on so many lives, and for your commitment to US Chess!

Please direct any questions to John Hartmann at john.hartmann@uschess.org, and feel free to send him your best photos for possible use in *Chess Life*, *Chess Life Kids*, and Chess Life Online. On social media, use the hashtag #NationalChessDay. ♠

NEWSLETTER LAUNCH

You can get the latest in American chess news and more in your inbox every week.

The Key is the new e-mail newsletter from US Chess, with tournament reports and features from *Chess Life* and *Chess Life Online*,

as well as a puzzle, the Game of the Week, and more.

If you're a US Chess member and you haven't opted out, you're getting *The Key* every Wednesday. If it's caught in your spam filter, mark as Not Spam.

FM Bill Goichberg (1942-2026)



FM William "Bill" Goichberg passed away Sunday Aug. 2, at age 83.

Between the 1960s and the 2000s, Bill held every one of the highest roles in US Chess. He was rating statistician; he was co-editor of *Chess Life*; he was a member of what we now call the Executive Board three separate times; he was executive director; he was president.

Of course, most of us know Bill's work through his Continental Chess Association. Founded in the 1960s, it runs some of the biggest tournaments in the country — the World Open in Philadelphia, the Los Angeles Open, and massive tournaments and prize funds everywhere in between.

It's hard to even explain what the chess world would be like without all Bill Goichberg's innovations: rated scholastic tour-

naments; the National Elementary, Junior High and High School Championships; the K-12 — he originated all of them. Back when it was much harder for a tournament to be eligible for FIDE ratings and norms, he was a leader in organizing tournaments just for that purpose, for the benefit of a whole generation of American chessplayers.

According to a statement posted on the Continental Chess Association website, Continental Chess will continue to operate without interruption, in accordance with Bill's wishes and as an enduring part of his legacy.

Visitation services for Bill were held Aug. 18 in Monroe, N.Y., and he was interred Aug. 26 in Pittsburgh, alongside his wife, Brenda.

We will have much more on Bill's life and legacy in an upcoming issue.

New York International

The historic Marshall Chess Club played host to the 14th Annual New York International (July 15-19, New York) and somehow found a way to fit 70 players into its cozy confines. GMs Safal Bora and David Brodsky took top honors with a score of 7/9, while GMs Karthik Venkataraman and Oliver Barbosa shared third place with IM Oleksii Bilych at 6½.

Brodsky led wire-to-wire, but a final-round draw with Bilych allowed Bora to reach the podium by defeating IM Mykola Bortnyk with the black pieces.

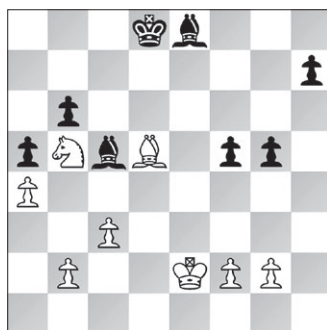
FRENCH DEFENSE, TARRASCH VARIATION (C07)

IM Mykola Bortnyk (2559)

GM Safal Bora (2587)

14th New York Int (9), New York, 07.19.2026

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nd2 c5 4. exd5 Qxd5 5. Ngf3 cxd4 6. Bc4 Qd6 7. 0-0 Nf6 8. Nb3 Nc6 9. Nbx4 d4 10. Qxd4 Qxd4 11. Nxd4 Bd7 12. Bf4 Bc5 13. Rad1 0-0 14. Rfe1 Rac8 15. Bb3 a5 16. a4 Rfd8 17. c3 Be8 18. Nb5 Rxd1 19. Rxd1 Ne4 20. Bg3 Nxd3 21. hxd3 Kf8 22. Kf1 Ke7 23. Bc2 Rd8 24. Rxd8 Kxd8 25. Be4 b6 26. g4 g6 27. Ke2 f5 28. gxf5 exf5 29. Bd5 g5



30. Be6 f4! 31. Bf5 h5 32. f3 Ke7! 33. Kd3 Kf6 34. Be4 g4 35. b4 Bg1 36. c4 axb4 37. Nc7 Bxa4 38. Nd5+ Kg5 39. Nxb4 g3 40. Ke2 h4 41. Kf1 Bc5 42. Nc6 Kf6 43. Nb8 Ke5 44. Nc6+ Kd6 45. Nd8 Ke7 46. Nc6+ Kd6 47. Nd8 Bd7 48. Nf7+ Ke7 49. Ng5 Kf6 50. Nh3 Ke5 51. Bh7 b5 52. Ng5 bxc4 53. Bc2 c3 54. Bd3 Bb5, White resigned.

Bortnyk also fell victim to Brodsky in a fascinating Round 7 battle.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, TAIMANOV VARIATION (B47)

GM David Brodsky (2610)

IM Mykola Bortnyk (2559)

14th New York Int (6), New York, 07.18.2026

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nc6 5. Nc3 Qc7 6. Be2 Nf6 7. Ndb5 Qb8 8. f4 a6 9. e5 axb5 10. exf6 gxf6 11. Nxb5 Na7 12. 0-0 Nxb5 13. Bxb5 Bc5+ 14. Kh1 f5 15. Rf3 Rg8 16. c3 b6 17. b4 Bd6 18. Be3 Bb7 19. Rg3 Rxd3 20. hxd3 Ke7 21. Qh5 Qg8 22. Qh4+ f6 23. Bxb6 e5



24. Rd1! Bd5 25. c4 Be6 26. c5 Bb8 27. c6 dxc6 28. Bd8+ Qxd8 29. Qxh7+ Bf7 30. Rxd8 cxb5 31. Qh8, Black resigned.

IM Bryan Enming Lin is one of our most promising juniors, and his Round 2 game with another New York talent, FM William Safranek, showed off his feel for the initiative. For more from Lin, check out his annotations in the August issue of *Chess Life Kids*.

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B40)

FM William Safranek (2344)

IM Bryan Enming Lin (2521)

14th New York Int (2), New York, 07.16.2026

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. b3 b6 4. d4 cxd4 5. Nxd4 Bb7 6. Nd2 Qf6

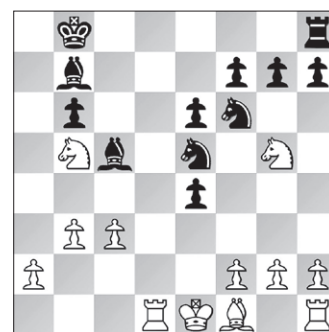
Varying from their game played less than a month earlier at the Washington International, which went 6. ... Bc5 7. Bb2 Qf6 8. Nc4 Qh4 9. Be2 Nf6 10. e5 Ne4 11. 0-0 0-0 12. Bf3 f5 13. Qe2 Nc6 14. Nb5?! Ng5!. Black

was already better and won.

7. c3 Nc6 8. Nb5 0-0-0 9. Nf3 d5!

Inviting White to grab the Exchange and plunge into complications.

10. Bg5 dxe4 11. Bxf6 Rxd1+ 12. Rxd1 Nxf6 13. Ng5 Ne5 14. Nxa7+ Kb8 15. Nb5 Bc5



16. b4 Be7 17. Be2 Rf8 18. 0-0 h6 19. Nh3 Nd5 20. Rc1 g5 21. f3 Ne3 22. Rf2? Nxd2! 23. fxe4 Nf4?!

23. ... Nh4!, followed by ... g5-g4 and ... Be7-g5 or opening the g-file, looks better.

24. Nxf4 gxf4 25. Nd4 Bh4 26. Rxf4 Rg8+ 27. Kh1 Bg5 28. Rg1 Rc8 29. Rff1?

29. Rgf1! saves the day. Now Black's pieces swarm the kingside.

29. ... Bxe4+ 30. Nf3 Rxc3 31. Rg3 Bf4 32. Rh3 Rc2 33. Bd1 Rd2 34. Re1 Rxd1 35. Rxd1 Nxf3 36. Rh5 Nd2+ 37. Kg1 Be3 mate.

Greg Keener and Kevin Feng directed for the Marshall. For more on the event, check out the biweekly Marshall Spectator at themarshallspectator.substack.com.

Washington International

GMs Grigoriy Oparin and Christopher Yoo shared first place at the 13th Annual Washington International (July 25-29, Rockville, Md.) with 7/9. GM Jianchao Zhou and Ethan Sheehan were a half-point back at 6½.

Oparin and Yoo were a half-point ahead of Zhou heading into the final round, and

their quick draw gave Zhou the opportunity to join them in first place with a win. But try as he might — and for 96 moves he did try — Zhou could not overcome GM David Brodsky's stout defense in a queen and knight versus queen and pawn endgame.

Yoo's Round 7 win over IM Kevin George was one of the highlights of the event.

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE, SÄMISCH VARIATION (E29)

GM Christopher Woojin Yoo (2667)
IM Kevin George (2445)
13th Washington Int (7), Rockville, 07.28.2026

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 0-0 5. a3 Bxc3+ 6. bxc3 c5 7. Bd3 Nc6 8. Ne2 b6 9. 0-0 Ba6 10. e4 Ne8 11. e5 Na5 12. f4 f5 13. exf6!? e.p. Nxf6 14. f5 exf5 15. Rxf5 Bxc4 16. Bg5 Kh8



17. Nf4! Qe8 18. Re5 Qf7 19. Bg6!! Qg8

The bishop is immune: If 19. ... hxcg6 20. Re7! and the queen has to go.

20. Qe1

20. Re3!, with the idea of Re3-h3, is even stronger.

20. ... Nc6 21. Re3 Nd5 22. Nxd5 Rf1+?

Black is hanging on, if barely, after 22. ... Bxd5 23. Qh4 Bf7 24. Bd3.

23. Qxf1 Bxf1 24. Nf6! Qb3

Not 24. ... gxf6 25. Bxf6+ Qg7 26. Rxf1.

25. Rxf1 Ne7 26. Rxe7 hxg6 27. Ne8 Rxe8 28. Rxe8+ Kh7 29. h3 Qxc3 30. Rf4, Black resigned.

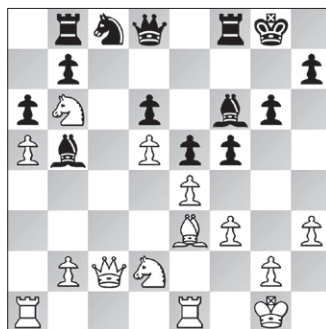
GM John Fedorowicz finished in the middle of the pack with 5. A U.S. Chess Hall of Famer, "Fed" is focused more on scholastic coaching these days, and at age 67 he's not averse to a draw. But if you poke the bear, you get the claws, as top seed GM Awonder Liang found out in Round 2. Fed gave the

Olympiad team member all he could handle.

MODERN DEFENSE (B06)

GM John Fedorowicz (2333)
GM Awonder Liang (2782)
13th Washington Int (3), Rockville, 07.26.2026

1. e4 g6 2. d4 Bg7 3. Nf3 d6 4. Nc3 a6 5. a4 Nf6 6. Be2 0-0 7. 0-0 Nc6 8. a5 Bg4 9. Be3 e5 10. d5 Ne7 11. h3 Bd7 12. Nd2 Ne8 13. Na4 f5 14. f3 Nf6 15. c4 Nh5 16. c5 Ng3 17. Re1 Nxe2+ 18. Qxe2 Bb5 19. Qd1 Bf6 20. cxd6 cxd6 21. Nb6 Rb8 22. Qc2 Nc8?



Liang has taken some liberties in the opening, and this move only serves to compound his problems.

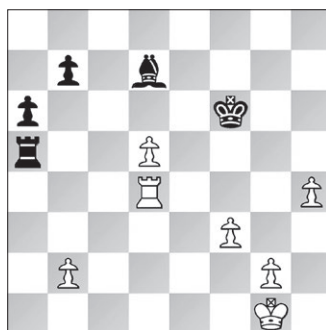
23. exf5! Bh4 24. fxg6! Bxe1 25. gxh7+ Kh8 26. Rxe1 Nxb6 27. Bxb6 Qh4 28. Bf2 Qh6 29. Be3 Qg7 30. Qe4 Rbc8 31. h4 Rf7 32. Bg5 Qxh7 33. Qxh7+?!

Handing out a lifeline: 33. Qg4! Bd7 34. Qb4! keeps Black on the run.

33. ... Rxh7 34. Ne4 Rd7 35. Bf6+ Kg8 36. Bxe5?! dxe5 37. Nf6+ Kf7 38. Nxd7 Bxd7 39. Rxe5

Four pawns — including three connected on the kingside — looks like it should be more than enough for the bishop, but Liang defends with the tenacity of a 2700 player. He begins by grabbing one pawn back.

39. ... Kf6 40. Re4 Rc5 41. Rd4 Rxa5



42. g4 Rb5 43. b4 b6 44. Kf2 a5 45. bxa5 bxa5 46. Ke3 a4 47. g5+ Kg6 48. Rb3! Rb4 49. f4 Kh5 50. Rc3 Bf5 51. Rc6 Kg4 52. Ra6 Re4+ 53. Kd2 Bd7 54. g6 Re7 55. Rf6 a3 56. Ra6 Rg7 57. Rxa3 Rxc6 58. Ke3 Rg8 59. Ra7 Re8+ 60. Kd4 Bf5 61. h5 Kxf4 62. d6 Re1 63. h6 Rh1 64. Kc5 Rh5 65. Rf7 Rxh6 66. d7 Rh8 67. Kd6 Rd8, draw.

Some 210 players turned out for the event across three sections. Mike Hoffpaur and Michael Regan directed for the Maryland Chess Association.

STL Rapid and Blitz

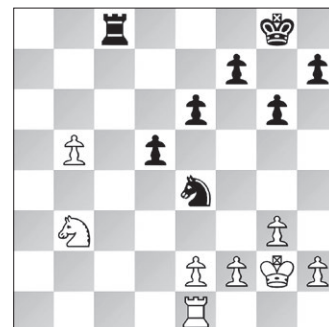
It was a clean sweep for GM Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu at the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz (July 31-Aug. 7, St. Louis). "Pragg" finished first in both the Rapid (G/25+10) and Blitz (G/3+2) sections to claim the overall title. GM Javokhir Sindarov finished second, while GM Wesley So claimed third place.

Pragg clinched his tournament victory with a round to spare, but he had to earn it with this impressive defense against Sindarov at blitz pace.

RÉTI OPENING (A05)

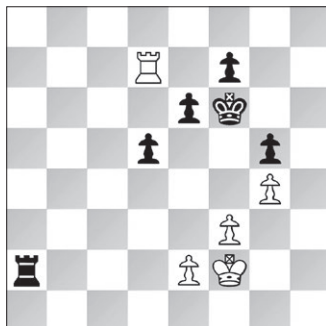
GM Praggnanandhaa R (2750)
GM Javokhir Sindarov (2777)
Saint Louis Blitz (17), St. Louis, 08.06.2026

1. Nf3 Nf6 2. b3 d6 3. d4 g6 4. Bb2 Bg7 5. g3 c5 6. dxc5 Qa5+ 7. Nbd2 Qxc5 8. Qc1 0-0 9. Bg2 Nc6 10. 0-0 Qh5 11. c4 Bh3 12. Bc3 Bxg2 13. Kxg2 b5 14. Qc2 Rfc8 15. Qd3 bxc4 16. Nxc4 Qd5 17. Rad1 Qxd3 18. Rxd3 Rab8 19. Re1 d5 20. Nce5 e6 21. Nxc6 Rxc6 22. Bd4 Rbc8 23. Bxa7 Ra6 24. Bd4 Rxa2 25. b4 Ne4 26. b5 Bxd4 27. Nxd4 Rb2 28. Rb3 Rxb3 29. Nxb3



29. ... Rc4 30. Rc1 Rb4 31. Nc5 Nd6

32. Nd3 Rxb5 33. Rc6 Nc4 34. Rc7 Ra5 35. h4 Ra2 36. Kf1 h6 37. g4 g5 38. hxg5 hxg5 39. f3 Kg7 40. Nc5 Kf6 41. Kf2 Ne5 42. Nd7+ Nxd7 43. Rxd7



43. ... Ra4 44. Ke3 Ra2 45. Kd3 Ra5 46. Ke3 e5 47. Rd6+ Ke7 48. Rb6 Ra3+ 49. Kf2 d4 50. Rc6 Ra2 51. Ke1 f6 52. Rb6 Ra3 53. Kf2 Kf7 54. Rc6 Kg6 55. Rb6 Kf7 56. Rc6 e4 57. fxe4 Re3 58. Rd6 Rxe4 59. Kf3 Re3+ 60. Kf2 Re4 61. Kf3 Rf4+ 62. Kg3 Ke7 63. Ra6 Kd7 64. Rb6 Ke7 65. Ra6 Re4 66. Kf3 Re3+ 67. Kf2 Re6 68. Ra4 Re4 69. Kf3 Rf4+ 70. Kg3 Ke6 71. Ra3 Re4 72. Kf3 Re3+ 73. Rxe3+ dxe3 74. Kxe3 Ke5 75. Kf3 Kd4 76. Kf2 Ke4 77. e3 Kd3 78. Kf3 Kd2 79. Kf2 Kc2 80. Kg2 Kc3 81. Kg3 Kc2 82. Kg2 Kc3 83. Kg3 Kc4 84. Kg2 Kb3 85. Kf3 Kc3 86. Kg3 Kc2 87. Kg2 Kd3 88. Kf3 Kd2 89. Kf2, draw.

So's rapid win over GM Fabiano Caruana, who finished in shared fifth place overall, deserves attention.

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE (E20)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2792)

GM Wesley So (2765)

Saint Louis Rapid (8), St. Louis, 08.04. 2026

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. f3 c5 5. d5 b5 6. e4 d6 7. Bd2 Bxc3 8. Bxc3 b4 9. Bd2 0-0 10. Ne2 exd5 11. cxd5 Nh5 12. Qb3 f5 13. exf5 Nd7 14. g4



GM Pragganandhaa Rameshbabu

14. ... Ne5!?

Offering a dangerous piece sacrifice.

15. gxf5!?

Brave! 15. Ng3 leaves White with a small, stable edge.

15. ... c4 16. Qe3 Nd3+ 17. Kd1 Nxb2+

18. Kc2 c3 19. Nd4! Qf6?! 20. Bc1?!

20. Qf4!, with Bd2-e3 to come, defuses all of Black's pressure: 20. ... Bd7 21. Be3 (21. Rb1! Ba4+ 22. Kc1 is even stronger) 21. ... Ba4+ 22. Nb3.

20. ... Bd7 21. Bxb2



21. ... Rfe8!

What's (at least for now) another piece?

22. Qf2 Ba4+ 23. Kb1 Re1+! 24. Bc1 Rae8

25. Bb5! Rxh1 26. Bxa4?

26. Bxe8! Bxe8 27. a3! is unclear.

26. ... Ree1! 27. Kc2 Rhf1 28. Qxf1 Rxf1

29. Kd3 c2 30. Bxc2 Rxf3+ 31. Nxf3 Qc3+

32. Ke2

A bit better was 32. Ke4 Qxa1 33. Bf4 Qxa2 34. Nd4 Qa6, though Black is still winning.

32. ... Qxa1 33. Kd1 Qxa2 34. Nd2 a5 35.

Bb3 Qa1 36. h6 a4 37. Bc2 b3 38. Nxb3 axb3 39. Bxb3 Qc3 40. Bc2 Qf3+ 41. Kd2 Qf4+ 42. Kd1 Qg4+ 43. Kd2 Qg5+ 44. Kd1 Qh5+ 45. Ke1 Qxh2 46. Bd2 gxf6 47. Bd3 h5, White resigned.

From the "It really can happen to anyone" file: Aronian fell victim to GM Jorden van Foreest's Greek Gift in the blitz.

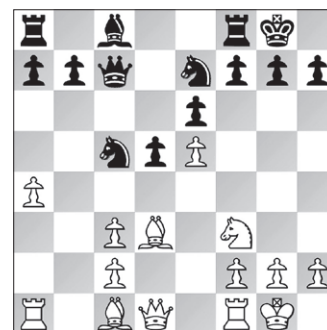
FRENCH DEFENSE, WINAWER VARIATION (C17)

GM Jorden van Foreest (2728)

GM Levon Aronian (2721)

Saint Louis Blitz (15), St. Louis, 08.06.2026

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e5 c5 5. a3 Ba5 6. dxc5 Bxc3+ 7. bxc3 Qc7 8. Nf3 Ne7 9. Bd3 Nd7 10. 0-0 Nxc5 11. a4 0-0?



12. Bxh7+ Kxh7 13. Ng5+ Kg6 14. Qg4 f5

15. Qg3 f4 16. Qg4 Qc6 17. Bxf4 Rxf4 18.

Qxf4 Ne4 19. Qf7+ Kxg5 20. Qxg7+ Kf5 21.

Rae1 Bd7 22. Re3 Ng6 23. Rf3+ Kg5 24.

h4+ Kxh4 25. Qxg6, Black resigned.

Chris Bird, Grant Oen, and Bill Buklis directed for the Saint Louis Chess Club. ♠



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FOREIGN REPORT

BY MARK CROWTHER

GM Alireza Firouzja



GCT Super Rapid & Blitz Croatia

ZAGREB | JULY 1-6

1st: GM Alireza Firouzja (12/18 Rapid, 11½/18 Blitz) 23½/36 total. **2nd:** GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov (11, 12½) 23½. **3rd-4th:** GMs Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (11, 10½) and Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu (12, 9½) 21½. **5th:** Vincent Keymer (10, 10) 20. **6th:** GM Gukesh Dommaraju (10, 8½) 18½. **7th:** GM Anish Giri (8, 9) 17. **8th:** GM Bogdan-Daniel Deac (7, 8) 15. **9th:** GM Jorden van Foreest (7, 5½) 12½. **10th:** GM Ivan Saric (2, 5) 7.

GM Alireza Firouzja won the second rapid and blitz of the Grand Chess Tour, but only after some drama: Firouzja won the Rapid section and had a big lead in the Blitz, but a 3/9 collapse on the final day almost cost him the title; he had to beat World Champion Gukesh Dommaraju in order to catch a resurgent GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov and force a playoff. Two G/8+3 games were drawn before a final Armageddon game, which Firouzja drew with the black pieces, winning \$47,500; Abdusattorov won \$42,500.

Around this time it became known that the Esports World Cup in Paris clashed with the GCT Sinquefield Cup. At the end of July it was announced that Firouzja had left the tour in order to play in Paris. GM Sam Sevian replaced him for the Sinquefield Cup.

ENGLISH OPENING (A07)

GM Vincent Keymer (2767)

GM Alireza Firouzja (2744)

GCT Super Rapid Croatia (4), Zagreb, 07.02.2026

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 Nf6 3. Bg2 e6 4. 0-0 Be7 5. d3 b6 6. c4 Bb7 7. cxd5 Nxd5 8. Qa4+ Nd7 9. Ne5 Bf6 10. Nc6 Qc8 11. d4 a6 12. e4 b5 13. Qc2 Ne7 14. e5 Bxc6! 15. Bxc6 Nxc6 16. exf6?! Nxd4 17. fxg7 Rg8



18. Qxh7? Qb7! 19. f3 0-0-0! 20. Nd2 f5 21. Qh6 Ne5! 22. Qe3 Qd5 23. Rb1 Rxc7 24. b4 f4 25. Qe4 fxg3 26. hxg3 Rxc3+, White resigned.

39th Leon Chess

LEON | JULY 3-5

Final: GM Jaime Santos Latasa 3½-½

GM Le Quang Liem.

Semi-finals: Le 4-3 GM Kirill Alekseenko; Santos Latasa 3-1 GM Faustino Oro.

Santos won the long-running Leon tournament for the second time. The Leon event started as a regular round robin and was at one time reinvented as “the tournament of the future,” in which players could use computer engines to help their play, before settling on the current four-player, three-day knockout format.

ENGLISH OPENING (A07)

GM Le Quang Liem (2731)

GM Jaime Santos Latasa (2620)

39th Leon GM (2), 07.05.2026

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 Nf6 3. Bg2 c5 4. 0-0 e6 5. c4 d4 6. e3 Nc6 7. d3 Bd6 8. exd4 cxd4 9. Nbd2 h6 10. Nh4 0-0 11. f4 a5 12. Ne4 Be7 13. Nxf6+ Bxf6 14. Nf3 Re8 15. g4 e5 16. g5 e4 17. dxe4 hxg5 18. fxe5 Be5 19. Nxe5 Nxe5 20. b3 d3 21. Bb2 Bg4 22. Qd2 Be2 23. Rf5 Qb6+ 24. Kh1 Ng4



25. Qf4? Qe3 26. Bc3 Qxf4 27. Rxf4 a4 28. b4? Ne5 29. c5 Rad8 30. Bf1 Bf3+ 31. Bg2 d2 32. Rxf3 Nxf3 33. Bxf3 Rd3 34. Bxd2 Rxf3 35. b5 Rf2 36. Be3 Rb2 37. c6 bxc6 38. b6 Rxe4 39. Bg1 Rc4 40. Rd1 c5 41. Rd6 Rc1 42. g6 fxe6 43. Rxe6 Kf7 44. Rg5 Rxb6 45. Rxc5 Rxc5 46. Bxc5 Rb1+, White resigned.

Quantbox Chennai Grand Masters

CHENNAI | JULY 16-22

1st: GM Alireza Firouzja, 4½/7. **2nd-3rd:** GMs Dmitry Andreikin and Arjun Erigaisi, 4. **4th-6th:** GMs Nodirbek Abdusattorov, M Pranesh, and Sarin Nihal, 3½. **7th:** GM Hans Moke Niemann, 3. **8th:** GM Gukesh Dommaraju, 2.

Firouzja's good form continued as he took clear first in this Category 20 event, beating Pranesh and Gukesh and drawing the remaining games. World Champion and Chennai native Gukesh had a horrific time, losing three games and winning none. He only just kept his rating above 2700.

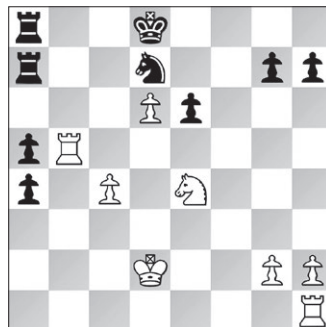
QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED (D44)

GM Dmitry Andreikin (2710)
GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov (2766)
Quantbox Chennai (7), 07.22.2026

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



5. Bg5 dxc4 6. a4 Bb4 7. e4 Bxc3+ 8. bxc3 Qa5 9. e5 Ne4 10. Rc1 b5 11. Qc2 Nxc5 12. Nxc5 Qxa4 13. Qxa4 bxa4 14. Ne4 Nd7 15. Bxc4 Ke7 16. f4 a5 17. Rb1 Ba6 18. Bxa6 Rxa6 19. Kd2 Rha8 20. c4 c5 21. d5 f6 22. Rb7 R6a7 23. d6+ Kd8 24. Rb5 fxe5 25. fxe5 Nxe5 26. Rxc5 Nd7 27. Rb5



27. ... Nf6? 28. Nc5 Rc8 29. Re1 Ke8 30. Kc3 a3 31. Nxe6 a2 32. c5 Kd7 33. Nxc7 Nd5+ 34. Kc4 Kc6 35. Nf5 Re8 36. Nd4+ Kd7 37. c6+, Black resigned.

59th Biel Chess Festival

BIEL | JULY 11-24

1st: GM Levon Aronian (12/24 Classical, 9/10 Rapid, 8½/10 Blitz) 29½/44 total. **2nd:** GM Aydin Suleymanli (14½, 6, 5) 25½/44. **3rd:** GM Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus (14½, 3, 6½) 24/44. **4th:** GM Le Quang Liem (15½, 4, 4½) 24/44. **5th:** GM Matthias Bluebaum (6/15, 4, 2½) 12½/35. **6th:** GM Jose Eduardo Martinez Alcantara (4½/15, 4, 3) 11½/35.

American GM Levon Aronian won the 59th Biel Masters Triathlon, an event with a complex format in which the players compete first in rapid, then classical, then blitz, and finally the leaders play again in classical. GM Aydin Suleymanli won the Classical section, but Aronian's heavy score in Rapid and Blitz won the day.

IM Vaclav Finek won the Challengers section, held under the same rules, ahead of GM Xiao Tong, IM Marco Matera, GM Alexandra Kosteniuk, American IM Carissa Yip, and GM Vaishali Rameshbabu.

FRENCH DEFENSE, STEINITZ VARIATION (C11)

GM Levon Aronian (2724)
GM Matthias Bluebaum (2694)
59th Biel Rapid (5), 07.12.2026

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5 Nfd7 5. f4 c5 6. Nf3 Nc6 7. Bd3 a6 8. 0-0 b5?! 9. f5 cxd4 10. fxe6 fxe6



11. Nxd4 Qb6 12. Be3 Nxd4 13. Kh1 Kd8?! 14. Qg4 Bc5 15. b4! Bxb4 16. Ne2 Bc5 17. Nxd4 Re8 18. Rf7 Ra7 19. Raf1 h6 20. Qh5 g5 21. c3 Nxe5 22. Rxa7 Qxa7 23. Qxh6 Kc7 24. Bxb5 Bd7 25. Bxd7 Nxd7 26. Nxe6+ Kc8 27. Nxc5 Rxe3 28. Qc6+ Kd8

29. Nb7+ Ke7 30. Qd6+ Ke8 31. Qg6+,
Black resigned.

Dole Open

AIX-EN-PROVENCE | JULY 18-26

1st-2nd: GMs Haik Martirosyan and Robert Hovhannisyan, 7½/9. **3rd-8th:** GMs Leon Luke Mendonca, Bharath Subramaniyam H, Gergely Kantor, M. Amin Tabatabaei, Raunak Sadhwani, and Aksel Bu Kvaloy, 7. 297 players.

GM Haik Martirosyan edged out GM Robert Hovhannisyan on tiebreak, but the main story was FM Bodhana Sivanandan becoming the youngest girl to beat a GM rated over 2600 when she defeated Marc'Andria Maurizzi in the opening round. She broke Judit Polgar's 38-year-old record and scored a WGM/IM norm at the age of 11 years and four months.

