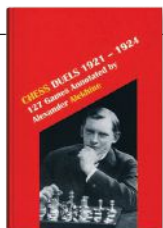


CHESSLIFE

IRINA KRUSH

*on winning the
U.S. Women's
Championship
for the eighth time,
her career, her
battle with
COVID-19, and
balancing teaching
and playing*

Still
KRUSHIN' IT

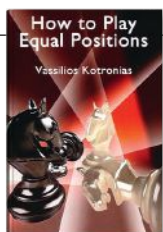


CHESS DUELS - 1921-1924

by Alexander Alekhine

B0023MV - \$44.95

The publication is a continuation of the project to publish all the available games annotated by the Fourth world chess champion Alexander Alekhine. These are not only his own games but also games by other players for which he contributed notes in various publications. Covered here are several international tournaments in Europe from 1921-1923, as well as exhibition games in Britain and North America from 1923 and early 1924. An additional chapter gives a few early game annotations which were not included in the first volume.

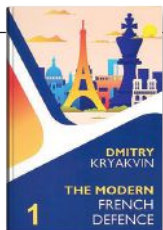


HOW TO PLAY EQUAL POSITIONS

by Vassilios Kotronias

B0154EU - \$31.95

The purpose of this book is to shed some light on the underlying principles that govern "boring" chess positions, bordering on equality. Such positions have gradually become the main dish of nowadays' chess menu because people have increased their level, their stamina, their desire to grind down wins out of nothing. The author proposes a clear streamlined method of thinking in dry equal positions without long-term plans. It is based mostly on correct evaluation and categorization of the position, and on move by move play.

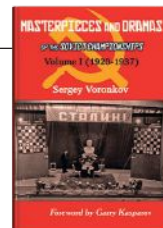


THE MODERN FRENCH DEFENCE - VOL. 1

by Dmitry Kryakvin

B0155EU - \$33.95

The French Defence is coming back to fashion again! One of the leaders in the 2020 Candidates tournament, Ian Nepomniachtchi, successfully staked on it. Lately World champion himself also embraced the French several times. A great expert of this opening is the last challenger for the world title Fabiano Caruana. The French became a real arena of the battle of the engines - neural network genius Leela was confidently repelling the attacks of its powerful rivals. The focus of Volume #1 is the Tarrasch and Various Lines.

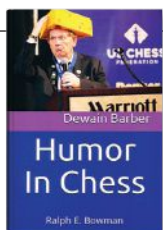


MASTERPIECES AND DRAMAS OF THE SOVIET CHAMPIONSHIPS - VOL. 1

by Sergey Voronkov

B0035ER - \$39.95

In his three-volume treatise, leading Russian chess historian Sergey Voronkov vividly brings to life the long-forgotten history of the Soviet championships held in 1920-1953. Volume I covers the first 10 championships from 1920-1937, as well as the title match between Botvinnik and Levenfish. The key contestants also include world champion Alekhine and challenger Bogoljubov, lesser-known Soviet champions Romanovsky, Bogatyrychuk, Verlinsky, and Rabinovich, and names that today will be unfamiliar yet were big stars at the time: Riumin, Alatortsev, Makogonov, Rauzer, Ragozin, Chekhover, and many others.



HUMOR IN CHESS

by Dewain Barber

B0147OB - \$14.95

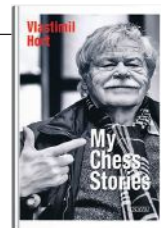
A 2020 CHESS JOURNALISTS AWARD WINNER. Dewain Barber, the Dean of Scholastic Chess, has compiled a collection of 184 chess stories that shows the humorous side of the royal game.

MY CHESS STORIES

by Vlastimil Hort

B0146OB - \$34.95

In this book, Vlastimil Hort talks about his personal experiences and encounters in the chess world. A long stay in hospital when he was five years old and a caring doctor who explained the chess rules to him were the beginning of his great passion. Today, he can look back on a turbulent and successful chess life. With his unmistakable Bohemian talent for storytelling, he now gives a lively insight behind the scenes of the chess world in 64 stories - sometimes with amusement, sometimes with nostalgia, but always entertainingly and to the point.

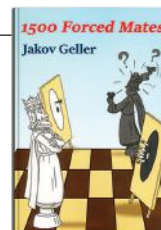


1500 FORCED MATES

by Jakov Geller

B0036ER - \$24.95

This book focuses on a key element of tactics: forced mate. It contains 1500 positions rife with tactical resources; 1380 of them are presented as puzzles. The book is divided into 31 chapters, most of which are dedicated to a single tactical method, which is described in detail. This fundamental work systematizes the methods for delivering forced mate, which include sacrifices, pawn promotion, vacation, attraction, elimination, deflection, blocking, seizing the square, x-rays, discovered checks and much more! The greatest value of this book is in the learning system that can be used as a foundation for young chess players to study tactics.

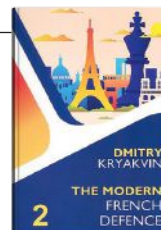


THE MODERN FRENCH DEFENCE - VOL. 2

by Dmitry Kryakvin

B0156EU - \$33.95

The French Defence is coming back to fashion again! One of the leaders in the 2020 Candidates tournament, Ian Nepomniachtchi, successfully staked on it. Lately World champion himself also embraced the French several times. A great expert of this opening is the last challenger for the world title Fabiano Caruana. The French became a real arena of the battle of the engines - neural network genius Leela was confidently repelling the attacks of its powerful rivals. The focus of Volume #2 is the Advance and Winawer.

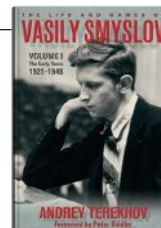


THE LIFE AND GAMES OF VASILY SMYSLOV - VOL. 1

by Andrey Terekhov

B0129RE - \$34.95

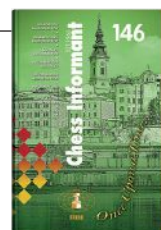
Vasily Smyslov, the seventh world champion, had a long and illustrious chess career. He played close to 3,000 tournament games over seven decades, from the time of Lasker and Capablanca to the days of Anand and Carlsen. From 1948 to 1958, Smyslov participated in four world championships, becoming world champion in 1957. In this first volume of a multi-volume set, Russian FIDE master Andrey Terekhov traces the development of young Vasily from his formative years and becoming the youngest grandmaster in the Soviet Union to finishing second in the world championship match tournament.



CHESS INFORMANT - ISSUE 146

B0146INF - \$39.95

Chess Informant 146 contains hundreds of games, annotated by strong players, cross tables, tournament results, separate chapters on combinations, endgames, problems, studies. It includes analysis of particular openings, regular columns of top players on various themes etc.





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MARCH

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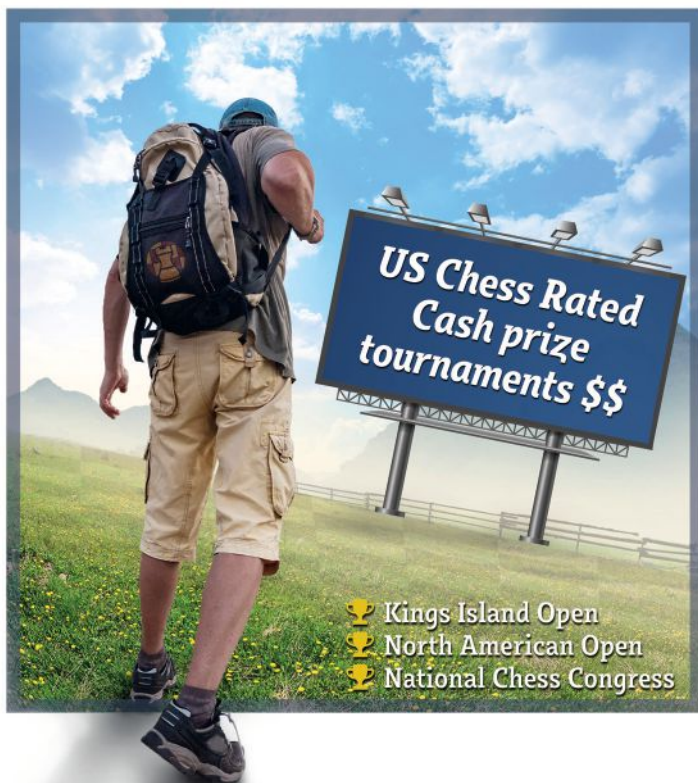
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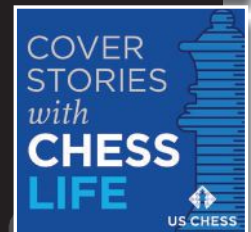
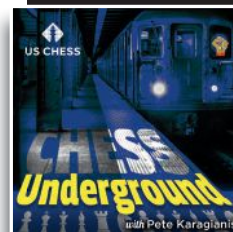
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PODCASTS
FROM  **US CHESS**

Letters: *Kudos and Knights*

TEACHING KNIGHT MOVES

GM Andy Soltis' column from September 2020 continues to generate comments. It seems a lot of our members have a special way of teaching knight moves. Here are a few more:

Growing up, I was always partial to the description of the knight move as "one square in the horizontal or vertical direction, followed by one square diagonally." I have modified that a little bit, based on the idea of counting to two. "A knight can move to a square that is two opposite colored squares away from its current position." For instance, to move the g1 knight to f3, the player would count g2 as the first light square away from g1, and f3 as the second light square away from g1. Accordingly, to move the knight from f3 to g5, the player would count f4 as the first dark square away from f3, and g5 as the second dark square away from f3. I am curious to see if anyone likes this description, or have I just tossed more mud in the water?

John Kucela
via email

So far it seems everyone has their own opinion on how to teach the knight moves. So here's the way I do it.

The passive approach is to place a knight in the center of the board and then put pawns on every square the knight can land on. Pointing out the octagonal shape helps them to visualize the moves.

But I like the active method. With the knight in the center again, put eight pawns in a square formation around it. Then challenge the student to capture all eight pawns in nine moves with the knight. Doing this exercise a couple of times really sticks in their head.

John Skelton
via email

KUDOS ON THE JANUARY ISSUE

A real compliment goes out to Mr. Jerome Helm of Omaha, Nebraska, for his creation of "his teaching chess in 15 minutes" along with utilizing Paul Morphy's Opera Game ... that "offers everything, strategy and tactics."

Whereas a gold star has gone out over the centuries to many fine players in the game of chess, a platinum star should be awarded to Mr. Helm for his own simplification and ease of access to what could always be a forever complicated endeavor. Let's bring more players into the fold thanks to Mr. Helm.

Terry Kokosenski
via email

Thank you *Chess Life*, Dennis McGrath, and Castle Chess for the balanced, bittersweet story about the impact of COVID-19 on a thriving chess club.

As a second generation serious chess player in the Twin Cities (my father Roger was a long-time member of the Minneapolis Chess Club), my contemporaries and I benefited from the Stenbergs, Tiers, Barnes, and countless volunteers who established a strong chess presence in Minnesota before the Fischer chess revolution. Although now many years away from the Twin Cities, my favorite chess recollections will

always include the Twin City High School Chess League, University of Minnesota Pan-Am chess team entries (Dan Voje teammate), and the Twin City Chess League (Curt Brasket teammate), where I encountered the next generation of future Minneapolis Chess Hall of Famers.

Terry Gleason
via email

Note from author: Although a life-time US Chess member and regularly a cover-to-cover reader of Chess Life, this is the first time I was moved to write a letter to Chess Life.

Editor's Note: We neglected to include one key fact in our coverage of the 2020 U.S. Championships: the winners of the Cadet, U.S. Junior & U.S. Junior Girls' each receive a \$6,000 scholarship, jointly supported by US Chess and Dewain Barber. Barber has also made available one-year memberships for all of the participants in these three events.

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

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In Praise of Descriptive Notation

What's old could be new again...

By JOHN HARTMANN

Few issues in chess rankle players "of a certain age" more than the demise of descriptive notation (DN). To wit:

Chess Life, November 1967: Readers are asked whether the magazine should change from descriptive to algebraic notation in an "Important Questionnaire." The results, as reported in April 1968, run roughly six to one in favor of keeping descriptive.

Five years later, in November 1972 and deep in the throes of Fischer fever, *Chess Life* editor Burt Hochberg revisits the issue, announcing that despite only 18% of the membership favoring algebraic, the Policy Board adopted a motion to effectively begin the transition. Using short "explanatory article[s]" each month, the idea was to acclimate readers to the shift, much like the proverbial lobster in the pot of boiling water.

And so began the "Notation Wars."

Letters were written. (See May 1973, for example.) Issues were printed in three languages: descriptive, short algebraic, and long algebraic notations. (How's that for confusing??) In time, the magazine became more and more rooted in algebraic, although it was only under the editorial reign of Peter Kurzdorfer in the early 2000s that the final holdouts, columnists Larry Evans and Andy Soltis, finally gave up the descriptive ghost.

Now I am no luddite, and let me reassure everyone that we are not returning to the old days of 1. P-K4. (Except on the next page — that's one-time only.) But more and more I am convinced of the value of knowing descriptive

notation, and prompted by a letter to the editor from Pesach Kremen — thanks for that, Pesach! — I intend to abuse my great powers and explain why that is the case.

There is one glaringly obvious reason to learn descriptive notation: great swathes of chess literature and history are only available in descriptive. Many of the best books of yesteryear — Mikhail Botvinnik's *One Hundred Selected Games*, Fred Reinfeld's *The Immortal Games of Capablanca* or *Tarrasch's Best Games of Chess*, Savielly Tartakover & Julius du Mont's *500 Master Games of Chess* — have yet to be translated into algebraic, and most likely never will be. The bilingual among us can still benefit from them, and without much cost, for titles like these litter used bookshops, abandoned by the algebraic-only crowd.

We might also consider the immense archive of back issues of *Chess Life* and *Chess Review*, now available at the Digital Archive at uschess.org for anyone to download. Take a typical issue from the 1960s or 1970s, with columnists like Pal Benko, Svetozar Gligorić, or Paul Keres, and features by both the American and Soviet elite. If you can't read descriptive, these are unintelligible; if you invest the time to pick up DN, a whole new world of reading and training material is now at your fingertips.

But it's not just the practical value of being able to read classic chess literature. Knowing descriptive notation, and thinking in descriptive notation, might actually help your game. And here again, the idea of becoming bilingual gives us a model for why this might be true.

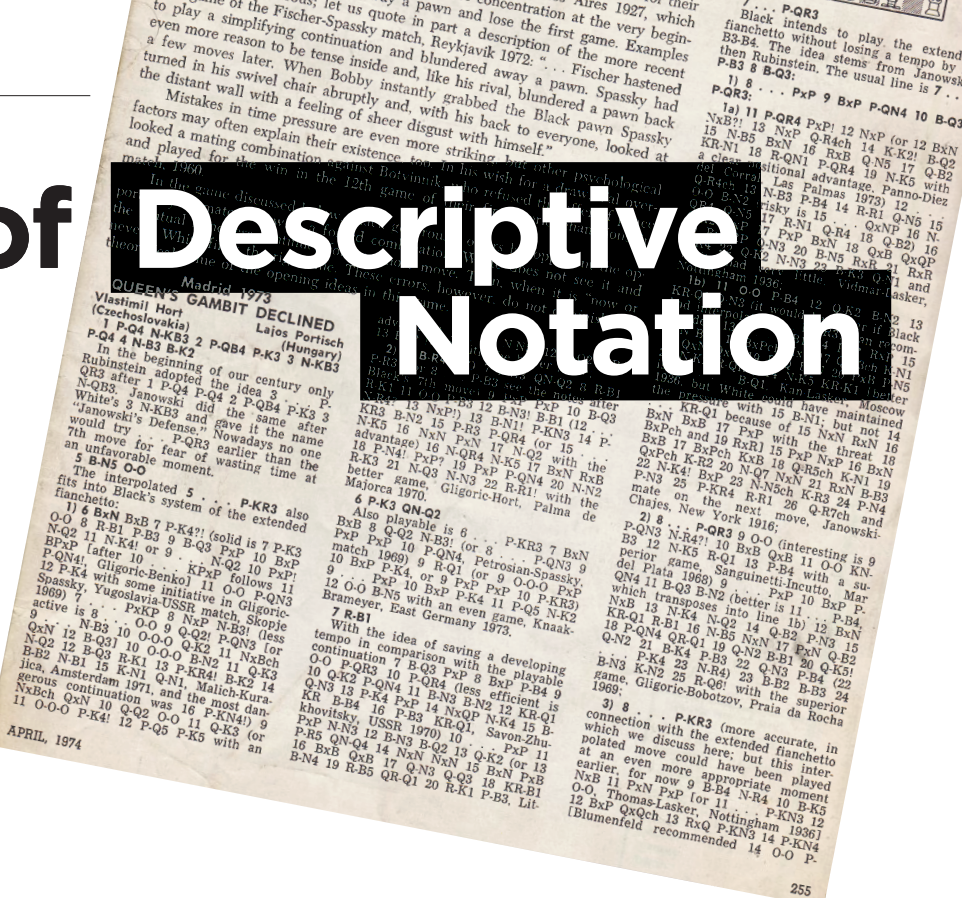
You don't have to be a Martin Heidegger or a Benjamin Whorf to understand how language creates and frames a world. (How many Inuit words are there for snow?) To speak a specific language is to inhabit a conceptual framework that parses out what we perceive; even something like the interplay between article and verb tense, the number and type of pronouns, can radically shape how we think and what we experience.