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B40)

FM Bodhana Sivanandan (2303)
GM Marc'Andria Maurizzi (2628)
4th Dole Open (1), Aix-en-Provence,
07.18.2026

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. g3 Nc6 4. Bg2 Nf6 5. Nc3 d6 6. d4 cxd4 7. Nxd4 Bd7 8. 0-0 Be7 9. Re1 0-0 10. Nxc6 Bxc6 11. Be3 a6 12. a4 Rc8 13. Qe2 Qa5 14. Red1 Rfd8 15. Bd4 h6 16. e5 dxe5 17. Bxe5 Bxg2 18. Kxg2 Qb4 19. Rxd8+ Rxd8 20. Rb1 Nd7 21. Bf4 Nc5 22. Qf3 Rd7 23. b3 g5 24. Bc1 g4 25. Qe3 Bg5 26. Qe1 Bf6 27. Bb2



27. ... Qb6? 28. b4 Qxb4 29. Nd5 Qxb2 30. Rxb2 Bxb2 31. Nb6 Rc7 32. Qb4 Bg7 33. Qxg4 Nd7 34. Nc4 Nf6 35. Qe2 Nd5 36. Nd6 Rd7 37. Ne4 Nc3 38. Nxc3 Bxc3 39. Qc4, Black resigned.



Tiglon, Antipov,
Cardoso (L to R)

45th Benasque Open

BENASQUE | JULY 5-14

1st-6th: GMs Mikhail Al. Antipov, Bryce Tiglon, Jose Gabriel Cardoso, and Renier Castellanos Rodriguez, IM Aron Pasti, and GM Dan Zoler, 8/10. **7th-13th:** GMs Aditya S Samant and Momchil Petkov, IMs Javier Habans Aguerrea and Edoardo Di Benedetto, FM Ivan Povshednyi, Asier Lakuntza Plazaola, and FM Jose Escartin Lacasa, 7½. 511 players.

Antipov and Di Benedetto shared the lead going into the last round. Antipov drew quickly with Cardoso, while Tiglon beat Di Benedetto to join the top group.

GIUOCO PIANO (C53)

GM Bryce Tiglon (2510)
Marcos Gutierrez Garcia (2147)
45th Benasque Open (6), Benasque,
07.10.2026

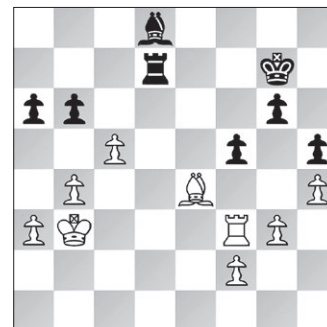
1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. c3 Nf6 5. d3 0-0 6. 0-0 d6 7. Re1 a6 8. a4 Ba7 9. h3 h6 10. Nbd2 Re8 11. b4 Be6 12. Bxe6 Rxe6 13. Qc2 Ne7 14. Nf1 Ng6 15. d4 Re8 16. Ng3 Qd7 17. Be3 Rad8? 18. dxe5 Bxe3 19. exf6 Bf4 20. Nh5 Be5 21. Nxc7 Rf8 22. Nxe5 dxe5 23. Nf5 Kh7 24. Rad1 Qc6 25. Qc1 Nf4 26. Rxd8 Rxd8 27. g3 Nxc3+

28. Kg2 Ng5 29. Qxg5, Black resigned.

FRENCH DEFENSE, BURN VARIATION (C11)

GM Bryce Tiglon (2510)
IM Edoardo Di Benedetto (2470)
45th Benasque Open (10), Benasque,
07.14.2026

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bg5 dxe4 5. Nxe4 Nbd7 6. Nf3 h6 7. Bxf6 Nxf6 8. Bd3 Nxe4 9. Bxe4 c5 10. Qe2 Qa5+ 11. c3 cxd4 12. Nxd4 Be7 13. h4 Qb6 14. Rd1 0-0 15. Nf3 e5 16. Nxe5 Bf6 17. Nc4 Qc5 18. Ne3 Be6 19. Nd5 Bxd5 20. Rxd5 Qe7 21. Bf3 Qxe2+ 22. Kxe2 Rfe8+ 23. Kd3 Rad8 24. g3 Rxd5+ 25. Bxd5 Rd8 26. Ke4 Re8+ 27. Kf3 b6 28. Rd1 Rd8 29. Rd3 Kf8 30. Ke2 Rd7 31. Kd2 Be7 32. b4 h5? 33. Kc2 g6 34. Kb3 Bf6 35. c4 Be7 36. a3 Rc7 37. Ka4 a6 38. Rf3 Bd8 39. Kb3 Rd7 40. Be4 Kg7? 41. c5 f5



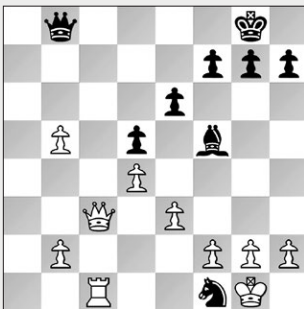
42. Rd3! Rxd3+ 43. Bxd3 a5 44. bxa5 bxa5 45. f4 Kf8 46. Kc4 Ke7 47. Kd5 Kd7 48. Bb5+ Kc8 49. Be8, Black resigned. ♠

Tactical TESTS

BY **JOHN HARTMANN**

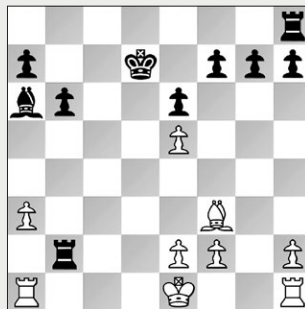
► TRY YOUR HAND AT THESE 12 TACTICS PUZZLES, ALL DRAWN FROM RECENT GAMES. The positions generally increase in difficulty, and you may be faced with a range of tasks including mates, winning material, and defending. Let us know what you think about them with an email to letters@uschess.org. Solutions are on page 63. ♡

TACTIC 1.



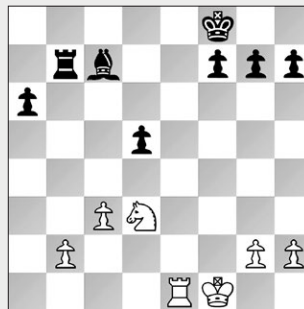
WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 2.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 3.



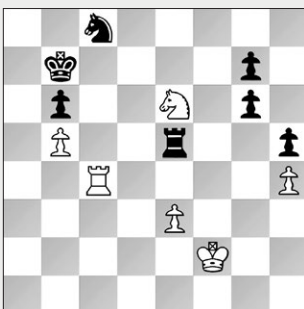
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TACTIC 4.



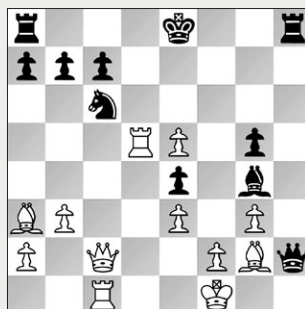
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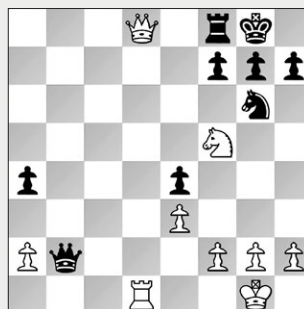
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TACTIC 6.



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TACTIC 7.



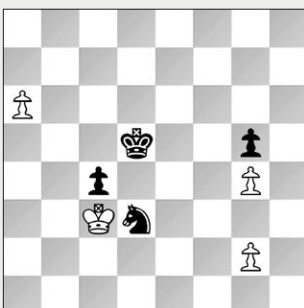
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TACTIC 8.



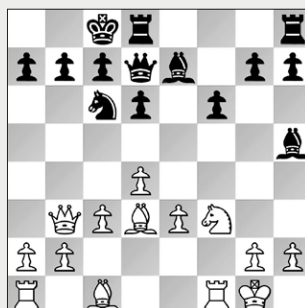
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TACTIC 9.



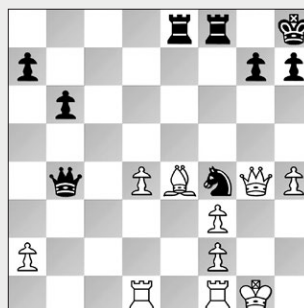
BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 10.



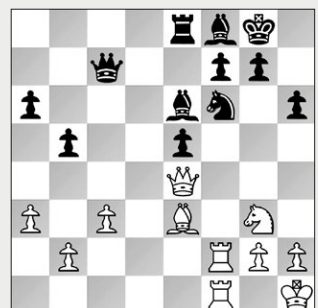
WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 11.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 12.



WHITE TO MOVE

Three Modes

Acquiring knowledge is the easy part.

BY GM ANDY SOLTIS

W

HAT IS IT YOU LEARN WHEN you are learning this game?

A shorthand answer is “chess knowledge.” Another is “chess skill.” A third way of putting it is “chess understanding.”

They sound like synonyms, but these three modes of expertise are very different.

CARO-KANN DEFENSE, ADVANCE VARIATION (B12)

GM Hans Niemann (2725)

GM Yagis Erdogmus (2658)

Tata Steel (3), Wijk aan Zee, 01.19.2026

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 Bf5 4. Nf3 e6 5. Be2 c5 6. Be3 Nd7 7. 0-0 Ne7 8. dxc5 Nc6 9. c4 dxc4 10. Na3 Bxc5 11. Bxc5 Nxc5 12. Nxc4 0-0



To find the most promising move for White, you might rely on only one of the three modes.

For example, a booked-up player — someone with a lot of opening knowledge — might choose 13. Qc1. They know it's the “book move,” the one most often played by masters.

But a player who is unfamiliar with the position may think in a different way. They'll look at the moves that seem most natural

and consider their consequences.

For example, they may start with 13. Nd6, but then see 13. ... Qb6 and decide this is not promising for White. They may also reject 13. Rc1, for example, because of 13. ... Nd3.

They aren't relying on knowledge, but using a trained technique: the skill of calculating. This may also lead White to choose 13. Qc1.

A third player may not know the diagram position any better than the second player. But they rely on what masters call positional understanding.

They may ask, “If I allow 13. ... Qxd1, is the endgame good for me?” And then, “If I avoid that by moving my queen, where is it best placed?”

If they conclude that the queen belongs on e3, they might end up choosing — you guessed it, 13. Qc1.

(The game went **13. Qc1 Nd7 14. Rd1 Be4 15. Qe3 Bd5 16. Rac1 Qb8** with roughly equal chances, ending in a draw.)

We all use the three modes — book knowledge, trained skills and positional understanding — at different times. We learn them in very different ways.

Knowledge, in the chess sense, is the easiest to learn. It is primarily a matter of memorizing. Recalling one more book move in an opening variation than your opponent is a powerful weapon.

Magnus Carlsen was only exaggerating a bit when he said, “I would rather be a queen down in some position neither of us knows than a piece up in a position which he knows in and out and I don't!”

The main problem with acquiring knowledge is that there is so much of it. The late GM Jan Timman wrote in *Timman's Titans* that he wouldn't have gone into a chess career if he knew how much book knowledge would matter.

On the other hand are the chess skills of

calculation and pattern recognition. You can try to master them by exercises that introduce practiced repetition, such as puzzle rushes.

But skill training also has a downside: There are only a limited number of useful patterns that you can learn. Once you've nailed them, a law of diminishing returns kicks in.

Similarly, you can gain a lot of rating points by being able to calculate three moves ahead rather than two. But seeing six moves rather than five won't matter much.

As Carlsen said this year on *TakeTakeTake.com*: “I've gotten that question so many times: ‘How many moves do you see ahead?’ Most of the time I see, like, two or three moves.”

By far the hardest mode of expertise to learn — and therefore the most valuable — is positional understanding.

When Carlsen was 13 and visiting Moscow, he was tested by senior Russian trainers. They concluded he was merely “ordinary” as a tactician. But they found his ability to understand non-tactical positions was on the level of world champions Tigran Petrosian and Anatoly Karpov.

“Understanding” relies to a large degree on positional evaluation. That is, answering the question: “If I go there and they go there, will the new position be better for me or worse?”

When computer pioneer Claude Shannon analyzed chess 70 years ago, he realized that future machines could acquire knowledge easily and would eventually be able to master calculation.

But evaluating would be extremely hard to convert to code. This helps explain why it took so long for engines to defeat the best humans.

But there are many positions that defy understanding.

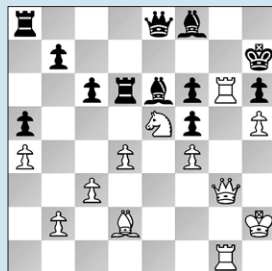
QUIZ FOR SEPTEMBER

HAD HE LIVED IN another country, Alexey Suetin would have been a superstar. But as merely one of many Soviet grandmasters, he was overlooked until he won the World Senior Championship in his 70th year. In his prime, Suetin was one of the world's top 20 players. But that made him only the 11th-best Soviet GM.

This month's quiz features six sparkling victories by Suetin, who was born a century ago in 1926. Your task is to find the fastest winning line of play. This will typically mean the forced win of a decisive amount of material. But watch for mating tactics too. Solutions on page 63.

PROBLEM 1

Alexey Suetin
Maximilian Ujtetky



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 2

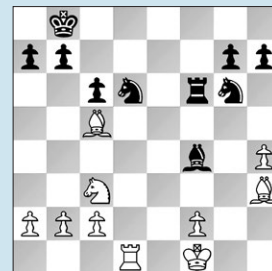
Alexey Suetin
Nathan Zilberman



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 3

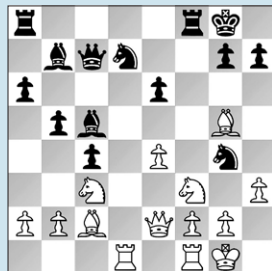
Alexey Suetin
Grigory Borisenko



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 4

Sergey Fokin
Alexey Suetin



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 5

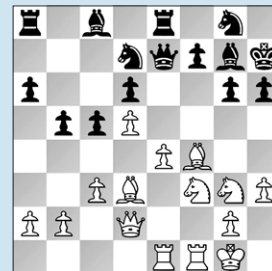
Alexey Suetin
Jonny Nielsen



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 6

Alexey Suetin
Eldis Cobo Arteaga



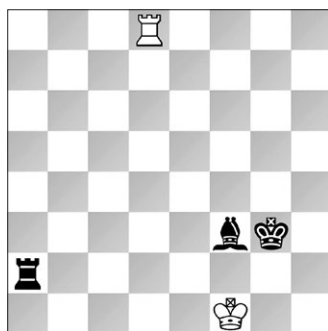
WHITE TO MOVE

WORK IT OUT

GM Andrey Rychagov (2528)

GM Alexander Grischuk (2715)

Russian Ch superfinal (10), Moscow,
12.29.2007



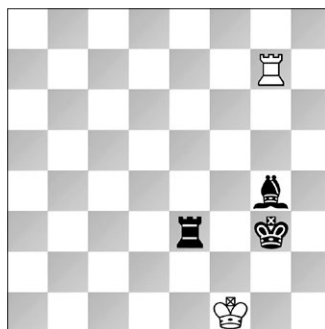
WHITE TO MOVE

The endgame of K+R+B vs. K+R is a draw — as long as the best moves are made. But it is notoriously difficult for either side to find them.

This position arose 35 moves since the last capture. White could claim a draw under the 50-move rule if he survived another 15 moves.

After he chose **96. Ke1** Black replied **96. ... Re2+ 97. Kf1 Re3!**

He threatened to mate after 98. ... Bg2+. White's only way to stop that was to pin the bishop with **98. Rg8+ Bg4 99. Rg7**.



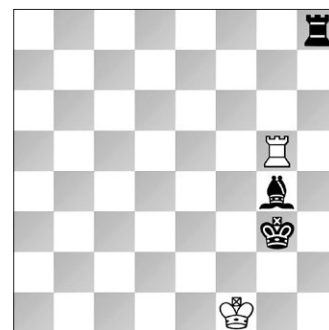
Getting this close to mate is often the easy part of playing the stronger side in this ending. If Black was going to win before White claimed a draw he needed to find another way to mate.

He found it in **99. ... Re8 100. Rg5 Rh8!**

(see diagram top of next column)

White resigned in view of 101. Ke1 Rd8! and 102. ... Rd1 mate.

Black was the 16th-highest rated player in the world, but the finish of the game puzzled him. After it was over he studied it with the



POSITION AFTER 100. ... Rh8

help of the Nalimov tablebases, hoping to learn the governing principles. "I tried to understand this ending," he said.

But this is not a middlegame, where you can evaluate two alternatives and conclude that one move leads to a moderate advantage and the other would only get a slight plus.

There is no subtle evaluation in this ending. Mastering it means spotting the many mating traps and "only" moves. For example, 96. Ke1?? was a blunder. White had to play 96. Rg8+! so that 96. ... Bg4 97. Re8! would save him (97. ... Ra1+ 98. Re1).

In situations like this, you won't know which of the three modes is most useful. Yet another reason chess is so hard to learn. ♠

Falling Just Short

This endgame from the Women's Candidates was both a heartbreaker and a great example of tough defense.

BY IM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN

G

GOING INTO ROUND 12 OF the hotly contested 2026 Women's Candidates, Grandmasters Anna Muzychuk and Aleksandra Goryachkina were still in contention.

Muzychuk was tied with GM Zhu Jiner for second with 6/11; Goryachkina had 5½, while GM Vaishali Rameshbabu led with 7.

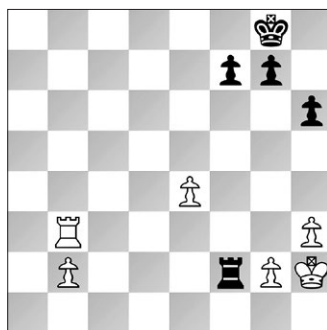
With three rounds remaining, it was still anyone's tournament. Muzychuk and Goryachkina faced each other in Round 12, and the endgame saga that ensued from that encounter is the star of this column.

ON A TIGHTROPE

GM Anna Muzychuk (2522)

GM Aleksandra Goryachkina (2534)

Women's Candidates (12), Cyprus
04.12.2026



WHITE TO MOVE

We start with an innocent-looking four pawns vs. three pawns rook endgame, not much different from the drawn position from Lagno – Tan that we examined in last month's column.

35. Kg3 Rc2 36. h4 Kf8 37. Rb7

Putting the rook on the seventh rank to cut

off the black king and start the march of the b-pawn makes a lot of sense.

37. ... Rc6?

The rook is going in the wrong direction. Black needs to maintain it on the second rank, attacking the g2-pawn and ready to get behind the b-pawn once it starts moving. The king is cut off on the rank, so Black should free it via g7, starting with 37. ... g5. After 38. h5 Kg7 39. Kf3 Kf6 40. g3 Rd2 Black will just wait. Once the white king starts moving towards the queenside, the rook can attack the g-pawn.

38. b4 Rg6+ 39. Kf3 Rf6+ 40. Ke3 Rg6

The white passer has started moving, so Black is looking for counterplay against the g2-pawn. The problem here is that the black king is cut off and stuck on the back rank.

41. b5

Of course, White declines the repetition.

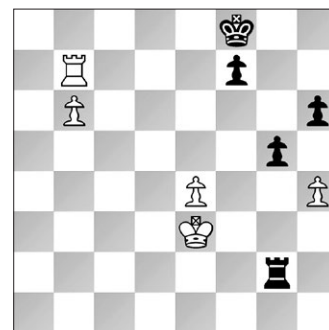
41. ... Rxc2

The material is equal now, so at first glance it might feel as though things are going well for Black. In fact, she is already lost here. We will see why as the game progresses.

42. b6 g5

Black is creating her own passed pawn.

It seems logical to put the rook behind the pawn with 42. ... Rb2, but now we will see why the black king being cut off is so important: 43. h5! and now if Black creates a passed pawn with 43. ... g5 44. hxg6 *e.p.* 44. ... fxg6 45. e5 White has two more advanced passed pawns and will win by putting the b-pawn on the seventh rank. After 45. ... h5 46. Rb8+ Kg7 47. b7 h4 48. e6 Black will be forced to give up her rook with 48. ... Kf6 49. Rf8+ and White wins.



43. Rc7!

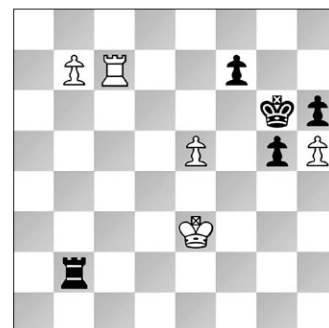
With the simple threat of 44. Rc8+ followed by promoting the pawn. There's a concrete reason why she didn't trade on g5 first, and we'll see the difference in a few moves.

43. ... Rb2 44. b7 Kg7 45. e5

With the threat of e5-e6, creating another advanced passed pawn. Black doesn't have time to push her own passed pawn.

45. ... Kg6 46. h5+!

This is why it was important not to trade on g5!



46. ... Kf5

If 46. ... Kxh5? 47. Rxf7 and one of the pawns will queen: 47. ... Kg6 48. e6 g4 49. Rc7 Kf6 50. e7 Kf7 51. Rc8.

47. Kd4 Ke6 48. Kc5

The king marches towards the very far advanced b-pawn, and Black will soon be forced to give up the rook for it.

48. ... Kxe5

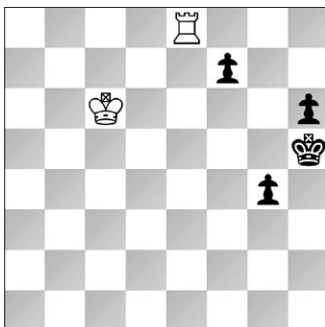
48. ... g4 loses immediately to 49. Rc6+ Kd7 50. Rb6 and the pawn will queen.

49. Kc6

The engine offers a quicker path to victory with 49. Rd7. The threat is 50. Rd5, then checking again, either from d4 or d6, and then creating interference on the b-file by going either to b4 or b6. After 49. ... Rc2+ 50. Kb6 Rb2+ 51. Kc7 f5 White shouldn't promote quickly: 52. b8=Q Rxb8 53. Kxb8 f4 54. Re7+ Kf6 55. Re8 g4 draws.

Instead, White should use the threat of interference to gain a tempo: 52. Rh7 f4 53. Rxh6 and the threat of 54. Rb6 forces Black to give up the rook: 53. ... Rxb7+ 54. Kxb7 f3 55. Rh8 g4 56. Rf8 Ke4 57. h6 and White promotes first. Of course, all of this is very difficult to calculate, but the concept of gaining a tempo by creating a threat of interference is good to keep in mind.

49. ... g4 50. Re7+ Kf6 51. Re8 Rxb7 52. Kxb7 Kg5 53. Kc6 Kxh5



We have now entered the second part of the endgame: rook vs. pawns. Even though Black has three pawns, White is winning here; the king is very close. These positions are very tricky, however. The main defensive mechanisms here for Black are shouldering and stalemates.

54. Kd5 Kh4 55. Ke4 Kg3 56. Ra8

White can try going after the pawns immediately with 56. Rh8, and Black has to find an only move to save the game: 56. ... f5+!. (Black can find this move through process of elimination, because 56. ... Kf2 57. Ra8 g3 58. Ra2+ Kg1 59. Kf3 wins for White.) Logically, the pawn sac puts the white king in a worse position: 57. Kxf5 Kf3 and now both the rook and the king are awkwardly

placed. The rook has to rush back with 58. Ra8 if White wants to try for a win, but after 58. ... g3 59. Ra3+ Kf2 60. Kf4 g2 61. Ra2+ Kf1 62. Kf3 g1=N+ 63. Ke4 Ne2 Black is right on time and this endgame is a draw.

56. ... h5 57. Ra3+ Kh2 58. Kf4

Improving the position of the king even more.

58. ... f5 59. Ra2+

Muzychuk continues her excellent play. Capturing the pawn would immediately lead to a draw: After 59. Kxf5 g3 White's king and rook are both poorly placed. Next comes 60. Kf4 g2 61. Ra2 h4 62. Kf3 h3 and now it is White who has to find a draw here with 63. Kg4 Kh1 64. Ra1+ g1=Q+ 65. Rxg1+ Kxg1 66. Kxh3.

59. ... Kh3 60. Ra3+ Kh2 61. Ra2+

Professionals always repeat!

61. ... Kh3 62. Ra5 g3 63. Rxf5

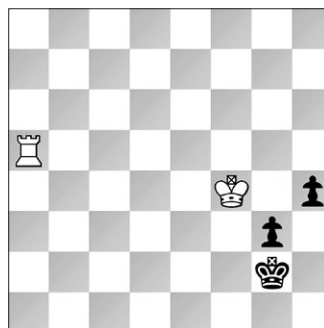
I think 63. Kf3 is the easier path to victory, ignoring the pawn and getting the king closer to the most advanced pawn.

This line requires a lot of precision, though: 63. ... g2 64. Ra1! h4 (if 64. ... Kh2 65. Ra2 winning the important pawn) 65. Rg1 f4 and now taking on f4 draws and taking on g2 is stalemate, but White doesn't have to fall for those traps — 66. Kf2 f3 67. Kxf3 Kh2 68. Rxg2+ with a forced mate: 68. ... Kh1 69. Kf2 h3 70. Rg1+ Kh2 71. Rg3 Kh1 72. Rxh3 mate.

63. ... Kg2

Goryachkina is utilizing the same defense as before: hiding the king in front of the pawn. She has lost a pawn in the process, though.

64. Ra5 h4

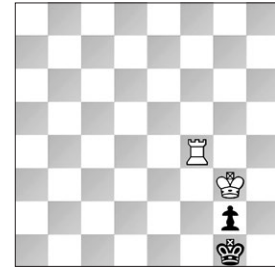


And we have finally reached the most painful part of chess, where a series of perfect moves is undone by one mistake.

65. Ra2??

A very logical check, but it gives away the win.

65. Kg4 Kh2 66. Rh5 isn't easy to find at all, but it's now the only way to win. After 66. ... g2 67. Rxh4+ Kg1 68. Kg3 Kf1 69. Rf4+ Kg1 we've reached a must-know endgame.



POSITION AFTER 69. ... Kg1

The thing to avoid is 70. Rf2 Kh1, when 71. Rxg2 stalemate is unavoidable, but any rook move between f5 and f8, or a4 and d4, is a win.

For example, 70. Rf5 Kh1 71. Rh5+ Kg1 72. Rh2, or 70. Ra4 Kh1 71. Rh4+ Kg1 72. Rh2, and in both cases the rook is attacking the pawn from the other side, so White avoids stalemate.

65. ... Kh3! 66. Ra3

Muzychuk's idea must have been 66. Kf3, but it's met by 66. ... g2! with the stalemate idea again! If 67. Kf2 Kh2 68. Ra1 h3 and Black will promote next, forcing a stalemate: 69. Rb1 g1=Q+ 70. Rxg1.

If 66. Ra8 g2 67. Rg8 Kh2 68. Kf3, Black can promote, but can also get a little fancy, forcing a stalemate with 68. ... h3 69. Kf2 g1=Q+ 70. Rxg1.

66. ... Kh2

Black has improved her king over the last diagram, and White's rook and king are poorly placed now.

67. Kg4 g2

White will be forced to give up the rook for the g-pawn and get the h-pawn with the king.

68. Rh3+ Kg1 69. Kxh4 Kf2 70. Rh2 Kf3 71. Rxg2 Kxg2, draw.

What a battle! There are two sides to this game: Muzychuk's heartbreak and Goryachkina's resilience. Muzychuk played most of the endgame like a machine, and it must have been devastating for her to falter at the very end.

On the other hand, Goryachkina fought until the very end, and when the opportunity to save a half-point presented itself, she was ready to seize it. ♠

Invitation Accepted ✓

GM Baryshpolets takes the Southern California Championship.

BY IM ROBERT SHLYAKHTENKO

S

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA IS one of the few chess states to offer a closed invitational championship, and in recent

years, this championship has also become one of the strongest in the country. For this year's championship, held over Memorial Day weekend in Los Angeles, the eight-player field boasted four grandmasters and an average US Chess rating of 2493.

The deserving winner was top seed GM Andrey Baryshpolets, who played solidly throughout the tournament and demonstrated his high class with an undefeated 5/7 score.

Crucial to his success was his first-round victory against the second seed, GM Arman Mikaelyan. Readers may remember that Mikaelyan brilliantly defeated Baryshpolets in

the previous edition of the championship, covered in the August 2025 *Chess Life*, so this game was a chance for revenge!

SICILIAN DEFENSE, ALAPIN VARIATION (B22)

GM Arman Mikaelyan (2606)
GM Andrey Baryshpolets (2607)
Southern California Championship (1),
Los Angeles, 05.22.2026

1. e4 c5 2. c3 Nf6 3. e5 Nd5 4. Nf3 Nc6
5. Bc4 e6 6. 0-0 d6 7. d4 cxd4 8. cxd4 Be7
9. Qe2 0-0 10. Rd1 Na5!?

White's light-squared bishop is his most important attacking piece in the Alapin Sicilian, so Black rushes to exchange it, even at the cost of time.

11. Bd3 Nb4 12. exd6

Trying to preserve the bishop. Many games have continued 12. Nc3 Nxd3 13. Rxd3 b6 14. b4, with complicated play.

12. ... Qxd6 13. Be4

A critical moment.



The field for the 2026 Southern California Championship

PHOTO: ALLA MOUSSA

13. ... f5!

The only way to justify Black's opening strategy. With this move, he secures the bishop pair and gains significant counterplay on the light squares; the weakness of the e5-square is less important.

14. Bd3 Nxd3 15. Rxd3 b6 16. Rd1

16. Re3?! is a mistake; after 16. ... Nc6 the d4-pawn becomes too weak. But in my opinion, White should have sought dynamics with 16. b4! Nc6 (or 16. ... Nc4 17. Rc3 b5 18. a4) 17. b5 Nb4 18. Rb3 which, at the very least, poses some questions for Black.

16. ... Bb7 17. Nc3?!

The first real inaccuracy. It was very important to play 17. b3!, which allows White to trade Black's dark-squared bishop with a subsequent Bc1-a3.

17. ... Bf6! 18. Ne5 Nc6 19. Nxc6 Qxc6**20. f3 Rad8**

Black has secured a definite advantage and now methodically improves his position.

21. Be3 a6

Preparing to gain space with ... b7-b5 and restricting White's knight.

22. Rac1 Qd6 23. Qe1

White could improve here with 23. Na4, discouraging ... b6-b5 and potentially aiming for counterplay with d4-d5.

23. ... Rfe8

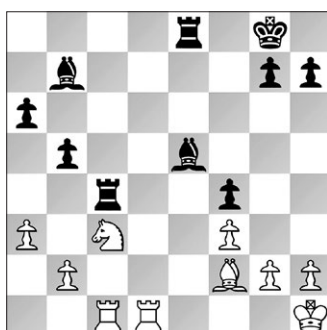
A flexible move — at some point Black might consider ... e6-e5.

24. a3 b5 25. Kh1 Rc8

25. ... e5 was already possible, but Black tries to avoid trades.

26. Bf2 e5 27. Bg3!?

Provoking ... f5-f4.

27. ... f4 28. dxe5 Qxe5 29. Qxe5 Bxe5**30. Bf2 Rc4**

Black's advantage is minimal, but he has a clear plan: advancing the queenside pawns with ... a6-a5 and ... b5-b4. In mutual time pressure, Black's play turned out to be much easier.

31. Re1?!

I think 31. Kg1 was better, leaving White's rooks on the c- and d- files. This leaves White better prepared for Black's queenside plan.

31. ... Kf7 32. Rcd1 Bc6! 33. Rd3 a5!?

Suddenly, White's position is critical: ... b5-b4 is a huge threat.

34. h3?

After this move, there is no longer hope. Black would also be clearly better after 34. Rd2 b4 35. axb4 axb4 36. Ne2 b3 37. Nc1 Ba4, but in time pressure, White missed the resource 34. Rxe5! Rxe5 35. b3!, which comes close to equalizing.

34. ... b4 35. axb4 axb4 36. Nd1 Rc1

Even with comparatively little material on the board, White is too passive to hold things together.

37. Kh2 Bf6! 38. Rxe8 Kxe8

Now Black threatens ... Bd7-a4, winning the knight.

39. b3 Bb5 40. Rd6 Kf7

And now the threat is 41. ... Rb1, winning the b3-pawn. White is powerless against it.

41. Bb6

Accelerating the end.

41. ... Bh4! 42. Bf2 Rxd1!

Black converted with ease.

43. Rxd1 Bxf2 44. Rd5 Bc6 45. Rd6 Be8**46. h4, and White resigned.**

Baryshpolets followed with a 23-move miniature win against FM Mikayel Rostomyan. His strong start, however, was slowed by a topsy-turvy draw against rising star FM Rose Atwell (more on her later!) and a missed brilliancy against experienced GM Melik Khachiyan in Round 4:

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED (D55)

GM Melikset Khachiyan (2458)

GM Andrey Baryshpolets (2607)

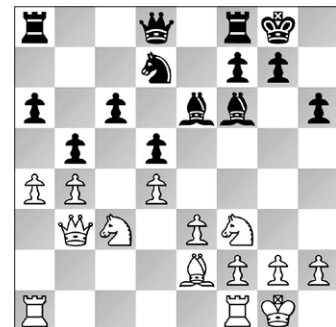
Southern California Championship (6),
Los Angeles, 05.25.2026

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Be7 4. Nf3 Nf6**5. Bg5 h6 6. Bxf6 Bxf6 7. cxd5 exd5 8. b4**

It's rare to see this move played so early, but Black does not seem to have a real way to exploit it. This line was a specialty of English GM Keith Arkell; among his victims was a very young Magnus Carlsen in 2002! Objectively, however, White cannot hope to demonstrate an opening advantage.

8. ... 0-0 9. e3 c6 10. Be2

It's hard to say whether the bishop is better placed here or on d3.

10. ... Be6 11. 0-0 Nd7 12. Qb3 a6 13. a4**b5!**

This is one of Black's typical ways of meeting the minority attack, particularly when he has a knight within reach of the c4-square (as is the case here).

14. a5!?

Preventing ... Nb6-c4, but now it will be very hard to break through on the queenside. 14. Ne1, heading for d3, was an alternative.

14. ... Be7 15. Rac1 Bd6 16. Na2 Rc8 17.**Rc2 Qf6 18. Rfc1 Nb8**

Economical defense of the c6-pawn. Now it is quite difficult for White to make progress on the queenside, while Black's kingside play, supported by his strong dark-squared bishop, is starting to look menacing. This is a relatively common scenario when White gives up his dark-squared bishop in the QGD/Ragozin complexes, and I learned to be wary of such positions after suffering my fair share of losses on the White side.

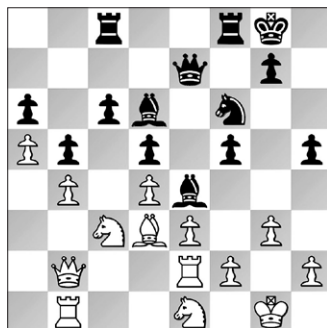
19. Qb2 Bf5 20. Rd2 Nd7 21. Bd3?! Be4?!

A natural move, but both sides missed a tactical chance that would have increased Black's advantage: 21. ... Bxd3! 22. Rxd3 c5!! would have been a great shot. After 23. bxc5 Nxc5 24. Rdd1 Ne4 Black's protected passed pawn on b5 gives him a clear advantage.

22. Ne1 Qe6

Instead, Baryshpolets pursues a clear plan: prepare ... f7-f5-f4, induce the weakening move g2-g3, and then weaken White's kingside further with ... h6-h5-h4.

23. Nc3 f5 24. g3 Qe7 25. Rb1 Nf6 26. Re2 h5



Compared to the position 10 moves ago, White's position has gotten worse, while Black's has greatly improved — without White having done anything obviously wrong.

27. f3

A risky move, as Black can just ignore the threat to the bishop. But White has to stir up complications somehow.

The best defense was 27. h4 Ng4 28. f4, but after 28. ... Rf6! followed by ... Rf6-g6 White's task remains far from pleasant.

27. ... h4! 28. gxh4

Black is winning after 28. fxe4 fxe4 29. Bc2 hxg3.

28. ... Nh5! 29. Qd2

29. fxe4 still loses; after 29. ... fxe4 simply compare the attackers-to-defenders ratio on the kingside.

29. ... Qxh4 30. Rg2 Rce8 31. fxe4

Khachiyan finally accepts the offered piece, hoping to make use of Baryshpolets' extreme time pressure. But objectively, White should not survive.

31. ... fxe4 32. Be2 Ng3!

A great resource; White cannot accept the sacrifice.

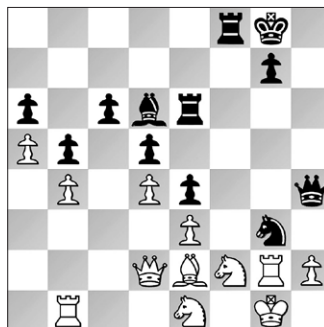
33. Nd1

If 33. hxg3 Bxg3 threatens ... Bg3-f2+, and after 34. Bd1 Black can continue improving his position slowly or go for the flashy 34. ... Rf1+!? 35. Kxf1 Qh1+ 36. Ke2 Rf8! 37. Bc2 Qh5+ with impending checkmate.

33. ... Re6!

Bringing in the reserves.

34. Nf2



The critical moment of the game. In severe *zeitnot*, Baryshpolets was unable to finish off a masterpiece.

34. ... Rh6?

34. ... Rg6! just wins. It's not really clear what White can try; for instance, 35. hxg3 Bxg3 36. Ng4 Bf2+!, or 35. Bd1 Ne2+ 36. Bxe2 Qxh2+ 37. Kf1 Qh1+.

35. Bg4!

Khachiyan finds the only way to save the game.

35. ... Qxg4!?

It looks like 35. ... Nf1!? 36. Kxf1 Bxh2 37. Rb2 Bg3 38. Qe2 has to be winning for Black — but there is no win!

36. Rxg3! Qh4 37. Ng4!

All of a sudden, White's pieces become quite active, and it is Black who must be careful.

37. ... Rg6?

Black has sufficient compensation after 37. ... Bxg3! 38. Nxh6+ Qxh6 39. hxg3 Rf5! 40. Rb3 Rh5 41. Qg2 Rh3, as White has no way to bring the knight on e1 into the game.

38. Ng2! Qh5 39. Ne5

The last in a sequence of only moves. Suddenly, White should be winning.

39. ... Bxe5 40. dxe5 Rxg3 41. hxg3 Qxe5 42. Rf1?

Black would be left without play after 42. Nf4! g5 43. Ne2.

42. ... Rxf1+ 43. Kxf1 Qxg3

Black wins a third pawn, after which his position becomes holdable. This wild game soon ended in a draw.

44. Qd4 Qf3+ 45. Kg1 g5 46. Qc3 Kh7 47. Ne1 Qe2 48. Nc2 Qg4+ 49. Kf2 Qf3+

50. Ke1 g4 51. Nd4 Qh1+ 52. Kd2 g3 53. Qxc6 g2 54. Qd7+ Kh8 55. Qe8+ Kh7 56. Qf7+ Kh8 57. Qf6+ Kh7, draw.

This enabled Mikaelyan to renew his fight for first place with back-to-back victories in rounds 3 and 4. His third-round game, an instructive endgame grind against Mongolian GM Batchuluun Tsegmed, is below. Mikaelyan's stratagem of advancing a rook pawn as far as possible in preparation for an endgame is very typical and well worth remembering.

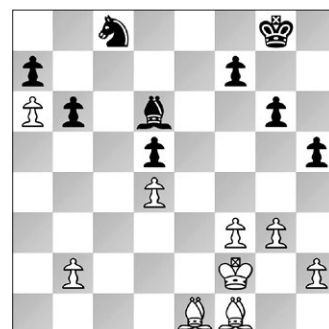
ENGLISH OPENING (A11)

GM Arman Mikaelyan (2606)

GM Batchuluun Tsegmed (2476)

Southern California Championship (3), Los Angeles, 05.23.2026

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 Nf6 3. Bg2 Bg4 4. c4 c6 5. Ne5 Bf5 6. cxd5 cxd5 7. Nc3 Nc6 8. Qa4 Bd7 9. Nxd7 Qxd7 10. d4 e6 11. 0-0 Be7 12. Bd2 0-0 13. e3 Rfc8 14. Rfc1 Ne8 15. Qd1 Nd6 16. Be1 Rc7 17. Ne2 Rac8 18. Nf4 Nb8 19. Rxc7 Rxc7 20. Nd3 Qe8 21. a4 Nd7 22. a5 g6 23. Bf1 h5 24. a6 b6 25. Nf4 Nf6 26. Ne2 Nfe4 27. Rc1 Rxc1 28. Qxc1 Qc8 29. Qxc8+ Nxc8 30. f3 Nf6 31. Nc3 Ne8 32. e4 Nc7 33. exd5 Nxd5 34. Nxd5 exd5 35. Kf2 Bd6



Not much has happened so far. White has a slight advantage thanks to his bishop pair and to two positional factors created by the a6-pawn: the weakening of the c6-square and the potential weakness of the a7-pawn. But it will take a lot of hard work to turn this edge into something tangible.

36. Bb5!

The bishop comes to d7, dominating Black's knight and making it difficult for Black to activate his king.

36. ... Ne7 37. Bd7 f5?!

The first step in the wrong direction. Black needlessly weakens the g5-square.

Black should have tried to activate his king with 37. ... Kg7 38. Bd2 Ng8 followed by bringing the king to e7. Now 39. h4 prevents ... Kg7-f6, but only at the cost of weakening the g3-pawn, and in case of 39. Bg5 Black plays 39. ... f6 40. Bd2 Kf7.

Alternatively, 37. ... Kf8 38. Bd2 Ng8 is possible, but after 39. Bc6 Ne7 40. Bh6+ Kg8 41. Bd7 Kh7 42. Bd2 Kg7 we reach the same position as after the immediate 37. ... Kg7.

38. Bd2 Kf7?

The real mistake.

The justification of Black's last move lay in the pawn sacrifice 38. ... f4! 39. g4!? (or 39. gxf4 Kf7 followed by ... Ne7-f5, and Black should hold) 39. ... hxg4 40. fxg4 g5! 41. h4 gxh4 42. g5 Kf7 43. Kf3 h3! 44. Bxh3 Nc6 and Black has enough counterplay to draw.

39. Bg5!

All of a sudden, Black is in an unpleasant situation, with little room to maneuver.

39. ... Bc7

39. ... Ng8? allows 40. Bd8! with the threat of taking on b6.

40. h3?

Perhaps Mikaelyan wanted to prepare g3-g4, and later realized that this plan is ineffective. Weakening the g3-pawn greatly reduces White's winning chances.

The best way was 40. Ke3!. The key point is that after 40. ... Ng8 41. Ba4 Nf6 White can play 42. Bf4! and the pure bishop vs. knight endgame is winning due to Black's multiple weaknesses.

40. ... Bd6

I would prefer 40. ... Ng8 followed by 41. ... Nf6, which allows Black's king to enter the game. The potential opposite-colored bishop ending after 41. Bc6 Nf6 is not problematic for Black.

41. Kg2 Bc7 42. Kf2 Bd6 43. Bh4

The problem is that 43. g4 hxg4 44. hxg4 fxg4 45. fxg4 Ng8! 46. Bd8 Bb8 is fine for Black. His knight will have access to the e4-outpost, or, in the case of g4-g5, the f5-outpost.

43. ... Bc7 44. Ke2 Bd6

Black continues to wait passively, probably assuming that White has no way to break through. 44. ... Ng8! was again correct.

45. Kd3 Bc7 46. Kc2 Bd6 47. Kc3 Bc7?

It's a mistake to play 47. ... Ng8? here because of 48. Bd8 Nf6 49. Ba4! Bxg3 50. Kb4!, but 47. ... g5! 48. Bxg5 Bxg3 would have kept

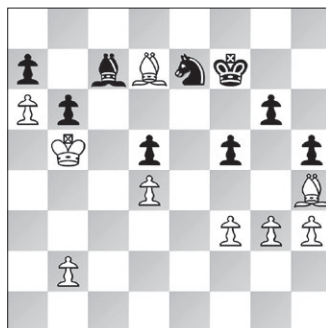
some drawing chances.

48. Kb4?

48. f4! was possible already.

48. ... Bd6+ 49. Kb5 Bc7?

The decisive mistake. This was the last chance for 49. ... g5! 50. Bxg5 Bxg3.



50. f4!

The right idea, restricting Black's bishop and preventing all kingside counterplay.

50. ... Bd6

Black can do nothing but wait.

51. Bg5 Bc7 52. h4! Bd6 53. Bc6 Bc7

54. Bxe7!

The key point. This opposite-colored bishop ending is winning for White due to Black's passive bishop and weaknesses on a7 and g6.

54. ... Kxe7 55. Bxd5 Bd8 56. Kc6 b5

Forced; Black could not allow 57. Kb7.

57. Kxb5 Bb6 58. Kc4 Ba5 59. b4 Bb6 60.

Bg8 Kf8 61. Be6 Ke7 62. Kd5 Kf6 63. Bd7

Ke7 64. Bc8 Kf6 65. b5 Ke7 66. Bxf5!

A nice final touch. Black's bishop cannot control all White's pawns simultaneously.

66. ... gxf5 67. Ke5 Kd7 68. Kxf5 Bxd4 69.

Kg6 Kc7 70. f5 Kb6 71. f6 Kxb5 72. f7 Bc5

73. Kxh5 Kxa6 74. Kg6 Kb7 75. h5, Black

resigned.

After Mikaelyan defeated me with the black pieces in Round 6, there was three-way tie at the top of the standings. That Baryshpolets and Mikaelyan had a share of the lead was perhaps not surprising, but the third player was more unexpected, at least for those who have not followed her progress in recent months.

Rose Atwell played aggressive, uncompromising chess throughout the tournament. Her fifth-round win against IM Julian Colville, himself a rising star, was a nice example of her ability to suddenly seize the initiative:

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED (D55)

IM Julian Colville (2426)

FM Rose Atwell (2468)

Southern California Championship (6), Los Angeles, 05.25.2026

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

5. e3 0-0 6. Nf3 h6 7. Bxf6 Bxf6 8. Rc1 b6

The long-established main line is 8. ... c6, while 8. ... dxc4 9. Bxc4 Nd7 is a more modern treatment.

9. h4!?

A creative approach to the position. But I find 9. cxd5! the most natural way to meet ... b7-b6.

9. ... g6?!

The computer suggests 9. ... c5!, following the old adage that a flank attack is best met with a response in the center. After 10. cxd5 exd5 11. dxc5 Bb7! 12. cxb6 Nc6! Black offers two pawns but has enough counterplay.

10. Qb3?!

Inconsistent.



GM Andrey Baryshpolets

White could have clarified the position in the center and secured a positional advantage with 10. cxd5 exd5 11. h5 g5 12. Bd3.

10. ... dxc4!

Now Black is able to open the center, a circumstance that White's pieces are not ready for.

11. Bxc4 Bb7 12. Ne2 Nc6?

Black starts to take over after 12. ... c5! 13. dxc5 Nd7!. The unopposed dark-squared bishop is especially strong in this position.

13. Qc2?

Both players underestimated 13. Bxe6! Na5 (13. ... fxe6 14. Rxc6 Bxc6 15. Qxe6+ Rf7 16. Qxc6 is close to winning for White) 14. Qc2 fxe6. They probably thought this position was safe for Black, missing 15. b4! Nc6 (15. ... Bxf3 16. gxf3 Nb7 keeps the extra material, but after 17. Nf4 Black faces unstoppable threats) 16. Qxg6+ Bg7 17. Rxc6! and White wins.

13. ... Ne7 14. Nf4?!



After this move, the tide turns for the last time. White is sufficiently solid after

14. h5 g5 15. 0-0.

14. ... c5!

Seizing the initiative.

15. dxc5 Rc8! 16. h5?

Colville misevaluates the upcoming position. Black is better after 16. cxb6 Qxb6 17. 0-0 Bxf3 18. gxf3 Nf5, but it's far from a disaster for White.

16. ... g5 17. Nxe6 fxe6 18. Bxe6+ Kh8

19. Bxc8 Qxc8!

Perhaps this is the move Colville missed. Black's queen comes to g4 with powerful effect.

20. Qa4?

20. cxb6 Qg4! is the point, but 20. 0-0! Qg4 21. Ne1 offered chances to resist.

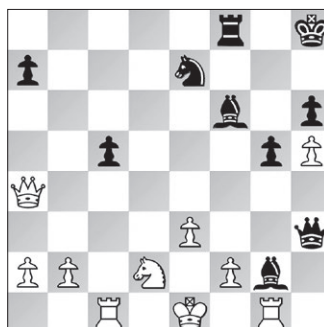
20. ... bxc5?

20. ... Bc6! was much stronger. White's queen cannot remain on the fourth rank for long, and Black's queen will invade on g4.

21. Nd2?

Capitulation. It's difficult to play 21. 0-0 here, but it's necessary, and White is surviving.

21. ... Bxg2 22. Rg1 Qh3!



Atwell converts with ruthless precision.

23. Nf1 Nf5 24. Qd7 Bxf1 25. Rxf1 Qg2

26. Qd3 Nh4 27. Qd6 Bg7 28. Qd7 Nf3+

29. Ke2 Ne5 30. Qa4 Qf3+ 31. Kd2 Qd5+, White resigned.

As a result, Atwell had a chance to fight for the title in the last round. She fell just short, drawing with the white pieces against Khachiyan, but was nevertheless rewarded for her fighting spirit: Thanks to her performance, her live FIDE rating crossed 2400; she already had the three norms required, so she became an IM-elect.

Meanwhile, I lost a long game to Baryshpolets (I really did everything I could to help the main contenders in this event!). Mikaelyan, perhaps foreseeing my demise, overpressed and lost a balanced position against Rostomyan. Thus, Baryshpolets took clear first with 5 points; Atwell was second with 4½, while Mikaelyan and Tsegmed tied for 3rd-4th place with 4 points each.

All in all, it was another exciting championship: Such a mixed field of experienced competitors and ambitious young talent is bound to produce fighting chess. Immense gratitude is due to the Southern California Chess Federation for taking on the significant organizational and fundraising challenges of such an event. The choice to host this tournament alongside the traditional Lina Grumette Memorial Day Classic event (see *Chess Life Online* for coverage) worked well. When I first entered the Southern California chess scene, it was very inspiring to see up close how the state's top players compete, and I am glad that the next generation has such an opportunity.

The consistent strength of the championship has demonstrated that it is possible to coordinate high-level events in Southern California, and plans are underway to expand the scope of such competitions. For example, GM Khachiyan intends to organize a local norm invitational event in early August, the first such event in several years.

What do you think?

As the readers may have surmised, this year's championship was far from my most successful appearance. In Round 5, I was unable to break through superb defense by FM Rostomyan and, after much thought, decided to abandon my winning efforts and played a move that seemed to force a draw instantly. Of course, as soon as I played it,



FM Rose Atwell

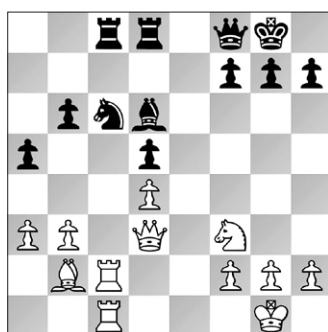
I realized that it was a terrible blunder, and Rostomyan punished me ruthlessly. A bit shell-shocked, I lost the final two games as well, something that has not happened to me in recent memory. Nevertheless, even in difficult tournaments it is possible to play interesting games. I will leave the readers with the following calculation exercise from my Round 3 game:

WHAT'S THE DEAL?

IM Robert Shlyakhtenko (2559)

IM Julian Colville (2426)

Southern California Championship (3),
Los Angeles, 05.23.2026



BLACK TO MOVE

How would you evaluate the position after 21. ... Bxa3? Set up the position on a physical board and try to calculate as many lines as possible, writing down your main conclu-

sions. I would suggest taking an hour (perhaps more) on this position: At least, that's how long it took the players to assess the complications during the game!

The Solution

21. ... Bxa3!?

This move is not really better or worse than simply moving the knight on c6. But its consequences are fascinating! White has three main options: taking on a3, taking on c6, or playing 22. Ng5.

22. Rxc6!?

I saw that this move should lead to an equal position and decided it was my best practical chance. Alternatives are:

a) 22. Ng5! g6 23. Qh3 h5 and here White has several ways of continuing the attack, such as 24. Nxf7 (24. Bxa3 Qxa3 25. g4 is not dangerous in view of 25. ... Qe7!; meanwhile, 24. Ne6 is very tempting: 24. ... fxe6 25. Qxe6+ Qf7 26. Qxf7+ Kxf7 27. Bxa3 and initially, it seems like White should have some pressure, because retreating the knight allows an invasion on the seventh rank, but Black has the clever defense 27. ... Re8! 28. Kf1 Re6 followed by ... Ke8-d7, with equality) 24. ... Kxf7! (24. ... Bxb2? 25. Nxd8 Bxc1 26. Qxc8 Nxd4 looks messy at first glance, but White has 27. Ne6!) 25. Rxc6 Rxc6 26. Rxc6 and now the weakness of White's back rank

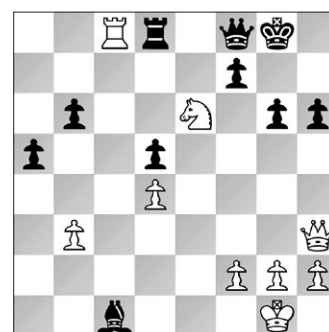
again saves Black: 26. ... Qe7 27. Bc3 Rd6! with an equal position.

b) 22. Bxa3 Qxa3 23. Ng5 g6 24. h4! is possible, but after 24. ... Qd6 25. Qa6! h6 26. Nxf7! Kxf7 27. Rxc6 Rxc6 28. Qb7+ Rd7 29. Qxc6 Qxc6 30. Rxc6 Re7! 31. Rxb6 Re4 Black should hold.

22. ... Bxb2!

It's slightly unpleasant for Black after 22. ... Rxc6 23. Rxc6 Bxb2 24. Rxb6: His bishop has no purpose; the d5-pawn is potentially weak, and White can easily improve his kingside position with g2-g3 and h2-h4.

23. Ng5 g6 24. Qh3 h6! 25. Rxc8 Bxc1 26. Ne6!



The critical position.

26. ... fxe6?!

I was hoping for this. However, even here White has no advantage.

The most testing move was 26. ... Re8!! A brilliant resource! All three of Black's pieces were hanging on the previous move, and Black leaves two of them under attack! I had seen this when Black played 21. ... Bxa3, but evaluated the position as equal. My calculations continued: 27. g3! fxe6 (27. ... Qe7 28. Rxc1 Qxe6 29. Qxh6 and I felt that White should have sufficient counterchances against Black's king, despite Black's pawn majority on the queenside) 28. Rxc1 h5 29. Rc6 Qf6 30. Rxb6 Qxd4 31. Rxe6 with a draw.

27. Qxe6+ Kh8 28. Qe5+ Kg8 29. Qe6+ Kh8 30. Rxc1 Qd6

30. ... Qf4! is also possible.

31. Rc6 Qxe6 32. Rxe6

Initially, I had overestimated this position. My opponent played ...

32. ... Rc8!, draw.

... and Black's rook was active enough to equalize. Thus, in the end, the decision to capture on a3 was fully justified! ♠

Southern California Closed Championship

LOS ANGELES | MAY 22-25, 2026

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1	GM Andrey Baryshpolets	2607	*	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	5/7
2	FM Rose Atwell	2468	½	*	½	½	1	½	½	1	4½/7
3	GM Batchuluun Tsegmed	2476	½	½	*	0	1	½	½	1	4/7
4	GM Arman Mikaelyan	2606	0	½	1	*	0	½	1	1	4/7
5	FM Mikayel Rostomyan	2381	0	0	0	1	*	½	1	½	3/7
6	GM Melikset Khachiyan	2458	½	½	½	½	½	*	0	0	2½/7
7	IM Robert Shlyakhtenko	2559	0	½	½	0	0	1	*	½	2½/7
8	IM Julian Colville	2426	½	0	0	0	½	1	½	*	2½/7

Pressure, Points

On winning a second straight U.S. Girls' Junior

BY **WGM ZOEY TANG**

W

HAT'S YOUR GREATEST strength as a chess player?

Some are good tacticians; others are theoreticians, attackers, endgame specialists, strategists. But when GM Yasser Seirawan asked me this question during the pregame interviews for this year's U.S. Girls' Junior Championship, I responded that I play well under pressure.

Here's a secret: Part of why I'm good at dealing with pressure is because I'm good at pretending it doesn't exist at all. (Picture an ostrich with its head in the sand.)

Now, my greatest weakness? I kept this a secret during my interview, and I'm not about to reveal it now! You can draw your own conclusions from my games.

The U.S. Girls' Junior is part of the U.S. National Championships, held annually in St. Louis. This year, the National Championships were expanded to include four sections (Junior, Girls' Junior, Senior, Senior Women's). The top 10 players in each section are invited to compete in a nine-round round robin for tens of thousands of dollars of prizes. It is one of the most prestigious tournaments in the U.S.

I entered this year's tournament as the defending champion. Knowing the strength of the field, I didn't think anyone could be considered a clear favorite. I had a psychological advantage, though, or at least I framed it that way to myself: Compared to everyone else, I'd already proved myself once last year, so I'd always have less to lose.

The first half started off well enough for me. By the rest day, I'd reached an undefeated 4/5 score. Most of my games were fairly smooth, except for my Round 3 win against WGM Rochelle Wu:

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED, RAGOZIN VARIATION (D38)

WGM Zoey Tang (2392)

WGM Rochelle Wu (2312)

U.S. Girls' Junior Ch (3), St. Louis, 07.16.2026

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. Nc3 Bb4

5. cxd5 exd5 6. Bg5 h6 7. Bh4 Bf5 8. Qa4+

Taking advantage of the fact that Black still hasn't castled.



PHOTO: COURTESY SLCC / OOTES

8. ... Nc6 9. e3 g5 10. Bg3 0-0



11. Nd2?

Stopping ... Nf6-e4 is a worthy cause, but here the king is left too weak. Developing and counterattacking with 11. Bb5 was better. Then, after 11. ... Bxc3+ 12. bxc3 Ne7, only now 13. Nd2!.

11. ... a5?

Not seizing the moment.

After 11. ... Qe7 12. Be2 it looks like White is only one move away from getting the king to safety, but it's already too late: 12. ... Rfe8 threatens ... Nc6xd4 again, and after 13. a3 (Black's way better after 13. 0-0 Nxd4 14. exd4 Bxc3) 13. ... Nxd4 14. axb4 Nc2+ 15. Kf1 d4! (15. ... Nxa1? 16. Qxa1 is hard to evaluate) is the move I missed, and Rochelle likely did also. Black accepts being down a piece, claiming that the rook on h1 is pretty useless anyway. Black is better after 16. exd4 Nxd4 17. Bc4 a6.

12. Be2 Ne7 13. h4 g4 14. h5

Manually isolating the g4-pawn.

14. ... Bh7 15. Bh4?!

Very direct; during the game I missed Black's key resource.

There was no need to rush; after 15. Be5! Nf5 16. 0-0 the g4-pawn will be lost eventually and White is slightly better.

15. ... Nf5 16. Bxf6 Qxf6 17. Bxg4?

Biting the bullet, but it turns out to be a wrong decision. Black obviously has compensation after 17. Nxd5 Bxd2+ 18. Kxd2 Qg5 19. f4! gxf3 e.p. 20. gxf3 Kh8, but both sides are doing fine.

17. ... Nxd4! 18. exd4?!



At this point White had no other testing try, even though the engine says 18. 0-0 is better.

18. ... Qxd4??

Here move order matters a lot. Black should play 18. ... Rfe8+ 19. Kf1 Qxd4 20. Qd1, and now 20. ... Bc5! is the move I missed. Black's winning after 21. Qf3 Qxd2.

19. Bd7!

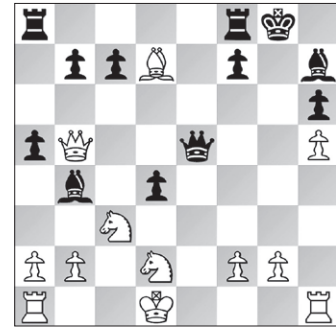
Black was threatening 19. ... Qxg4, 19. ... Bxc3, and 19. ... Rfe8+, but this move deals with them all at once!