So too, I would argue, with chess notation. Algebraic notation presupposes a third-person, objective viewpoint — the "god's eye view" from above — where every square has one true name, regardless of who is playing what color. Descriptive notation, in contrast, is situated, its proper implementation entirely dependent upon which side of the board you sit.

I submit that players who grew up using descriptive might well experience the chess board differently from those who are native algebraic speakers, and that we might understand this difference by thinking of how we learn to navigate a new locale.

If you want to go someplace new and you rely on Google Maps to plot your path, you may get there safely, but you won't necessarily learn *how* to get there. The algorithm gives you the route, one which may not make sense to an experienced local driver, but one that is nevertheless efficient according to the criteria built into Google's search mechanisms.

If instead you wrangle with a physical map to determine the route, or if you follow a set of verbal directions from a friend, things are



different. You have to pay attention to your situatedness in the process, in finding the signposts and keeping track of the twists and turns you must make. You have to be active in finding your way, instead of relying on the cell phone and the satellite and the far-away server farm.

It may be a bit of a stretch, but I think that we can see something of the same phenomenon in the difference between those who think, for lack of a better word, in algebraic and descriptive notation. David Hooper and Ken Whyld make an analogous point in *The Oxford Companion to Chess*: “[u]sing this notation [DN – ~ed.] is like describing the location of a house in relationship to a landmark, ‘the third house after the crossroads:’ the traveler needs to be moving in the right direction.” (106)

Perhaps the “algebraic native” who learns descriptive notation is doing more than gaining access to old books. Perhaps they are giving themselves a new perspective on the board and the pieces, a chance at a slightly altered board sight. Even reading books

in descriptive notation — books written before the engine age, requiring more active analytical reading — might have a beneficial effect in this regard.

This idea is not new to me. The plural of anecdote is not data, but I vividly recall my first coach, FM Mark Ritter, telling me that when he found himself playing poorly, he would switch his written notation from algebraic to descriptive. True, this was in a time before (as is currently the case) only algebraic notation was legal in US Chess events, but the point remains: it is possible that tweaking one’s mental framework for approaching the board might temporarily reboot one’s thinking.

Will learning descriptive notation boost your rating? Probably not. (But if it does, you know who to thank!) Nevertheless, it seems to me that every chess fan should invest the time in learning to read descriptive. Not only does it open up occluded parts of chess history and literature to the next generations of fans, but it helps us see our game — *literally* — in a new (or is it old?) light. ♠

FACES ACROSS THE BOARD

By AL LAWRENCE



ERIC NAGER

**DAPHNE,
ALABAMA**

*“Coming back
to chess” as a
championship coach*

Eric (above, left) and his younger brother Paul coach different Alabama school teams, Eric for Bayside Academy and Paul for UMS-Wright. They shared the state scholastic championship in 2014.

When Eric’s nephews started high school in 2000, he phoned to see if their small, K-12 school offered a chess coach. “If you want to volunteer, it’s your job,” the headmaster told him. “So, in that unceremonious way, I was signed on,” Eric recalls with a laugh. As a kid, Eric learned chess from his dad and played the game through his own school days. “I had to put chess away in college. But chess is something one can always come back to.” He came back to mentor others.

Eric foresaw a lofty beginning, students learning notation and studying master games — but some kids just want to have fun.

Five years after starting from scratch, Eric led his David-against-Goliath team to become the first national chess champions from Alabama. They won the Under-1200 section at the SuperNationals in Nashville, despite competing at longer time controls than they could practice — and despite dealing with the culture shock of small-school kids battling amid 5,000 other players. To date, Bayside has collected 11 state championship titles and 10 top-10 spots at Nationals.

Eric’s book, *The Pawn Who Would Be Queen*, recounts two decades of championship coaching, the practical and the playful. A favorite image: in 2006, when Bayside was invited to Moscow, each member brought a gift that was “typically American.” Cowboy hats and peanut butter were among the swag shared with the Russians. Now Eric’s book has launched an hourlong documentary. Both are available online at www.thepawnwhowouldbequeen.com.

Oh, and Eric wants you to know that his 2014 trophy, pictured above, is just a bit taller than brother Paul’s — Bayside won on tiebreaks.

A Descriptive Sampler

Here’s an unused game from our report on the Tata Steel Masters, rendered in Descriptive Notation. Read up on it at Wikipedia, and then try your hand at replaying the game to get a sense of the notation style.

DESCRIPTIVE MOVES

GM Pentala Harikrishna (2732)

GM Alireza Firouzja (2749)

83rd Tata Steel Masters (8), 01.24.2021



Black is a pawn up, but the position is relatively level as the doubled queen’s pawns mute the influence of the bishops. Here Harikrishna gives Firouzja the chance to free one of them.

37. N-B4? P-Q6! 38. NxP/3 B-Q5 ch 39. N-B2 R-B7

Suddenly Black’s pieces all make sense, including the bishop on KB2 which is doing good defensive work.

40. K-B1 RxP 41. R-K2 R-N8 ch 42. R-K1 R/3-QN3

Perhaps better is 42. ... RxR ch 43. KxR K-K2 44. K-K2 K-Q3 with a serious advantage for Black.

43. N-Q3 B-B6 44. RxR RxR ch 45. K-B2 K-K2 46. R-R2 K-B3 47. K-K3 K-N4?!

White has found his way back into the game, but now misses a key chance to fully equalize.

48. N-B5?!

Better was 48. R-R7! P-Q5 ch 49. K-K4 BxP and now, with all the black pieces on the queenside, White can drum up enough play against the king to hold. A sample line: 50. R-R5 ch K-B3 51. R-R6 ch K-B2 52. R-R7 ch K-N1 53. R-QB7. There’s also a tactical way to liquidate: 48. P-R4 KxP (it’s also equal after 48. ... P-N4 49. R-R7 K-B3 50. R-R6 ch K-N4 51. RxP) 49. BxP BxB 50. R-R5 ch K-K3 51. N-B4 ch K-Q2 52. RxB ch K-B3 53. K-Q3 R-Q8 ch 54. K-B4 with equality.

48. ... R-N4 49. R-R7 B-N1 50. R-QB7 KxP 51. N-NP?

After 51. K-Q3 Black still has to prove the win.

51. ... P-Q5 ch 52. K-B2 R-N7 ch 53. B-K2 K-B5 54. N-Q6 B-Q7 55. K-B1 R-N8 ch 56. B-Q1 P-Q6, White resigned.

ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE SEEKS INPUT

The Accessibility and Special Circumstances Committee (ASCC) has begun work on updating the *US Chess Guidelines for Accessible Chess Events* that were published in April 2020.

Under the leadership of chair Dr. Stephanie Berk, the ASCC will be updating the guidelines and adding a section that covers accessibility issues with online play. If you have experience with accessibility issues and online events as a player, organizer, or tournament director, the ASCC would like your input. The ASCC is looking for case studies, identification of potential issues,



and accommodations that you have found with your own events. The guidelines will be updated in 2021 to reflect this growing area of play.

For general comments, suggestions on the guidelines, and input on accessibility with online play, please reach out to the committee at accessibility@uschess.org.

UPDATE: Scholastic National Invitational Event and Award Requirements

No changes have been made to the existing Scholastic National Invitational Event and Award Requirements posted at <https://new.uschess.org/invitational-information>. The regulations as posted will be used to calculate the lists of qualifiers and/or invited players for this year's events. The US Chess rating supplement and rating systems used are specified for each event.

However, for sections 1-8, 13, and 15-18, per an Executive Board motion passed on December 22, 2020, all regular US Chess rated games played since March 1, 2019 until the date of the respective supplement specified for each event will be used as the period for establishing whether a player has met the activity requirement as in section 20.2. Games played under any of the online rating systems will not count towards this calculation.

Also, the Executive Board recently reaffirmed the motion (<https://new.uschess.org/news/us-chess-suspending-international-event-participation>) to not authorize delegations for any international events until further notice due to U.S. State Department Level 4 travel warnings. It also reaffirmed that US Chess will not provide any financial support to any participants for international competition until further notice. This motion affects events such as the World Youth, World Cadet, Pan-American Youth, and other international events listed in the aforementioned requirements.

Attention Life Members

In February, all life members were mailed to notify you to confirm your address and to make a selection for either printed or digital benefits. Please verify your membership, contact information, and publication preference by March 31, 2021, or your membership will become inactive. You may reactivate your membership, update your contact information or publication preference at any time.

If you did not receive the notice, please email membership@uschess.org and we will provide you with the necessary form.

REGISTER TO VOTE: NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

It's March and another US Chess Executive Board election season is underway. This year, four candidates are vying for three board seats. And continuing our embrace of streamlining our processes, the US Chess Election Committee is considering something new this year and we want you to be prepared to take part if you so choose.



REGISTERING TO VOTE & CHOOSING YOUR BALLOT PREFERENCE

Log into your US Chess member dashboard and click on the blue Register to Vote button, within your profile information between your membership expiration date and the line for TD Level. During the voter registration process, you can also choose how you prefer to receive your Executive Board Election ballot, by postal mail or via email for an online ballot.

Your voter registration and ballot preference must be completed by May 1, 2021 (11:59 CT) in order to be eligible for the 2021 Executive Board election. Those not choosing a ballot preference will continue to receive a ballot by postal mail.

If you do not have an account linked to US Chess homepage (www.uschess.org) via the Member Site Login in the upper right corner, visit <https://new.uschess.org/user/login> and follow the prompts for a first-time log in below the User Account login box. You will need your US Chess ID and an email address unique to your US Chess membership in order to set up an account. Your account is your gateway for accessing your full range of US Chess benefits.

If you are unable to set up an account and register to vote online, you may also request to be registered to vote by sending your US Chess ID number and whether you want to vote online or by paper ballot to governance@gmail.com. Our staff will register you.

Candidates Certified for Executive Board Election

The Election Committee certifies the following four candidates for the 2021 Executive Board election:

- | | | |
|----|----------|-------------------------|
| 1. | 10320372 | Randy Bauer (IA) |
| 2. | 12633862 | John C. Fernandez (MO) |
| 3. | 12544760 | Kevin Joseph Pryor (FL) |
| 4. | 12792845 | Ryan Velez (KY) |

In Passing



GM Lubomir Kavalek 1943 - 2021

By **GM ANDY SOLTIS**

At the closing banquet of the 1972 World Championship match — sitting four chairs from winner GM Bobby Fischer — was a balding, bearded, 29-year-old man whose invitation to the event listed him simply as Fischer’s “coach (bowling).”

This was the kind of semi-anonymous role played for decades by GM Lubomir (Lubos) Kavalek, the ultimate chess professional.

In the seven years that followed, Kavalek became one of the world’s top 10, helped negotiate Fischer’s world championship defense, coached an American to the world junior championship, devised one of the greatest tournaments ever held, and won his second and third U.S. Championship titles.

Yet when he died January 18 of lung cancer, Kavalek was best remembered for a single brilliant game that he won when he was 18 and as one of the stars of “the golden generation” of Czech chess.

He was born in Prague on August 9, 1943, and grew up in a chess culture of Marxism. Before the last round of the 1964 Olympiad, Czech team captain GM Ludek Pachman, a rabid Communist, made a secret deal with the Soviets to draw all four games to ensure gold medals for the USSR. No one told Lubos (pronounced “LOO-bosh”), who had White against GM Leonid Stein. He opened with the hardly drawish 1. e4 e5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3. f4 exf4 4. d4?! Qh4+ 5. Ke2. “You have insulted the Soviet chess school,” Pachman shrieked at him. (They eventually drew.)

As recently as last year, Lubos told me he was “still trying to grasp” how his Czech colleagues became loyal Communists to get ahead but now said they were anti-Communists all their lives. At one point in his youth, he was so sick of the politics that he considered giving up chess for contract bridge. Then he discovered the key figure in the Czech bridge hierarchy was Pachman.

Kavalek defected after the failed anti-Soviet uprising in 1968 and crossed the Iron Curtain

by bribing guards with cases of vodka. He settled in the U.S. with his wife, Irena, and got a job with Radio Free Europe. Because of his fluency in English, Russian, Czech, and Serbian, he was sent to Reykjavik to cover the Fischer-Spassky match. Bobby listened to the broadcasts and asked him to be his bowling partner at a U.S. military base. When Fischer soured on his official second, GM Bill Lombardy, Kavalek replaced him for the rest of the match. “Bobby never said ‘thank you’ to me,” Lubos recalled.

But in 1975, Fischer asked him to help change the rules for his world championship match defense that year. Lubos asked Larry Kaufman, a future grandmaster with a strong math background, to prove Bobby was mathematically right about the rules he wanted. Kaufman concluded he was wrong. Fischer stuck to his demands and forfeited his title.

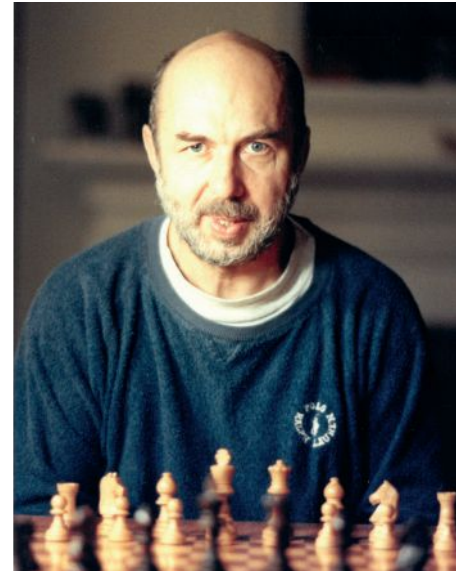
Lubos moved on to planning tournaments with the richest-ever prize funds. His dream tournament was held in Montreal with a \$110,000 prize chest (more than \$400,000 in today’s dollars, a round-robin record). More than a decade later, Kavalek organized the World Cup tournaments that helped convince the vast majority of the world’s grandmasters to join a professional guild, the Grandmasters Association.

If you read his wonderful tournament reports in *Chess Life*, you knew how much Kavalek enjoyed just playing and getting his know his colleagues. “He was one of those GMs that almost everyone liked,” Kaufman said.

GM Larry Christiansen recalled how, at Linares 1981, the players visited a local bull ring. “Lubos actually went out there and played matador with some of the smaller bulls” — and got knocked down, he said. At U.S. tournaments, Kavalek, GMs Walter Browne, Robert Byrne, and Christiansen played doubles tennis. Somehow the winning team was the always the one with Lubos, Larry said.

Kavalek also became a mentor. In 1976, he guided Mark Diesen to win the World Junior Championship. More than a decade later, according to Lubos, GM Nigel Short came to him and said, “I want you to make me world champion like you made Bobby Fischer world champion.”

Although Short denies these words, he



CREDITS: TOP - BILL HOOK; BOTTOM - BURT HOCHBERG, MONTREAL 1979

credits Kavalek with guiding him to the 1993 championship match against GM Garry Kasparov. Chess history took a sharp turn in Kavalek’s Virginia home that February, when Short thought FIDE had cheated him out of a bigger prize fund. “I pointed to the phone in my kitchen,” Kavalek recalled, and told Short to call Kasparov. Short and Kasparov agreed to hijack the match from FIDE. This led to a 13-year period when there were two world champions. “The chaos in the chess world started in my house,” Kavalek said.

Lubos won several brilliancy prizes, including one against Kaufman in the 1972 U.S. Championship. Historian Isaac Linder asked him to define beauty in chess. What Kavalek wrote could have been his blueprint for life: “Reaching your aims by simple, most efficient means, yet giving the pieces a special, almost supernatural power to come to life.” ♠

Mysteries for Know-It-Alls

There's a lot we don't know about chess. Let's try to fill in some gaps.

By GM ANDY SOLTIS

THANKS TO THE INTERNET AND databases we know much more about chess than any previous generation knew. We've become know-it-alls.

But we *can't* know it all — because “all” hasn't been input into our computers. Much of what we think we know is based on woefully incomplete data.

For example, you may have heard the claim that “Philidor never played the Philidor's Defense!”

Is it true? Well, if you look in a database, you'll find about 50 games played by Andre Philidor. In all but a few he was White. There are no Philidor Defense games in which he played Black.

But hold on. Virtually all of those databased games were played when he was over 60. He was an avid player since age 14 and began studying 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 d6 in his 20s.

Surely there must be some Philidor Defenses in the thousands of his games that are missing. Do you believe the database or common sense?

Today you hear know-it-all claims in online commentary of master tournaments. A high-Elo talking-head declares that White's 14th move is an innovation: “It's never been played before.”

Like the Philidor claim, you should ask, “How can anyone possibly know if that is true?”

But listeners will believe it because the move isn't in a database of grandmaster games. Of course, that database must be complete. Only grandmasters play chess.

Instead of believing know-it-alls, we should recognize what we don't know and fill in the gaps. Chess has enduring mysteries we can attempt to solve. Here are five of them.

WHO TERRORIZED THE INTERNET CHESS WORLD AND THEN VANISHED?