19. ... Qe5+?! 20. Kd1?

I wasn't sure of the difference between this and 20. Kf1. I thought the king could be useful guarding d2, but it can't run to safety.

It turns out 20. Kf1 is correct, after a tactical justification: 20. ... d4 21. Nf3! Bd3+ 22. Kg1 Qd6 23. Nd1 and if 23. ... c6 24. Rh4!.

20. ... d4 21. Qb5



21. ... Qd6??

An inexplicable mistake. Rochelle later told me she was also quite surprised after she played this move (!). She'd been intending 21. ... Qg7, when slow moves like (a) 22. Nce4? aren't enough: 22. ... c6 23. Qe2 Rad8 and trading queens with 24. Qg4 would be nice, but Black has 24. ... Qxg4+ 25. Bxg4 f5 with a big advantage.

White needs to play (b) 22. Rh3 dxc3 23. Rg3 and a complex position follows after 23. ... Qxg3 24. fxg3 cxb2 25. Rb1 Bxd2 26. Rxb2 Bg5.

22. Nce4 Qe7 23. Bf5

Now I've consolidated, and the rest is fairly simple.

23. ... c5 24. Bxh7+ Kxh7 25. a3 Bxd2





WIM Chloe Gaw



WFM Irene Fei



FM Jasmine Su



WIM Rachael Li



WFM Aimee Yang

26. Nxd2 Rfe8 27. Kc2 c4 28. Rae1 d3+ 29. Kd1, Black resigned.

Meanwhile, WIM Rachael Li had an even better start, with a blazing $4\frac{1}{2}/5$. Reviewing her games, I couldn't help admiring her attacking style, which led to beautiful victories such as her own third-round game:

SICILIAN DEFENSE, CLOSED VARIATION (B23)

WIM Rachael Li (2436)

FM Jasmine Zhixin Su (2328)

U.S. Girls' Junior Ch (3), St. Louis, 07.16.2026

1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 d6 3. f4 g6 4. Nf3 Bg7 5. Bb5+ Bd7 6. Bc4 Nc6 7. d3 e6



Black intends to follow up with ... Ng8-e7. The whole kingside setup is designed to stop

White's f4-f5 break.

8. f5

Anyway! This is fully justified; Black's king is one move further away from castling, so opening the e-file is highly dangerous.

8. ... exf5

Black might have had an easier time after 8. ... gxf5, but this move itself is inhuman. After 9. exf5 Nf6 10. 0-0 0-0 11. Bg5 h6 the opened g-file is not as vulnerable with the fianchettoed bishop defending.

9. 0-0 Nge7 10. Qe1 h6?!

Preventing Nf3-g5 and Bc1-g5 is an unaffordable luxury. Jasmine was correct

in avoiding 10. ... 0-0?, as after 11. Qh4 White's kingside attack is still quite strong. But 10. ... Be6 would've been the best way to consolidate both the center and the kingside. White's only try is 11. exf5, but after 11. ... gxf5! (not 11. ... Bxf5? 12. Ng5) 12. Bxe6 fxe6 13. Qxe6 Qd7 14. Qc4 0-0-0 Black is OK.

11. Bf4 Ne5?!

Again, 11. ... Be6 was more resilient.

12. exf5 Nxc4 13. fxe6?!



The engine doesn't like this move, but it's hugely creative and difficult to defend against.

White has a healthy advantage after 13. dxc4 Bxf5 14. Rd1 0-0 15. Rxd6.

13. ... 0-0?

A very understandable, if wrong, decision.

The only option was accepting the challenge with 13. ... Ne5. Without the confidence of knowing the objective evaluation, however, it's hard to play, because it appears Black is almost lost, in many ways. But she would survive after 14. Nxe5 dxe5 15. gxf7+ Kxf7! 16. Bxh6+ (16. Bxe5+ would involve a different defense from Black: 16. ... Nf5 17. Qe4 Bxe5 18. Qxe5 Kg6! 19. Nd5) 16. ... Bf6 17. Rxf6+ (17. Bg5 could also be considered) 17. ... Kxf6 18. Qh4+ Ke6 19. Qc4+.

14. dxc4 Be6?

With 14. ... Bc6 15. Rd1 Nxc6 Black can maintain some semblance of counterplay: 16. Bxd6 Bxf3 17. Rxf3 Bd4+ 18. Rxd4 cxd4 19. Ne4! and eventually White simplifies into a pawn-up endgame after 19. ... Re8 20. Nf6+ Qxf6 21. Qxe8+ Rxe8 22. Rxf6.

15. gxf7+

The problem with 14. ... Be6 is revealed: Black is forced to block the f-file.

15. ... Bxf7 16. Rd1 Bxc4 17. Bxd6!

This had to be seen from afar.

17. ... Rf7

17. ... Bxf1 isn't possible because of 18. Bxe7.

18. Rf2 Nf5 19. Ne5

Fancy! Good thing Rachael has everything calculated out. 19. Be5 is also good.

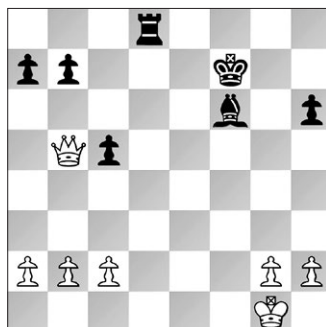
19. ... Nxd6 20. Nxf7 Bxf7 21. Nb5 Nxb5

21. ... Bf8 doesn't help matters: 22. Nxd6 Bxd6 23. Rfd2 and White's winning.

22. Rxd8+ Rxd8 23. Rxf7!

The last part of the long combination.

23. ... Kxf7 24. Qf1+ Bf6 25. Qxb5



White's queen is very active, and soon it will pick up Black's pawns. The rest is a matter of good technique, which Rachael demonstrates nicely.

25. ... b6 26. Kf2 Kg7 27. Ke2 Bg5 28. Qa4 a5 29. Qc6 Rd2+ 30. Kf3 Rxc2 31. Qb7+ Kf8 32. Qxb6 a4 33. h4, Black resigned.

Depending on where the bishop goes, White will check on f6 or h6, and then another check picks up the rook.

Rachael and I were paired against each other in Round 7; it was bound to be a critical game, and on the rest day I had plenty of time to look ahead to it. The possible scenarios in the standings raced through my mind. From a statistical standpoint, it might end up being my best (or only) chance to catch up. Still, I forced myself to focus on the present: Sole second place and trailing by only half a point was a decent position to be in. As long as I kept focusing on my own games and playing good chess, I could create chances.

This approach ended up favoring me; so did fortune. In Round 6, the first after the rest day, I won from a worse position against IM-elect Rose Atwell, while Rachael lost for the first time, against WGM Iris Mou. Suddenly, I was going into the crucial seventh round leading for the first time.

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B23)

WIM Rachael Li (2436)

WGM Zoey Tang (2392)

U.S. Girls' Junior Ch (7), St. Louis, 07.21.2026

1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 e6 3. g3 d5 4. exd5 exd5

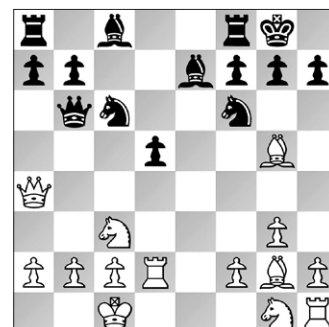
5. d4 cxd4 6. Qxd4

Already, we have reached an interesting, atypical position. My IQP and the eventual opposite-side castling mean I should play actively.

6. ... Nf6 7. Bg5 Be7 8. 0-0-0 Nc6 9. Qa4 Qb6

Counterattacking f2. This was the last move of my preparation.

10. Rd2 0-0 11. Bg2



A key question arises: How should Black guard d5?

11. ... Be6?!

Too complacent. Now White gets free pressure.

11. ... h6! was more aligned with the spirit of the position. After 12. Bxf6 Bxf6 13. Bxd5 Nb4 Black has active minor pieces and open files against White's king. The engine calls it equal, but Black's position is preferable practically: 14. Bb3 a5 and now the only defense is 15. Qb5, but Black is fine after 15. ... Qxb5 16. Nxb5 a4 17. Bc4 Bf5.

The typical push 11. ... d4?! doesn't work as well: 12. Bxf6 Bxf6 13. Nd5 Qd8 14. Ne2 and the d4-pawn is overextended.

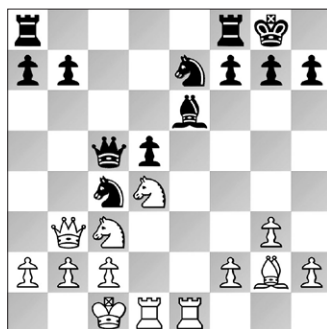
12. Nge2 Ng4?

Trading minor pieces is definitely not to my advantage. Having played the solid 11. ... Be6, best was to play in the same manner with 12. ... Rad8!. Black will occupy the d- and e-files rather trying than a direct queenside attack. White's only slightly better after 13. Rhd1 h6 14. Be3 Bc5 15. Bxc5 Qxc5 16. Nf4 Bg4.

13. Bxe7 Nxe7 14. Nd4 Ne5 15. Qb3 Qc5

No way I'm trading queens with d5 so weak.

16. Re1 Nc4 17. Rdd1



Somewhere around here, I realized how horrible my position was. The defenders of d5 are all weak on the open e-file and there's not enough time to untangle.

17. ... Bg4

17. ... Nc6?! would've been a nice counter-attacking idea, if it wasn't for 18. Qb5! (not 18. Nxe6?? fxe6 19. Rxe6? Nd4).

18. f3 Bd7 19. Qxb7

Rachael calculated well; White faces no consequences for grabbing the pawn.

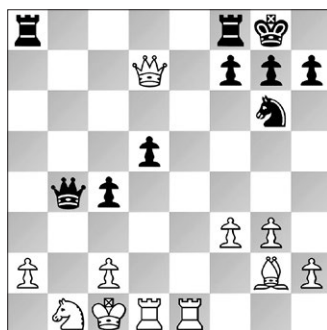
19. ... Qd6 20. Ndb5 Qb4 21. b3 a6 22. Qxd7 axb5 23. Nb1!

The only defensive move. Unfortunately I'd failed to see it ahead of time, so I was unpleasantly surprised here. 23. Qxe7?? Qxc3 24. bxc4 Rxa2 is hopeless despite the extra piece.

23. ... Ng6

23. ... Rxa2 would be some sort of last ditch/all-in attacking attempt, but White defends relatively easily after 24. Qxe7 Na3 25. Nxa3 Qc3 26. Qe5 Ra1+ 27. Nb1.

24. bxc4 bxc4



Certainly I have compensation here, but during the game I felt that White should be able to defend. Another big problem was the clock situation: I only had eight minutes left to play the next 16 moves before time control. Overall, not ideal.

25. a3!

The only move that maintains White's advantage.

White loses her edge after 25. c3?, because it turns out the second-rank defense possibilities aren't worth taking away the c3-square from the knight: 25. ... Qb6 26. Rd2 Rfb8 27. Qf5 Ra5 28. Qc2 Rb5 29. Na3 and Black has to just go back with 29. ... Ra5.

25. ... Qb6 26. f4!

Again the only move.

26. ... Rab8 27. Kd2?

Running the king to safety is logical, but in reality it will be forced into more exposed positions.

White is winning after 27. Nc3, though in a real game there are still swindling chances. Possibly Rachael didn't like 27. ... Qb2+ 28. Kd2 Rfd8 29. Qa4 d4 30. Nd5 d3, though, with White's queen guarding c2, there's no real threat: 31. Rb1 and White wins.

27. ... Qf2+ 28. Re2 c3+ 29. Kd3

It's also good enough to just play 29. Nxc3! Qd4+ 30. Ke1 Qxc3+ 31. Kf1, keeping an extra pawn (likely two) while safeguarding the king at last.

29. ... Qc5

Taking the d-pawn is never possible for White due to d-file pin ideas.

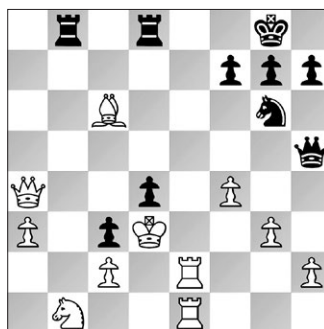
30. Qa4

30. Nxc3 was once again an option, giving up the knight with check to get the king to safety. 30. ... Qc4+ 31. Kd2 Qd4+ 32. Ke1 and White should win this.

30. ... d4

Now my position is playable because White's b1-knight is stranded. I was cautiously optimistic.

31. Rde1 Qh5 32. Bc6 Rfd8



33. Qc4??

This move takes away the king's escape square. White's still winning with 33. Re8+

Nf8 34. Rxd8 Rxd8 35. Qb5.

33. ... Qf5+

Played with five seconds left! Slowly, the realization that I was winning sank in.

34. Re4

34. Be4 Nxf4+ is similar.

34. ... Ne5+

34. ... Nxf4+ was a slightly more precise option: 35. gxf4 Qh3+ 36. Ke2 Qg2+ 37. Kd3 Qf3+ wins.

35. fxe5 Qf3+

If only the king had c4 to run to ...

36. R4e3 dxe3+ 37. Kxc3 Qf2

The knight is still stuck and White's king is still super weak. Black is winning.

38. Re2

38. Rf1 is met by 38. ... e2! 39. Rxf2 e1=Q+, and 38. Qe2 doesn't help: 38. ... Rdc8 39. Qxf2 Rxc6+ 40. Kd3 exf2.

38. ... Qg1 39. e6 fxe6 40. Qxe6+ Kh8

With the time control made, I finally felt more secure.

41. Qxe3 Qxb1 42. Qc5 Qd1 43. Rf2 h6

44. Rf7

Losing immediately, but there wasn't much better. If 44. Kc4 Qe1 wins.

44. ... Qd2+ 45. Kc4 Qxc2 mate.

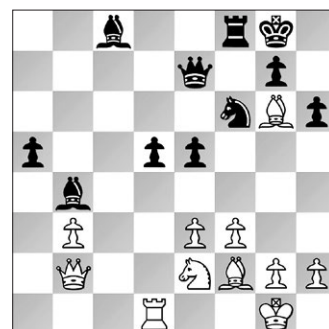
With this twist of luck, I held a 1½-point lead with only two rounds to go. I reminded myself to keep my focus and finish strong. And I managed to do it!

WRAPPING IT UP

WIM Chloe Gaw (2241)

WGM Zoey Tang (2392)

U.S. Girls' Junior Ch (9), St. Louis,
07.23.2026



BLACK TO MOVE

I was quite happy with the way the game was going. Earlier I'd gotten to use some nice preparation, so I was pushing positionally. A draw would guarantee me clear first, while even if I lost, in the worst-case scenario I would still go into a playoff.

26. ... e4 27. Nd4?

Optically the knight looks nice, but White has no counterattack now. Better was 27. Nf4 exf3 28. gxf3 and Black will always have to keep an eye on d5. If 28. ... Bd6 29. Qd4 and White's OK.

27. ... exf3 28. gxf3?

28. Nxf3, admittedly, also looks quite sad after 28. ... Ng4 29. Qe2 Bc5 30. Rxd5 Be6.

28. ... Ne4?!

I should have played 28. ... Ng4!. It's the same idea, but it's more forcing because White doesn't have the option of saving the g6-bishop. After 29. fxe4 Bxe4 30. Rf1 Qg5 Black's double threats of ... Qg5xe6 and ... Bg4-h3+ are decisive.

29. Bxe4 dxe4 30. f4 Bg4 31. Rb1 Bc5 32. Qc3 Qd6 33. Nb5?

The final mistake. White had to play 33. Rc1 Bxd4 34. Qxd4 Qg6 35. Bg3 Kh7, though Black is still much better.

33. ... Qd3

White can never trade queens on d3, or else the passed d-pawn is unstoppable.

34. Rc1 Bb4 35. Qc4+ Kh8 36. Ra1 Rc8 37. Qxd3 exd3 38. h3 d2, White resigned.

I finished with an undefeated $7\frac{1}{2}/9$; I'd succeeded in my title defense! It's incredible to win the tournament I've grown up following not once, but twice (and hopefully more in the future).

A last-round loss for Rachael meant she finished second on tiebreaks with $5\frac{1}{2}/9$; in contrast, WGM Rochelle Wu won her last five games in a row to finish third.

FM Jasmine Su also finished with $5\frac{1}{2}$ but barely missed out on the podium on tiebreaks.

I want to thank Rex and Dr. Jeanne Cairns Sinquefield, the Saint Louis Chess Club, and the entire team of organizers, arbiters, videographers, and staff that make the National Championships possible. They run a truly incredible event every year, and somehow it keeps getting better!

On a personal note, thank you to my friends, students, coach, and family for their unwavering support. I couldn't have done it without you guys. ♡



FM Rose Atwell



WGM Iris Mou



FM Megan Paragua

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Fast Chess

The greats remember one of their own at the Naroditsky Memorial.

BY GM MARK HEIMANN

R

RAISED AND EDUCATED IN THE Bay Area, Daniel Naroditsky moved to Charlotte, N.C., to lead an illustrious career as a grand-

master, a fearsome speed chess player, and a celebrated content creator. Over the Fourth of July weekend, I left my home in San Francisco to make a pilgrimage to Charlotte. I wanted to play chess in his honor.

After Danya's tragic passing last fall, the Charlotte Chess Center chose to celebrate his legacy with the inaugural Daniel Naroditsky Memorial, celebrating Danya's famed prowess in quick chess with two very strong rapid and blitz chess tournaments, and the lineup of players participating to honor him could not have been more stacked.

Tournament participants included Uzbek GM Jakovhir Sindarov, the incoming world championship challenger and breakout star

of the year, as well as America's own GMs Fabiano Caruana, Hikaru Nakamura, and Wesley So. The previous generation's elites were also well represented by the likes of GMs Boris Gelfand and Vasyl Ivanchuk.

Danya's peers in content creation also turned out in force: IMs Levy Rozman (a/k/a GothamChess), Julien Song, Eric Rosen, and John Bartholomew; GM Aman Hambleton of the Chessbrahs; the Botez sisters, and many more. Beyond this, the event drew dozens of international masters and grandmasters from all over the world, along with motivated up-and-coming talents and players of all levels who simply wanted to honor one of the game's most beloved figures and play against this Who's Who of modern chess.

For me, this tournament was a *zwischenzug* in the middle of a more traditional holiday, hiking in the Smoky Mountains of eastern

Tennessee. As a chessplayer, I was intimidated by the prospect of that much fresh air and exercise, so I gladly took the opportunity to nest a getaway within a getaway. One or more early alarms and a protein powder-laced cold brew later (the questionable decisions would start before I even sat down at a board), I was ready for the three-hour early morning drive to arrive just in time for the start of a full weekend of chess.

Friday was a rapid tournament: seven rounds at a time control of G/10+5, while Saturday's blitz consisted of 11 rounds of G/3+2. Both tournaments featured an elite Masters section and a Challengers section with many up-and-coming players, including several masters. The third day of the event, on Sunday, July 5, featured two special blitz round robins: one for 10 of the chess content creators, another for the top 10 finishers in



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Saturday's blitz.

Though there was certainly plenty of chess to occupy everyone's attention, the Charlotte Chess Center made sure to keep Danya's legacy prominent. Danya's mother made the ceremonial first move to kick off both days; the foyer displayed tributes such as signed chessboards and photographs sent in from supporters around the country, including the Silicon Valley Chess Community from where Danya and I called "back home," and also on display was a long list of donors who collectively raised \$1.2 million for the Daniel Naroditsky Foundation, set up by the Charlotte Chess Center.

Think Fast!

Right out of the gate, the competition was as fierce as Danya could have wanted. Even given the sensational form he's been in this year, Sindarov could not escape defeat at the hands of American prodigy GM Andy Woodward in the Rapid.

(All ratings given are US Chess Quick or Blitz ratings as applicable. ~ed.)

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B54)

GM Javokhir Sindarov (UNR)

GM Andy Woodward (2154)

Naroditsky Memorial Rapid (3),
Charlotte, 07.03.2026

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6

5. Bd3

Faster time controls are an especially good time to try interesting sidelines like this move, delaying the usual 5. Nc3 and leading to a structure that's different from a traditional Open Sicilian.

5. ... Nc6 6. Be3 Ng4 7. Nxc6 bxc6 8. Bd2 g6 9. Bc3 Nf6 10. e5 dxe5



11. Bxe5?!

The correct move is 11. Qe2, not regaining the pawn immediately. But it's very hard to remember theory perfectly in every sideline, or to reconstruct it over the board in rapid play.

11. ... Qd5

By forking e5 and g2, Woodward gains a slight advantage by forcing Sindarov to cede the bishop pair in an open position.

12. Bxf6 Qe6+ 13. Qe2 Qxf6 14. c3 Bh6 15. 0-0 0-0 16. Re1 Rd8 17. Na3 Be6 18. Red1 Rab8 19. Bc4 Bd5 20. Rd4 e6

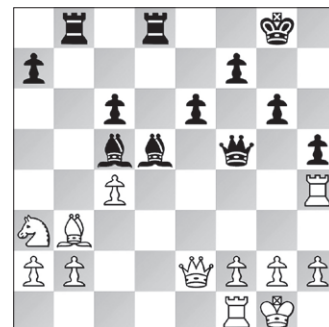
Woodward has played nearly faultlessly and

now has a sizable edge. His development is complete; his pieces are solidly placed, and his pressure on b2 makes it hard for White to redeploy to c2. Without a plan, Sindarov begins to flounder.

21. Bb3 Bf8 22. Ra4 Bc5 23. Rf1 Qg5 24. Rg4 Qf5 25. c4 h5

Black has maneuvered his bishops menacingly and now has a powerful kingside attack.

26. Rh4



26. ... Bxg2!!

A powerful piece sacrifice played by Andy with just two minutes on the clock. He realizes that with White's minor pieces huddled ineffectually on the queenside, flushing White's king out of safety and bringing his own rook into the game is impossible for White to meet, even with an extra piece.

27. Kxg2 Qg5+ 28. Kh3 Rd2 29. Qf3 Rbd8

The threat of bringing a rook to d3 and de-



IM Eric Rosen faces off with GM Vasyil Ivanchuk.



GM Hikaru Nakamura

livering a pin or a checkmate forces White to give back the material.

30. Bc2 Bxa3 31. Qxa3 Rxc2 32. Qg3 Qxg3+ 33. hxg3 Rxb2



Black has two extra pawns and, given White's uncoordinated rooks and weak queenside, will win even more. White's position is hopeless.

34. Rf4 Rxa2 35. Kg2 Kg7 36. Rb1 Rd7 37. Rb8 g5 38. Rf3 Rc2 39. Rb4 Kg6 40. Rb8 Kg7 41. Rb4 c5 42. Ra4 g4 43. Rf4 f5, White resigned.

A near-flawless game by Andy to take down the world championship challenger and one of the most sensational chess players of 2026: gaining a small edge from his opponent's slight opening error, nursing it into a larger one that eventually springboarded a beautiful tactical attack, and converting the advantage with clinical precision.

Sindarov would rebound with a win against yours truly and close with three straight wins to tie for first place with a 6/7 score. After

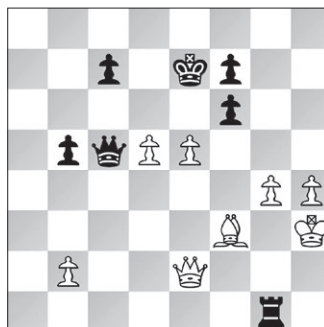
defeating Indian grandmaster Aravind in a playoff, he was crowned the champion of the weekend's first event. I'm going to give myself credit for being the wind that came back into his sails to propel him to victory!

Think Even Faster!

As intense as the rapid was, the upsets would only become wilder and the come-from-behind stories more dramatic as the time on the clock grew shorter. In the very first round of the blitz, world elite player and streamer Hikaru Nakamura narrowly avoided defeat at the hands of IM Irine Sukandar:

DUELING PERPETUALS

GM Hikaru Nakamura (2938)
IM Irine Sukandar (2199)
Naroditsky Memorial Blitz (1),
Charlotte, 07.04.2026



BLACK TO MOVE

A complicated, dynamically equal game. Black is up the Exchange, but White has potentially powerful kingside pawns and is breaking through in the center — a scary position in which to sit across the board from the likes of Nakamura!

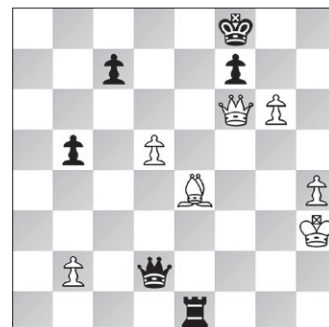
40. ... Qd4! 41. exf6+??

With 41. e6 White creates more squares for the queen to enter the position and give at least a perpetual. Now, Black's king can run into g7 and White's king starts to be the one feeling genuinely unsafe.

41. ... Kxf6 42. Be4 Kg7 43. Qf3 Qd2 44. g5 Re1??

The engine says Black is winning according to the engine, and here she threatens to win White's queen with ... Re1-e3. But now White has a draw by perpetual check.

45. Qf6+ Kf8 46. Qd8+ Kg7 47. Qf6+ Kf8 48. g6



White rejects the draw! A very gutsy decision that the engine says is incorrect, but Hikaru, being the heavy favorite, understandably wants to play for a win at all costs, and makes a bold split-second with both players having almost no time left.

48. ... Qe3+ 49. Bf3 Rh1+ 50. Kg4 Rg1+ 51. Kh3 Rh1+

Black instead forces a draw by perpetual check, perhaps in the heat of the moment not seeing that after 51. ... Rxg6 Black retains an extra Exchange and White's checks will soon run out.

All these decisions are made in split seconds, and nerves are running high, especially when you're facing the tournament's top seed. Sukandar, an experienced player and content creator, has doubtless learned from extensive experience that with seconds on the clock, very often the correct choice is to not look a gift horse in the mouth.

52. Kg3, draw.

In Round 4 of the Blitz I earned a rematch

CELEBRATING A LIFE IN 64 SQUARES ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

BY MATT MONTA

Ascending the escalator of the Marriott Hotel in downtown Charlotte, I rose up toward Daniel Naroditsky's face emblazoned on banners that read "Honor," "Passion," "Impact," and "Legacy." On easels, a collage of a life: photos as a young boy with Garry Kasparov; his personal Charlotte Chess Center sweatshirt; his achievements on and off the board. This foyer, a solemn commemoration illuminated by the morning sun, would become the bustling epicenter of the Naroditsky Memorial Tournament, organized by the Charlotte center. In time, the space would fill with elite GMs, chess personalities, young competitors and fans. It would be a place to meet friends, get autographs and photos, or discuss the events on any of the more than 100 boards in the playing hall. GM Hikaru Nakamura would later make an appearance here, drawing a crowd that could concern the fire marshal.

I traveled from Richmond, Va., to serve as one of 30 volunteers committed to making this event successful. Our ranks included parents whose children had been coached by Daniel, college students who just picked up the game, and a chess coach who flew in from Wisconsin. Our conversations inevitably turned to questions such as "How did you know Danya?" and "Why did you volunteer?," and answers such as "I was his friend," "I learned chess from him," and "I wanted to be part of his memory."

We checked badges, answered questions, handled security, and sorted name placards so that staff and players could focus on the chess and nothing else.

I was first assigned to check badges at the entrance to the VIP area, a place for top players and personalities to have space to focus, relax and check their videos.

The VIP area also had a secret passageway that bypassed the busy lobby to the hall. Here, we had to secure phones and screen players for other devices. I never imagined I would run a security sweep on IM Irine Sukandar, *Chess.com* founder IM Danny Rensch, or even FunMaster Mike, but there I was, waving my magic wand and asking GothamChess to empty his pockets.

Between rotations, we were allowed to enter the playing hall. Starting the round,

the arbiter called, "Start White's clock," and the chatter and clatter hushed to a hundred tiny clicks, giving way to 3,000 tournament pieces tapping a hypnotic rhythm in the memory of the late Daniel Naroditsky.

Shuffling down a crowded observational walkway, I was drawn to the top boards, separated in their own dignified alley, toward names and faces I'd only read about or seen in pictures — Caruana, So, Ivanchuk, Robson. Weaving through the scrum, I focused on aisle-side spots held by other masters and popular personalities such as IM John Bartholomew, IM Eric Rosen, and WGM Dina Belenkaya.

As they slowed into their middlegames, my gaze expanded to the sea of competitors beyond the featured DGT boards and large name placards, and that's where I discovered the true legacy and impact of Daniel Naroditsky. Untitled and amateur players filled the boards aside the legends and stars around which popular chess revolves, all focused on the same 64 squares with the same 32 pieces, all exploring the infinite possibilities of one game. Here were Daniel's students, his friends, his followers and fans, engaged in a sport to which he had dedicated his entire life, all accepting the invitation extended by the late grandmaster: Whether you're 2700 or 700, 80 years old or 8, you can be at

the board; you can be in the room; you can *play chess*.

Whether moving pieces or watching, each soul was inextricably connected to the story unfolding on those boards and the possibilities of what would come next. Collectively, we held a focused stillness, to the breath, to prevent even the slightest disruption of this bond and to allow Daniel's greatest games, his lessons, his strategies, his losses, his advice and encouragement, to flow through each move, consciously or subconsciously, in pursuit of a checkmate or a resource to find the draw.

In the late afternoon, when GM Javokhir Sindarov secured the Rapid championship, we exhaled. A solitary pair of clapping hands broke the spell, giving way to full applause celebrating the performance and offering collective gratitude for what we had witnessed.

When Daniel passed last October, a wave of grief subsumed the chess community, which lingers with every YouTube recommendation of a Naroditsky speedrun. With someone who had affected so many so profoundly, it was difficult to understand what that loss meant. This tournament gave an opportunity for a bit of closure and to see that even though Daniel is not physically with us, his spirit will forever be woven through the game.