What we know: In 2000 someone signed on to the Internet Chess Club as a “guest” and

began beating grandmasters with ridiculous openings. He became famous when Nigel Short revealed that they played nearly 50 games and the guest had won most. Here is one of the guest's miraculous 2001 wins.

IRREGULAR OPENING (BOO)

Player 1

Player 2

Internet Chess Club, 2001

1. e4 f6 2. d4 c6 3. Nc3 Kf7 4. f4 Ke6 5. f5+ Kd6



The “guest” was Black and had also won with 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 h5?! and 1. e4 e6 2. d4 Ke7? 3. Nc3 Ke8? 4. Nf3 Ke7?.

6. Bf4+ e5 7. dxe5+ Kc7 8. exf6+ d6 9. fxg7 Bxg7 10. Nf3 Qe7 11. Bd3 Bxf5 12. O-O Bg4 13. h3 Bh5 14. Qe1 Nd7 15. Qg3 Bf6 16. Rae1 Ne5 17. Bxe5 dxe5 18. Kh2 Nh6

White was reputed to be Robert Fontaine, a strong French-born player who was about to become a grandmaster. His opening advantage of more than +5.00 is all but gone.

19. Nd1 Raf8 20. Ne3 Rhg8 21. Qf2 Bxf3 22. Qxf3 Bh4 23. Nf5 Nxf5 24. exf5 Bg3+ 25. Kh1 Bxe1 26. Rxe1 Qg7 27. b4 h5 28. b5 cxb5 29. Bxb5? Rxf5 30. Qd5 e4! 31. Qxe4 Rxb5 32. Qc4+ Kb8, White resigned.

What we don't know: The anonymous guest stopped playing soon after this game. Short suspected he was Bobby Fischer. Others believed it was someone with a computer that was several times better than any engine then known. Who was it and why did he disappear without a trace?

WHERE IS THE FRANK J. MARSHALL TROPHY?

In 1936 Frank Marshall relinquished the title of U.S. Champion so that new champions could be chosen in regularly scheduled tournaments. The Marshall Chess Club donated a silver Tiffany cup as a rotating trophy, to be kept by each new champion until the next championship. It was the most prestigious prize in U.S. chess history.

What we know: The trophy was often photographed at the post-championship presentation ceremony. *Chess Review* ran a photo of it in 1964 when Bobby Fischer registered his remarkable 13-0 triumph.

What we don't: That seems to be the last time it appeared in a chess magazine. Did Bobby keep it? Did the next champion, Larry Evans, take possession from him? Players in later U.S. championships were surprised it ever existed.

HOW DID MEPHISTO WORK?

Mephisto was one of three “automatons” that fascinated 19th century audiences by playing master chess. Unlike its rivals, Ajeeb and the Turk, there was no human operator hidden inside Mephisto.

What we know: Isidor Gunsberg, a world championship challenger later in life, revealed that he made Mephisto's moves remotely when beating world-class opponents, as in this game.

QUIZ FOR MARCH

More examples this month from vintage tournaments celebrating their centennials this year. The stronger of the two, held at The Hague, was so impressive that future world champion Max Euwe finished next to last in a field of ten players. Euwe did better, a solid second place, at the other international, held in Vienna. In each of the six positions you are asked to find the fastest winning line of play. This will usually mean the forced win of a decisive amount of material, such as a minor piece. Solutions on Page 59.

PROBLEM I.

Savielly Tartakower
Jacques Mieses



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM II.

Alexander Alekhine
Max Euwe



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM III.

Akiba Rubinstein
Georg Marco



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM IV.

Teodor Gruber
Ernst Gruenfeld



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM V.

Hans Mueller
Max Euwe



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM VI.

Alexander Alekhine
Savielly Tartakower



BLACK TO MOVE

VIENNA GAMBIT (C25)

Mephisto
Mikhail Chigorin
London 1883

1. e4 e5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3. f4 exf4 4. Nf3 g5 5. h4 g4 6. Ng5? h6 7. Nxf7 Kxf7 8. d4

Another problem with incomplete computer data: This crazy sacrifice was later junked by masters. But it had won so many games that databases are packed with White wins and that makes 6. Ng5? seem sound.

8. ... f3 9. gxf3 Be7 10. Bc4+ Kg7 11. Be3 Bxh4+ 12. Kd2 d5 13. exd5 Na5 14. Bd3 Be7? 15. fxg4 Nf6 16. Bxh6+? Rxh6 17. g5 Rxh1 18. Qxh1



Today's automatons say Black misses several improvements, such as 18. ... Nc4+! 19. Bxc4 Ng4 here.

18. ... Qh8? 19. gxf6+ Bxf6 20. Rg1+ Kf7 21. Qe4 Qh6+ 22. Kd1 Bd7 23. b4! Re8 24. Qg6+ Qxg6 25. Bxg6+ Kf8 26. Bxe8 Bxe8 27. Rf1 Ke7 28. d6+ cxd6 29. Nd5+ Kd8 30. Nxf6, Black resigned.

What we don't: How exactly did Gunsberg do it? There is evidence that the pieces were magnetized and the squares were electrically wired. But the way Gunsberg, in another room, operated Mephisto's arm and made its moves on a board is unknown.

Bear in mind, electromagnetism was still an evolving theory. Radio technology was years away — Guglielmo Marconi was two when Mephisto was built.

Science historians should have solved this mystery by now. Now it's our turn.

WHO INVENTED EN PASSANT?

The origin of chess conventions and rules is remarkably vague. We know the 64 squares used to be monochromatic. When did they become checkered? "Probably" about 1100 is the best answer.

In addition, castling evolved over a period of centuries. And "someone" invented the modern queen and bishop move "after 1475."

What we know: The two-square advance of a pawn became popular after 1200. The earliest published example of an *en passant* capture seems to be a 1796 game.

What we don't: Somewhere in that six-century gap the *en passant* rule became standard. It appears in Ruy Lopez's 1561 book, which has just appeared in an English translation. We can guess the French origin from its name. But who introduced it and popularized it is a mystery.

And finally, fellow know-it-alls:

WHAT HAPPENED TO BOBBY FISCHER'S CLOCK?

Nearly 30 years ago Fischer's patent for a new form of timing device revolutionized chess. Versions of it are now used all over the world. But what happened to the first Fischer clock, the one Bobby owned?

What we know: A Yugoslav engineer made a clock to Bobby's specifications and satisfaction. Its first known use was in the 1992 Fischer-Boris Spassky "world championship rematch." You can Google images of it.

What we don't: The next use of a "Fischer clock" was in a Boris Spassky-Judit Polgar match held in Budapest in 1993. Fischer moved to Hungary around that time so it may have been his personal clock. But what happened to it? ♦

Did you know you could read archival copies of "Chess to Enjoy" (and all columns and features)? Go to uschess.org, click on "Chess Life Magazine," and then "Archives."

IN THE NEWS

by JOHN HARTMANN

STOCKFISH RETAINS TCEC CROWN

A development version of Stockfish (dated January 13, 2021 for those keeping score at home) is the winner of the 20th TCEC Superfinal, defeating the Leela chess engine by a score of 53-47 over a 100 game match at tcec-chess.com. 22 games were decisive, with Stockfish winning 14 of them. The match ran from January 16-February 1.

TCEC — originally shortened from “Thoresen Chess Engines Competition,” after its founder, Martin Thoresen; now simply “Top Chess Engine Championship” — qualifying cycles and Superfinals are perhaps the preeminent computer chess competitions in the world, drawing fans to tcec-chess.com and the TCEC Twitch channel to watch all the action.

This was Stockfish’s third consecutive Superfinal victory over Leela, which had upended the computer chess world when it arrived on the scene in early 2018, its neural network-based intelligence matching and bettering the traditional “alpha-beta” driven engines. The relative parity between Leela and Stockfish was altered once again in the summer of 2020 when Stockfish integrated its own version of a neural network — NNUE, or “efficiently updatable neural networks” — derived from its Shogi playing cousins. Currently Stockfish is generally thought to be slightly stronger than Leela, as computer rating lists and competitions are bearing out.

TCEC events use top level hardware to power all of the participating engines. For the Superfinal, Stockfish was running on 88 CPUs (176 threads) with 128 gigabyte hash tables, while Leela made use of four NVIDIA v100 graphics cards. Together with the long time controls and an opening book from Jeroen Noomen that prioritized unbalanced positions, the result was a series of games that, quite literally, boggled the human mind.

Here are two examples, featuring a win each by Stockfish and Leela.

NOBODY’S PERFECT

Stockfish (3601)

Leela (3586)

TCEC Season 20 - Superfinal (49),
01.23.2021



WHITE TO MOVE

Here we see a case of one of Leela’s residual weaknesses — the very occasional tactical oversight. As it turns out, the ensuing play, which includes a potential queen sac on move 85, is very hard to see within Leela’s type of move search. For more on this, check out GM Matthew Sadler’s blog (matthewsadler.me.uk) where he dives deep into the matter and shows exactly how this happened.

81. Nf5!

Not anticipated by Leela during the game, although it does end up seeing it after 19 ply on my (much weaker) home machine. The Leela administrators used an experimental version of their engine for the SuperFinal; perhaps this is what caused the oversight?

81. ... gxf5

No better is 81. ... Bxf5 82. exf5 when Black has to pitch material to avoid the f5–f6 pawn fork.

82. g6 f4 83. Qg2 Rff7

There’s no hope after 83. ... Kg8 84. Rxh7 Rxh7 85. Rxh7 Qe8 86. Qg5 and White wins.

84. Rh6

White could grab material with 84. gxf7 Qxf7 85. Qf2 but Stockfish decides to just keep ratcheting up the pressure.

84. ... Bb5

If 84. ... Rxg6 85. Rxg6 Rg7 86. Rxg7 Qxg7 87. Qh2 and White will slowly improve its pieces and win.

85. gxf7 Qxf7

Grabbing the queen leads to immediate mate: 85. ... Rxg2?? 86. Rxh7, mate.

86. Qd2 Qd7 87. Bd3 Bxd3 88. Qxd3

White maneuvers the queen and waits for the proper moment to strike.

88. ... Nb5 89. Qc4 Nc7 90. Qc3 Kg8 91. Qe1 Nb5 92. Qa5 Nc7 93. Qb6 Ne8 94. Qb8 Re7 95. Ka2 Kf8 96. Rg1 Rf7 97. Re6 Re7 98. Rxe7 Kxe7 99. Rg8 Qd8 100. Qxd8+ Kxd8 101. b3 axb3+ 102. Kxb3 h5 103. Rh8 Kd7 104. a4 Nc7 105. Rxh5 Kc8 106. Rh8+ Kd7 107. a5 Na6 108. Kc4 Nc7 109. Rb8 Na6 110. Rb6 Nb4 111. a6 Nxa6 112. Rxa6 Ke7 113. Kb5 c4 114. Kxc4 Kf6 115. Rxd6+ Ke7 116. Re6+ Kf7 117. Kc5 Kg7 118. d6 Kf7 119. Kd5 Kg7 120. d7 Kf8 121. d8=Q+ Kg7 122. Qd7+ Kf8 123. Re8, mate.

KING’S INDIAN DEFENSE, KARPOV VARIATION (E73)

Leela (3586)

Stockfish (3601)

TCEC Season 20 - Superfinal (52),
01.24.2021

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. Be2 0-0 6. Be3 e5 7. d5 a5 8. g4 Na6 9. g5 Nd7 10. h4 Ndc5 11. h5 c6 12. Nf3 Bd7 13. Nd2 a4 14. Kf1 f5 15. b4 Nxb4 16. h6 Bh8 17. Bxc5 dxc5 18. a3 Qxg5!?

Can an engine be brave? This is certainly a brave move, giving up a piece for a slew of pawns. One wonders whether something like 18. ... Na6 19. Rb1 Nc7 20. Rxb7 Bc8 21. Rb2 Qxg5 would have held.

19. axb4 cxb4 20. Nxa4 cxd5 21. Nb6 Rxa1 22. Qxa1 Qxd2 23. Nxd7 Rc8 24. Rh3 dxe4 25. Nb6 b3 26. Rxb3 Qxh6 27. Ke1



A fascinating position. Black has four pawns for the knight, but both Stockfish and Leela give White the edge.

27. ... Rf8 28. Nd5 e3 29. Nxe3 e4 30. Qa5 Bg7 31. Rxb7 f4 32. Nd1 Kh8 33. Qc7 f3 34. Bf1 Rg8 35. Qd6 Qg5 36. c5 Qc1



37. Rxb7! Rxb7 38. Qd8+ Rg8 39. Qd4+ Rg7 40. Bc4

Positional domination by Leela, and now the c-pawn will be a thorn in Black's side.

40. ... h5 41. c6 Qg5 42. Bd5 Kh7 43. Ne3 Re7 44. Qc5 Qe5 45. Kd1 Kh6 46. Kc2 Rc7 47. Nc4 Qf4 48. Kb3 h4 49. Be6 Qf6 50. Bd7 h3 51. Ne3 Kh7 52. Nd5 Qf7 53. Qd6 Ra7 54. Bxh3 Ra8 55. c7 Kh6 56. Kc2 Qg7 57. c8=Q Ra2+ 58. Kb3 Qb2+ 59. Kc4 Ra4+ 60. Nb4 Qc2+ 61. Kb5 Qxc8 62. Bxc8 Ra7 63. Qf8+ Kh7 64. Nd5 Rg7 65. Nf6+ Kh6 66. Nxe4 Kh7 67. Ng5+ Kh6 68. Nf7+ Kh5 69. Qh8+ Rh7 70. Qxh7, mate.

RADJABOV WINS AIRTHINGS MASTERS

GM Teimour Radjabov was the winner of the Airthings Masters, the second leg in the 2021 Meltwater Champions Chess Tour produced by Chess24 and Play Magnus.

Like the Skilling Open, reported on in these pages last month, the Airthings Masters consisted of two parts. The 12-player field contested a three-day rapid round-robin, with the top eight players advancing for a single-elimination knockout bracket featuring a pair of four game matches.

That so many players qualified for the knockout seems to have led to a "safety-first" approach for many, with just two points separating the first and last place finishers. GMs Magnus Carlsen, Wesley So, and Hikaru Nakamura shared top honors with 6½/11, with the remaining qualifiers being GMs Levon Aronian, Daniil Dubov, Ian Nepomniachtchi, Teimour Radjabov, and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

The action picked up in the knockout rounds, where the three round-robin winners immediately crashed out. Perhaps most surprising — and most ominous for Norwegian television, which committed to broadcasting the entire event — was Carlsen's rather toothless loss to Dubov in the first knockout round, with this win for the Russian clinching the match victory.



CATALAN OPENING (E10)

GM Daniil Dubov (2702)

GM Magnus Carlsen (2862)

Airthings Masters KO 2020, 12.30.2020

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. g3 Bb4+ 5. Nbd2 dxc4

Departing from the "standard" (for this Dubov specialty, anyway!) 5. ... 0-0 6. Bg2 b6 7. 0-0 Bb7 as seen in two Dubov-Carlsen games in this event. Dubov also has had White in this line against Kramnik, Radjabov, and Vidit.

6. Bg2 a5 7. a3 Bxd2+ 8. Bxd2 b5 9. a4 c6 10. Qc2 Bb7 11. h4!? Nbd7 12. h5 h6 13. Ne5 Nd5 14. Rh4 N7f6 15. Kf1 Qc7 16. Kg1 Nb4 17. Qc1 Rd8?! 18. axb5

The typical Catalan idea with 18. b3! would be powerful here.

18. ... cxb5 19. Bxb4 axb4 20. Ra7 Nd5 21. Rg4 Rg8 22. Qc2

Tania Sachdev and Santosh Vidit argued for 22. Qb1 on the *chess24.com* broadcast, with the idea 22. ... c3 (but the position blows up after 22. ... Ra8! 23. Rxb7 Qxb7 24. Qh7 Rf8 25. Rxb7 when it's anyone's game) 23. bxc3 bxc3 24. Qxb5+. One file (and one square) can make a difference!

22. ... c3 23. bxc3 bxc3 24. Ra3 Rc8 25. Nd3 Nf6 26. Bxb7 Qxb7 27. Nc5? Rxc5 28. dxc5 Nxg4 29. c6 Qxc6 30. Rxc3 Qb6!

Presumably the attack on f2 was what Dubov missed. White has only the faintest hopes of conjuring enough counterplay to survive — a knight is a knight!

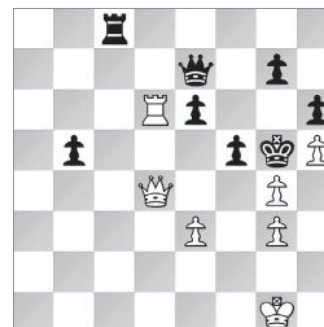
31. e3 Ke7 32. Rc6 Qd8 33. Qc5+ Kf6 34. Rd6 Qe7?

Fortune favors the bold once again. Of course Black snuffs out all counterplay with 34. ... Qc8 35. Qd4+ Ke7 36. Rb6 Qc7.

35. Qd4+ Kg5 36. f3! f5

If 36. ... Nf6 37. Qe5 mate, while 36. ... Nxe3 loses to 37. Qh4+ Kf5 38. Qf4 mate.