Monta (top center) watches the action



GM Javokhir Sindarov

against Sindarov, where this time I managed to make a draw:

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E91)

GM Mark Heimann (2441)
GM Javokhir Sindarov (2894)
Naroditsky Memorial Blitz (4),
Charlotte, 07.04.2026

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. Nf3 0-0 6. Be2 c5

Sindarov eschews more normal King's Indian play with 6. ... e5, perhaps to avoid simplifying lines such as 7. dxe5, leading to a drawish exchange of queens. I was actually bluffing this continuation, hoping to provoke a more passive attempt to keep tension such as 6. ... Nbd7. Instead, we transpose to a Maróczy Bind.

7. 0-0 cxd4 8. Nxd4 Nc6 9. Be3 Bd7 10. Qd2 Nxd4 11. Bxd4 Bc6 12. Bd3 a5 13. f4



13. ... e5!

Sindarov correctly takes the chance to blast open the center rather than allow me to keep it under a tight grip.

14. fxe5 dxe5 15. Bc5 Nxe4!

The best move, offering an Exchange sacrifice in return for powerful bishops and central pawns. Without this, I could use the threat against Black's rook to anchor a powerful knight on d5 and be completely fine.

16. Nxe4 Bxe4 17. Bxf8?!

17. Rfd1 was the correct way to accept Black's Exchange sacrifice, to prevent Black from setting up quite so dominant a central piece positioning.

17. ... Bxf8 18. Rad1 Qd4+ 19. Qf2 Bc5

Even down an Exchange, Black correctly does not fear a queen trade. The bishop will be untouchable on d4 and attacks both sides of the board while blocking White's rooks. Meanwhile, Black's pawn majority



IM John Bartholomew with Lena Schuman



Botez versus Botez!

on the center and kingside is ready to roll, while White's queenside is nearly impossible to advance.

20. Qxd4 Bxd4+ 21. Kh1 Bc6 22. Rd2 f5

By now I certainly realized how distasteful my position was. For the next several moves Sindarov gradually centralizes his king and gains space on the kingside, maintaining an advantage that the engine assesses as anywhere between -1 and -2.

23. Be2 Kg7 24. Bf3 Kf6 25. b3 h5 26. Rfd1 g5 27. Rd3 Rd8 28. a3 g4 29. Bxc6 bxc6 30. b4 axb4 31. axb4 Rb8 32. Rb3 f4 33. b5



33. ... cxb5

With 33. ... c5 Black would anchor his bishop on d4 and then start advancing the e-pawn, leading to a crushing advantage. However, a human player will always find it uncomfortable to leave an opponent with a protected

passed pawn, and this is not an easy judgment to make with seconds on the clock.

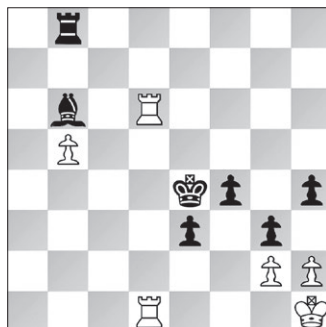
34. cxb5 Kf5 35. Rb4 h4 36. Rdb1?

This allows Black to blockade my source of counterplay and regain control. Instead, 36. b6 uses tactics — 36. ... Bxb6 loses the bishop to 37. Rdb1, and 36. ... Rxb6 loses the bishop to 37. Rdxh4 — to advance my passed pawn far enough into Black's position to hold the balance.

36. ... Bb6 37. Rc1 g3 38. Rbb1 Rd8 39. Rd1 Rb8 40. Rd6 e4 41. Rbd1 e3 42. R1d5+ Ke4

Black has been able to regain control and advance the powerful e-pawn, now with the king's support. But it is tricky to stay in control when surviving on a two-second increment!

43. Rd1



43. ... Ba5??

As Black tries to gain control of the queen-ing square, he takes his eye off the critical squares near his king that give me a chance to escape with a perpetual check.

44. R1d4+ Kf5 45. R4d5+, draw.

A harrowing endgame to have to defend! Tactical details are impossible for any human to get perfect in every blitz game, but Sindarov showed outstanding strategic judgment throughout the game and I consider myself very fortunate to have survived.

The day after topping the Rapid field, Sindarov would barely qualify for Sunday's Blitz round robin, tying for 10th and needing to win an Armageddon playoff to secure his spot. Saturday's scoreboard was topped by Nakamura's 8½/11 score (recovering nicely from his first-round draw).

Ethan Who?

Eight of the other qualifiers for Sunday's final were the usual elite grandmaster suspects, but they were also joined by a dark horse: NM Ethan Sheehan, a blitz specialist with a peak *Chess.com* rating of 3100+, scored a stunning 8/11 to qualify for Sunday's playoffs.

Sunday would start off with a perfect



Ethan Sheehan (L)
faces off with GM
Hikaru Nakamura

9/9 score in the Creators section by IM John Bartholomew. In the Masters section, Sheehan would continue his grandmaster-slaying with a win over none other than Nakamura:

SICILIAN DEFENSE, MOSCOW VARIATION (B52)

Ethan Sheehan (2532)

GM Hikaru Nakamura (2935)

Naroditsky Memorial Blitz Final (3),
Charlotte, 07.05.2026

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. Bb5+ Bd7 4. Bxd7+ Nxd7 5. 0-0 e6 6. Re1 Be7 7. c4 Ne5 8. d4 Nxf3+ 9. gxf3 cxd4 10. Qxd4

White goes for a Maróczy-like grip on the center, but at the cost of weakening his kingside. A gutsy decision, especially in blitz, where a loss of king safety can be disproportionately challenging to play with — but, as they say, no guts, no glory.

10. ... Bf6 11. Qd3 Ne7 12. Nc3 Ng6 13. f4 0-0 14. Be3 Bxc3 15. Qxc3 Qh4 16. f3 Nxf4



Hikaru wins a pawn with a clear advantage. It looks like the world number two is *en route* to another smooth victory, but keep watching.

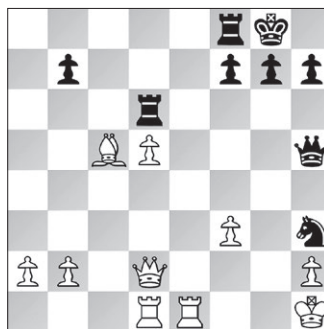
17. Qd2 Nh3+

Simply retreating the knight with 17. ... Ng6 consolidates Black's extra material, since 18. Qxd6 can be met by 18. ... Qf6, forking the pawns on b2 and f3. Perhaps Hikaru sensed blood and wanted to keep pieces close to Sheehan's king, but the knight cannot do much more on h3 and is in fact now trapped on the side of the board.

18. Kh1 Rad8 19. Bxa7 d5 20. cxd5 exd5 21. exd5

Hikaru has sacrificed the pawn he gained plus another one to blow open the center. While White's exposed king means Black is not worse, Black cannot claim an advantage with the sidelined knight versus the bishop in an open position.

21. ... Qh5 22. Rad1 Rd6 23. Bc5



23. ... Rg6??

It was time to bail out with 23. ... b6 24. Bxd6 Qxf3+ 25. Qg2 Nf2+ and it's a perpetual check after 26. Kg1 Nh3+ 27. Kh1 Nf2+. Instead, Hikaru throws the house at Sheehan, but it just isn't there.

24. Qe3 Qf5 25. Bxf8 h6 26. Bc5 Nf4 27. Qe8+ Kh7 28. Qe4 Qh3 29. Rg1 Ng2, and Black lost on time.

Hikaru flagged, but his position is lost. White has an extra rook and Black has no way to break through with two of his remaining three pieces being stuck in pins. A remarkably fast turnaround by Sheehan to take down one of the biggest names in chess!

Sheehan would eventually take third place with 6/9, an incredible result for the field's only non-grandmaster, and given that it was played over the board with the Charlotte Chess Center's extensive security procedures, it would certainly befuddle Danya's notorious accuser Vladimir Kramnik.

Ultimately, though, Sindarov regained his Friday form to take the second crown of the weekend with 7½/9, following up a first-round draw with an incredible six wins in the next seven games. His eighth-round win against the legendary GM Boris Gelfand clinched the title:

CLINICAL

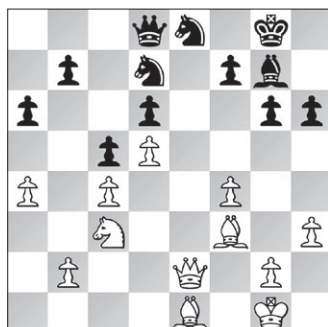
GM Boris Gelfand (2710)

GM Javokhir Sindarov (2827)

Naroditsky Memorial Blitz Final (8),
Charlotte, 07.05.2026



Sindarov (L) versus
Gelfand (R)



WHITE TO MOVE

24. Bd2

So far White has responded solidly to Black's aggressive King's Indian Defense and has simplified the position somewhat while retaining the bishop pair and a slight space advantage. But this is where White starts to go wrong. It's just a minor disruption of White's coordination, cutting off the queen's access to the queenside, but Sindarov exploits it impressively quickly.

24. ... Kf8 25. g3 Qb6

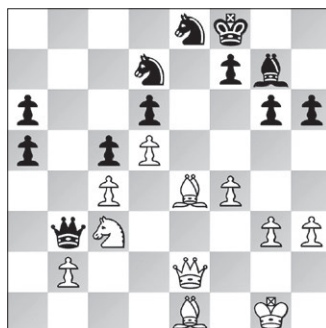
Black's last move guarded White's penetration points on the e-file, and now the black queen is free to probe White's queenside. The simple threat to the queenside pawns is actually very hard to meet.

26. Be1 Qb3

26. ... Qb4! is even stronger, when the threat of 27. ... Nb6 winning a pawn cannot be stopped. Even after the game continuation, though, White's attempts to keep a black knight from coming to b6 are not enough

to hold the balance.

27. a5 Qb4 28. Nd1 Qb3 29. Nc3 b6 30. Be4 bxa5



White has forestalled the black knights' access to the queenside long enough to bring a bishop over to defend, but it came at the cost of the a-pawn. In Sindarov's hands, even a doubled extra a-pawn is a weapon powerful enough to break down White's queenside.

31. Bd3 a4 32. Qc2 Qb4 33. Kf1 Nb6 34. Nd1 Qb3 35. Qxb3 axb3

Now Black has a solid extra pawn and retains pressure against b2 and c4. The endgame is winning, and with some ups and downs in mutual time pressure Sindarov did indeed go on to convert.

Gelfand had knocked me out of contention for the finals in the last round of the previous day's Blitz tournament, so for me the tournament had ended on Saturday. That evening, since I hadn't had enough knockouts, I visited the nearby EDGE Performance

Training for my first chessboxing workout hosted by members of Team USA Chessboxing. For years, I had been told that, with my background in competitive powerlifting alongside chess, I should try this unique sport that alternates rounds of speed chess and boxing. Grandmasters Robby Kevlishvili and Semen Khanin, also very athletic off the chess board, also showed up, along with a number of players of all chess-playing levels, some of whom had considerable boxing ability.

Under the tutelage of Matt Thomas, America's first chessboxing world champion, we worked through several warmups, breathing exercises, and basic combat drills. Personally I can say that with my lack of actual combat sports experience (other than a few years of karate circa middle school that I have entirely forgotten), I was no great talent, but it was certainly a great learning experience and a memorable opportunity to try a new way of combining chess and fitness!

Chessboxing (and an impromptu heavy bench press workout afterward) left me too late to catch the Fourth of July Fireworks with my partner Adi and the rest of the Smoky Mountain vacation crew, so I had to settle for seeing them from the car as I made my way back toward Tennessee. But Independence Day fireworks extravaganzas happen every year, while people like Danya are unique and worth coming together as a chess community to celebrate. I am sure that, through the foundation stewarded by the Charlotte Chess Center, his memory will be alive and well for many years to come. ♠



PHOTO: COURTESY MATT THOMAS

The 2026 United States Senior Championship

BY GM ALEX FISHBEIN

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HE 2026 EDITION OF THE U.S. Senior Championship featured its strongest field ever. Everyone was a GM, except for former U.S. Champion IM Stuart Rachels. GM Alex Onischuk, still very young (for us!) at 50, returned to competitive chess as the favorite in our tournament. As recently as 2017, he had been in a playoff with Wesley So for the U.S. Championship. This meant that we had two former 2700s, with GM Vladimir Akopian looking to regain the title after falling just short last year in a playoff against your author.

Onischuk took a while to get into high

gear. He seemed rusty in the beginning and was fortunate to score three points in his first five games. Akopian, by contrast, was on fire, winning five of his first six games (tempered by a loss to GM Alex Shabalov).

Vladimir is usually a cautious player, but he came here to fight:

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B80)

GM Vladimir Akopian (2602)

GM Igor Novikov (2535)

U.S. Senior Ch (1), St. Louis, 07.14.2026

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6
5. Nc3 a6 6. f3 e6 7. Be3 b5 8. Qd2 Nbd7
9. g4 h6 10. a3

This position has been seen in thousands of games, including twice between these two players, in 2022 and 2023. Akopian deviates here from his previous 10. 0-0-0.

10. ... Bb7 11. 0-0-0 Ne5?!

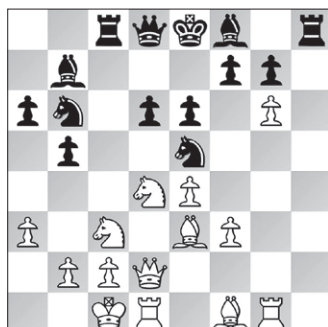
A serious inaccuracy. Black usually plays 11. ... Rc8 followed by ... d6-d5, or 11. ... d5 immediately.

12. Rg1 Rc8 13. h4 Nfd7 14. g5 hxg5
15. hxg5 Nb6?! 16. g6!



GM Igor Novikov

PHOTO: COURTESY SLCC / OOTES



White's attack has come first. The black knight can trade off one of White's bishops, but that doesn't help much.

16. ... Nbc4 17. gxf7+ Kxf7 18. Bxc4 Nxc4 19. Qg2! Qf6

19. ... Nxe3? would lead to mate after 20. Qg6+.

20. Bg5! Qg6 21. Nce2

21. f4! is very strong, with the plan of swinging the d1-rook to d3 and g3. Black cannot play 21. ... Ne3 because of 22. f5.

21. ... e5! 22. Nf5 d5 23. Qf2?

Here again, White should play 23. f4.

23. ... Bc5



24. Ned4!?

A remarkable concept!

24. ... exd4

In this crazy position, White is threatening a discovery against the queen, while having pinned his own knight. Black captures that knight, preparing to sacrifice the queen. 24. ... Rh7 was better, apparently.

25. Be7?

After 25. Bh4!, White was probably worried about 25. ... d3, but the computer shows a long, forced line: 26. Rxc6 Bxf2 27. Rxc7+ Kf8 28. Bxf2 Rh2 29. Bd4! Na5! (29. ... Rxc2+ 30. Kb1 Nd2+ 31. Ka2 is not dangerous) 30. Rxd3 Rhxc2+ 31. Kd1! dxe4 32. Rc3! R2xc3 33. Bxc3 Rxc3 34. bxc3 and White should win.



25. ... Qxf5! 26. exf5 Bxe7 27. Rxd4 Bf6 28. Kb1

The queen sacrifice was just what the doctor ordered for Black. His f6-bishop protects his king, so of course he won't trade it for a mere rook on d4. Without targets to attack, White can end up in a worse position with the queen against three minor pieces. But Black needs to pay attention to White's threats. Here, 28. ... Rce8! prevents 29. Rdg4, thanks to 29. ... Ne3!

28. ... Rh5? 29. Rdg4! Rxf5 30. Qg3

Black has captured the f5-pawn, but White has made a gun on the g-file.

30. ... g5 31. Qh2! Kg6 32. f4 Ne3

33. Rxc5+! Bxc5 34. fxc5

The black king has no defenders.

34. ... Rf7

Or 34. ... Rxc5 35. Qd6+ and Black will soon lose a minor piece with no relief from the mating attack.

35. Qh6+ Kf5 36. g6 Re7 37. Qg5+, Black resigned.

Most of Akopian's other wins were smoother than this one, and it became a question of whether anyone could stay within striking distance.

After the rest day, the "Catch Akopian if you can" mission had two project leaders: Onischuk and me. Both of us had yet to face him, although we both would have black, and two of my remaining opponents were struggling with their form.

CUT OFF COUNTERPLAY

GM Alexander Goldin (2594)

GM Alexander Fishbein (2518)

U.S. Senior Ch (6), St. Louis, 07.20.2026



WHITE TO MOVE

My King's Indian has morphed into a very nice Benoni structure. The white king is looking askance at the g4-pawn, which has weakened all the dark squares.

19. Rae1

Trying to tempt me into making a protected passed pawn by capturing on b2, which would allow counterplay after 20. Rb1. I had other fish to fry.

19. ... Ne5! 20. Qc2 c4! 21. g5 Rac8 22. Re2 Nd3 23. Qb1 f5!

The Benoni pawn has created a permanent knight on d3, and here is another timely Benoni pawn break. White cannot take exf5 because of the pin, and if he takes *en passant* then the white kingside becomes further exposed.

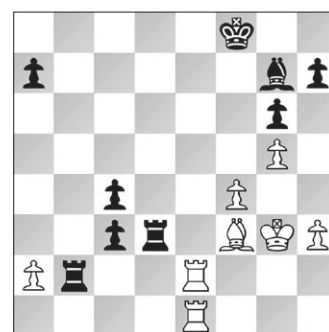


24. f4 Qf7 25. b3 b5 26. bxc4 bxc4 27. Bc1 Qd7 28. Kh2 Qa4 29. Qb7 Nc5 30. Qb1 fxe4
Black is now a pawn up, and the c-pawn seems unstoppable. I thought the game was just about over.

31. Be3 Rb8 32. Qc2 Qxc2 33. Rxc2 c3 34. Bxc5 dxc5 35. d6 Rbd8 36. Re1! Rxd6
Here I realized that my intended 36. ... e3? runs into 37. Bc6!, and if 37. ... Re6? 38. Bd5.

37. Rxe4 Rb8 38. Ree2 Rb2 39. Bf3 Kf8 40. Kg3 c4?!
The best move is 40. ... Re6!. If White takes, my c-pawn will really be unstoppable.

41. Rc1?! Rd3 42. Rce1



While working on chess during the last few years, I noticed that older players suffer from one specific deficiency: the loss of energy after having previously miscalculated. In the sidebar, I discuss what training I have done to try to overcome this problem.

I had the feeling that the ending had gone wrong. I had overlooked Alex's counterplay, and White's rooks are about to harass my king. If I trade one of them, my c-pawn suddenly appears to be quite stoppable.

But I had practiced for exactly this psychological scenario. When I played 41. ... Rd3, I calculated the precise tactic here.

42. ... Rxe2! 43. Rxe2 Bd4! 44. Kg4 Be3! 45. Bc6

The point is that 45. Be4 doesn't really attack the rook. After 45. ... Bd2 46. Bxd3 cxd3 the pawns can't be stopped.

45. ... Bd2 46. Ba4 Rd4! 47. Re8+

The passive 47. Rf2 allows the black king to enter with 47. ... Ke7 48. h4 Kd6, etc. The game continuation is equally hopeless because the c-pawn will cost White the bishop.

47. ... Kf7 48. Ra8 Rxf4+ 49. Kg3 Rf1 50. Rxa7+ Ke6 51. Rc7 Kd5 52. Rxh7 Rc1 53. Rd7+ Kc5 54. h4 c2 55. Bxc2 Rxc2 56. h5



gxh5 57. g6 Bc3, White resigned.

The rook ending after 58. g7 is a simple win, with the white king on the wrong side.

While Onischuk and I were winning games, Akopian returned to his more cautious self. He took zero risks with white against both of us and then held a worse endgame against GM Jesse Kraai to finish with 6½/9. That left a window for Onischuk and me — but only one window for both, as we played each other in the last round. The winner would catch Vladimir.

CARO-KANN DEFENSE (B10)

GM Alexander Fishbein (2518)

GM Alexander Onischuk (2707)

U.S. Senior Ch (9), St. Louis, 07.23.2026

1. e4 c6 2. Nf3 d5 3. d3 Qc7 4. Nbd2 Nd7 5. exd5 cxd5 6. d4 Ngf6 7. Bd3 e6 8. 0-0 b6 9. Re1 Bd6 10. Qe2 0-0 11. Ne5 Bb7 12. c3 a5 13. a4 Qc8 14. Bc2 Re8

Although White has the advantage here, Onischuk felt more comfortable in this structure than I did. The right plan is Nd2-f1-g3 followed by h2-h4 to attack the king. Black is not without defensive resources. Instead, I started playing more “positionally,” looking at the b5-square: completely the wrong approach.

I give all credit to Alex for getting me into a position I didn't like very much.

15. Ndf3 Ne4 16. Nxd7 Qxd7 17. Ne5 Qc7 18. f3 Nf6 19. Bd3

There was a chance to return to the right side of the board with 19. Qf2 Nd7 20. Qh4 Nf8 21. f4.

19. ... Nd7 20. Bb5?



I assumed he had to play 20. ... Bc8 now.

20. ... Nxe5!

I noticed this the instant I released my hand from the bishop. If I take the rook, the knight goes to g6 and I lose the h2-pawn.

With my mangled kingside, that is more than enough compensation for the Exchange. I now had to immediately readjust to playing for equality.

21. dxe5 Bc5+ 22. Be3?

A positional mistake. Sure, it would be nice to trade the dark-squared bishops, but not at the cost of also trading my light-square bishop! That bishop keeps my position together, as we will soon see. I needed to play 22. Kh1 Bc6 23. Bd3.

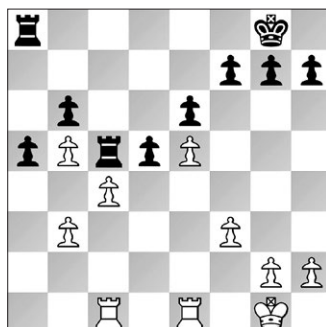
22. ... Bc6 23. Rac1?

I am trying to create vague counterplay with c3-c4, but it falls flat.

If 23. Bd4? Bxd4+ 24. cxd4 Bxb5 (if Black allowed my bishop to live with 24. ... Rec8??, then 25. Bd3! covers the c2-square) 25. Qxb5 Rec8! and my c-file is defenseless.

After 23. Bxc6 Bxe3+ 24. Qxe3 Qxc6 Black has all the play on the queenside, but White can hope to survive.

23. ... Bxe3+ 24. Qxe3 Bxb5 25. axb5 Rec8! 26. b3 Qc5 27. Qxc5 Rxc5 28. c4



28. ... g5!

Excellent technique. Against a lesser opponent, I might have confused matters enough to escape. Alex Onischuk is in no hurry and surrounds my e-pawn.

29. Red1 Rac8 30. Kf2 Kg7 31. Ke3 Kg6 32. g4 h5 33. h3 dxc4 34. bxc4 Rxe5+ 35. Kd4 Rec5

Black is a pawn up and has a dominating position as well.

36. Kd3 h4 37. Re1 Kf6 38. Rc2 e5 39. Rc3 Rd8+ 40. Kc2 Rd4 41. Kb3 Ke6 42. Re4 Rd2 43. Rc2 Rd1 44. Re3 Rb1+ 45. Ka3 Rxb5 46. Rd3 Rb4 47. Rcd2 Rc6, White resigned.

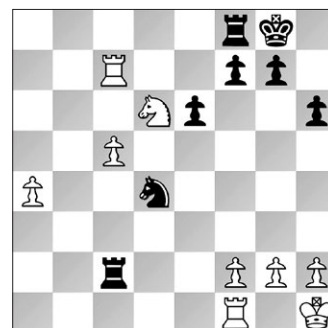
So it came down to a playoff between Onischuk and Akopian. The rapid portion ended at 1-1, and we pick up the action in the second blitz game, with Akopian having won the first one:

FOR THE TITLE

GM Alexander Onischuk (2707)

GM Vladimir Akopian (2602)

U.S. Senior Ch Playoff (4), St. Louis, 07.24.2026



BLACK TO MOVE

31. ... f5

Black wants to keep this pawn in the event of having to put the rook on a8. Opening the second rank invites the second white rook there, an invitation he doesn't accept. But the two players had 10 seconds each at this point. With that in mind, the following sequence is very impressive:

32. h4 Ra8 33. Ra1

33. Rb1 might have led to a very different result.

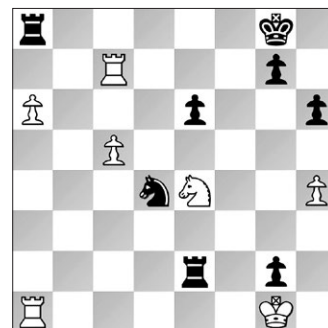
33. ... Rxf2 34. a5 f4!

A desperate lunge, but also a sound one. Mate outweighs a queen!

35. a6 f3 36. Ne4

White can't take the pawn because of the mating net, but 36. a7 would draw with best play.

36. ... fxg2+ 37. Kg1 Re2



The position has changed dramatically. White has no good defense against mate.

38. Nf2 Rf8! 39. a7 Rfxf2

Black wins with 39. ... Rexf2! 40. a8=Q Ne2+ 41. Kh2 g1=Q+.



GM Alex Shabalov

40. a8=Q+ Kh7 41. Rxg7+! Kxg7 42. Qb7+
It's a draw with best play after 42. Ra7+, in which case Akopian would still have won the match.

42. ... Kg6 43. Kh2 Nf3+ 44. Kg3 Rf1, White lost on time.

Objectively a mistake, but it won the game because White couldn't find a move and flagged! The only move is 45. h5+, and after 45. ... Kf6 White would take on f3 and it's a draw.

Akopian thus became the 2026 U.S. Senior Champion. In the five years he has played here, he was only outscored in the round robin once (by GM Melik Khachiyan in 2023).

Many thanks again to Rex and Jeanne Sinquefeld for their vision in sponsoring senior chess. The Saint Louis Chess Club, and the directing team led by Chris Bird, ran the tournament impeccably as always. The playing conditions and atmosphere make the event the highlight of the year for all the players.

In conclusion, here is Alex Shabalov's last-round win over Stuart Rachels, annotated by Rachels. "Shabba" won his last two games for the second year in a row, finishing again on the same 5½ score that I did (good for a third-place tie this time).

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B90)

IM Stuart Rachels (2480)

GM Alexander Shabalov (2501)

U.S. Senior Ch (9), St. Louis, 07.23.2026

Annotations by IM Stuart Rachels

"Stu, your approach to openings is from 1985, buddy. You have a 'repertoire' that you're 'working on.' Today the goal is to reach a position that you've looked at which your opponent hasn't." So said GM Jesse Kraai over Mexican food in St. Louis the night before this game.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. a4

By Jesse's lights, Shabba won our opening battle before a pawn was pushed: I didn't bother preparing because Shabba plays so many systems, whereas he could easily prepare for me. I've played 6. a4 ever since John Nunn recommended it in *Beating the Sicilian* (1984).

6. ... e5 7. Nf3 h6 8. Nd2 Be7

But would Shabba really outfox me? What Jesse calls "working on your repertoire" I call "being ready for anything my opponent might play." Although I've never faced 7. ... h6, my notes on it are extensive: after 8. Nd2, I consider five replies (8. ... d5, 8. ... Be7, 8. ...



Benjamin and Fishbein



Rachels explains what 1989 was like

Be6, 8. ... Qc7, and 8. ... Nc6), and the resulting variations include 595 half-moves. One line extends out to move 33. Also, quite happily, my notes describe 8. ... Be7 as “a little inaccurate.”



9. Nd5?!

Sorry, buddy; that's your response to 8. ... Nc6 — the difference being that 8. ... Nc6 9. Nd5 Nxd5 10. exd5 attacks Black's knight. So much for my 595 half-moves in this Najdorf subvariation. Indeed, my opening work was downright harmful: If I'd been thinking about the position (instead of my notes), I would have played the best move, 9. Nc4. After all, 9. Nc4 is the idea behind 8. Nd2.

Now Shabba paused for thought. During the game, I thought this meant that I'd won the prep battle. In fact, I hadn't, even though Sacha had spent only a few hours studying what I'd spent at least 30 hours on.

9. ... Nxd5 10. exd5 0-0

A touch better was 10. ... Qa5 11. c4 Bf5, with full equality. Chess is so difficult that most players will start erring as soon as their theoretical knowledge runs out. This is why Kraai described the goal of opening prep as “reaching a position that your opponent hasn't seen” rather than “reaching an objectively superior position that your opponent hasn't seen.” Your line doesn't have to be best; it just has to be playable and unfamiliar to your opponent. Which I suppose my move 9. Nd5 was. However, it was also unfamiliar to me.

11. a5 Bf5 12. Nc4 Nd7 13. Be2 Rc8 14. 0-0 Bg6 15. Be3



15. ... Bg5!?

This freeing move is possible because I hadn't secured my c-pawn. After the game, I called 15. Be3 “careless” and Shabba felt that Black was already better.

16. Nxd6 Rxc2 17. Bd3

Good enough for equality, but the cold-blooded 17. Nxb7! favors White. I didn't take that move seriously, for fear of losing my knight on b7, but Black would get in trouble if he tries to win it. For example, on 17. ... Qc7 18. Bxg5 hxg5 19. Bxa6 Ra8 20. Bd3! Bxd3 21. Qxd3 (indirectly protecting the knight) 21. ... Rxb2 22. a6 (guarding the knight directly), White is winning, with an extra pawn and passed pawns on the fifth and sixth ranks.

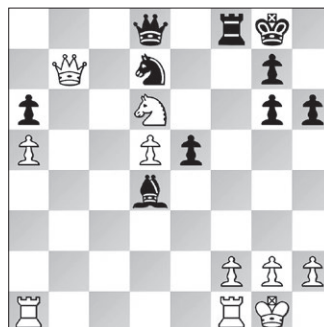
17. ... Rxb2 18. Bxg6 hxg6 19. Qc1?!

Safe, equal, and best was 19. Bxg5 Qxg5 20. Rb1. However, I thought I should fight for an advantage. Why? Because of my bad memory! I thought 9. Nd5 gave me the advantage (hey, the engine said so!), and 10 moves later, I still believed too much in my position.

19. ... Bxe3 20. Qxb2

And here 20. Qxe3 Rb4 was safer, but I could see that White is a touch worse there.