37. fxb4 Rc8



Now Dubov gets to deliver a stylish checkmate.

38. Qf4+ Kf6 39. Qxf5, mate.

In the end it came down to a final round showdown between Aronian and Radjabov, a pairing with very real geopolitical ramifications given the then-ongoing conflict between Armenia (Aronian's homeland) and Azerbaijan (Radjabov's). Fortunately both the players and the propagandists kept the hostilities to the chess board, and ultimately Radjabov prevailed. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave took third place, defeating Daniil Dubov in the consolation bracket.

Few would have placed Radjabov among the pre-tournament favorites, particularly as he has kept a lighter tournament schedule and lower profile in the past few years than most other elite grandmasters. After winning the 2019 FIDE World Cup, an event before which he discussed his being semi-retired and possibly quitting the game, Radjabov ended up passing up his spot in the 2020 Candidates Tournament due to prescient concerns over COVID-19 and its postponement or cancellation. Since then he has largely played in Chess24 related online events, and with limited success.

But Radjabov showed great fighting verve and energy in this event, especially in the knockout rounds, reminding chess fans all over the world what a dynamic player he can be when inspired. Here's his semi-finals win over Ian Nepomniachtchi, one that Radjabov described afterwards as involving his "best preparation" in the event.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT, SEMI-TARRASCH (D42)

GM Teimour Radjabov (2765)

GM Ian Nepomniachtchi (2784)

Airthings Masters KO 2020, 12.30.2020

1. Nf3 c5 2. c4 Nc6 3. e3 Nf6 4. Nc3 e6 5. d4 d5 6. cxd5 Nxd5 7. Bd3 Be7 8. a3 cxd4 9. exd4 O-O 10. O-O b6 11. Qc2 Nf6 12. Rd1

12. Bg5 h6 13. Bxf6 Bxf6 14. Be4 was tried earlier in this knockout match, with the game drawn in 104 moves!

12. ... h6

If 12. ... Bb7 the central break 13. d5! gives White the edge with 13. ... exd5 14. Nxd5 Nxd5 15. Bxh7+ Kh8 16. Be4.

13. d5 exd5 14. Nxd5 Nxd5

Of course not 14. ... Qxd5? 15. Bh7+.

15. Qxc6 Be6 16. Qa4

Radjabov: "A funny looking move, but quite strong." There is still a pin on the d-file, and

with either Bd3-e4 or Qa4-e4 White can increase the pressure.

16. ... Qc7?!

Already slightly inaccurate.

The computer gives 16. ... Qd6 as potentially best, while the tactical 16. ... Bc5 requires a bit of knowledge: 17. Bc4 (17. Bf4 Nxf4 18. Bh7+ Kxh7 19. Rxd8 Nh3+! and Black should have enough compensation, according to Radjabov) 17. ... Qe8 18. Qxe8 Rfxe8 19. Bxd5 Rad8 20. b4 Be7 21. Bxh6 is equal.

17. Bd2!

Beginning to target the queen by opening the c-file.

17. ... Rad8

Another line from Radjabov: 17. ... Bc5 18. Rac1 Qe7 19. Re1 Rac8 and "for the computer, maybe it's fine, but for humans it's kind of unpleasant."

18. Rac1

(see diagram top of next column)

18. ... Qb7?

White is for choice after the better 18. ... Qd6, while after the natural 18. ... Qb8 19. Nd4 Bd7 20. Bb5 White has a risk-free advantage.

19. Qe4! g6

The point is that 19. ... Nf6?, defending the mate on h7, hangs the queen.



20. Bxh6 Bf5

After 20. ... Rfe8? Black loses the Exchange with 21. Bb5.

21. Qa4 Bxd3 22. Bxf8 Be2 23. Bxe7

23. Re1 is "even easier" but the text does keep the pin on the d-file.

23. ... Bxd1 24. Rxd1 Qxe7 25. Qd4 b5 26. h4 Rd7

Hoping desperately for ... Nd5-f6, unpinning.

27. Ne5 Rd6 28. g3 a6 29. Ng4 Rd7 30. Qe5 Qe6 31. Qxe6 fxe6 32. Rxd5, Black resigned.

The pawn ending is hopeless after 32. ... Rxd5 33. Nf6+ Kf7 34. Nxd5 exd5 35. Kf1. ♠

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



GRANDMASTER CHALLENGE

Six moments from Anish Giri's games in Wijk aan Zee

By **GM JACOB AAGAARD**

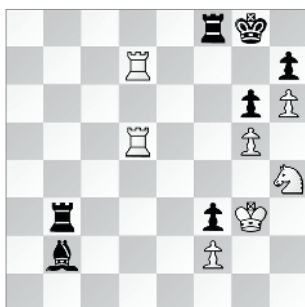
I have long been a fan of Anish Giri's combative style. From the view of internet commentators who look at the scoreline only, you often hear jokes about his "artistic tendencies," and especially a supposed proclivity for draws. However, this is wildly off the mark.

Giri is an interesting player with lots of fascinating ideas in the opening. He is not averse to risk at all, but if things go south, he

fights like a tigress protecting her cubs. This is why he rarely loses.

For a top grandmaster with a technical style like Giri, some of his games will not be very interesting. But in most games there will be key moments that require a bit of energy or accuracy to give winning chances. Here we shall look at six very different positions from Wijk aan Zee. Your task is to see if you can guess the strong move Giri or his opponent could have played or managed to find.

#1: TACTIC!



WHITE TO MOVE

Maybe my favorite moment in Wijk. White to play and win.

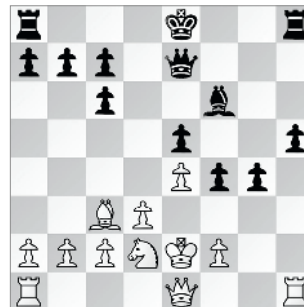
#2: CALCULATION



WHITE TO MOVE

This position is from the Armageddon game. Should White throw in 26. c6!? or not?

#3: DEFENSE



WHITE TO MOVE

The young super talent from Norway, Aryan Tari, has sacrificed a piece on the recommendation of the engines. How should White set up his pieces?

#4: IMAGINATION



BLACK TO MOVE

Here we revisit the first playoff game. Which chance to take a lead in the match did Giri miss?

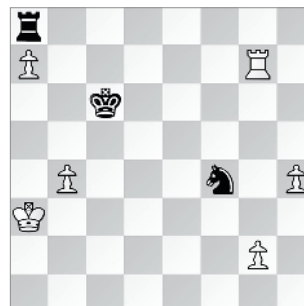
#5: CONVERSION OF AN ADVANTAGE



WHITE TO MOVE

Our Dutch hero is entirely lost in this position. A number of moves look very promising. Please find a clear path for Anton Guijarro ensure the advantage. Keeping control is often particularly difficult in a position like this.

#6: ENDGAME CALCULATION



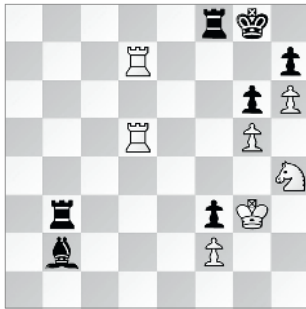
WHITE TO MOVE

Giri had a lot of chances to win the tournament, but maybe nowhere more than the penultimate round encounter with Firouzja. A totally winning position slowly became less and less winning, until we reached this position, where there was only one chance left. Can you find it?

Solutions

#1: TACTIC!

GM Anish Giri (2764)
GM Radoslaw Wojtaszek (2705)
83rd Tata Steel Masters (10), 01.27.2021



WHITE TO MOVE

After 49. Rxh7! Black resigned due to 49. ... Kxh7 50. Rd7+ Kg8 51. h7+ Kh8 52. Nxc6, mate.

#2: CALCULATION

GM Anish Giri (2764)
GM Jorden Van Foreest (2671)
83rd Tata Steel Masters Playoff (3),
01.31.2021



WHITE TO MOVE

The answer is no! Best is 26. Qc3 and White is dominating. After

26. c6? Nxc2 27. cxd7 Nxd4!

Black escapes with an extra pawn.

28. exd4

28. dxc8=Q? Ne2+ 29. Kh1 Nxc3+ 30. hxc3 Rfxc8 would be technically lost.

28. ... Bxd7 29. Rc1 Bb5 30. Bd6 Rfc8 31. Bc5 Rc7 32. Re1 Rac8 33. f4 h5

Stronger would have been 33. ... Rxc5!. After 34. dxc5 Rxc5 35. h4 d4 Black has a serious advantage. However, as this is an Armageddon game and White has to win at all costs, it is natural for Black to keep a very solid position and let his opponent do all the running.

34. Kf2 Kh7 35. h3 Kg6 36. g4 hxg4 37. hxg4 Rc6 38. Rb7 R8c7 39. Rb8 Rc8 40. Rb7 R8c7 41. Rxc7 Rxc7 42. Re5 Bd7 43. Rg5+ Kh7 44. Bf8 g6 45. Re5 f6 46. Re3 Kg8 47. Bc5 Rb7 48. Bb6 Bb5 49. Rxe6 Kf7 50. Re1 Re7 51. Rc1 Re4 52. Kf3 Be2+ 53. Kg3 Re3+ 54. Kf2 Re4 55. Rc7+ Ke8 56. g5 Rxf4 57. Kxe2 fxe5 58. Ra7 g4 59. Rxa6 g3 60. Ra7 g2 61. Ra8+ Kd7 62. Rd8+ Ke7, White resigned.

RUY LOPEZ, BERLIN VARIATION (C65)

GM Anish Giri (2764)
GM Aryan Tari (2625)
83rd Tata Steel Masters (1), 01.16.2021

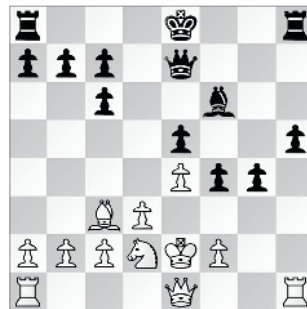
1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nf6 4. d3 Bc5 5. Bxc6 dxc6 6. O-O Bg4 7. h3 Bh5 8. g4! Nxc4 9. hxg4 Bxc4 10. Be3 Be7

At Depth 72, Stockfish says this is equal. The reality is that Black has a lot to prove and little to hope for.

11. Kg2!

Good homework from Giri. 11. Kh1? f5 12. Rg1 h5 13. Nc3 f4 14. Bd2 g5 gave Black a winning attack in Nakamura – Carlsen, internet (blitz) 2020, although White eventually won the game.

11. ... f5 12. Qe1 Bxf3+ 13. Kxf3 f4 14. Bd2 g5 15. Bc3 Bf6 16. Nd2 Qe7 17. Rh1 h5 18. Ke2 g4



#3: DEFENSE (POSITION)

19. f3!

White won't find any serious advantage after 19. Qg1 f3+ 20. Nxf3 gxf3+ 21. Kxf3 Qf7. The h-pawn is a strong asset for Black.

19. ... g3

I would be very reluctant to lose the flexibility with the pieces like this.

20. Kf1!

The king needs a role. What could be better than blocking the position on the kingside, freeing up the other pieces to do more creative things?

20. ... h4 21. Rh3! a5 22. a4 b6 23. Kg2

White has a large advantage and won with simple means.

23. ... c5 24. Qb1 Kf7 25. b3 Rad8 26. Nc4 Kg6 27. Qb2 Rh5 28. Rahl Rdh8 29. Qa1 Kg7 30. Bb2 Kg6 31. Qb1 Rd8 32. Qe1 Kg7 33. Qa1 Rdh8 34. Na3 Kg6 35. Nb5 Bg7 36. Nc3 Qd8 37. Ne2 R8h7 38. Qe1 Qd6 39. Qc3 c6 40. Qc4 Rh8 41. Ba3 Qf6 42. Qa6 Bb8 43. Bc1 Bh6 44. Qa7 Qd8 45. Bb2 Qc8 46. Qe7 Bf8 47. Nxf4+, Black resigned.

BISHOP'S OPENING (C24)

GM Jorden Van Foreest (2671)
GM Anish Giri (2764)
83rd Tata Steel Masters Playoff (1),
01.31.2021

1. e4 e5 2. Bc4 Nf6 3. d3 c6 4. Nf3 d5 5. Bb3 a5 6. Nc3 Bb4 7. a3 Bxc3+ 8. bxc3 a4 9. Ba2 dxe4 10. Nxe5 O-O 11. O-O Qe7 12. d4 Nbd7 13. Bf4 Nd5 14. Qd2 Nxf4 15. Qxf4 Nxe5 16. dxe5 Ra5 17. Qxe4 Qxe5 18. Qb4 Rb5 19. Qxa4 Qxc3 20. Bb3 Rg5 21. Rfe1?

White should have played 21. Qf4 Rg4 22. Qe3 Qxe3 23. fxe3 Re4, when Black is better, but with the active 24. Rad1 White would limit his troubles a lot.

21. ... Bh3!

Causing problems on g2. Less clear was 21. ... Qh3 22. Qe4 Bf5 on account of 23. Re3! Bxe4 24. Rxh3 Rxc2+ 25. Kf1, where Black has a big advantage, but is not totally winning just yet.

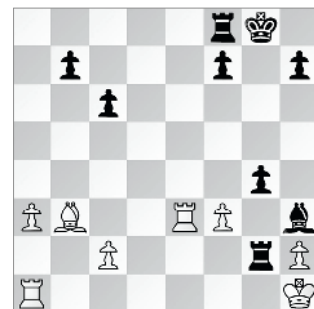
22. Qf4!

Good defensive play by Jorden. Note that 22. g3 Rg4! and then ... Qf3 would win for Black.

22. ... Rxc2+ 23. Kh1 g5!

The only move. Did you catch 23. ... Rg6? 24. Qxf7+! Rxf7 25. Re8, mate?

24. Qe3 Qxe3 25. Rxe3 g4 26. f3



#4: IMAGINATION (POSITION)

We have reached our exercise. After

26. ... h5?

Black could have won the game with the beautiful continuation: 26. ... g3!! 27. hxg3 Rd8, where the rooks will dominate on the second rank before delivering mate. Here 28. Rg1 Rf2 29. Rd3 Re8 30. g4 Ree2 and Black wins, i.e. 31. Rg3 Rf1+ 32. Rg1 Bg2+ 33. Kh2 Bxf3+ with an extra pawn and Exchange. Instead, White managed to escape with a draw.

27. fxe4 hxg4 28. Rg1 Rxc1+ 29. Kxc1 Rd8 30. Re7 Rd1+ 31. Kf2 Rf1+ 32. Kg3 b5 33. Rc7 Rf6 34. a4 bxa4 35. Bxa4 Rf3+ 36. Kh4 Rf2 37. Bb3 Kf8 38. Rxc6 Rxh2 39. Rf6 Ke8 40. Rxf7 Rxc2 41. Bxc2 Kxf7 42. Bf5 Kf6 43. Bxc4 Bxc4 44. Kxc4, draw agreed.

#5: CONVERSION OF AN ADVANTAGE

GM David Anton Guijarro (2679)

GM Anish Giri (2764)

83rd Tata Steel Masters (13), 01.31.2021



WHITE TO MOVE

David Anton played:

29. b6!? Bb8 30. Qb3?!

... only to see his advantage being rather tricky to handle. White would have a big advantage after 30. Rc1 Rf4 31. Qa3, although the exchange of queens is not guaranteed. Still, the best White can hope for in this line is a position similar to after 29. Qa3.

30. ... h6 31. Ra2 Rc8 32. Ra4?!

Black would find counterplay after 32. Nd2! d5!? 33. cxd5 exd5 34. exd5 Qc1+ 35. Nf1 Bd6, although White is still better.

32. ... Rf7?!

Already here Black had the chance to play 32. ... d5! with counterplay. White's advantage is dwindling.

33. Re1 Rd8 34. Qb4 Qc6 35. Raa1 Rf4 36. Qa4 Rc8 37. Qxc6 Rxc6 38. Nd2 Rf8 39. Red1 Kg8 40. f3?! Kf7 41. Kf1 Ke7 42. Ke2 Rc5 43. h4 Rd8 44. Ra2 d5

Black has equalised.

45. cxd5 exd5 46. exd5 Rxd5 47. Rda1 Bd6 48. Ne4 Rc4 49. Rd2 Rxd2+ 50. Nxd2 Rc5 51. h5 e4 52. Nxe4 Rxh5 53. Kd3 Kd7 54. Kc4, draw.

Instead, Anton should have played...

29. Qa3!

This was the strongest technical move. The tactical reason is that 29. ... Qxc4 30. Rc1! would exploit the bishop's position on c7. This allows White to exchange queens under favorable circumstances.

29. ... Qxa3 30. Rxa3 Rf4 31. b6!

The bishop now has to return to b8, when Black is in a terrible bind.

31. ... Bb8

31. ... Bd8?! loses on the spot to 32. Rd3 Be7 33. c5! with the rook coming to d7.