20. ... Bd4 21. Qxb7

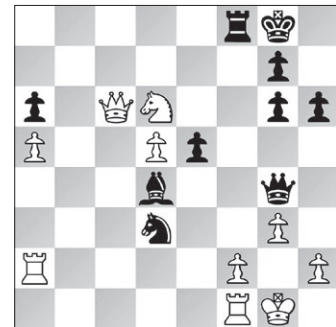


21. ... Nc5! 22. Qc6 Qh4!

Shabba isn't interested in regaining the Ex-

change. He wants my king.

23. Ra2 Nd3 24. g3 Qg4



Threatening 25. ... Qf3. How can I defend f2? My queen and knight can't seem to help out; the queen is out of play, and I can't cover e4 in order to put my knight there. Meanwhile, time was running low. I cracked.

25. Nb5??

Simply 25. Rd2! Qf3 26. Qc2 holds. If those moves look simple to you, bear in mind that neither Shabba nor I saw them during the game or in the post-mortem. You should also know that those moves look simple to me, and I didn't find them.

25. ... axb5 26. Qe6+ Qxe6 27. dxe6 b4

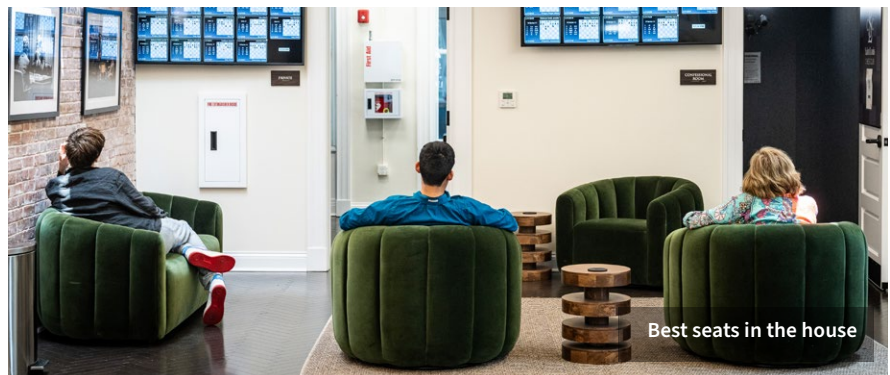
Black's knight on d3 is still a monster. My rooks can't make my passed pawns a real threat.

28. a6 Ra8 29. Ra5 b3 30. Rd1 b2 31. Rb5 Nc5 32. a7

This was not my usual joke of making an absurd move before resigning. I thought that 32. ... Rxa7 33. Rb8+ Kh7 34. e7 would queen my pawn! Those few hallucinatory seconds were wonderful. And then I saw 34. ... Rxe7.

32. ... Rxa7 33. Rb8+ Kh7, White resigned.

Must I state the moral of the story? Jesse was right. ♠



STAYING SHARP AS WE GET OLDER ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

BY GM ALEX FISHBEIN

► Is it possible to improve your chess as you get older? My answer is unequivocally yes!

I have now been a “senior” by the chess metric (50+) for eight years, but I started thinking even earlier about how to combat aging in chess. I studied how the heroes of chess longevity such as Viktor Korchnoi and Vassily Smyslov adjusted their style. I thought about what specific chess skills erode with time. I gradually devised a training regimen for myself, and I share my ideas in my new book, *Fighting Father Time*, published by Russell Enterprises.

Fighting Father Time draws upon the experience of the above-mentioned players and others. I show my own successes, but also, even more prominently, my failures. The guiding principle is “Learn from your stumbles.” Whether your problem is visualization, endgame technique, positional play, or memory, I try to illustrate real-life remedies suited to older players.

Keep Fighting

It’s not about “mellowing out” or playing it safe: It’s about fighting and not compromising!

I argue that the standard advice for older players to play “more quietly” is often misplaced. You should become more combative! There is a chapter in *Fighting Father Time* that talks about “sins of submission.” You need to resist the temptation to play a safer or non-concrete move because you don’t feel you have the energy and confidence.

I should stress that I am not talking about denying that your position is inferior when it is. I am talking about quashing a conscious feeling that you are unable to calculate variations, either because you’re tired or you’re afraid of seeing ghosts.

In preparation for this year’s U.S. Senior Championship, I tried to improve my ability to stay resilient and sharp at the end of a long and hard game. I chose an intense type of training. Using Bruce Pandolfi’s *Solitaire Chess* method, I would come home after a long day at my job in finance and play over the games of GM Javokhir

Sindarov from the Candidates Tournament, trying to guess his moves.

This would ensure that (a) I would be tired and (b) I would have to recover from mistakes. You’re not going to guess your way through a top-level game without making some errors in calculation! Therefore, I would reach the exact state I wanted to practice: exhaustion and the feeling I have gone wrong somewhere. This is the moment where you need to avoid a sin of submission, and instead have the grit to solve the problem facing you:

KEEP GOING

GM Wei Yi (2754)

GM Javokhir Sindarov (2745)

Candidates Tournament (6), Pegeia, 04.04.2026



BLACK TO MOVE

I was Black, trying to play like Sindarov. Up till now, I had replicated almost all his moves (although not all of them were op-

timal). Black had a big advantage for most of the middlegame. But now something seemed wrong. If I take twice on b4, then after 33. Rd4 I am going to lose my second extra pawn, and if I trade queens, the rook ending doesn’t seem winning. Ditto for 31. ... c4 32. Rd4.

And if 31. ... Qe3 then 32. Qh4 and my king is facing all kinds of checks. A draw seems inevitable.

What to do? I knew that Sindarov wins this game. I felt this was the critical moment and thought for a long time here. But I saw nothing promising and went into the drawn rook ending with 31. ... cxb4?.

Sindarov saw that 31. ... Qe3 32. Qh4 Qg3!! wins. If 33. Qxg3+ fxg3 and the mate threat makes it hopeless for White after 34. Rd1 c4. The king is not getting out.

In the game, White tried 32. Qf3 c4 33. Qg4+ Kf8 34. Rd1 c3 35. Qg5 f3 36. Qxe3 Rxe3 and resigned.

Well, exhausted after a long day and at the end of a tough practice game here, I didn’t find this very aesthetic solution. But this is training! I learned what sort of mindframe I need to be in to perform such tasks.

Always approach the position with a fresh view, and don’t let your previous miscalculations take away your optimism! This attitude helped me in my game with Goldin, and also in a couple other U.S. Senior games when I had to defend difficult endgames after earlier mistakes.

For my next big tournament, I will think about how to readjust from playing for an advantage to playing for equality, something I had trouble with here.



GM Alex Fishbein

PHOTO: COURTESY SLCC / OOTES



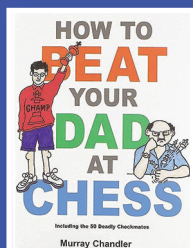
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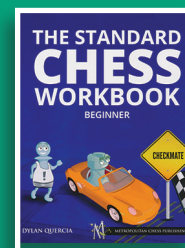
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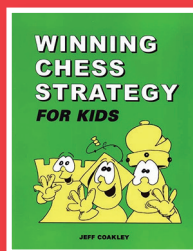


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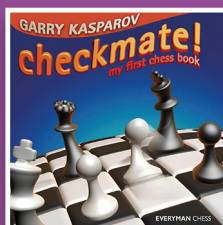


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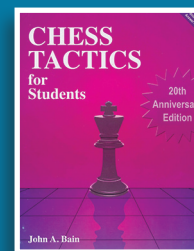


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Strategy and Tactics

Samuel Reshevsky could do it all.

BY **BRUCE PANDOLFINI**

G

RANDMASTER SAMUEL Reshevsky (1911-1992), an eight-time U.S. Champion, was known primarily as a brilliant

positional player who won many strategic masterpieces.

But he was also an outstanding calculator, capable of finding delightful shots and unexpected tactical surprises.

In this month's encounter with Weaver Adams, the former *wunderkind* exploits his opponent's overaggressive attack with precise countermoves, leading to a decisive gain of material.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, DRAGON VARIATION (B70)

Weaver Adams
Samuel Reshevsky
U.S. Open, Boston, 1944

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4



Now ensure that the position above is set up on your chessboard. As you play through the remaining moves in this game, use a piece of paper to cover the article, exposing Black's next move only after trying to guess it. If you guess correctly, give yourself the par score.

Sometimes points are also awarded for second-best moves, and there may even be

bonus points — or deductions — for other moves and variations. Note that ****** means that Black's move is on the next line. ******

3. **Par Score 5** **cx**d4
Naturally, Black exchanges the c-pawn for the d-pawn, as in all main lines of the Open Sicilian.

4. **N**xd4 ******

4. **Par Score 6** **N**f6
Black begins the assault against the chief central target, the White e-pawn.

5. **N**c3 ******

5. **Par Score 5** **g**6
The Dragon Sicilian. Black hopes for play and pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal.

You may accept **full credit** for 5. ... a6, 5. ... e6, or 5. ... Nc6.

6. **g**3
White fianchettoes as well. ******

6. **Par Score 4** **B**g7

7. **B**g2
In a sense, Black is playing a dark-square game while White is playing a light-square game. ******

7. **Par Score 5** **0-0**
On 7. ... Nc6, there follows 8. Nxc6 bxc6 9. e5. Add **1 bonus point** if you saw that.

8. **h**3
White plays this move not only to stop a later ... Nf6-g4, but especially to advance the g-pawn and attack. ******

8. **Par Score 5** **B**d7
You may accept **full credit** for 8. ... Nc6.

9. **B**e3
This was made feasible because of White's 8th move. ******

9. **Par Score 5** **N**c6
The position is basically even. If anything, White is holding maybe a very slight advantage.

10. **Q**d2
White keeps in mind the possibility of trading dark-squared bishops, though he must also stay alert to tactics against the d4-square. ******

10. **Par Score 5** **R**c8
A typical placement in the Sicilian. Black aims for play along the half-open c-file.

11. **g**4
This advance against the Black kingside is often effective in a variety of lines in the Sicilian. ******

11. **Par Score 5** **N**xd4
By trading knights, Black avoids an invasion at h6 for now.

12. **B**xd4
On 12. Qxd4, Black gets a strong attack after 12. ... Nxg4 13. Qxa7 Nxe3 14. Qxe3 Qa5 (take **1 bonus point** for noticing that). ******

12. **Par Score 6** **Q**a5
Black starts his queenside play, a characteristic response to White's kingside attack. Accept **full credit** for 12. ... Rc4.

13. **g**5
Adams forges ahead with his planned kingside assault, aiming to trade off the Dragon bishop. ******

13. **Par Score 4** **N**h5

ABCS OF CHESS

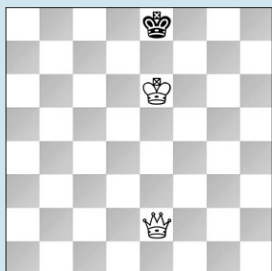
THESE PROBLEMS ARE all related to key positions in this month's game. In each case, White is to move. The answers can be found in Solutions on page 63.

SEPTEMBER EXERCISE:

It's natural to see the position from the side we're playing. But from the other side, you might get a different take on the position. No matter how much you rely on an opening, or how well you know it, try playing and analyzing from the other perspective, even if it makes you a little uncomfortable. You might be surprised by what you find, and it should make you a more complete player.

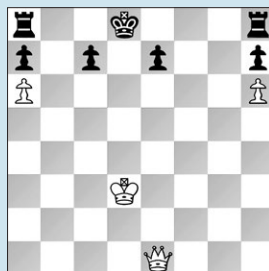
PROBLEM 1

Mating net



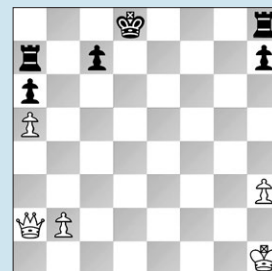
PROBLEM 2

Fork



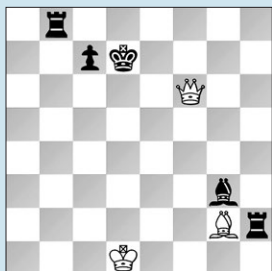
PROBLEM 3

Fork



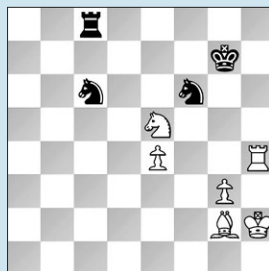
PROBLEM 4

Mating net



PROBLEM 5

Double attack



PROBLEM 6

Mating net



This is actually a good place for the knight, even though it may look out of play on the edge of the board.

14. Bxg7 **

14. Par Score 4 Kxg7

Accept only 3 points partial credit for 14. ... Nxg7. The knight is, perhaps surprisingly, better placed at h5. We'll see why next move.

15. Bf3

White hopes to bust up Black's kingside. What is Black to do? **

15. Par Score 7 Nf4

The surprise answer! Is the Black knight immune?

16. Qxf4

White decides he can take the knight. We shall see. **

16. Par Score 7 Rxc3

A familiar sacrifice in the Sicilian. After 17. bxc3 Qxc3+ 18. Ke2 Bb5+, Black is in command (1 bonus point if you saw that in your calculations).

17. Qd2

White has counted on this pin. **

17. Par Score 5 Rc5

This reply is essentially forced.

18. b4

Not liking the position after trading queens with 18. Qxa5 Rxa5, Adams goes for material. **

18. Par Score 6 Qa3

This is the counterstroke Reshevsky was counting on.

19. bxc5 **

19. Par Score 5 Qxf3

White's h1-rook is now hanging.

20. Rh2

Better was 20. Rg1. At h2, the rook has less scope and is more vulnerable. **

20. Par Score 5 Qxe4+

Here White should probably answer 21. Qe3, even though after 21. ... Qxc2 Black has plenty of play for the Exchange.

21. Kf1

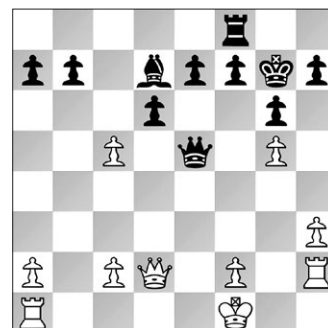
But this is a serious mistake. **

21. Par Score 7 Qe5

Reshevsky concludes with a killing fork. White must lose a rook.

22. White resigned.

A precisely conducted defense. ♠



POSITION AFTER 21. ... Qe5

SOLITAIRE CHESS SCORING:

Total your score to determine your approximate rating below

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

From the Attack to the Endgame

Sometimes the phases can get blurred together.

BY GM JOEL BENJAMIN



IN THESE PAGES I HAVE shown the opening leading to the endgame, and I've shown tactics in the endgame. But

sometimes the attack and the endgame are woven together: Every possible tactical possibility leads to a new version of an endgame, and the differences can be subtle yet significant. Here's one such game, a barn burner between Austrian star GM Felix Blohberger, 24, and Czech legend GM David Navara.

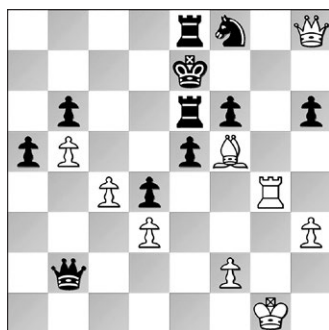
ENGLISH OPENING (A14)

GM David Navara (2639)

GM Felix Blohberger (2548)

Match (4), Vienna, 06.11.2026

1. c4 e6 2. g3 d5 3. Bg2 Nf6 4. Nf3 Be7 5. 0-0 0-0 6. b3 c5 7. Bb2 Nc6 8. e3 d4 9. exd4 cxd4 10. Re1 Re8 11. a3 a5 12. d3 Bd6 13. Nbd2 e5 14. Ng5 h6 15. Nge4 Nxe4 16. Nxe4 Bf8 17. g4 Ne7! 18. Bc1 Ng6 19. g5 hxg5 20. Qh5 Be7 21. Nxc5 Bxc5 22. Bxc5 Qd7 23. b4 Ra6 24. b5 Rae6 25. Bh3 b6 26. Re4 Bb7 27. Rae1 Bxe4 28. Rxe4 Qd6 29. Bf5 Qxa3 30. h3 Nf8 31. Rh4 f6 32. Bd2 Qb2 33. Qh8+ Kf7 34. Bh6 gxh6 35. Rg4 Ke7

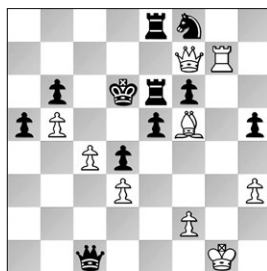


This up-and-down struggle has produced a wild scramble, with the juiciest variations now coming into play. The drama was augmented by time pressure, which was rather worse for White: 2:30 left on the clock vs. 7:35.

36. Rg8?

This is technically a blunder, though without an engine one could hardly see why this move should fail while the correct move should draw!

Nevertheless, White should objectively opt for 36. Qg7+ Kd6 37. Qf7! (this ties up Black's pieces, while 37. Qb7 Kc5 gets nowhere) 37. ... h5 38. Rg7 Qc1+ and now one legal move loses, while the other draws in miraculous fashion:



POSITION AFTER 38. ... Qc1+

39. Kg2? is arguably more natural but loses after 39. ... Kc5! 40. Bxe6 Nxe6! 41. Qxe8 Nf4+ (this is why it was the wrong square) 42. Kh2 Nxd3. Black's king will escape downfield and marshal his armada of passed pawns.

Instead, 39. Kh2! looks a bit counter-intuitive, but it works! Now comes 39. ... Qf4+ 40. Kg1 R8e7 41. Qxf8 Qxf5 42. c5+! (Black wins after 42. Qd8+ Kc5 43. Rxe7 Kb4) 42. ... Kxc5 43. Qc8+ Kb4 44. Qc4+ Ka3 45. Qc1+ Kb3 46. Rxe7! (the timing is critical; 46. Qb1+ Kc3 47.

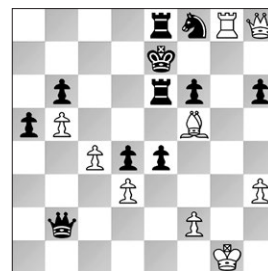
Rxe7 Qg5+ and Black wins) 46. ... Rxe7 47. Qb1+ Kc3 48. Qc1+ with perpetual check, because 48. ... Kxd3 49. Qb1+ costs Black his queen (though 49. ... Ke2! 50. Qxf5 Rg7+ still draws).

36. ... a4?

Another natural move that doesn't stand up to the engine.

Black has an objectively stronger continuation in 36. ... Qa3 (protecting the knight in the case of 37. Bxe6 Kxe6) 37. Qg7+ Kd6 38. Qb7! (38. Rxf8 Qc1+ 39. Kg2 Qg5+ and Black wins) 38. ... Kc5 39. Bxe6 Rxe6 40. Rxf8 Kb4 with Black retaining significant winning chances.

But Stockfish's crusher is 36. ... e4!, giving White more issues to deal with.



POSITION AFTER 36. ... e4

All replies are insufficient: 37. dxe4 (37. Qg7+ Kd6 38. Rxf8 Qc1+, or 37. Bxe6 e3!) 37. ... d3 38. Bxe6 Kxe6 39. Rxf8 Qa1+ 40. Kg2 Rxf8 41. Qxf8 Qd4 42. Qe8+ Kd6 43. Qc6+ Ke7 44. Kf3 a4 and Black will get a second queen.

37. Qg7+?

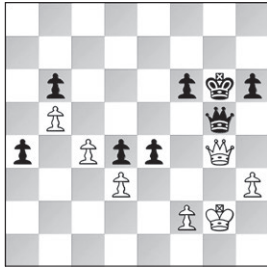
Here a simple capture would have sufficed. White has 37. Bxe6 Kxe6 38. Rxf8 and now:

(a) 38. ... Qb1+ 39. Kg2 Rxf8 40. Qxf8 Qxd3 41. Qe8+ Kd6 (41. ... Kf5?? walks into mate

beginning with 42. Qc8+) 42. Qf8+ with perpetual check.

(b) 38. ... Qc1+ 39. Kg2 draws without further drama, as after 39. ... Qg5+ 40. Kf1 Rxf8 41. Qxf8 Black has no better than perpetual check.

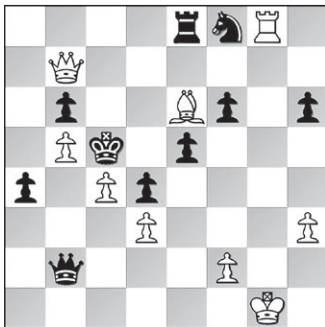
But the variations after 38. ... Qc1+ 39. Kh2 are worth exploring, especially for liquidation lovers like me: 39. ... Rxf8 40. Qxf8 Qf4+ 41. Kg2 e4 42. Qg8+ Kf5 43. Qd5+ Qe5 44. Qd7+ Kg6 45. Qg4+ Qg5



POSITION AFTER 45. ... Qg5

46. c5! (It is vital to not initiate the queen swap. If 46. Qxg5+? fxf5 47. c5 bxc5 48. b6? [it's actually better to queen second — 48. dxe4 d3 49. b6 d2 50. b7 d1=Q 51. b8=Q Qd4, though Black still has good winning chances] 48. ... exd3 49. b7 d2 50. b8=Q d1=Q and Black will be able to escape the checks and win) 46. ... Qxg4+ 47. hxg4 exd3 (not 47. ... bxc5?? 48. b6 exd3 49. b7 d2 50. b8=Q d1=Q 51. Qg8 mate) 48. cxb6 d2 49. b7 d1=Q 50. b8=Q Qxg4+ 51. Kh2 and White will likely hold.

37. ... Kd6 38. Qb7 Kc5 39. Bxe6



39. ... Rxe6?

Blohberger had four minutes to make two moves, not enough to work out the subtle differences between his move and the superior 39. ... Kb4!.

The key line is 40. Rxf8 (40. Qf7 Nxe6! 41. Qxe8 Nc5 wins easily, while bishop moves are met by the march of the a-pawn) 40. ... Rxe6 41. Qd5 e4!! 42. Qxe6 exd3 and White is helpless despite the extra rook, e.g. 43. Qe7+ Kc3 44. Rxf6 a3 45. Kh2 a2 46. c5 a1=Q 47. cxb6 Qbb1.

40. Qc8+ Kb4 41. Qxf8+ Kc3 42. Qf7 a3?!

We aren't wired to play down a rook in the endgame. Here again Blohberger should go for the inhuman 42. ... e4!? 43. Qxe6 exd3.

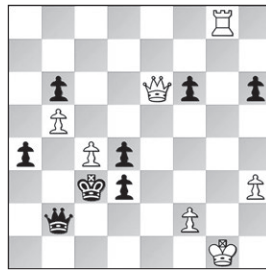
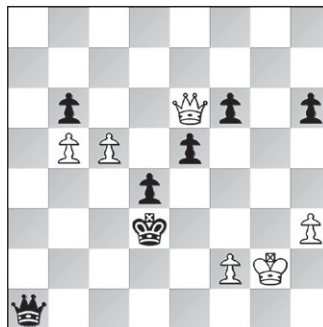


DIAGRAM AFTER 43. ... exd3

The position is almost the same as in the line cited on Move 39, but the rook is better placed on g8. This subtlety allows White to draw with perfect play, which includes several forced moves: 44. Kh2!! a3 (44. ... d2 45. Rg3+ d3 46. Qxf6+ Kc2 47. Qxb2+ Kxb2 48. Rxd3 Kc2 49. Rxd2+ Kxd2 50. c5 bxc5 51. b6 a3 52. b7 a2 53. b8=Q a1=Q 54. Qf4+ and White survives) 45. Qxb6 d2 46. Qa5+ Kb3 47. Rg3+ Qc3 48. Rxc3+ dxc3 49. b6! d1=Q 50. Qb5+! (50. b7 Qd6+ 51. Kg2 c2 gives Black good winning chances) 50. ... Ka2 51. c5! and with the threatened check on c4 disrupting Black's timing, White holds the draw.

43. Qxe6 a2 44. Ra8 a1=Q+ 45. Rxa1 Qxa1+ 46. Kg2 Kxd3 47. c5!



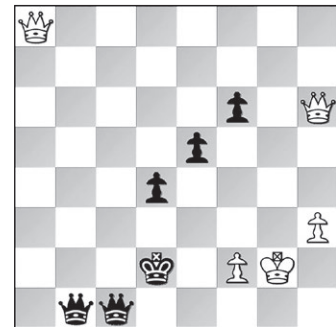
Blohberger had every reason to fancy his chances in this queen ending, but Navara obtains counterplay with lightning speed.

47. ... bxc5 48. Qa6! Qb1 49. b6+ c4 50. b7 Kd2 51. Qa8! c3 52. b8=Q c2 53. Qh8

By now both players were slipping into time pressure again.

White has a more direct draw — one that sets a nasty trap to boot — in 53. Qa5+ Ke2! (53. ... Kd1?? would be refuted by 54. Qc8, 54. Qba8, or 54. Qg8, all of which threaten a deadly check on the h5-d1 diagonal) 54. Qab5+! (quiet moves fail to 54. ... Qf1+) 54. ... Qxb5 55. Qxb5+ d3 56. Qb2 Kd1 57. Qb3 with a repetition.

53. ... c1=Q 54. Qxh6+



54. ... Kc3

Blohberger decides to wrap things up. He could still try to play for a win with 54. ... Ke2 55. Qf3+ Ke1.

Now White would have to avoid 56. Qhxf6? e4 57. Qe6 Qg5+ 58. Kh2 Kd2 (or 58. ... e3 59. fxe3 Qc2+ 60. Kh1 d3) 59. Qfg4 Qxg4 60. hxg4 e3 61. fxe3 d3 62. g5 Qc2! followed by ... Kd2-c1. Instead 56. Qxc1+! Qxc1 57. Qe4+ Kd2 58. h4 gets White's passer going in time to draw.

55. Qc6+ Kb2 56. Qb5+ Ka2 57. Qd5+ Kb2 58. Qb5+ Ka2 59. Qd5+ Kb2, draw. ♫



Blohberger (L) faces off with Navara

A Strong Opening

A young American star makes an excellent debut as an author.

BY IM JOHN WATSON

R

READERS OF *CHess LIFE* WILL almost certainly be familiar with 16-year-old GM Andy Woodward, whose spectacular

results in the past few years have made him one of the most exciting prospects in American chess.

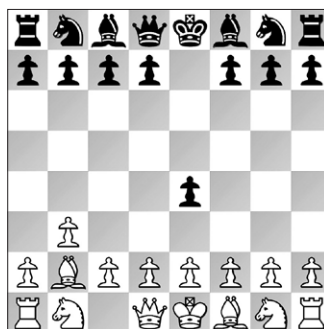
In 2024, at age 13, Woodward became the second-youngest grandmaster in U.S. history (next to Abhimanyu Mishra). In 2025, he became U.S. Junior Champion and finished tied for fifth in the 2025 FIDE Grand Swiss, a qualifying event for the World Championship. This year, among other performances, he won the Challengers section of the prestigious Tata Steel tournament in Wijk aan Zee.

Now Woodward has published an ebook in the ChessBase training series entitled *The Bulletproof 1. b3 Repertoire*, with each chapter presented and explained in a video. In his introduction, Woodward says that his analysis is “mainly directed towards a blitz repertoire,” and the exemplary games that he uses are all blitz contests.

In past decades, top players used 1. b3 extensively in games with classical time controls, but recently it has become primarily a blitz and rapid weapon in the hands of players such as Carlsen, Nakamura, Nepomniachtchi, Caruana, Firouzja, Praggnanandhaa, and others. Regardless of whether these giants will begin to employ it more often in classical tournaments, 1. b3 is completely sound, and there's no reason average players can't use it as their main weapon, or as one of a few first-move options.

The Bulletproof 1. b3 Repertoire is written as a straightforward practical guide, so let's jump into some examples of how Woodward wants White to play. On almost any level, the move you are most likely to see is 1. ... e5. If you think that 1. b3 is always going to lead to safe and sterile positions, here's an example that could make you reconsider:

1. b3 e5 2. Bb2 e4!?



When I was first shown this move almost 50 years ago, I was skeptical of Black's loss of time and overextension, but after a lengthy analysis I couldn't find anything wrong with it. Many years later, it is better established and still looks playable. Woodward's recommendation for White is practical and forcing:

3. c4

After discouraging ... d7-d5, White intends to attack the e-pawn. 3. d3 Nf6 4. dxe4!? Nxe4 gives Black counterplay, with ideas of putting the f8-bishop on b4 or c5, ... Qd8-h4, or simply the aforementioned ... d7-d5.

3. ... c6

3. ... Nf6 4. e3 c6 5. Qc2 transposes.

4. e3 Nf6 5. Qc2

White already threatens 6. Bxf6 and 7. Qxe4+.

5. ... d5 6. cxd5 cxd5 7. Bxf6! gxf6

Not 7. ... Qxf6?? 8. Qxc8+.

8. Nc3

Now White is threatening 9. Nxd5!. This is all forced, and Black's ugly pawn structure makes it look like White stands better. Of course, chess is never easy.

8. ... Nc6!

Black has counterplay on the light squares, supplemented by the bishop pair and a space advantage.

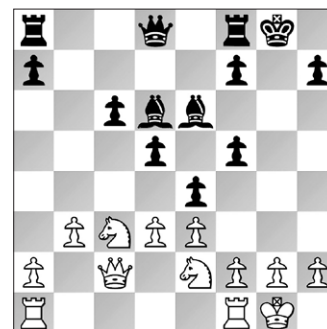
9. Bb5!

Woodward comments: “Making sure the knight doesn't enter via b4 or e5 to d3.” You can quickly check and see that other moves actually leave Black with an edge.

9. ... Be6 10. Nge2 Bd6 11. d3

To break up the center and open the d-file. Here White can consider delaying this move in favor of a plan of 0-0, Bb5xc6(+), and Ra1-c1, which might prove more flexible.

11. ... f5 12. 0-0 0-0 13. Bxc6 bxc6



An intriguing position. Black has space and the bishop pair while his pawn structure is compromised on both the queenside and kingside. The engines prefer White, but only barely.

14. Na4

Controlling c5 and attacking c6. Stopping ... Qd8-h4 with 14. g3 allows various responses, but one nice idea is 14. ... Bc8! 15. Na4 Ba6 with good counterplay.

14. ... Qh4 15. g3

At this point Woodward's main line is 15. ... Qg4 16. Nf4, when White has a limited edge after 16. ... Bxf4 17. exf4 h5! 18. Qd1 Qh3 19. Nc5. Instead, Black can preserve kingside attacking ambitions:

15. ... Qh3! 16. Nf4

16. Qxc6?! Rfd8 has the idea of ... d5-d4 and ... Be6-d5, or, in some cases, ... f5-f4. If 16. Nc5 Rae8 threatens 17. ... f4!; for example, 17. Rad1 f4 18. Nxf4 Bxf4 19. Nxe6 Rxe6 20. exf4 Rh6 21. f3 exd3 22. Rxd3 Re8 followed by ... Rh6-e6, equalizing.

16. ... Bxf4 17. exf4 d4!

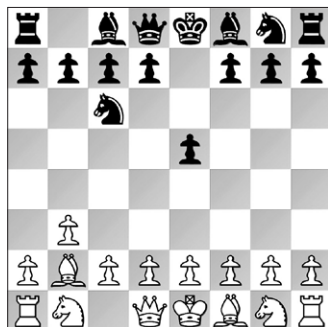
Black introduces the powerful idea of ... Be6-d5 and has equalized.

18. Qc5! Bd5 19. dxe4 fxe4 20. Qxd4 e3 21. f3 e2 22. Rf2 Bxf3

Now White must avoid 23. Rxf3?? Rfd8. This line offers an instructive mix of tactical and positional ideas. Obviously, players are unlikely to find all these moves over the board, and of course White can vary earlier.

Here's a look at Woodward's very original approach to the main 1. ... e5 line.

1. b3 e5 2. Bb2 Nc6



3. Nf3

3. e3 is easily the most popular move here. Then the odd-looking variation 3. ... Nf6 4. Bb5 Bd6 5. Na3 Na5! (to counter the Na3-c4 idea) is a well-established line that has attracted supergrandmasters on both sides; it suffices for equality, but players of both colors still consider it interesting enough to contest regularly. The alternatives 3. c4 and 3. g3 are also worth looking into.

3. ... e4

Woodward meets 3. ... d6 with 4. d4 e4 (he shows how 4. ... exd4 5. Nxd4 can easily lead to serious advantages for White, e.g., after 5. ... Nxd4?! 6. Qxd4 Nf6 7. Nc3 Be7 8. 0-0-0 0-0? 9. Nd5! Be6 10. Nxe7+ Qxe7 11. e3 with ideas such as Rh1-g1 and g2-g4-g5) 5.

d5 exf3?! (5. ... Nce7 is best, as Woodward points out, when 6. Ng5 e3 7. f4 leads to complicated lines where I believe Black can hold their own with extremely accurate play, but this doesn't preclude a full-fledged battle) 6. dxc6.



POSITION AFTER 6. dxc6

Here White has an advantage in any case, but Woodward finds some trappy lines which are devastating; for example, 6. ... fxg2? (6. ... fxe2 7. Qxe2+ Ne7? 8. cxb7 Bxb7 9. Nc3 Qd7 10. 0-0-0 0-0-0 11. Na4 and White is much better) 7. Bxg2 b6 8. Nc3 Nf6 9. Qd2 Be7 10. 0-0-0 0-0. This is hopeless for Black after 11. Rhg1 or any advance of the central pawns.

4. Nd4

Here the author shows an attractive line versus a tempting Black try:

4. ... Qf6?!

Woodward likes 4. ... Nxd4 5. Bxd4 d5 6. e3 for White, but my engines disagree and I found ways to improve upon his analysis. In practice, White can create a double-edged position, which should suffice to produce an interesting game. Against a strong and prepared opponent, though, you might want to have the sound 3. e3 ready as an alternative.

5. e3 Bc5 6. Nc3!



6. ... Nxd4 7. Nd5!

If 7. Nxe4? Qg6.

7. ... Qd6!

Not 7. ... Nf3+? 8. gxf3 Qxb2 9. Nxc7+ Kd8 10. Nxa8.

8. exd4 Qxd5 9. dxc5 Nf6 10. Qe2

White has a clear advantage here. 3. Nf3 is the sort of move that fits well in what Woodward calls a blitz repertoire, but it wouldn't be out of place in a tournament game either.

Against a King's Indian setup, Woodward recommends an ultra-positional English system.

1. b3 Nf6 2. Bb2 g3 3. Nf3

Players such as Carlsen, Nakamura, and Jobava have chosen 3. Bxf6 here, with 3. ... exf6 4. c4 the most common follow-up. There are other interesting moves, such as 3. e4. 1. b3 may not always put a lot of pressure upon Black, but it tends to allow for a wide variety of strategies.

3. ... Bg7 4. c4

Woodward wants to clamp down on ... d7-d5 right away. Here the most common continuation by a large margin has been 4. g3, when 4. ... 0-0 5. Bg2 d6 6. d4 is the main line.

4. ... 0-0

Obviously Black has many possible setups; for example, 4. ... c5 5. g3 0-0 6. Bg2 Nc6 7. 0-0 d6 8. d4 cxd4 9. Nxd4 Bd7, when Woodward recommends 10. Nc2!? (10. Nc3 has been easily the most popular move, but White may want to avoid the sequence 10. ... Nxd4 11. Qxd4 Bc6) 10. ... Qc8 11. Nc3 Bh3 12. Rb1!? Bxg2 13. Kxg2 Qd7 14. e4 when Woodward says "White has a nice Maróczy Bind and Black has no clear plans." After 14. ... Rfd8 followed by ... e7-e6 and ... a7-a6 we get a typically solid Hedgehog position.

5. g3 d6 6. Bg2 e5 7. 0-0 Re8

After 7. ... Nc6 8. d3 Re8 9. Nc3, Black might consider 9. ... Nd4, as is often played in the analogous English positions.

8. d3



This is a typical English structure where Woodward comes up with a subtle prophylactic move order for White.

8. ... Nbd7

Against 8. ... c6, Woodward suggests 9. Qc2!: “Delaying Nc3 [as] Black can then play ... d5. Only after 9. ... Nbd7 we can play 10. Nc3 because 10. ... d5?! is dubious after 11. cxd5 cxd5 12. Nb5! immediately threatening Nc7 with a big advantage: 12. ... Re6 13. Qc7! Qe8 (13. ... Qe7 14. Ba3!) 14. Rfc1.”

9. Nc3 c6 10. Qc2 a6 11. Nd2!

White has held back the ... d7-d5 break and is ready for b3-b4-b5. If 11. Rfd1 d5!

11. ... Nf8 12. Nce4 d5

12. ... Nxe4 13. dxe4 is easier for White to play and at any rate double-edged.

13. Nxf6+ Bxf6 14. e4



14. ... dxc4

14. ... d4 15. c5! intends 16. Nc4.

15. Nxc4 Ne6 16. Qd2 Nd4 17. f4



White breaks up Black's center and has superior piece activity.

Woodward's treatment of 1. ... d5 is not comprehensive, but he gives detailed advice versus most major setups. After 2. Bb2, he recommends a sort of reversed Queen's Indian Defense, answering 2. ... c5 with 3. e3, and using a traditional double fianchetto Reti setup with 3. Nf3, 4. g3, and a delayed c2-c4 when Black goes for a reversed London System setup. This is a very practical approach which ensures unbalanced play

while minimizing risk.

You can play through the notes separately and/or watch Woodward's video presentation. He is competent and thorough, although there isn't a great deal of strategic explanation. Woodward shows why a line works (or doesn't) by example, analyzing various defensive attempts and contrasting White alternatives to his preferred course. This emphasis suggests that the best audience for this product will probably be somewhat more advanced players — say, 1500 or above, although anyone can benefit from it.

I'm pleased to see today's young players publishing books and ebooks. They offer a kind of considered reflection that is losing ground in the face of the ubiquitous chatting, commenting, and posting that accompanies live events, not to mention the availability of instant engine analysis. That's only natural, but putting one's thoughts to paper (so to speak) is invaluable for the improving player and supplies a unique, disciplined perspective on the game. I look forward to more such fine efforts from Andy Woodward and his contemporaries. ♠

Woodward, Andy. The Bulletproof 1. b3 Repertoire. Ebook and video, 1 hr. 16 min.; ChessBase, 2026. \$19.40.

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Nationals

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • GRAND PRIX

2026 U.S. G/30 & G/60 National Championship

SEPTEMBER 11-13, 2026 — LATLA# 55780
Site: Lavin Bernick Center, Tulane University
Address: 29 McAlister Drive, New Orleans, LA 70118
Overall Prize Fund: \$6,000 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Downriver Chess & Tulane Chess • info@downriverchess.com • downriverchess.com

Grand Prix

The Grand Prix point totals reflect all rated event information as of August 27, 2026, for the 2026 Grand Prix. These standings are updated regularly, but should be considered unofficial. Visit ratings.uschess.org/grand-prix/standings for up-to-date information.

2026 US CHESS GRAND PRIX STANDINGS

Name	State/Ctry	Pts
1. GM JIANCHAO ZHOU	MA	499.21
2. GM CHRISTOPHER YOO	CA	173.55
3. GM VIKTOR MATVIISHEN	TX	119.44
4. GM ALEXANDER IVANOV	MA	106.27
5. IM EVAN PARK	PA	93.00
6. GM NICK DE FIRMIAN	CA	87.53
7. IM OLEKSII BILYCH	TX	85.95
8. GM FIDEL CORRALES JIMINEZ	CA	84.67
9. IM JASON LIANG	OH	84.65
10. GM ZAVEN ANDRIASIAN	FOR	76.70

The Grand Prix continues in 2026. For information visit new.uschess.org/us-chess-grand-prix-program

2026 Awards

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

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

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

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

148th annual New York State Championship—America's oldest annual tournament!

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — NY TLA# 55860
Site: Albany Marriott Hotel **Address:** 189 Wolf Road, Albany, NY 12205 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$18,000 **GP Pts:** 80 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX

2026 CalChess State Open & Class FIDE Championship

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — CA TLA# 57967
Site: Sonesta Silicon Valley Event Center **Address:** 1800 Barber Ln, Milpitas, CA 95035 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$20,000 **GP Pts:** 100 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** BayAreaChess • events@bayareachess.com • bayareachess.com

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

12th annual New York State Blitz Championship!

SEPTEMBER 6, 2026 — NY TLA# 55862
Site: Albany Marriott Hotel **Address:** 189 Wolf Road, Albany, NY 12205 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$800 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #26

SEPT. 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55953
Site: Holiday Inn Express & Suites **Address:** 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821
Overall Prize Fund: \$4,800 **b/60 GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** John McCumiskey • sactochess@sbcglobal.net • 916-524-9479 • sacramentochessclub.org

GRAND PRIX

2026 Sacramento Senior Championship

SEPT. 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55952
Site: Holiday Inn Express & Suites **Address:** 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821
Overall Prize Fund: \$3,300 **b/40 GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** John McCumiskey • sactochess@sbcglobal.net • 916-524-9479 • sacramentochessclub.org

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess At Least 15 Grand Prix

SEPTEMBER 13, 2026 — NC TLA# 57540
Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$532 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • dragonknightchess.com

GRAND PRIX

Beckstead Family Classic 2026

SEPTEMBER 18-20, 2026 — MO TLA# 55384
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

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 PA State Game/60 Championship - West

SEPTEMBER 19, 2026 — PA TLA# 56740
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/clearing-house

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

Thomas Bergquist Memorial 87th WV State Championship

SEPT. 19-20, 2026 — WV TLA# 57794
Site: Harrison County Senior Citizen Center **Ad-**

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new.uschess.org/national-events-calendar

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

dress: 500 W. Main Street, Clarksburg, WV 26301
Overall Prize Fund: \$500 **GP Pts:** 6 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Harrison County Chess Club • greelaw@aol.com • 3046419241

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess National Brunch Day Grand Prix

SEPTEMBER 20, 2026 — NC TLA# 58032
Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,228 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • dragonknightchess.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

CFCC 2026 Autumn Open & Scholastic

SEPTEMBER 25-27, 2026 — FL TLA# 57109
Site: Delta Hotels Marriott Orlando Celebration **Address:** 2900 Parkway Boulevard, Kissimmee, FL 34747 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$9,000 **GP Pts:** 40 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Central Florida Chess Club (CFCC) • storchnoi@gmail.com • (407) 312-6237 • centralflchess.org/cfcc-2026-autumn-open-and-scholastic-weekend-tournament

GRAND PRIX

ICA FIDE Championship

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — NJ TLA# 57437
Site: Community Church of Glen Rock Education Building **Address:** 354 Rock Road, Glen Rock, NJ 07452 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$2,300 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** International Chess Academy • chessdirector@icanj.net • 2017970330 • icanj.net

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

CFCC 2026 Autumn Open Saturday Night Open Blitz

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — FL TLA# 57110
Site: Delta Hotels Marriott Orlando Celebration **Address:** 2900 Parkway Boulevard, Kissimmee, FL 34747 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$500 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Central Florida Chess Club (CFCC) • storchnoi@gmail.com • (407) 312-6237 • centralflchess.org/cfcc-2026-autumn-open-and-scholastic-weekend-tournament

GRAND PRIX

Catherine McLaughlin Rapid Open 2026

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — MO TLA# 55387
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

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

2nd Annual Dragon Knight Chess World Rivers Day Grand Prix

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026 — NC TLA# 58033
Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,228 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • dragonknightchess.com

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

43rd Annual Reno Western States Open

OCTOBER 2-4, 2026 — NV TLA# 57101
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 • wackykykl@aol.com • 775-747-1405 • renochessclub.org

GRAND PRIX

2026 Charlotte Fall Open

OCTOBER 2-4, 2026 — NC TLA# 56102
Site: Hilton Garden Inn - Southpark **Address:** 4808 Sharon Road, Charlotte, NC 28210 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$5,500 **GP Pts:** 40 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Charlotte Chess Center • events@charlottechesscenter.org • app.charlottechesscenter.org/events

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess World Animal Day Grand Prix

OCTOBER 4, 2026 — NC TLA# 58035
Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,228 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • dragonknightchess.com

PLEASE NOTE

DEADLINE FOR PRINT TLA SUBMISSIONS

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

GRAND PRIX

1st Azeri Chess Academy Open
OCTOBER 5-10, 2026 — TX TLA# 56866
Site: Houston Chess Studio **Address:** 250 Patton Street, Suite H, Houston, TX 77009 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$12,500 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Azeri Chess Academy LLC • info@azerichessacademy.com • azerichessacademy.com/tournaments/1st-azeri-chess-academy-open

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

34th annual Midwest Class Championships
OCTOBER 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 56700
Site: Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel **Address:** 601 North Milwaukee Ave., Wheeling, IL 60090 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$20,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessour.com

GRAND PRIX

5th Skyline Open
OCTOBER 9-12, 2026 — VA TLA# 57329
Site: Washington Dulles Airport Marriott **Address:** 45020 Aviation Drive, Dulles, VA 20166 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$10,000 **GP Pts:** 80 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Eastern Chess Association • easternchessdirector@gmail.com • 7574162075 • easternchess.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

13th annual Midwest Class Blitz Championship
OCTOBER 10, 2026 — IL TLA# 56701
Site: Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel **Address:** 601 North Milwaukee Ave., Wheeling, IL 60090 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$500 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessour.com

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Michigan Bottom Half Class Championships
OCTOBER 10-11, 2026 — MI TLA# 57126
Site: Wyndham Garden Ann Arbor **Address:** 2900 Jackson Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48103 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$2,575 **GP Pts:** 15 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Michigan Chess Association • jeffchess64@gmail.com • 810-955-7271 • michess.org

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Lafayette Open 2026
OCTOBER 10-11, 2026 — LA TLA# 58119
Site: Discovery Inn and Suites **Address:** 120 E Kaliste Saloom Rd, Lafayette, LA 70508 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,600 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Tommy LeBlanc • 337-981-1821 • lafayettechessclub.org

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess I Love Yarn Day Grand Prix
OCTOBER 11, 2026 — NC TLA# 58037
Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,228 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • dragonknightchess.com

GRAND PRIX

2026 South Dakota Governor's Cup
OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — SD TLA# 57250
Site: Denny Sanford Premier Center (Sioux Falls Convention Center) **Address:** 1201 N West Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD 57107 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$12,000 **GP Pts:** 80 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Chess Weekend Inc. • glenn@chessweekend.com • chessweekend.com

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

34th annual Eastern Class Championships
OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — CT TLA# 56702
Site: Sheraton Hartford Hotel **Address:** 1 Bradley Airport, Windsor Locks, CT 06096 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$17,000 **GP Pts:** 100 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

4th Gulf Coast October Open
OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
Site: Embassy Suites by Hilton **Address:** 10450 Corkscrew Commons Drive, Estero, FL 33928 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$10,000 **GP Pts:** 50 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Boca Raton Chess Club • jon@bocachess.com • 561-302-4377 • bocachess.com

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

30th annual Eastern Chess Congress
OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56703
Site: Westin Princeton at Forrestal Village Hotel **Address:** 201 Village Blvd, Princeton, NJ 08540 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$25,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessour.com

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

2026 Fredericksburg Open
OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677
Site: Country Inn & Suites Fredericksburg-South **Address:** 10358 Patriot Highway, Fredericksburg, VA 22408 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$4,500 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y

Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Michael E Hoffpauir, NTD/IA/SL • mhoffpauir@aol.com • 7578464805 • vachess.org

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 PA State Action Chess Championship - West
OCTOBER 24, 2026 — PA TLA# 56741
Site: William Pitt Union, Univ. of Pittsburgh **Address:** 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/clearing-house

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

13th annual Eastern Chess Congress Blitz Championship
OCTOBER 24, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56704
Site: Westin Princeton at Forrestal Village Hotel **Address:** 201 Village Blvd, Princeton, NJ 08540 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$500 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chessour.com

GRAND PRIX

20th Annual SPICE Cup Open
NOVEMBER 4-9, 2026 — WA TLA# 57647
Site: Hilton Bellevue **Address:** 300 112th Ave SE, Bellevue, WA 98004 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$12,500 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Josh Sinanan • WashingtonChessFederation@gmail.com • 206-769-3757 • spicecup64.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

21st annual Los Angeles Open
NOVEMBER 6-8, 2026 — CA TLA# 56845
Site: Hilton Orange County Airport Hotel **Ad-**

57th annual NATIONAL CHESS CONGRESS

6 rounds, Nov 27-29 or Nov 28-29, 2026 - Loews Philadelphia Hotel

Thanksgiving Weekend: \$45,250 prize fund guaranteed, 20 plaques, free entries!

6 rounds, 40/80, SD/30; d30 (2-day option, rounds 1-3 G/40 d10). U800 & U600 sections play separate 2-day schedule only, 11/28-29, G/40 d10. Top 3 sections are also FIDE rated.

Loews Philadelphia Hotel, 1200 Market St, Philadelphia PA 19107. Hotel rates \$127-127-152-177, use link at chessevents.us, reserve by 11/13.

In 10 sections (see peakrating.us):

Premier Section: Open to 2000/over. Prizes \$4000-2400-1200-800-500, clear/tiebreak win \$200, USCF U2400 \$2000-1000. 200 GPP.

U2200, U2000: Each \$2500-1300-700-500-300.

U1800: \$2400-1200-600-400-300.

U1600: \$2000-1000-600-400-300.

U1400: \$1600-800-500-300-200.

U1200: \$1400-700-400-300-200.

U1000: \$1200-600-400-300-200..

U800, U600: Each, plaques to top 10. CCA free entry prizes to top 4.

Unrated prize limits: U1000 \$200, U1200 \$300, U1400 \$400, U1600 \$500, U1800 \$600, U2000 \$700.

Mixed Doubles prizes: Best male+female 2-player combined score among all sections, averaging under 2200: \$2000-1000-600-400. May enter different sections, register before both begin round 2, teams including an unrated limited to \$400.

November official ratings used; unofficial or Online Regular USCF ratings usually used if otherwise unrated. **Cannot play** below USCF Online Regular rating - 100 points. **\$250 Dr. Aleksandr/Alisa Melekina Prize** For Top Father/Daughter team.

Top 8 sections entry fee: \$138 online at chessaction.com by 11/24, \$160 later online or at site, until 1 hour before round 1.

U800, U600 sections entry fee: \$52 online by 11/24, \$70 later, at site or online, until 9 am 11/28.

All: No checks at site, credit cards OK. Re-entry (except Premier) \$60.

Special USCF membership dues with magazine if paid online with entry fee: see chess.events.us. **USCF membership required.**

3-Day schedule: Reg. Fri to 11 am, rds Fri 12 & 6, Sat 12 & 6, Sun 10 & 3:30.

2-Day U1000/up schedule: Reg Sat to 9 am, rds Sat 10, 12:45, 3:30 & 6; Sun 10 & 3:30.

2-Day U800 & U600 sections: Reg Sat to 9 am, rds 10, 12:45 & 3:30 each day.

Half point byes OK all rds, limit 3, must commit before rd 3.

See chessevents.us for more rules and information.

Bring set, board, clock if possible—none supplied.

Cellphones: No possession during play; in bag near your table OK.

Parking: Loews valet 10% off regular rate (about \$60). Gateway Garage, 3/5 mile away at 1540 Spring St, about \$12/day Sat & Sun, \$30 other days.

Entry: chessaction.com. No mail entries. \$15 charge for refunds.

Email: director@chess.us.

Blitz tournament Sat 10:30 pm, enter by 10 pm.

dress: 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 • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 PA State Game/15 Championship - West

NOVEMBER 7, 2026 — PA TLA# 56742
Site: William Pitt Union, Univ. of Pittsburgh
Address: 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/clearing-house

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

24th Annual Turkey Bowl

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017
Site: Fort Lauderdale Marriott North **Address:**
6650 North Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale,
FL 33309 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$12,600 **GP Pts:**
60 **FIDE:** **Y Accessible:** **Y Residency:** **N Org:**
Boca Raton Chess Club • jon@bocachess.com •
561-302-4377 • bocachess.com

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

35th annual Kings Island Open

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — OH TLA# 56847
Site: Embassy Suites Cincinnati NE **Address:**
4554 Lake Forest Dr, Blue Ash OH 45242 **Overall**
Prize Fund: \$25,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** **Y Access-**
ible: **Y Residency:** **N Org:** Continental Chess •
director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX

Thanksgiving Open 2026

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Site: Saint Louis Chess Club **Address:** 4663
Maryland Avenue, St. Louis MO 63108 **Overall**
Prize Fund: \$10,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** **Y Access-**
ible: **Y Residency:** **N Org:** Saint Louis Chess
Club • tournaments@saintlouischessclub.org •
3143612437 • saintlouischessclub.org

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

57th annual National Chess Congress

NOVEMBER 27-29, 2026 — PA TLA# 56849
Site: Loews Hotel **Address:** 1200 Market St,
Philadelphia, PA 19107 **Overall Prize Fund:**
\$45,250 **GP Pts:** 200 **FIDE:** **Y Accessible:** **N Res-**
idency: **N Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX

2026 Saint Louis Chess Club Championship

DECEMBER 18-20, 2026 — MO TLA# 55385
Site: Saint Louis Chess Club **Address:** 4663
Maryland Avenue, St. Louis MO 63108 **Overall**
Prize Fund: \$5,000 **GP Pts:** 40 **FIDE:** **N Access-**
ible: **Y Residency:** **N Org:** Saint Louis Chess
Club • tournaments@saintlouischessclub.org •
3143612437 • saintlouischessclub.org

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

51st annual Eastern Open

DECEMBER 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880
Site: Hyatt Regency Crystal City **Address:** 2799
Richmond Highway, Arlington VA 22202 **Overall**
Prize Fund: \$30,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** **Y Access-**
ible: **Y Residency:** **N Org:** Continental Chess •
director@chess.us • chesstour.com

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

36th annual North American Open

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084
Site: Horseshoe Casino Resort (formerly Bal-
ly's) **Address:** 3645 Las Vegas Blvd. S, Las Ve-
gas, NV 89103 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$130,000
GP Pts: 300 **FIDE:** **Y Accessible:** **Y Residency:**
N Org: Continental Chess • director@chess.us •
chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX

\$10K Guaranteed Ken Ferguson Memorial Open

JANUARY 16-18, 2027 — LA TLA# 55902
Site: Sheraton New Orleans Hotel **Address:** 500
Canal, New Orleans, LA 70130 **Overall Prize**
Fund: \$10,000 **GP Pts:** 40 **FIDE:** **Y Accessible:**
Y Residency: **N Org:** Downriver Chess & Tulane
Chess • info@downriverchess.com • downriv-erchess.com

Regional

ALABAMA

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519

4th Gulf Coast October Open

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017

24th Annual Turkey Bowl

See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

ALASKA

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

ARIZONA

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA#

55953

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #26

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA#

55952

2026 Sacramento Senior Championship

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 6-8, 2026 — CA TLA# 56845

21st annual Los Angeles Open

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084

36th annual North American Open

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

ARKANSAS

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

CALIFORNIA

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — CA TLA# 57967

2026 CalChess State Open & Class FIDE Championship

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA#

55953

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #26

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA#

55952

2026 Sacramento Senior Championship

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 6-8, 2026 — CA TLA# 56845

21st annual Los Angeles Open

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084

36th annual North American Open

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

COLORADO

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — SD TLA# 57250

2026 South Dakota Governor's Cup

See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084

36th annual North American Open

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

CONNECTICUT

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026 — NY TLA# 57527

12th Annual New York State Magnus High School and Junior High Chess League: Season 12 Kickoff!

See New York.

OCTOBER 11, 2026 — NY TLA# 57537

12th Annual New York State Magnus High School and Junior High Chess League: October 11th

See New York.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — CT TLA# 56702

34th annual Eastern Class Championships

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017

24th Annual Turkey Bowl

See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-15, 2026 — NY TLA# 57478

10th Annual New York State Girls Championship!

See New York.

DELAWARE

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677

2026 Fredericksburg Open

See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 21-22, 2026 — DE TLA# 57406

Delaware Capital Open

Site: Delaware Agricultural Museum **Address:**
866 North Dupont Hwy, Dover, DE 19901 **Overall**
Prize Fund: \$1,500 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** **N Access-**
ible: **Y Residency:** **N Org:** Delaware Chess
Association • aa.legolas@gmail.com • 410-219-
3179 • delawarechessassociation.org

JANUARY 16-17, 2027 — DE TLA# 57889

Sussex County Open 2027

Site: National Guard Readiness Center **Ad-**
dress: 109 West Pine Street, Georgetown, DE
19947 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,500 **GP Pts:** n/a
FIDE: **N Accessible:** **Y Residency:** **N Org:** Dela-
ware Chess Association • aa.legolas@gmail.com •
410-430-9343 • delawarechessassociation.org

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 13-14, 2027 — DE TLA# 57324

New Castle County Delaware State Championship

Site: Ramada Inn **Address:** 280 Chapman Road,
Newark, DE 19702 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,500
GP Pts: \$3,600 **FIDE:** **N Accessible:** **Y Residen-**
cy: **N Org:** Delaware Chess Association • aa.legolas@gmail.com • 410-219-3179 • delaware-chessassociation.org

DIST. OF COLUMBIA

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — VA TLA# 57655

Scholastic Tournament at the

Meadowdale Public Library

See Virginia.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — VA TLA# 57656

Quads at the Meadowdale Public

Library

See Virginia.

OCTOBER 9-12, 2026 — VA TLA# 57329

5th Skyline Open

See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519

4th Gulf Coast October Open

See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

FLORIDA

SEPTEMBER 25-27, 2026 — FL TLA# 57109

CFCC 2026 Autumn Open & Scholastic

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — FL TLA# 57110

CFCC 2026 Autumn Open Saturday

Night Open Blitz

See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519

4th Gulf Coast October Open

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017

24th Annual Turkey Bowl

See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

GEORGIA

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519

4th Gulf Coast October Open

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017

24th Annual Turkey Bowl

See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

HAWAII

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

IDAHO

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA#

55953

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #26

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA#

55952

2026 Sacramento Senior Championship

See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — SD TLA# 57250

2026 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

ILLINOIS

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517

2026 Illinois Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 56700

34th annual Midwest Class Championships
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

OCTOBER 10, 2026 — IL TLA# 56701

13th annual Midwest Class Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — SD TLA# 57250

2026 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519

4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017

24th Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — OH TLA# 56847

35th annual Kings Island Open
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

INDIANA

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517

2026 Illinois Open
See Grand Prix.

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — OH TLA# 57495

Golden Buckeye Senior Open
See Ohio.

OCTOBER 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 56700

34th annual Midwest Class Championships
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

OCTOBER 10, 2026 — KY TLA# 57373

The Butch Mosby Chess Classic 2
See Kentucky.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — OH TLA# 56847

35th annual Kings Island Open
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

IOWA

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517

2026 Illinois Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — SD TLA# 57250

2026 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

KANSAS

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

KENTUCKY

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — OH TLA# 57495

Golden Buckeye Senior Open
See Ohio.

OCTOBER 10, 2026 — KY TLA# 57373

The Butch Mosby Chess Classic 2
Site: Roots101 Museum **Address:** 124 North 1st Street, Louisville, KY 40202 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$4,000 b/64 teams **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Corbin Seavers • urbanlouisvillechess@yahoo.com • 5023656369

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — SD TLA# 57250

2026 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — OH TLA# 56847

35th annual Kings Island Open
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

LOUISIANA

OCTOBER 10-11, 2026 — LA TLA# 58119

Lafayette Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 16-18, 2027 — LA TLA# 55902

\$10K Guaranteed Ken Ferguson Memorial Open
See Grand Prix.

MAINE

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

MARYLAND

OCTOBER 9-12, 2026 — VA TLA# 57329

5th Skyline Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519

4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56703

30th annual Eastern Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677

2026 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017

24th Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-29, 2026 — PA TLA# 56849

57th annual National Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

DECEMBER 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880

51st annual Eastern Open

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

MASSACHUSETTS

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — CT TLA# 56702

34th annual Eastern Class Championships
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519

4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017

24th Annual Turkey Bowl
See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

MICHIGAN

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517

2026 Illinois Open
See Grand Prix.

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — OH TLA# 57495

Golden Buckeye Senior Open
See Ohio.