32. Rc1 Rc8 33. Nd2 Kg8 34. Rd3

White will play g2-g3, Nd2-b3 and c4-c5, when Black is struggling a lot. The key point



GM ANISH GIRI, SUFFERING FROM A COMMON AFFLICTION IN THE DAYS OF COVID-19

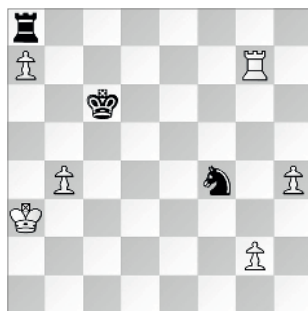
is that it seems implausible that Black will ever get the bishop back in the game.

#6: ENDGAME CALCULATION

GM Anish Giri (2764)

GM Alireza Firouzja (2749)

83rd Wijk aan Zee (12), 01.30.2021



WHITE TO MOVE

Giri was totally winning earlier, but by now the easy win has become a muddled battle.

61. g4?

Why he decided to move the worst placed pawn is hard to say.

61. ... Ne6! 62. Rf7 Nc7

Black survives.

63. g5 Rxa7+ 64. Kb2 Ra8 65. g6 Ne6 66. h5 Rh8 67. Rh7 Rg8, draw.

So what should Giri have done?

61. Ka4!

Winning. The key idea is to push the b-pawn.

61. ... Kb6

Equally painful for Black would be 61. ... Ne6 62. b5+ Kb6 63. Rg6!. After 63. ... Rxa7+ 64. Kb4 Re7 65. h5 Kc7 66. h6 White is winning. The combined force of the b-pawn and h-pawn are fully matching the knight. With the g-pawn and later maybe the white king approaching as reinforcements, White wins. A key point is that the exchange of rooks will more or less always win for White.

62. g4?!

I guess this is the way most people would play.

The computer's 62. Kb3! is a curious move. After 62. ... Kc6, it is not a repetition, as White's king is better placed. Everything wins, including 63. Rf7!? Nxe2 64. h5 Ne3 65. h6 Nd5 66. h7 Rh8 67. Rg7 Nf6 — a last trap — 68. Rg8! and White wins. (Note that 68. Rg6? Kb7 69. Rxf6 Rxh7 70. Ra6 Ka8 is only a draw.)

62. ... Ne6 63. Rf7 Nc7 64. h5 Rxa7+ 65. Kb3

White is completely winning. ♠

The Flying Dutchman

GM Jorden van Foreest Wins Tata Steel; Giri Second, Caruana Tied for Third

By **JOHN HARTMANN**

Annotations by **GM JACOB AAGAARD** and **IM JOHN WATSON**

Photos courtesy of **JURRIAN HOEFSMIT**

Tata Steel, the latest avatar of the annual tournament in Wijk aan Zee, has in recent years become one of the most compelling events on the elite chess circuit. Part of this has to do with its “first mover” status each January. Part of it has to do with the organizer’s judicious blend of players, giving local heroes and up-and-comers the chance to mix it up with some of the best in the world. Part of it is the tradition: the hope to add one’s name to the list of historical winners, the blustery cold of the seaside town, the fabled split pea soup dinner at the closing ceremony.

This year’s edition — the 83rd — had something else going for it. The 2021 Tata Steel Tournament (January 15-31) was, outside of national and team championships in Russia and China, one of the first top-level tournaments contested over-the-board since Norway Chess in October. After so many online events played at rapid and blitz time controls, and with so many of the same players competing in each

tournament, there was more than a bit of a hunger among chess fans for the “novelty” of slow games played by new faces.

Part of that diversity was forced upon organizers by the cold realities of life in the age of COVID-19. Writing for ESPN India, Susan Ninan reports that no fewer than four players — GMs Nodirbek Abdusattorov, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, Ian Nepomniatchchi, and, just two days before clocks were started, Daniil Dubov — had to be replaced due to travel problems or potential exposure to the virus. Fortunately the experienced team led by tournament director Jeroen van den Berg had plenty of willing participants on speed dial, with Dubov’s replacement GM Alexander Donchenko arriving less than 24 hours before the start of the first round.

There were other changes forced by the virus. Traditionally there are multiple international round-robins at Tata Steel along with amateur events; this year, it was only the “A Group” in an otherwise empty playing hall. Competitors were

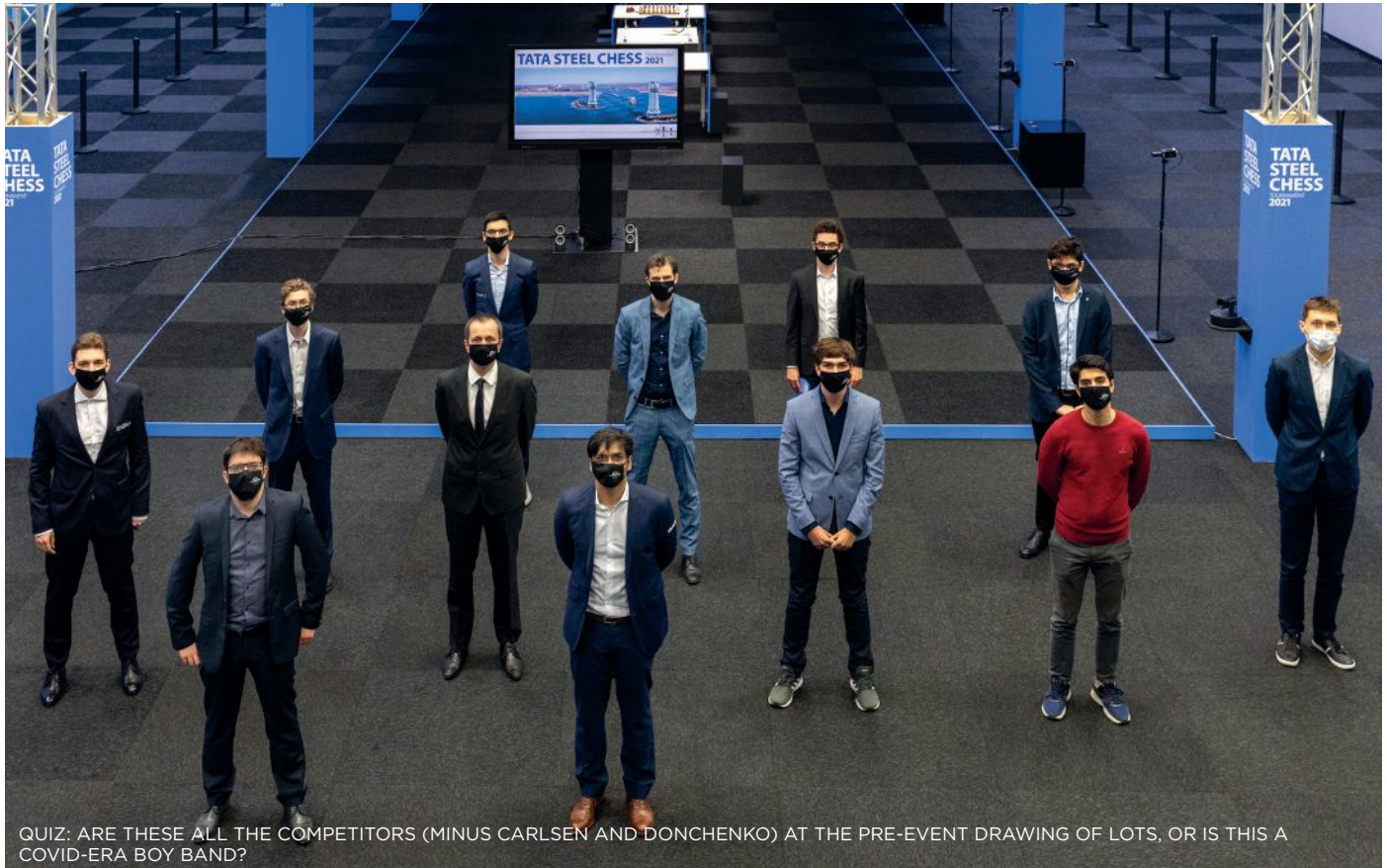
not required to wear masks at the board, as can be seen in the stellar tournament photography from Jurriaan Hoefsmit, but they did need to wear them everywhere else, and everyone was tested four times throughout the event. And I’m told that there was no split pea soup.

Despite these challenges, the 2021 Tata Steel Masters was a roaring success, featuring plenty of fighting chess from a diverse field, including three of the world’s top five players (GMs Magnus Carlsen, Fabiano Caruana, and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave) and three more in the top twenty (GMs Anish Giri, Alireza Firouzja, and Jan-Krzysztof Duda.)

The remaining eight players featured experience (GMs Pentala Harikrishna and Radosław Wojtaszek) and plenty of youth. At 27, GM Nils Grandelius was the eldest member of this contingent, with GMs David Antón Guijarro, Alexander Donchenko, Jorden van Foreest, Aryan Tari, and Andrey Espienko rounding out the field in descending age order.

GM JORDEN VAN FOREEST,
WINNER OF THE 2021
TATA STEEL MASTERS





Hometown Boys

No Dutchman had won in Wijk since GM Jan Timman in 1985. While world #11 Anish Giri was the nation's great hope to break through, it ended up being 21-year old Jorden van Foreest who took top honors after a breathtaking victory in the Armageddon tiebreak against... Anish Giri!

LONDON OPENING (D00)

GM Anish Giri (2764)
GM Jorden Van Foreest (2671)
83rd Tata Steel Masters Playoff (3),
01.31.2021

After two nervy five-minute games, Giri and van Foreest went to Armageddon, with White getting five minutes and Black four, and with three seconds per move added after move 60. The arbiters drew lots to give Giri the White pieces, meaning that van Foreest had draw odds.

1. d4 d5 2. Bf4 Nf6 3. e3 c5 4. Nf3 Nc6 5. Nbd2 e6 6. c3 Bd6 7. Bg3 h6 8. Bb5 Be7 9. Ne5 Qb6 10. a4 O-O 11. O-O a6 12. Bxc6 bxc6 13. dxc5 Bxc5 14. b4 Be7 15. a5 Qb7 16. Nd3 Nd7 17. Nb3 Qb5 18. Nd4 Qb7 19. Rb1 Nf6 20. Nc5 Bxc5 21. bxc5 Qd7 22. Rb6 Ne4

The commentators originally lauded the following knight-jumps by van Foreest, but as it turns out, Black is struggling mightily here.

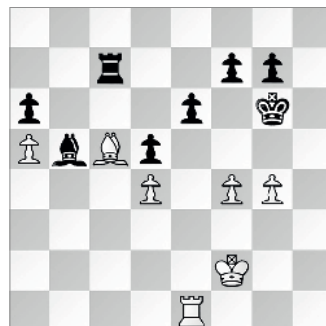
23. Rxc6 Nxc3 24. Qc2 Nb5 25. Rb6 Na3 26. c6?

So tempting, but flawed! With 26. Qc3! Nc4 27. c6 Qe7 28. e4 White's pieces are full of life, and if Black tries 28. ... Nxb6 29. axb6 the two passed pawns spell doom for Black.

26. ... Nxc2 27. cxd7 Nxd4 28. exd4

One suspects that Giri overlooked 28. dxc8=Q? Ne2+! on his 26th move. The game is now just equal.

28. ... Bxd7 29. Rc1 Bb5 30. Bd6 Rfc8 31. Bc5 Rc7 32. Re1 Rac8 33. f4 h5 34. Kf2 Kh7 35. h3 Kg6 36. g4 hxg4 37. hxg4 Rc6 38. Rb7 R8c7 39. Rb8 Rc8 40. Rb7 R8c7 41. Rxc7 Rxc7



It's hard to see how White can make progress, but in a blitz game, anything can

happen... and here, it does!

42. Re5 Bd7 43. Rg5+ Kh7 44. Bf8 g6 45. Re5 f6 46. Re3 Kg8 47. Bc5 Rb7 48. Bb6 Bb5?! 49. Rxe6 Kf7 50. Re1 Re7 51. Rc1 Re4 52. Kf3 Be2+ 53. Kg3 Re3+ 54. Kf2 Re4 55. Rc7+ Ke8 56. g5 Rxf4+??

Winning a pawn but losing a piece!

57. Kxe2 fxg5 58. Ra7 g4

With almost no time left for both players, the DGT board could not keep up with the pieces flying about, and the move transmission ended about here with Giri appearing to have everything under control. So imagine everyone's surprise when we discovered what actually transpired!

59. Rxa6 g3 60. Ra7?? g2!

There's no way to stop the g-pawn from queening!

61. Ra8+ Kd7 62. Rd8+ Ke7, White resigned.

Here Giri conceded, graciously congratulating his friend and sometimes trainer on his first victory at Wijk, and leaving all those watching the livestream utterly confused.

Far be it for me to contradict the likes of Leonard Barden, the legendary British chess

master and columnist, but when he wrote on in *The Guardian* on February 4th that van Foreest's tournament win was "one of the great upsets of chess history, comparable to Harry Pillsbury at Hastings 1895 or Glenn Flear at London 1986," it seems to me that he may have missed the mark, doing a disservice to the particularities of van Foreest's impressive young career.

At the tender age of 21 Jorden van Foreest has already racked up quite the list of accomplishments: European under-14 champion in 2013 and Dutch champion in 2016, when he earned his GM title. He also shared the Dutch title in 2019 with his brother Lucas, who is far from the only other chess player in the van Foreest family: Jorden's great great-grandfather and great great-granduncle are both former Dutch champions, and his remaining four siblings are all active tournament players, including his sister Machteld, one of the strongest Dutch women at age 14.

Van Foreest's first appearance at the Tata Steel Masters was also in 2019, when he finished towards the bottom of the table, a performance he bettered in 2020 when he tied for fourth place with a +1 score (7/13). Having proven that he could "hang" with the world's elite, defeating the likes of Dubov, Yu Yangyi, and Vitiugov, and with a full year's improvement, there was nothing stopping the young GM from making another leap towards the top of the table.

Scoring an impressive 8½/13 and going over 2700 for the first time, van Foreest's tournament victory was marked by excellent opening preparation (see his 14. ... Bh3! against Vachier-Lagrave as a case in point), consistent dynamic play, and a real desire to win. His final round win over Nils Grandelius, annotated by IM John Watson, gives a real flavor of his style and strength.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B90)

GM Jorden Van Foreest (2671)

GM Nils Grandelius (2663)

83rd Tata Steel Masters (13), 01.31.2021

Annotations by IM John Watson

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Qd3

An excellent practical choice for the last round, since Van Foreest needed a win to have any hopes of reaching a playoff.

6. ... Nbd7

Giri suggests this in his *Najdorf Sicilian: Lifetime Repertoire* course on chessable.com. Van Foreest anticipated that it might well be Grandelius' choice. The Swedish number one had already faced 6. Qd3 in a game against Carlsen four rounds earlier. Black was under a little pressure after 6. ... e6 7. a4 Nc6 8. Nxc6

bxc6 9. Qg3 Bb7 10. Be2 and eventually lost.

7. Be2 b5 8. a4 Nc5!

Giri's recommendation. Two earlier games had gone 8. ... b4 9. Nd5 Bb7 10. Nxf6+ (10. Qc4! with the idea 10. ... Nxd5 11. exd5) 10. ... Nxf6 11. Bf3 with advantage to White.

9. Qe3 b4 10. Nd5 Ncxe4 11. a5

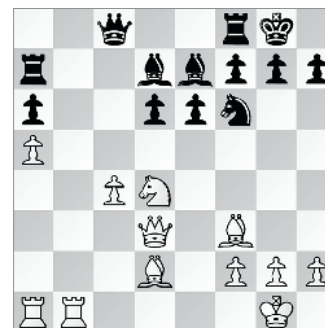
A new idea. Giri analyzes two other moves: (a) 11. Nxb4, when a direct line is 11. ... e5 (more ambitious is 11. ... Qc7 12. f3 Nc5 13. 0-0 g6 14. Rd1 Bg7) 12. Ndc6 Qc7 13. Bf3 Bb7 14. Bxe4 Nxe4 15. Qxe4 Rc8 16. Qe2 Bxc6 17. Qxa6 Bxg2 18. Qb5+ Qd7 19. Rg1 Be4; (b) 11. Nc6!? is messy and balanced, for example, 11. ... Nxd5 12. Qxe4 Nf6 13. Qd4!? Qc7 14. Nxb4 Bb7 15. 0-0 e5 16. Qc3 Qxc3 17. bxc3 Be7 18. Rd1 0-0.

11. ... Nxd5 12. Qxe4 e6

White gets interesting play for a pawn after 12. ... Bb7 13. c4!? bxc3 *e.p.* 14. Bd1! Qc8 15. Ba4+ Kd8 16. 0-0. The engine likes Black, but in practice Black's king position will make life difficult for him.

13. 0-0 Bd7

My engine likes 13. ... Bb7, but again, in practice, 14. c4 bxc3 *e.p.* 15. Bd1 with the idea



21. Nb5!

A pretty sacrifice, which took courage to play under the high-stakes circumstances.

21. ... axb5 22. cxb5 Bxb5

It's easy to say this is forced because of the passed pawns, but White had to be sure there was no blockade. One line is 22. ... Nd5 23. Bxd5 (or 23. b6 Qa6 24. Qxa6! Rxa6 25. Be2) 23. ... exd5 24. b6 Bf5 25. Qb5 Bxb1 26. Rxb1 and Black has to return the rook and more by 26. ... Ra8 27. b7 Qc2 28. bxa8=Q Rxa8 29. Qb7.

23. Qxb5 Nd7

Right after the game, van Foreest said that he was surprised by this move and expected



Jorden van Foreest

@jordenvforeest



Playing as a kid in amateur sections I always dreamed of playing with the world's best at @tatasteelchess. Not in my wildest dreams would I have expected to ever win it one day!

12:32 PM · Jan 31, 2021



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Bd1-a4+ is obviously scary.

14. Bd2 Be7 15. Bf3 0-0 16. Qd3 Qb8 17. c4

Van Foreest said that he and his coach had this position on the board before the game and that the engine gave White a small advantage after 17. c4, but that he didn't know what to do with it afterwards! A remarkable example of modern preparation, since the whole line beginning with 8. a4 is so little known.

17. ... bxc3! e.p. 18. bxc3 Ra7?

18. ... Bf6! was the way to reorganize, with the point being 19. c4 (19. Rfb1 Qa7) 19. ... Qa7!, e.g., 20. Nb3 Bxa1 21. Rxa1 Nf6 22. Be3 Qb8 23. Bxa8 Qxa8 24. Qxd6 Bc6 with equality.

19. Rfb1 Qc8 20. c4 Nf6

23. ... d5. This may be better, but 24. Be3 Ra8 25. a6 is nevertheless terribly difficult to defend against. I suspect that 23. ... Nd5 24. Bxd5 exd5 25. Qxd5 is probably best, but the a-pawn is still terribly strong.

24. Bb7 Qd8 25. a6 Bf6 26. Ba5!?

A good move, but it turns out that 26. Be3! is better still, for example, 26. ... Nc5 (26. ... Bxa1? 27. Bxa7 Bf6 28. Be3 Qe7 29. a7) 27. Ra2 Qc7 28. Rd2 Be7 29. Rc1 Rd8 30. g3 h6 31. Rc3 and Black is running out of moves, e.g., 31. ... Bf6 32. Rxc5! dxc5 33. Rxd8+ Qxd8 (33. ... Bxd8 34. Bxc5) 34. Qxc5 Qd1+ 35. Kg2 and White is winning.

26. ... Qe8 27. Bc7!?



GM ANISH GIRI

It's difficult to see, but 27. Ra2! Bd4 28. Rd2 Bc5 29. Bb4 is more accurate.

27. ... Bxa1 28. Rxa1!?

White chooses what seems to be a safe advantage. The engines and various commentators all proclaimed that 28. Bxd6! was winning, but it's not so easy when you have to calculate 28. ... Bd4 29. Bxf8 Kxf8 30. Rc1 Nc5! 31. Rxc5 Qxb5 32. Rxb5 and assess it as winning, which is not at all clear to me. Who would choose this over the board?

28. ... d5?

As always, the clock is a factor. Black has the nice trick 28. ... Nc5! 29. Qb6 Qd7! with the idea 30. Bxd6 (or 30. h4 Nxa6 31. Rxa6 Rxa6 32. Bxa6 d5 with a slight edge) 30. ... Qxb7! 31. Bxc5 Rfa8 and a draw will result.

29. Bd6 Qd8 30. Rc1

It turns out that 30. Bxf8 Nxf8 31. Rc1 is lights out, but 31. ... Qd6 32. g3 h5 33. Rc6

Qe5 34. Qb6 Qe1+ 35. Kg2 Qe4+ isn't worth allowing unless you're absolutely clear that 36. Kf1 is winning.

30. ... g6?

After 30. ... Re8 31. h3! threatens Rc1-c7, but not yet: if 31. Rc7 Nb8! 32. Rc8? Qxc8.

31. h3 Re8 32. Rc7 Nf6!?

At least this prepares some tricks. Another try is 32. ... Nb8 33. Rc8 Qxc8 34. Bxc8 Rxc8 35. Bxb8 Rxa6, and now 36. Be5! is much easier than 36. Qxa6 Rxb8.

33. Be5 Ne4 34. Qc6! Rf8 35. Bd4

Simpler was 35. Rc8 Qe7 36. f3.

35. ... Qb8 36. f3 Rxa6!

An ingenious counterattack which only just falls short.

37. Bxa6 Qb4 38. Be5!

Not 38. fxe4?? Qxd4+ 39. Kh2 Qe5+ 40. g3 Qb2+ 41. Qc2 Qxc2+ 42. Rxc2 dxe4 with equality.

38. ... Qe1+ 39. Kh2 Nf2

Imagine playing this in time trouble.

40. Qc3! Qh1+ 41. Kg3 Qg1 42. Rc8 Nh1+

43. Kh4 Qf2+ 44. g3 g5+!

A last stab.

45. Kxg5 f6+ 46. Kh6! fxe5

Mate is imminent after 46. ... Qa7 47. Rxf8+ Kxf8 48. Bd6+ Kf7 49. Qc8.

47. Qxe5, Black resigned.

White threatens both Qe5-g7 mate and Qe5-h8+, and 47. ... Qxg3 48. Qxe6+ also mates. A nerve-shattering struggle!

Anish Giri also finished at 8½/13, and despite some online jibes from Carlsen after the event, he has much to be proud of here. While Giri may rue some missed chances, particularly against Firouzja in round four, he played some excellent chess, showing exactly why he is one of the top players in the world. GM Jacob Aagaard, who contributes a piece on Giri's games elsewhere in this issue, has annotated his key ninth round win over fellow Candidate Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B90)

GM Anish Giri (2764)

GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (2784)

83rd Wijk aan Zee (9), 01.26.2021

Annotations by GM Jacob Aagaard

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. h3 e5 7. Nf3 Be7 8. g4!?

A very off-beat line.

8. ... 0-0

8. ... h6 is potentially more critical. We can only guess at what Giri was intending. I believe he wanted to go all in with 9. Be3 b5 (9. ... 0-0? 10. Rg1 would give White a brutal attack) 10. g5 hxg5 11. Nxd4 with a very double-edged position.

9. g5 Nh5!?

I assume that Giri had not looked too deeply at this new move, as soon his opening does not turn out well. The alternative 9. ... Ne8 was the only move previously tried on a high level, and 10. Be3 Nc7 11. Qd2 Nd7 12. h4 b5 was played in Timofeev-Smirnov, Samara 2014. After the novelty 13. 0-0-0!?, the game would be double-edged.

10. Bc4

Giri thought for over 10 minutes and decided to bring out the pieces with normal moves. Checking everyone's favorite computer programs, we see that White supposedly has a miniscule edge after 10. h4 Be6 11. Nh2!? Nf4 12. Bxf4 exf4 13. Qd2, although Black should be fine if he plays actively.

10. ... Be6 11. Bb3 g6 12. Be3 Nd7 13. Qd2 Rc8 14. O-O-O Nc5 15. Bxc5 Rxc5

An interesting alternative is 15. ... dxc5!? with the idea 16. Qxd8 Bxd8, when play is quite sharp: 17. Bd5 Nf4 with counterattack against h3. And after 18. Bxe6 fxe6 19. Rd7 b5 20. h4 Black can force a draw with 20. ... Ng2 21. Rh3 Nf4 at least.

16. h4 Nf4?

Better is 16. ... Qa5! 17. Kb1 Rxc3! 18. Qxc3 (18. bxc3 Bg4 19. Qe3 Nf4 would offer Black a lot of compensation in a complex middlegame) 18. ... Qxc3 19. bxc3 Bg4 20. Rd3 Nf4 21. Re3 Ng2 with a draw. Note that 21. ... Bd8 22. Nd2 b5 would give compensation for the Exchange, but I doubt Black could ever have a real chance of being better, so MVL would not go for it.

17. Kb1?

White would have a nice plus after 17. Ne1! with the idea of Ne1-d3.

17. ... Qa5?

Black had to play 17. ... Bg4 18. Qe3 Qc8 19. Nd5 Nxd5 20. Rxd5 Rxd5 21. Bxd5 Be6, when a later ... f7-f6 break will give him counterplay.

18. Ne1! Rfc8 19. Nd3 Nxd3 20. Qxd3 Rxc3!

Black has no alternative. What else are his pieces going to do, while White attacks on the kingside?

21. bxc3 d5

The alternative 21. ... Rxc3 22. Qd2 Qc5 23. h5 looks scary for Black too.



This is the first critical moment in the game. Traditionally, one of Giri's big weaknesses is finding ideas he does not see quickly. Here it does not seem that he realized he had serious alternatives.

22. exd5?

22. Qd2!! would have destroyed Black's position. The key point is that Black cannot take with a gain of tempo on e4 anymore: 22. ... dxe4?! is totally hopeless, as 23. Bxe6 fxe6 24. Qd7 leads to a collapse of the black position. And after 22. ... Ba3 23. h5!? Black is under a serious attack.

22. ... Bf5 23. Qd2 Bd6!

Blocking the pawn for now and preparing counterplay on the dark squares.

24. c4 Qb6 25. Ka1 a5

This is not really a mistake, but is the start of Black drifting into a worse position.

The best move was 25. ... e4!. Black could get serious counterplay on the dark squares. There are variations possible, but nothing is very forcing, so they are for illustration only: 26. Rhe1 Be5+ 27. c3 Qa5 28. Re3 b5 with lots of action and very uncertain outcomes.

26. c3 a4 27. Bc2 e4

Keeping the game muddled up. 27. ... Bxc2!? 28. Qxc2 Rxc4 with compensation was simpler.

28. Bxa4 Rxc4 29. Bb3 Rc5

This is a bit artificial. The rook was better off on the eighth rank.

30. Rhe1 Be5 31. Re3 Qd6 32. Kb2 b5 33. a3 Rc8

Clearly a tempo lost. Black is still OK, but justifying the material investment requires some good moves down the road.

34. Ra1 b4!?

It is not obvious that it is in Black's interest to clarify the situation. Maybe he was better off with a wait-and-see strategy.

35. axb4 Qxb4 36. d6!

This has two advantages. It gets the passed pawn moving and it prepares for attacks on the f7-pawn.

36. ... Rb8 37. Ra3

With plenty of time left, MVL now loses the thread.

37. ... Qb7

37. ... Qb5! would be a strong prophylactic move, eyeing a potential check on f1.

38. Kc1!

Black is under a lot of pressure.

38. ... Qd7?

Passive play is not possible when you are playing for compensation.

Black could still have held everything together with 38. ... Qb5! 39. d7 Bxd7 40. Rxe4 Qc5!!, where the position remains terribly complicated. White has an Exchange and a pawn, but no clear way to untangle his position after a move like 41. Kb2. And after 41. Bxf7+ Kxf7 42. Qxd7+ Kf8! 43. Qa4 Black escapes with 43. ... Qxf2 44. Rxe5 Qf1+ with a perpetual after 45. Kc2 Qf2, and enough counterplay against the king after 45. Qd1 Rb1+ 46. Kxb1 Qxd1+ 47. Kb2 Qd2+ 48. Kb3 Qd1+ to make the draw there too.

39. Qd5 Bxd6

With real time left for move 40, Giri had the chance to calculate all the way to a clear conclusion.

40. Ra6! Rd8 41. Rxd6!

Clarity is precious.

41. ... Qxd6 42. Qxf7+ Kh8 43. Qf6+ Qxf6 44. gxf6 Rd6 45. f3!

The key point.

45. ... Rxf6

Not 45. ... exf3 46. Re8, mate.

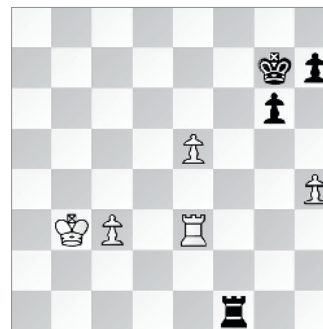
46. fxe4 Be6

Hoping that there is a chance of survival in the rook ending.

47. e5

Giri has everything under control. If he didn't, he would have played 47. Bd5, where he is also completely winning.

47. ... Rf1+ 48. Kb2 Bxb3 49. Kxb3 Kg7



Giri is excellent in converting clear advantages. This is why Firouzja was so successful defending a lost endgame against him — he created some imbalances.

50. c4!

Usually we would push the most advanced passed pawn. But in this case, the e-pawn is easily blocked, so it will be the c-pawn's turn to go. 50. e6 Kf8 51. e7+ Ke8 52. c4 Rf7! is an important point.

50. ... Rb1+ 51. Ka4 Kf7 52. c5 Ke6 53. c6

Black cannot take the e-pawn now. White won easily.

53. ... Rc1 54. Kb5 Rc2 55. Re1 Rc3 56. Kb6 Rb3+ 57. Ka6 Ra3+ 58. Kb6 Rb3+ 59. Ka6 Ra3+ 60. Kb7 Rb3+ 61. Kc8 Rb4 62. c7 Rxh4 63. Rc1!

Avoiding 63. Kd8? Rd4+ 64. Ke8 Rc4, which would have allowed Black to escape with a draw. No such luck!

63. ... Rf4 64. Kb7 Rf7 65. Re1!

There is no reason to let go of the e-pawn.

65. ... g5 66. Kb8 Rf8+ 67. c8=Q+ Rxc8+ 68. Kxc8 h5 69. Kc7 h4 70. Kc6, Black resigned.

Three for Third

There was a three-way tie for third place, with Caruana, Esipenko, and Firouzja all finishing at 8/13, and with Esipenko having the best tiebreaks. The young Russian had something of a breakthrough event in Wijk, also crossing the 2700 barrier and defeating Carlsen in a deceptively smooth manner.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, SCHEVENINGEN VARIATION (B84)

GM Andrey Esipenko (2677)

GM Magnus Carlsen (2862)

83rd Tata Steel Masters (8.1), 01.24.2021

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Be2 e6 7. Be3 Be7 8. g4 b5!? 9. g5 Nfd7 10. a3! Bxg5 11. Qd2 Bxe3 12. Qxe3

White has excellent compensation for the pawn.

12. ... Qh4?! 13. Rg1 g6 14. 0-0-0 Qe7 15. f4 Bb7 16. Kb1 Nc6?



This developing move is a surprising error by the World Champion, but Black was already in difficulties. It's far too risky to try 16. ... 0-0 as White will just open lines to the king with 17. h4. The engine suggests 16. ... Nc5 when White blasts open the center with 17. e5 d5 18. f5 with terrific initiative.

Now Esipenko pounces.

17. Ncx5! axb5 18. Nxc6 Bxc6 19. Qc3

A classic double attack, regaining the material with interest. The weaknesses on b5 and d6 will prove Black's downfall.

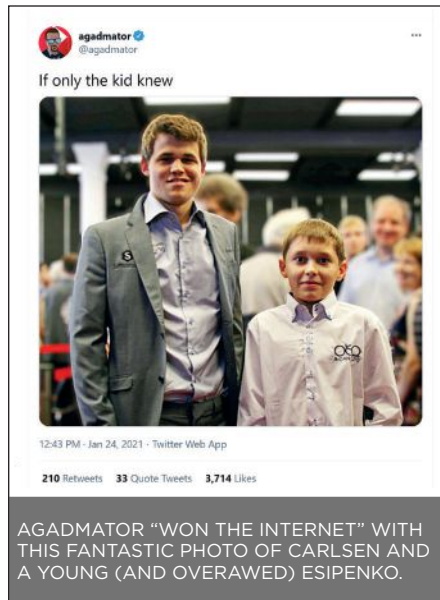
19. ... 0-0 20. Qxc6 d5 21. exd5 Rfc8 22. d6! Qd8

22. ... Rxc6 fails to 23. dxe7.

23. Qxb5 Rcb8 24. Qc4 Rxa3 25. Qc7! Qe8 26. Rg5!

The last difficult move for White, activating the rook and bringing it to the queenside to snuff out any Black counterplay.

26. ... Ra4 27. Ra5 Rab4 28. b3 R4b7 29. Qc3 Qd8 30. Bf3 Rb4 31. Qc7 Qf6 32. Ra8 Rxa8 33. Bxa8 Qf5 34. Kb2 Rb5 35. Qxd7 Rc5 36. Rc1 Qxf4 37. Qe8+ Kg7 38. d7, Black resigned.



Esipenko was absolutely delighted with the win in the post-match interviews, and the internet was set ablaze when the well-known YouTube chess creator Agadmator dug up a photo of Carlsen and a young Esipenko from 2013.

Defending Champion Fabiano Caruana performed more or less to expectations, his +3 score a fair result given his play. A missed win against Duda was counterbalanced by a hard-fought save against Firouzja, and his round nine victory over Wojtaszek featured a powerful positional idea that shocked the Twitterati. IM John Watson explains the key points in his notes to the game.

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E94)

GM Radoslaw Wojtaszek (2705)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2823)

83rd Tata Steel Masters (9), 01.26.2021

Annotations by IM John Watson

1. c4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 g6 4. Nc3 Bg7 5. e4 0-0 6. Be2 e5

The alternative 6. ... Bg4 would transpose after 7. 0-0 e5, but White more often plays 7. Be3, and if 7. ... e5 8. d5 White can benefit from not having castled, for example, 8. ... a5 9. h3 Bd7 10. g4 or 10. Nd2 is a very good version of the h2-h3 systems in the King's Indian.

7. 0-0 Bg4!?