OCTOBER 10-11, 2026 — MI TLA# 57126

2026 Michigan Bottom Half Class Championships
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — OH TLA# 56847

35th annual Kings Island Open
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

MINNESOTA

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — SD TLA# 57250

2026 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

MISSISSIPPI

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

MISSOURI

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — MO TLA# 55387

Catherine McLaughlin Rapid Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 18-20, 2026 — MO TLA# 55385

2026 Saint Louis Chess Club Championship
See Grand Prix.

MONTANA

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — SD TLA# 57250

2026 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

NEBRASKA

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — SD TLA# 57250

2026 South Dakota Governor's Cup
See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

NEVADA

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55953

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #26
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55952

2026 Sacramento Senior Championship
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 2-4, 2026 — NV TLA# 57101

43rd Annual Reno Western States Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 6-8, 2026 — CA TLA# 56845

21st annual Los Angeles Open
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084

36th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NEW HAMPSHIRE

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

NEW JERSEY

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — NJ TLA# 54721

Hamilton Chess Club Quads
Site: Edward McManimon Building **Address:** 320 Scully Ave., Hamilton, NJ 08610 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$25/quadrant **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Edward J Sytnik • edmendou@aol.com • 6093512437 • hamiltonchessclub.com

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026 — NY TLA# 57527

12th Annual New York State Magnus High School and Junior High Chess League: Season 12 Kickoff!
See New York.

OCTOBER 11, 2026 — NY TLA# 57537

12th Annual New York State Magnus High School and Junior High Chess League: October 11th
See New York.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — CT TLA# 56702

34th annual Eastern Class Championships
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519

4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56703

30th annual Eastern Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677

2026 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 24, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56704

13th annual Eastern Chess Congress

Blitz Championship

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017

24th Annual Turkey Bowl

See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-15, 2026 — NY TLA# 57478

10th Annual New York State Girls Championship!

See New York.

NOVEMBER 27-29, 2026 — PA TLA# 56849

57th annual National Chess Congress

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

DECEMBER 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880

51st annual Eastern Open

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NEW MEXICO

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084

36th annual North American Open

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — NY TLA# 55860

148th annual New York State Championship—America's oldest annual tournament!

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

SEPTEMBER 6, 2026 — NY TLA# 55862

12th annual New York State Blitz Championship!

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — NJ TLA# 57437

ICA FIDE Championship

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026 — NY TLA# 57527

12th Annual New York State Magnus High School and Junior High Chess League: Season 12 Kickoff!

Site: Columbia Grammar and Prep., High School Library Address: 4 West 93rd Street, New York, NY 10025 Overall Prize Fund: \$800 GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Chess Center of New York • [director@magnusleague.org](#) • [www.chesscenter.cc](#)

OCTOBER 11, 2026 — NY TLA# 57537

12th Annual New York State Magnus High School and Junior High Chess League: October 11th

Site: Columbia Grammar and Prep. High School Address: 4 West 93rd Street, New York, NY 10025 Overall Prize Fund: \$800 GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Chess Center of New York • [director@magnusleague.org](#) • 347-201-2269 • [www.chesscenter.cc](#)

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — CT TLA# 56702

34th annual Eastern Class Championships

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519

4th Gulf Coast October Open

See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56703

30th annual Eastern Chess Congress

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677

2026 Fredericksburg Open

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017

24th Annual Turkey Bowl

See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

NOVEMBER 14-15, 2026 — NY TLA# 57478

10th Annual New York State Girls Championship!

Site: Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School Address: 4 West 93rd Street, New York, NY 10025 Overall Prize Fund: \$1,000 GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Chess Center of New York • [director@chessgirls.win](#) • 347-201-2269 • [chessgirls.win](#)

NOVEMBER 27-29, 2026 — PA TLA# 56849

57th annual National Chess Congress

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

DECEMBER 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880

51st annual Eastern Open

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NORTH CAROLINA

SEPTEMBER 13, 2026 — NC TLA# 57540

Dragon Knight Chess At Least 15 Grand Prix

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2026 — NC TLA# 58032

Dragon Knight Chess National Brunch Day Grand Prix

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — VA TLA# 57655

Scholastic Tournament at the Meadowdale Public Library

See Virginia.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — VA TLA# 57656

Quads at the Meadowdale Public Library

See Virginia.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026 — NC TLA# 58033

2nd Annual Dragon Knight Chess World Rivers Day Grand Prix

See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 2-4, 2026 — NC TLA# 56102

2026 Charlotte Fall Open

See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 4, 2026 — NC TLA# 58035

Dragon Knight Chess World Animal Day Grand Prix

See Grand Prix.

OCT. 9-12, 2026 — VA TLA# 57329

5th Skyline Open

See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 11, 2026 — NC TLA# 58037

Dragon Knight Chess I Love Yarn Day Grand Prix

See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519

4th Gulf Coast October Open

See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677

2026 Fredericksburg Open

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017

24th Annual Turkey Bowl

See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

DEC. 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880

51st annual Eastern Open

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NORTH DAKOTA

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — SD TLA# 57250

2026 South Dakota Governor's Cup

See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

OHIO

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — OH TLA# 57495

Golden Buckeye Senior Open

Site: Salt Fork State Park Lodge Address: 11073 Natural Resources 3 Road, Kimbolton, OH 43749 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: N Residency: N Org: Grant Neilley • [grant@neilley.com](#) • 6143141102 • [neilley.com/chess](#)

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — OH TLA# 56847

35th annual Kings Island Open

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

OKLAHOMA

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

OREGON

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55953

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #26

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55952

2026 Sacramento Senior Championship

See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084

36th annual North American Open

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

PENNSYLVANIA

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — NY TLA# 55860

148th annual New York State Championship—America's oldest annual tournament!

See Grand Prix or [chessevents.us](#).

SEPTEMBER 19, 2026 — PA TLA# 56740

2026 PA State Game/60 Championship - West

See Grand Prix.

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — OH TLA# 57495

Golden Buckeye Senior Open

See Ohio.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519

4th Gulf Coast October Open

See Grand Prix.

Nov 6–8, 2026

Flagstaff

Arizona

Coconino

Open

<https://coconinochess.us>

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56703
30th annual Eastern Chess Congress
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677
2026 Fredericksburg Open
 See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 24, 2026 — PA TLA# 56741
2026 PA State Action Chess Championship - West
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 7, 2026 — PA TLA# 56742
2026 PA State Game/15 Championship - West
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017
24th Annual Turkey Bowl
 See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-15, 2026 — NY TLA# 57478
10th Annual New York State Girls Championship!
 See New York.

NOVEMBER 27-29, 2026 — PA TLA# 56849
57th annual National Chess Congress
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880
51st annual Eastern Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

PUERTO RICO
NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

RHODE ISLAND
NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

SOUTH CAROLINA
OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017
24th Annual Turkey Bowl
 See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

SOUTH DAKOTA
OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — SD TLA# 57250
2026 South Dakota Governor's Cup
 See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

TENNESSEE
NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

TEXAS
OCTOBER 5-10, 2026 — TX TLA# 56866
1st Azeri Chess Academy Open
 See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017
24th Annual Turkey Bowl
 See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084
36th annual North American Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

UTAH
NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

VERMONT
NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

VIRGINIA
HERITAGE EVENT • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2026 — VA TLA# 57313
87th Virginia Closed
Site: Hilton Garden Inn Innsbrook **Address:** 4050 Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA 23060 **Overall Prize Fund:** see online TLA **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Michael E Hoffpauir • mhoffpauir@aol.com • 7578464805 • vachess.org

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — VA TLA# 57655
Scholastic Tournament at the Meadowdale Public Library
Site: Meadowdale Public Library **Address:** 4301 Meadowdale Blvd, North Chesterfield, VA 23234 **Overall Prize Fund:** see online TLA **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Michael E Hoffpauir, NTD/IA/SI • mhoffpauir@aol.com • 7578464805 • vachess.org

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — VA TLA# 57656
Quads at the Meadowdale Public Library
Site: Meadowdale Public Library **Address:** 4301 Meadowdale Blvd, North Chesterfield, VA 23234 **Overall Prize Fund:** see online TLA **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Michael E Hoffpauir, NTD/IA/SI • mhoffpauir@aol.com • 7578464805 • vachess.org

OCTOBER 9-12, 2026 — VA TLA# 57329
5th Skyline Open
 See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56703
30th annual Eastern Chess Congress
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017
24th Annual Turkey Bowl
 See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-29, 2026 — PA TLA# 56849
57th annual National Chess Congress
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880
51st annual Eastern Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

WASHINGTON
SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55952

2026 Sacramento Senior Championship
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 4-9, 2026 — WA TLA# 57647
20th Annual SPICE Cup Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 7-8, 2026 — WA TLA# 57649
21st Susan Polgar Foundation National Open for Girls and Boys
Site: Hilton Bellevue **Address:** 300 112th Ave SE, Bellevue, WA 98004 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Josh Sinanan • WashingtonChessFederation@gmail.com • 206-769-3757 • spfn.org

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084
36th annual North American Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

WEST VIRGINIA
SEPT. 19-20, 2026 — WV TLA# 57794
Thomas Bergquist Memorial 87th WV State Championship
 See Grand Prix.

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — OH TLA# 57495
Golden Buckeye Senior Open
 See Ohio.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677
2026 Fredericksburg Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

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

OCTOBER 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 56700

34th annual Midwest Class Championships
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — SD TLA# 57250
2026 South Dakota Governor's Cup
 See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — FL TLA# 58017
24th Annual Turkey Bowl
 See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
NOVEMBER 14-15, 2026 — W TLA# 58018
2026-2027 Wisconsin Junior Open
Site: Holiday Inn - Manitowoc **Address:** 4601 Calumet Ave., Manitowoc, WI 54220 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Steve Erbach • serbach@gmail.com • 920-279-5688 • wischess.org

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
NOVEMBER 14-15, 2026 — W TLA# 58019
2026 WCA Veterans Tournament
Site: Holiday Inn - Manitowoc **Address:** 4601 Calumet Ave., Manitowoc, WI 54220 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,500 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Steve Erbach • serbach@gmail.com • 920-279-5688 • wischess.org

WYOMING
OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — SD TLA# 57250
2026 South Dakota Governor's Cup
 See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

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980.265.1156
www.charlottechesscenter.org

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917.678.2077
www.chesssanity.org

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Pelham, NY
201.347.2269
www.chesstour.com

Dirigo Chess Club

Falmouth, ME
207.318.4630
www.dirigochessclub.org

Florida Scholastic Chess League

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786.755.FSCL (3725)
www.fsclichess.org

Grand Knights Chess Academy

Bellevue, WA
425.445.8588
www.grandknightschess.com

Hamden Chess Club

Hamden, CT
203.680.8456
www.playmorechess.com

King Registration

Chicago, IL
773.317.8347
www.kingregistration.com

Marshall Chess Club

New York, NY
212.477.3716
www.marshallchessclub.org

New York State Chess Association

New York, NY
646-232-3155
www.nysca.net

Ocean State Chess Association

Riverside, R.I.
401.212.1335
www.oceanstatechess.com

PaperClip Pairings

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956.621.0377

Postal Chess Club

Sunnyvale, California
www.chess.com/club/postal-chess-club

San Diego Chess Club

San Diego, CA
619.752.4377
www.sandiegochessclub.org

Saint Louis Chess Club

Saint Louis, MO
314.361.CHESS (2437)
saintlouischessclub.org

Washington Chess Federation

Redmond, WA
206.769.3757
www.wachess.com

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ChessPalace (CA)

www.chesspalace.com

Downriver Chess Club (LA)

www.downriverchess.com

Evangel Chess Club (AL)

evangelchurch.me

Little House of Chess, Inc. (NY)

littlehouseofchess.org

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www.michess.org

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www.chessset.com

The 64 Squares Foundation (FL)

www.miamichesspro.com

Texas Chess Center (TX)

www.texaschesscenter.com

TLA CHESS (VA)

jack.scheible@verizon.net

Tri-Bridges Chess Club

www.tribridgeschessclub.com

Utah Chess Association (UT)

www.utahchess.com

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CORRESPONDENCE CHESS

Check out these US Chess Rated Events!

7-Player Championship Events

2026 Golden Knights (Postal) | 2026 Electronic Knights

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as single round robin, groupings based on order entries received. Players start in Preliminary round and qualify for Semi-final and then Final rounds based on scores in previous round. **ENTRY FEE:** \$35 per entry. Players can enter up to a maximum of 10 times per event. **PRIZES:** Prize fund of \$2300 based on 200 entries. \$15 correspondence chess gift certificate to players knocked out in Preliminary round.

7-Player Round Robins

Victor Palciauskas Tournament (ICCF Server)

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as single round robin, groupings based on ratings. **ENTRY FEE:** \$5 per entry. **PRIZES:** 1st place receives a signed certificate.

4-Player Quads

John W. Collins Memorial (Postal) | Walter Muir E-Quads (ICCF Server)

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as double round robin, groupings based on ratings. **ENTRY FEE:** \$10 per entry. **PRIZES:** 1st place receives \$25 correspondence chess gift certificate and signed certificate.

2-Player Matches (Postal or Email)

FORMAT: Players play either 2, 4, or 6 games against the same opponent. Selecting multiple options may facilitate faster pairings. Pairings based on ratings or players may name their own opponent. **ENTRY FEE:** \$5 per entry. **PRIZES:** None.

ICCF
Server

Two ways to enter:

- Visit us online at uschess.org
- Mail in the form below

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- Postal events are open only to US Chess members who reside on the contiguous USA, Alaska, Hawaii or have an APO/FPO postal address.
- Email events are open to all US Chess members with an accessible email account.
- ICCF Server events are open to all US Chess members with access to the ICCF internet based correspondence chess server and an ICCF account (free to create) in good standing.
- For events with groupings based on ratings, the following rating classes will be used:
 - o Class A: 1800 and above
 - o Class B: 1500-1999
 - o Class C: 1200-1699
 - o Class D: 1399 and below
- If you do not have an existing correspondence rating, please estimate your playing strength when submitting your entry.
- Correspondence chess gift certificate prizes can be used on correspondence chess entries only. They cannot be used for membership renewals or at US Chess Sales.

Online entry and payment by credit card is available at new.uschess.org/correspondence-chess

Name _____ USCHESSID# _____ Est. Rating _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ E-mail _____

- ☐ Golden Knights EF: \$35
 ☐ Palciauskas ICCF EF: \$5
 ☐ Muir ICCF Quad EF: \$10
 2-player matches, EF: \$5 per entry, see above for options
☐ Electronic Knights EF: \$35
 ☐ Collins Quad EF: \$10
 Postal Match: 2 ☐ 4 ☐ 6 ☐
 Email Match: 2 ☐ 4 ☐ 6 ☐
☐ Check here if you do not wish to have an opponent who is incarcerated (note that this may slow down your assignment).

Make checks payable to US CHESS and mail to: US Chess Correspondence Chess, PO Box 775308, St. Louis, MO 63177

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Solutions

PAGE 15 TACTICAL TESTS

TACTIC 1. 30. Qc8+ Qxc8 31. Rxc8 mate. Garg – Fomemor, *Chess.com*, 2026. **TACTIC 2. 21. 0-0-0+!** wins the rook. Did you forget about castling queenside? Heiserman – Yoo, Tuesday Night Marathon, 2026. **TACTIC 3.** Black has to give up material or allow mate after **32. Nc5! Rxb2** (32. ... Rb8 33. Nd7+ wins the rook) **33. Nd7+ Kg8 34. Re8 mate.** Kanov – Medhus, Smuk Skak GM, 2026 (analysis). **TACTIC 4. 29. Ng6+ hxc6 30. Rh4 mate.** A classic mate pattern! Mudrak – Hlozek, Stare Mesto Open, 2026. **TACTIC 5. 38. Nd8+ Kb8** (any other move loses the knight) **39. Nc6+.** Gut – Deng, *Chess.com*, 2026 (analysis). **TACTIC 6.** It's mate in three if you sac the queen! **20. ... Qh1+ 21. Bxh1 Rxh1+ 22. Kg2 Bf3 mate.** Molina – Williams, *Chess.com*, 2026. **TACTIC 7. 34. Ne7+ Nxe7** If 34. ... Kh8 35. Nxc6+ hxc6 (35. ... fxc6 36. Qxf8 mate) 36. Qxf8+ Kh7 37. Qxf7. **35. Qxf8+ Kxf8 36. Rd8 mate.** Borgaonkar – Alonso, *Chess.com*, 2026 (analysis). **TACTIC 8. 16. Bc5 Re8** If 16. ... d6 17. exd6. **17. Bxe7 Rxe7 18. Nd5 Kf8** Or 18. ... Re6 19. Nxc7; if 18. ... Re8 19. Nxc7. **19. Nxe7 Kxe7 20. Rxc7.** Khadour – Dubreuil, *Chess.com*, 2026 (analysis). **TACTIC 9.** Calculate precisely to stop the pawn! **63. ... Nc5 64. a7 Na4+ 65. Kb4 Nb6 66. a8=Q+ Nxa8.** Ruiz Bolanos – Mohammadi, *Chess.com*, 2026 (analysis). **TACTIC 10.** In the game Proleiko played the interesting 15. Ne5, but he missed a killer shot: **15. d5! Bxf3** If 15. ... Ne5 16. Nxe5 fxe5 17. Bf5 with the same effect, while 15. ... Na5 16. Qa3 b6 17. Nd4 looks crushing. **16. dxc6 Bxc6 17. Bf5 Qxf5 18. Rxf5.** Proleiko – Boettcher, U.S. Open, 2026 (analysis). **TACTIC 11.** The first move is easy; the rest aren't! **25. ... h5! 26. Qd7** Naturally if 26. Qg5 Nh3+, or 26. Qg3 Ne2+. **26. ... Rxe4 27. fxe4 Qc3!** Not 27. ... Qa3? 28. f3 Qe3+ 29. Rf2! with equality. **28. f3 Qc2!** with the idea **29. Rf2 Qxd1+.** Hakobyan – Paravyan, *Chess.com*, 2026 (analysis). **TACTIC 12.** Two rook sacrifices on the same square! **30. Rxf6! gxf6 31. Nh5 Be7 32. Rxf6!** Avoiding the inferior 32. Nxf6+ Bxf6 33. Rxf6 Qc4!. **32. ... Rd8** Not 32. ... Bxf6? 33. Nxf6+ Kg7 (33. ... Kf8 34. Qb4+) 34. Nxe8+. **33. Rg6+ Kf8 34. Bxh6+ Ke8 35. Ng7+ Kd7 36. Nxe6 fxe6 37. Rg7,** winning. Garcia Correa – Preobrazhenskaya, *Chess.com*, 2026 (analysis).

PAGE 17 CHESS TO ENJOY

PROBLEM 1. 30. Rg7+ Kh8 31. Rg8+, Black resigned. Next up is 31. ... Kh7 32. Qg7+! Bxg7 33. R1xg7 mate. **PROBLEM 2. 8. Bg5! Bxf3 9. Qd2** wins the queen (if 9. ... Qxd4 10. Bb5+). **PROBLEM 3. 28. Ne4!** (if 28. ... Nxe4 29. Rd8+ Kc7 30. Rc8 mate). **PROBLEM 4. 17. ... Nde5!** The game went **18. Nxe5 Nxf2!** and wins. If 18. hxc4 Nxf3+ 19. gxf3 Qg3+ 20. Kh1 Qh3+ 21. Kg1 Rxf3. **PROBLEM 5. 29. Rd7!** If 29. ... Qxd7 30. Nf6+. The game went **29. ... Nxd7 30. Qxg6+ Kh8 31. Qxh6+** and Black resigned because of 31. ... Kg8 32. Ng5!. **PROBLEM 6. 25. Nf5! gxf5** (25. ... Qf8 26. Bxd6) **26. exf5** is a winning attack. The game concluded **26. ... Qf8 27. f6+ Kh8 28. fxg7+ Kxg7 29. Bxh6+! Nxb6 30. Qg5+, Black resigned.**

PAGE 49 ABCS OF CHESS

PROBLEM 1. Mating net: White mates in 2 with **1. Qe5** (or 1. Qb2 or 1. Qh2); if 1. ... Kd8 2. Qb8 mate; if 1. ... Kf8 2. Qh8 mate. **PROBLEM 2. Fork:** White wins a rook with **1. Qe5 Rf8** (or 1. ... Kd7) **2. Qd5+.** **PROBLEM 3. Fork:** White wins a rook with **1. Qd5+.** If 1. ... Ke8 (or 1. ... Ke7) 2. Qe5+; if 1. ... Kc8 2. Qd4. **PROBLEM 4. Mating net:** White mates in 2: **1. Bc6+ Kc8 2. Qf8 mate.** **PROBLEM 5. Double attack:** White wins a piece with **1. Nxc6 Rxc6 2. e5.** **PROBLEM 6. Mating net:** White mates in 2: **1. Qxc6+ bxc6 2. Bxc6 mate.**

PAGE 64 PRACTICAL TASKS

POSITION 1. 17. e5! Nd7 18. Nb5! A standard regrouping: White prepares c2-c3 and Nb5-d4. Black's pieces are completely misplaced for this structure, and his plan is not at all clear. In the game, White played 17. exd5?, which gives Black an isolated pawn but allows their pieces to come alive. In general, isolated queen's pawn positions are not dangerous for Black once White has played f2-f4, due to the weakening of the e3- and e4-squares. After 17. ... Nxd5 18. Nxd5 exd5! 19. c3 Bf5 20. Qd2 Be4 Black's bishop was firmly entrenched on e4. Skettos – Flynn, 4NCL Congress (2), Harrogate, 2024 (analysis). **POSITION 2. 29. ... Ne3!** The knight is incredibly strong here. Black played 29. ... Ne5? in the game, but after 30. Rh4 Bf5 31. Kg2 White had equalized; 29. ... Nf2 is not as clear, but still much better than the move in the game. **30. Rh4 30. Re4** Re8 is winning for Black. At some point the knight can jump to f5. **30. ... Bf5** The same position as the game, but with the knight on e3 instead of e5. That is the difference between a totally winning position for Black and equality! The white king is stuck on g1 and Ra1-d1 is prevented, so Black's rook is headed to d2. **31. Re1** Not 31. Rd4 Nc2. **31. ... Rd8** and White is powerless against the invasion of the second rank. Sciborowski – Glusko, Polish 2nd League 2025 (analysis). **POSITION 3.** The only defense is **31. ... Nc5!!** 31. ... Rd8? is no good: 32. Bxd7 Rxd7 33. Rb8+ Kg7 (or 33. ... Bf8 34. Bb4!) 34. g4! and Black's bishop is about to be trapped. Black played 31. ... Rb8?, but after 32. Rxb8+ Nxb8 33. Bb5! Black's knight was trapped. The game concluded 33. ... Bf8 34. Ba5! Bd6 35. Bb6! and Black resigned. **32. Rb5 Rc8! 33. Rxc5 Bf8 34. Ra5 Rxc6 35. Ra8 Kg7** and White still has winning chances, but the battle continues. Lazarus – Kenning, Cambridge Intl. Open (2), 2024 (analysis). **POSITION 4. 34. Bc2!** is winning. This is the key idea White missed; as a result she never actually reached the diagram position and lost. **34. ... Qxd5** The bishop cannot be captured: 34. ... Bxc2 35. Qxf7+ Kh8 gives White a mating attack. Meanwhile, 34. ... Rc7 35. Re3! leaves Black no good defense against 36. Re8: 35. ... Rc8 allows 36. Bxg6+ fxc6 37. Re7+ with a mating attack. **35. Rf5!** The most convincing finish. The rook endgame is winning after 35. Qxf7+ Qxf7 36. Rxf7+ Kh6 37. Rf6 Rg8 38. Rxd6 Kh7 39. Bxg6+ Rxc6 40. Rd5!, but there is still more work to be done. **35. ... Bxf5 36. Qxf5+ Qxf5 37. Bxf5+ Kg7 38. Bxc8** with an extra piece. Ignatova – Nguyen, German Youth Teams 2025 (analysis). **POSITION 5: 14. ... Nd4!** is best, avoiding the trade of knights. Black will play ... f7-f6 and White's knights will lack effective outposts.

The game went 14. ... Re8! 15. Nxc6 bxc6 16. Na4! when White's knight had a perfect square for the rest of the game, targeting Black's pawn on c5. Koppe – Bruss, Bavarian Ch, 2025 (analysis). **POSITION 6. 30. Bxc6!** won a critical pawn and the game: **30. ... Qxb6 31. cxb6** Only like this! Not 31. Rxb6? when the in-between check 31. ... Rd1+! gets Black out of jail: 32. Kg2 Nxc5. **31. ... Re7 32. a5 Nd4 33. Bg2 Ne2+ 34. Kh2 Nc3 35. Rb4 Na2 36. Rb2 Nc3 37. Rxb7 Rxb7 38. Bxb7 Rxb7 39. a6, Black resigned.** Estevez Sacristan – Molinero Castejon, Pamplona 2026 (analysis). **POSITION 7. 24. ... Qxe5!** White can't take the queen. 24. ... Bh6+ 25. Kb1 Qxe5 is not as clear after 26. Rxc6. **25. Qa4** Not 25. dxe5 Bh6+ 26. Rd2 Rh1+ 27. Qf1 Rxf1 mate. **25. ... Rxd4 26. Rc4+ R4d7!** and Black converted the extra piece. Puechler – Jekel, Kaltern, 2025. **POSITION 8. 20. ... Rad8!** There is no good defense against ... a5-a4. The immediate 20. ... a4? allows counterplay: 21. Nc5! and White has equalized. **21. f4** The alternatives are no better: 21. Qc4 or 21. Rc4 both lose to 21. ... Bxe5. **21. ... a4 22. Nc5** If 22. Na1 Black has many ways to win. The engine likes 22. ... c5 23. dxc5 Rxd1+ 24. Rxd1 Rxd1+ 25. Qxd1 Qxb2 followed by taking on a2. **22. ... Nxd4** Winning a pawn. **23. Rxd4 Rxd4 24. e6?!** Qxb2! A nice tactical detail. **25. exf7+ Kxf7 26. Qg4 R8d6, White resigned.** Tesic – Goldkuhle, Muenster, 2025. **POSITION 9. 7. ... c5!** The key to Black's play, attacking White's center. **8. c3 8. dxc5 Bxc5 9. Nxc5 Qxc5** is excellent for Black. **8. ... Nc6** with a dream Advance Caro for Black. Black played 7. ... Be4? in the game, and after 8. Rg1 h5 9. Ng3 hxc4? (9. ... c5 is a better chance, although by now White stands very well) 10. Nxe4 dxe4 11. Qxc4 and White went on to win. Alternatively, 7. ... a5 is a reasonable idea, but after 8. a4 the best move is still 8. ... c5 and now White may profit from the b5-square. Patton – Gosling, Wells, 2026.

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Practical TASKS

BY IM ROBERT SHLYAKHTENKO AND MATAN PRILLELTENSKY

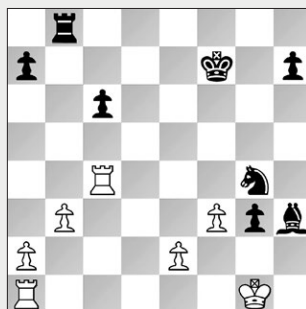
▶ RAY CHENG'S *PRACTICAL CHESS EXERCISES* is one of the most underrated books for amateur players, and with his blessing trainers Matan Prilleltensky and IM Robert Shlyakhtenko are bringing his concept to *Chess Life*. (Look for a book from them with these kinds of problems in the near future.) No hints, no one to tell you you're winning. Just find the best move, whether it's a shot, a defense, or a finesse. Just like at the board. Solutions are on page 63. ♠

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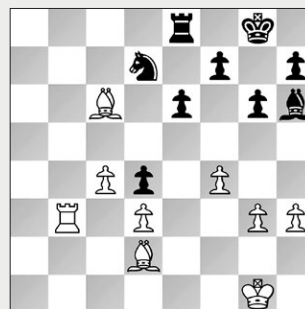
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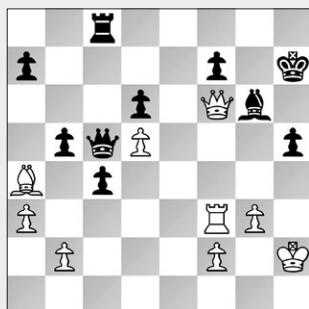
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POSITION 3.



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POSITION 4.



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POSITION 5.



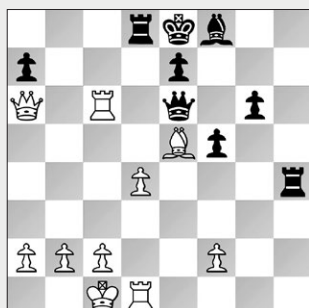
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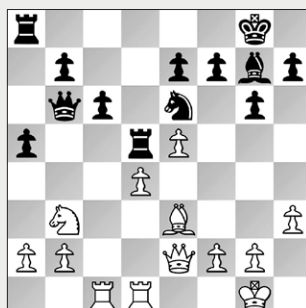
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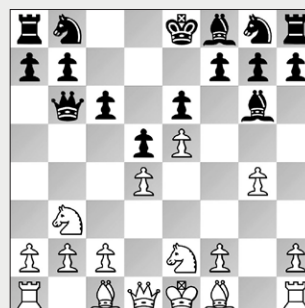
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POSITION 8.



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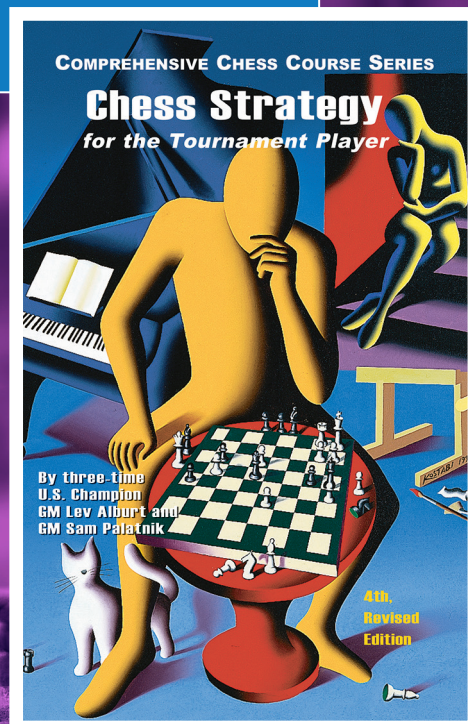
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