A rare variation which has only recently gained the attention of a few strong players. This is its first test on an elite level.

8. Be3

An important alternative is 8. d5. Black can set up by 8. ... a5 9. Be3 Na6, with the feature that after h2-h3 at some point, ... Bg4-d7

retains Black's usual ... f7-f5 counterattacking ideas. Similarly, 10. Nd2 Bd7 has been played in recent GM games.

8. ... Bxf3!

White gets a long-term advantage after 8. ... Nc6 9. d5 or 8. ... Nfd7 9. d5, with space and either the bishop pair or, if the light-square bishops are exchanged, the better bishop.

9. Bxf3 exd4!

A new move that has revived 7. ... Bg4. The idea is very concrete, else White gets d4-d5 in with a serious positional advantage.

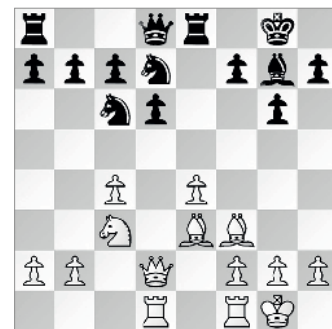
10. Bxd4 Nc6 11. Be3 Re8

Pressure on the e-pawn is key. Alternatively, 11. ... Nd7 12. Qd2 (12. Rc1) 12. ... Nc5 might be tried (12. ... Re8 transposes to the game) although 13. Bh6 limits Black's dynamic potential.

12. Qd2

Some inspiration for Caruana's idea may have come from the instructive game FM Gubsky-GM Antipov, Sochi 2019, which continued 12. Qc2 h5 13. h3 Nd7 14. Rad1 Bxc3! 15. Qxc3 Qf6! 16. Qb3 (16. Qxf6 Nxf6 and White can't defend his e-pawn) 16. ... Nc5! (16. ... Rab8 with equality) 17. Qc2 (17. Bxc5 dxc5 18. Qxb7 Ne5 19. Be2 Rab8 20. Qxc7 Rxb2 with ample compensation) 17. ... Re5!? 18. Rfe1 Rae8 19. Bc1 R5e7 and White is tied to the defense of the e-pawn, while ... Nc6-d4 or ... Nc5-e6 might follow.

12. ... Nd7 13. Rad1



13. ... Bxc3!

As in Gubsky-Antipov. This exchange provoked some interesting Twitter reactions, with the massively knowledgeable GM Ivan Sokolov exclaiming, "If this decision is good for Black, I need to learn chess again." GM Nigel Short chimed in with, "I viewed Caruana's 13. ... Bxc3!? with the same mixture of shock, horror and revulsion that a Victorian clergyman would have had upon reading Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* for the first time." In fact, you could look at this as a move that will be forced, now or soon



thereafter, if Black is to avoid being squeezed to death by the bishops.

A correspondence game saw the similar theme with 13. ... Nc5 14. Rfe1 a5 15. b3 Bxc3! 16. Qxc3 Nxe4 17. Bxe4 Rxe4 18. Bh6 Re5 19. Rxe5 Nxe5 20. f4 Qh4 21. fxe5 Qxh6 22. exd6 cxd6 23. Rxd6 Re8 24. h3 Qh4 25. Qd4, draw in Sirota-Salceanu, ICCF 2000.

14. Qxc3 Qf6!

It's important to realize that if White gets time to consolidate, he's simply better, since two bishops and space are permanent advantages. Indeed, these are the reasons Black seldom plays 7. ... Bg4 and ... e5xd4, much less ... Bg7xc3, leading to serious dark-square kingside weaknesses on Black's kingside. There are a couple of other King's Indian variations in which Black plays this combination of three moves, but with very accurate play White tends to retain a long-term advantage. In the game, because White can't exchange queens without losing his e-pawn and as ... Qxc3 is threatened, Black gains time to tie down White's pieces to defense of the e-pawn.

15. Qc1

A sample continuation after 15. Qd2 is 15. ... Nc5 (or 15. ... Qe6 16. b3 Nc5) 16. b4!? (16. Qc2 a5 leaves White without a lot of useful moves, and ... Re8-e7 / ... Ra8-e8 can follow) 16. ... Nxe4 17. Qc2 Ng5 18. Bd5 Ne6 19. Qd2 Rab8 20. Rfe1 Ne5! 21. f4 Ng4 22. Bxa7 Ra8 23. h3 Rxa7 24. hxg4 Rea8, which is dynamically

equal. After 15. Qxf6 Nxf6 16. c5! dxc5 17. Bxc5 Nxe4 18. Be3 Re7 19. Rfe1 Rae8, White's bishop pair gives him compensation for the pawn, but nothing more.

15. ... Nc5

Black threatens the e4-pawn, but also intends ... a7-a5 and doubling on the open e-file.

16. Qb1!?

Caruana was critical of this. It would be depressing, but White could consider bailing out with 16. Bg5 Qg7 17. Bh6 Qf6 18. Bg5 (but not 18. Rfe1? Ne5 19. Be2 Nxe4).

16. ... Qe6!?

I prefer Black after the safe and sound 16. ... a5!.

17. Rfe1

With 17. b4!? Nxe4 18. Rc1! White has surprising compensation, e.g., 18. ... Re7 19. b5 Na5 20. Rfe1 Rae8 21. Bxa7 f5 22. Bd4 Nxc4.

17. ... Qxc4 18. b3 Qc3 19. Bd2 Qf6 20. Bc1 h5!?

20. ... Ne5 21. Be2 g5 is another sound setup.

21. Bb2 Ne5 22. Be2 h4 23. Qc1

Threatening f4.

23. ... g5 24. Bb5!?

My engine suggests 24. b4! Ne6 (24. ... Nxe4! 25. f3, although 25. ... Ng3 26. hxg3 hxg3

is wild and unclear) 25. Bg4 Qf4 26. Bxe6 Rxe6 27. Bxe5 Qxc1 28. Rxc1 dxe5 29. Rxc7 Rb6 30. a3 a5 with equality.

24. ... Re7 25. Re3 Qg6

Black takes a slight edge with 25. ... Ne6!.

26. Be2

White should have tried 26. Bxe5! Rxe5 27. b4 Ne6 28. Bd7, for example, 28. ... a5!? 29. Bxe6 Qxe6 30. Qxc7 axb4 and the position is equal.

26. ... Rae8 27. Qc2 Ne6

Stronger is 27. ... g4!

28. f3?

Perhaps White had to try the cool as you please 28. h3.

28. ... Nf4 29. Bf1 c6

Black has superb knights and an attack to go along with his pawn.

30. Qf2 Re6 31. Rc3 d5 32. g3??

A blunder. 32. Re3 is better, but 32. ... dxe4 33. Rxe4 Qf5 follows.

32. ... hxg3 33. hxg3 dxe4

Much stronger is 33. ... g4!.

34. gxf4?

With 34. fxe4 Nh5 35. Qf5! Qh6! 36. Bc1 Rg6 Black is still much better, but it's a fight.

34. ... gxf4+ 35. Qg2 exf3

Not 35. ... Nxf3+ 36. Rxf3 exf3 37. Qxg6+

fxg6 38. Bc4 and Black gives up any advantage.

36. Qxg6+ Rxc6 37. Kh1 f2 38. Bh3 Nc4!

39. Rxc4 Re1+, White resigned.

The third member of this “third place triumvirate” was the young Iranian phenom Alireza Firouzja, who received an apology from the tournament organizers after an unfortunate episode in the 13th and final round.

With Giri (8/12) leading Caruana, van Foreest, and Firouzja by a half-point heading into the final day's play, there were plenty of

tiebreak permutations in the air as the last games got under way. Van Foreest was the first to win, putting him at 8½ points, but after Caruana and Giri drew, the tiebreak situation meant that even a win for Firouzja against Wojtaszek was insufficient to land him in the stipulated two-player playoff.

With the time for the showdown between Giri and van Foreest approaching, the arbiters approached Firouzja and Wojtaszek after they reached the move 60 time control, asking them if they wanted to shift boards to

avoid the clatter of pieces in the blitz playoff. Firouzja was nonplussed, to say the least, and immediately made an error that allowed the Polish GM to force a draw.

This *faux pas* should not sour Firouzja on what was an otherwise excellent event. He overcame a tough first round loss to Carlsen, rattling off four wins in the next seven rounds before “drawing out” to finish at +3, and he continued to show the promise that leads many prognosticators to tip him as a future World Champion candidate.



83RD TATA STEEL MASTERS

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
1	GM Jorden van Foreest	2671	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	½	1	½	½	8½/13
2	GM Anish Giri	2764	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	½	8½/13
3	GM Andrey Esipenko	2677	½	½	*	½	½	1	½	0	½	½	1	1	½	1	8/13
4	GM Fabiano Caruana	2823	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	8/13
5	GM Alireza Firouzja	2749	½	½	½	½	*	0	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	8/13
6	GM Magnus Carlsen	2862	½	½	0	½	1	*	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	7½/13
7	GM Pentala Harikrishna	2732	0	½	½	½	0	½	*	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	6½/13
8	GM Aryan Tari	2625	0	0	1	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	½	6/13
9	GM Nils Grandelius	2663	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	½	*	1	½	½	1	1	6/13
10	GM Jan-Krzysztof Duda	2743	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	*	½	½	½	½	5½/13
11	GM Radoslaw Wojtaszek	2705	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	5/13
12	GM David Anton Guijarro	2679	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	5/13
13	GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	2784	½	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	*	1	5/13
14	GM Alexander Donchenko	2668	½	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	*	3½/13

Assessing the Rest

For Magnus Carlsen this was an event to forget, although it says something about the insanely high standards set by the World Champion that a mid-table in a Category 19 event represents a failure. His +2 score (7½/13) lost him a few rating points, but he will have plenty of opportunity to take his revenge in the various Meltwater Champions Chess Tour events concocted by his namesake company Play Magnus and Chess24.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave had a much tougher time in Wijk aan Zee, finishing in shared 11th place at -3 (5/13). Perhaps most worrying was the breakdown of his beloved Najdorf Defense, which cost him full points against Caruana, Giri, and Grandelius. He has quite a bit of work to do if he has hopes of winning the scheduled April resumption of the Candidates Tournament, which he currently leads with GM Ian Nepomniachtchi with seven rounds to play.

Special note should be made of Aryan Tari's performance. The lowest rated player in the field, the 21-year-old Norwegian GM finished with a respectable -1 score at 6/13, and would have ended on even terms had he found a remarkable resource in his round five draw with Anton Guijarro.



GM ARYAN TARI

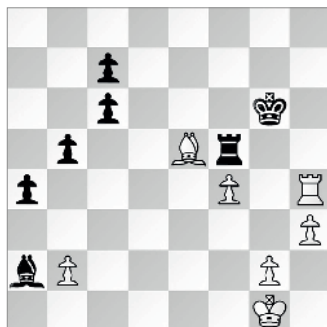
SEE IT TO BELIEVE IT!

David Anton Guijarro (2679)

Aryan Tari (2625)

83rd Tata Steel Masters (5), 01.21.2021

Annotations by IM John Watson



WHITE TO MOVE

After a well-played middlegame, White has reached a position with three passed pawns and even some threats against Black's king. Although Black has a few queenside threats, this looks fairly easy; the main problem is time trouble.

37. Rh8! b4 38. Rb8

Clearer still is 38. Ra8! a3 (38. ... Bb3 39. g4 Rf7 40. f5+ Kh6 41. h4!) 39. bxa3 b3 40. Rb8 c5 41. Kf2 c4 42. Ke3. On the other hand, 38. g4! Rxe5! 39. fxe5 c5 40. Ra8?? (40. Kf2) 40. ... a3! 41. bxa3 b3 will only draw.

38. ... c5 39. Rb5?

Better to get to the queenside: 39. Kf2! b3 40. Ke3 c4 41. Kd4 a3 42. Kc3 and the king arrives just in time.

39. ... b3

Okay, but 39. ... Rxe5! 40. fxe5 b3 41. Rxc5 a3 42. bxa3 b2 43. Rb5 b1=Q+ 44. Rxb1 Bxb1 is an easy draw. This is the sort of trick that drives you crazy when battling the clock.

40. Rxc5 Rxe5 41. Rxe5 a3 42. bxa3 b2 43. Rb5 b1=Q+ 44. Rxb1 Bxb1

Can White win this? The widely separated rook pawns would seem to help, but White's pawns aren't advanced enough to prevent a blockade.

45. Kf2 Bc2 46. g4 c5 47. Ke3 Kf6 48. Kd2

A draw looks inevitable, but White figures that he has no losing chances and plays on a bit.

48. ... Ba4 49. h4

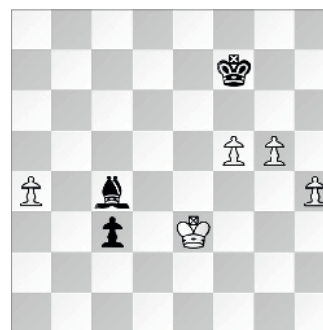
After 49. Kc3 Bb5 50. h4 Kg6 51. f5+ Kf6 the pawns are stopped.

49. ... Bd7 50. f5 Ba4 51. Ke3 c4 52. Kf4??

I'm sure that White never dreamed he could actually lose such a position! It was time to take the draw, e.g., 52. Kd4 Bd1 53. Kxc4 Bxg4 with equality or 52. Kd2 c3+ 53. Kxc3 Bd1.

52. ... c3! 53. g5+ Kf7 54. Ke3 c2??

Doubtless there was little time for thought. Out of nowhere, Black had 54. ... Bb5! 55. a4 Bc4 ...



... and remarkably, White's king can't waste a tempo, so he simply has to advance his pawns until they are all captured! I've never seen this idea and don't doubt that I could have fallen for it myself. Play could go, for example, 56. a5 Ba6 57. h5 Kg7 58. h6+ Kh7 59. f6 Kg6 60. h7 Kxh7 61. f7 Kg7 62. g6 Kf8 63. Kf4 c2, etc.

55. Kd2 Kg7 56. h5 Bb3 57. Kc1 Ba4 58. Kb2 Bb3 59. Kc1 Ba4 60. Kb2, draw.

A comedy of errors, but indicative of how difficult it is for even very strong players to keep a clear head under pressure. ♠

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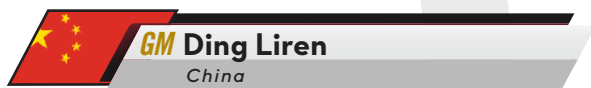
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A FIGHTING

GM IRINA KRUSH reflects on another U.S. Women's Championship and the vicissitudes of 2020

By **JAMAAL ABDUL-ALIM**

Whenever GM Irina Krush competes in a tournament, she knows her students are watching her every move. And so it was when she found herself fighting it out in the 2020 U.S. Women's Championship, which was held online due to COVID-19.

While running an online chess school can be a demanding endeavor that can detract from one's ability to prepare for a top-level tournament, for Krush having students serves as a source of motivation.

"My students actually get to see me in action," Krush told *Chess Life* recently. "And I know it's inspiring for them. It's a very different experience winning now [as opposed to] five or 10 years ago when I was just playing for myself, because now I know my students are watching.

"I know they root for me," Krush says. "I know they follow my games and that it just means a lot to them."

Indeed, I happen to have personal knowledge of just how much her students look up to her. I got that knowledge during the 2013-2014 academic year, when I moved to New York City to take a one-year journalism fellowship at Columbia University.

During that time, I signed up my daughter, Hadiyah, who was 12 at the time, to take group classes led by Krush at a game store in Greenwich Village.

Krush never allowed parents to be in the classroom when she was teaching.

As a former chess instructor, I understood. Some may disagree, but in my view, there are times when a chess instructor needs to be able to teach without any interference — and it isn't always pretty.

Krush will be the first to tell you that she has a serious approach.

"Well, I'm not a soft, cuddly teacher," she volunteered during our interview.

I found the remark humorous because I already knew that. And, for what it's worth, despite her stern approach, my daughter has admiration for Krush's no-nonsense ways and "being logical and not in la-la land."

Back to the story: Krush — who went on to clinch the 2020 U.S. Women's Championship undefeated, scoring 8½ out of a possible 11 points by achieving six wins and five draws — made her remarks in January during an hour-long Zoom interview. The interview touched on topics that ranged from Krush's personal battle against COVID-19 in spring of 2020 to what it's like to be a woman in the male-dominated world of chess, to her favorite scene in "The Queen's Gambit," the hit Netflix limited series that has been credited with inspiring more women and girls to take

ALL PHOTOS EXCEPT PAGE 34 BY GABRIELA HERMAN

Warrior





up chess. (That scene? The last one of the series, where — no spoilers! — Beth plays chess in the park and practices her Russian.)

Krush's victory is remarkable for reasons that transcend the fact that she did it while helping to run GM Chess — a chess teaching venture she co-founded in 2015 with her coach, GM Giorgi Kacheishvili, and GM Tamaz Gelashvili, both of Georgia (the country, not the state).

She admittedly did very little preparation for the U.S. Women's Championship.

"My level of preparation is not the same at all," Krush says. "It's like close to a level zero compared to what it used to be."

Krush had two main concerns about the fact that the tournament was being held online. The first was not being able to answer the call of nature due to rules that required players to stay at their computers — at least toward the latter stages of the game — while play was in progress. Her second worry was about her Wi-Fi going out all of a sudden.

"I don't have this amazing internet setup," Krush says. "So it was a real concern for me and I wanted it just to hold up."

Krush's worst fears came to pass during the final moments of her penultimate game against WGM Sabina-Francesca Foisor.

"I had like a minute and I saw I had disconnected. My connection went on limited and I had to reconnect to get back on," Krush says. "Thankfully. It wasn't a big deal. I didn't lose but you see, of course, there's always a chance, right?"

Indeed, as any player knows, chess is already "so subject to sudden vicissitudes," as Benjamin Franklin once noted, that fortunes can reverse in an instant. That is doubly so, probably even more, when you're playing online with spotty Wi-Fi.

Fortunately for Krush, she still won and collected the \$25,000 prize and secured her eighth U.S. Women's Champion title over a span

of three or four different decades, depending on when you believe a decade starts.

It was a championship she almost didn't live to see.

Back in March — when government officials began to order lockdowns amid the COVID-19 outbreak — Krush found herself among the earliest waves of people to contract the disease.

Before her COVID-19 infection, Krush admits she had been ambivalent about the severity of the virus, even wondering at one point: How bad could this be?

The answer came quickly.

Around the same time COVID-19 restrictions forced the closing of the Marshall Chess Club — where Krush had been convening classes — Krush began to feel ill.

She went to a hospital. They kept her.

"They gave me an actual room," Krush recalled, reflecting on how getting a room is something that would "never have happened" just a few days later when hospitals in New York City began to get overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients.

Krush ended up going back to the hospital several more times. Each time they sent her home.

"I went back like three more times, but there was never even any talk of them doing anything for me or taking me in," Krush says. "It was just like, 'OK, well, as long as you're breathing, you can be home.'"

But Krush did have trouble breathing.

"When you can't breathe, you're basically being attacked on your ability to live. So that was the scary part," Krush says. "I didn't have a lot of the other things that accompanied COVID-19. I never had a cough. I never had a high fever. I never had problems with energy.

"I always felt like I could walk up and down the stairs. It never got so



bad that I felt like I was going to collapse and just die.”

Sleep was hard to come by.

“I had to sleep sitting up,” Krush says. “That’s how difficult it was to breathe. So I had low points like that. And that final trip to the hospital was probably my low point. It was when the pain from the inflammation was so bad. Your chest gets very tired when you can’t breathe and you are struggling to get those breaths in.”



Krush is keenly aware that she is in a unique position to influence girls in the world of chess.

“I just want to see the interested kids, like the kids who know — whether they’re boys or girls — that they love chess,” Krush says. “But I do acknowledge the reality that probably my presence could make more of a difference for a girl, that maybe I have a chance just to give a bit more in some way to a girl, and so I’m not really that surprised that I’m getting a lot of inquiries from parents of girls.”

Much of that interest was undoubtedly spawned by “The Queen’s Gambit,” coupled with the fact that the pandemic has led more people to seek out chess instruction online as they search for things to do indoors because of the social distancing restrictions of COVID-19.

Krush’s influence on girls and young women in the world of chess transcends what she does in her classes.

WIM Ashritha Eswaran, who tied for fifth place in the U.S. Women’s Championship and has drawn twice and lost twice against Krush — one of those losses being at the 2020 championship — says she has learned “numerous lessons after every game” she has played against Krush.

“The most important was that Irina is a phenomenal tactical and positional player,” Eswaran says. “Thus, I had to be very sharp and alert throughout the entire game.”

She also credits Krush with showing her what it means to be a “fighting warrior.”

“Most importantly, I learned to never lose confidence in myself and to always be myself even if I am losing every game in a tournament,” Eswaran says. “This ‘warrior-like’ attitude, that I learned from Irina, has certainly helped on numerous occasions both off and on the chess board.”

WGM Jennifer Yu — the 2019 U.S. Women’s Champion — has squared off against Krush in championships from years gone by. She has defeated Krush twice, lost twice, and drawn twice.

“Every single game was quite a bit of a challenge since I would often have to figure my way out of a bad position,” Yu says.

“Going into the tournament, I didn’t feel very good about my play since I’ve had quite a few more than abysmal results before the event,” Yu says of the 2020 championship. “This game would’ve been the fifth time I played black against her, so I wasn’t quite sure what to prep against her.

“I misplayed the opening with 11. ... Nc6, because after this, it is very difficult to defend my hanging pawns on d5 and c5. Irina played extremely well, placing pressure on my weak pawns and smoothly won the game.”



Krush shays she has always felt welcome in the world of chess. She credits that to two “shields.” The first shield was her father, who served as her chaperone early in her career.

The other shield, she said, was that she was good.

“In the chess world, the first thing that people are going to respect is the competency,” Krush says. “And because I was lucky enough to always be at the top of my age group for girls and boys, and because it was so rare to see someone that little at that level — especially a girl — that helped me.”



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: IRINA AND TROPHY, AGE 8-9; WITH YURY SHULMAN AND WESLEY SO AT THE 2014 TROMSØ OLYMPIAD; SMILING IN SAINT LOUIS, CIRCA 2013, COURTESY OF SLCC; KASPAROV AND KRUSH FOR "KASPAROV AGAINST THE WORLD" IN 1999; THE FAMOUS GIBRALTAR MONKEYS IN 2007; SWINGING IN A CHILDHOOD PARK; SMILING AT THE BOARD IN 1997. MIDDLE TOP: AN IMPORTANT CALL IN 1987. MIDDLE BOTTOM: THE 2013 WORLD TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP IN KAZAKHSTAN. UNLESS NOTED, ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF IRINA KRUSH.



She also got a psychological boost from IA Steve Immitt, a longtime tournament director who used to write her name in all caps with three exclamation points — KRUSH!!! — on the pairing sheets.

“I was impressed by her ability to defeat players much older (and taller) than her,” recalls Immitt, who first met Irina when her dad brought her to enter one of his Rated Beginners Tournaments at the Manhattan Chess Club in Carnegie Hall in the early 1990s, when she was no more than seven or eight.

“I was also intrigued by the eponymous aspect of her name shining forth in her results,” Immitt says, noting that Krush broke a national record in 1993 by becoming the youngest player at the time to defeat a master.

“Highlighting her name in caps and exclams proved to be quite prescient,” Immitt says, “as she quickly continued to rack up more and more impressive results.”

Toward the end of the interview, I asked Krush a series of questions on a variety of topics.

Should tournaments just stay online to save everyone time and money that would otherwise be spent on travel?

“Online play is kind of not good for classical chess. It’s not compatible with classical chess,” Krush says, noting that games must be shorter in order for players to abide by anti-cheating rules that require them to

stay at their computers. “So if we value classical chess, we definitely need to come back to over-the-board. But for rapid, it’s not so bad.”

Is there still a need for the WGM title?

“I think it had a legitimate place in the chess world,” Krush says. “I think these days — as we’re seeing just more and more women getting the regular GM title, I think it’s already pretty clear that it’s not just a matter of one person doing it and [that] no one else can possibly accomplish this.

“We already have, like, 20, 30 women getting the GM title, so it’s quite doable,” Krush says. “Based on what we’re seeing with how many women are getting the regular GM title, it’s already completely within the hands of women to do it.

“I mean it’s obvious there’s no longer any question about that, so in that sense I would have to ask, well, maybe someone else can explain to me why it’s necessary.”

Will there ever be an Irina Krush chess app?

“If there’s already a ‘Play Magnus’ app, why would there be a need for a ‘Play Irina’ app? I think the world already has enough.”

For now, Krush says she’s mulling over the idea of starting a YouTube channel. Among other things, the channel will focus on what her students should know and what people need to know to improve. Or, you might say, the channel will teach people how to totally KRUSH!!! ♣



My Life in Chess

Five Memorable Games by GM IRINA KRUSH

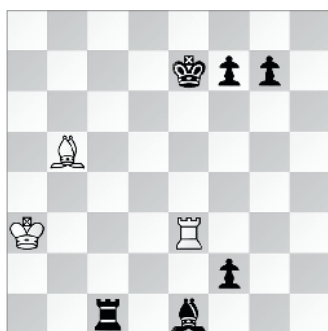
For this issue I was asked to present a few “personal favorites.” Many of the biggest games in my career have been from U.S. Championships, Olympiads, and World Team Championships, and they have been annotated somewhere in the past. The games I selected here are not necessarily the most critical ones but in some way all of them tell a little piece of my life in chess.

HARD LESSONS

Mari Danilchenko

Irina Krush

World Championship U10 Girls, Bratislava (1), 1993



BLACK TO MOVE

This early heartbreaker is one of the most memorable games of my life. It was the last round of the World Girls Under 10 Championship. I was nine years old, I had 8/10, and if I could win this ending with three extra pawns, I'd get to 9/11 and tie for first place with Georgia's (country, not state) Ana Matnadze (now an IM). Alas, I kept my king too safe...

63. ... Kf8?? 64. Re8, mate.

I cried for a long time after this game. I came in fourth place, just out of the medals! It took me another four years to finally medal at a world youth event.

PETROFF DEFENSE (C42)

Oswaldo Zambrana (2404)

IM Irina Krush (2449)

2nd American Continental, Buenos Aires (1), 08.29.2003

In 2003, I learned the “boring” Petroff, quite a switch-up for a lifelong Sicilian player. But the Petroff worked out to be a very exciting opening for me, and in the summer of 2003 I won nice games in it against Ivan Cheparinov and “the Zambrana.” This was the final round of the American Continental Championship, my first time in Argentina. I was so fond of this opening I was planning to call my future dog “Petroff!”

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nxe5 d6 4. Nf3 Nxe4 5. d4 d5 6. Bd3 Bd6 7. O-O O-O 8. c4 c6 9. Qc2 Na6 10. a3

Black has compensation for the pawn after 10. Bxe4 dxe4 11. Qxe4 Re8.

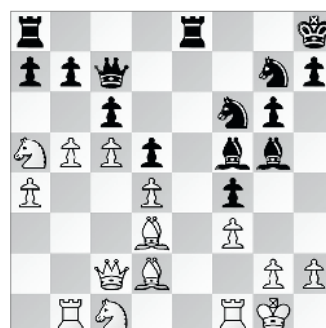
10. ... f5

A risky move, but I guess I really liked the knight on e4!

11. Nc3 Nc7 12. c5 Be7 13. Ne2 Ne6 14. b4 Bf6 15. Bb2 Qc7 16. Nd2 Bg5 17. Nb3 Bd7 18. Bc1 f4 19. f3 Nf6 20. a4 g6 21. b5 Ng7 22. Rb1

22. g4!? is a very reasonable prophylactic move, although he'd have to calculate sacs on g4. I suspect that my opponent didn't sense the danger on the kingside yet.

22. ... Bf5 23. Bd2 Rfe8 24. Nec1 Kh8 25. Na5



25. ... Ne4!

The first part of the concept I have been preparing. I have to do something quickly, since White has made a lot of progress on the queenside.

26. Be1



If 26. bxc6 Nxd2 27. Qxd2 b6.

26. ... Ng3!!

I'm pretty sure this is the only time in my life I put a piece *en prise* on two consecutive moves! I distinctly remember enjoying this part of the game.

27. hxg3 fxg3

The concept is very simple: the g3-pawn

is the anchor for the attack on White's king. Black just needs to get the queen to the h-file.

28. f4

After 28. Ne2 I would have had the chance play more nice moves: 28. ... Rxe2! 29. Qxe2 Re8 30. Qc2 Be3+ 31. Kh1 Qf4.

28. ... Rxe1

Okay, this is still not too bad, even if I'm giving away a good deal of material.

But it's a shame that I didn't play the spectacular queen sacrifice 28. ... Qxf4!! which would be such a worthy successor to the knight's efforts. After my game with WGM Tatev Abrahamyan at the 2020 U.S. Women's Championship, when the commentators pointed out a splendid win I'd missed to crown my attack, I told them, “I only have so much Mikhail Tal in me.”

So why didn't I sac the queen? Most likely I couldn't work out 29. Bxf5 (29. Rxf4 Rxe1+ 30. Rf1 Be3+ 31. Kh1 Rxf1+ 32. Bxf1 Bxc2 and White's whole position is falling apart.) 29. ... Rxe1 30. Rxe1 Nxf5 and while I'm down a rook, I will quietly bring in my pieces and eventually mate the white king, i.e. 31. Nab3 Rf8 with ... Qf4-h4 next.

29. Rxe1 Qxf4 30. Bxf5 Qxd4+ 31. Kf1 Rf8 32. Rb3 Bxc1

Much better was 32. ... Nxf5! 33. Rf3 Qh4.

33. Rf3 Nxf5 34. Qxc1 Qh4 35. Ke2

Due to my imprecision my opponent had a defense in 35. Qd1! Qh1+ 36. Ke2 Qxg2+ 37. Kd3 with the key point that the queen protects the f3-rook. But he was in time trouble and it's not a very easy move to spot.

35. ... Nd4+, White resigned.

The key variation goes 35. ... Nd4+ 36. Kd2 Nxf3+ 37. gxf3 Rxf3 and Black is winning. I need to create something like this at least one more time in my life!

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE (E55)

IM Irina Krush (2473)

GM Pontus Carlsson (2501)

70th Corus-C, Wijk aan Zee (8), 01.20.2008

I played in Wijk aan Zee just once in my life, and it was definitely a memorable tournament from a chess point of view. The event is very long (13 rounds), the place itself is cold and

defending bad positions without even getting a chance to play. I remember climbing up on a sand dune one night and shouting into the wind that I knew this was a test and I was going to get myself together and pass it (don't worry, I was by myself, so no one else saw the craziness). And I did indeed turn it around, winning a bunch of games in the second half, including one against the eventual winner GM Fabiano Caruana.

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 O-O 5. Bd3 d5 6. Nf3 c5 7. O-O dxc4 8. Bxc4 Nbd7 9. Qb3 cxd4 10. exd4 Bxc3 11. bxc3 Qc7 12. Re1 b6 13. Ba3 Rd8



What a provocation!

14. Bxe6 fxe6 15. Qxe6+ Kh8 16. Ng5 Nf8

But here I just couldn't see the win — there is no smothered mate. I felt like there should be something but I just couldn't find it... so I spent something like 40 minutes on this move. It was very satisfying to finally see it!

17. Nf7+

A key defensive line for Black is 17. Qf7 Qf4 18. Bc1 Qf5.

17. ... Kg8 18. Nh6+ Kh8

Will there be a repetition?

19. Qf7!

Ah, found you! The point is that the knight is much better on h6 than on g5 for this move.

19. ... Qf4 20. Bc1

No ... Qf4-f5 here! And any other move invites the famous smothered mate. I don't think I've ever gotten so close to a smothered mate against a strong player.

20. ... Be6 21. Bxf4 Bxf7 22. Nxf7+ Kg8 23. Nxd8 Rxd8 24. Be5 Nd5 25. c4 Nb4 26. Rab1 Nc6 27. c5 bxc5 28. dxc5 Ne6 29. Bf6 Re8 30. Bc3 Kf7 31. Rb7+ Kg6 32. Rd7 Kf5 33. Rd5+, Black resigned.

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE (E32)

IM Irina Krush (2483)
GM Liviu Dieter Nisipeanu (2678)
9th Gibraltar Masters (3),
01.27.2011

Gibraltar has been one of my favorite tournaments, and there's no open tournament

abroad I've played more. My first trip there was in 2007, and my most recent appearance was 2016, which feels so long ago now!

Gibraltar has given me the chance to face so many strong players. In my first event in 2007, I was paired in round one against GM Vladimir Akopian, then rated 2700. I think it was the only time in my life I wore black leather pants to a game, but they gave me the confidence to win! GM Nisipeanu is a world class player, so I was pleasantly surprised at how smoothly this game went.

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. Qc2 O-O 5. a3 Bxc3+ 6. Qxc3 h6!?

He wants to get off the beaten track, practically forcing me to develop my bishop to b2.

7. e3 b6 8. Nf3 Bb7 9. Be2 d6 10. b4 Ne4 11. Qc2 a5 12. Bb2 axb4 13. axb4 Rxa1+ 14. Bxa1 Ng5



15. Nd2!

This is really the only strong move of the game, but it's fairly typical. I don't mind giving the g2-pawn for some initiative on the g-file.

15. ... Bxg2 16. Rg1 Bh3

If 16. ... Bb7 17. d5 e5 18. f4.

17. d5 f6

After 17. ... e5 I have 18. f4.

18. dxe6 Nc6 19. f4 Nxe6 20. Rg3 Nxb4 21. Qb1 Qa8 22. Kf2!

Strong players are tricky, so it's important not to blunder anything! Black's great hope was 22. Rxh3 Qxa1 23. Qxa1 Nc2+.

22. ... Ng5 23. fxe5 fxe5+ 24. Kg1 Bf5 25. Qb2 Rf7 26. Rf3 Nd3 27. Bxd3 Bxd3 28. Rxf7 Kxf7 29. Qxg7+ Ke6 30. Qxh6+ Kd7 31. Qg7+ Kc6 32. Qd4 Qa5 33. Qxd3, Black resigned.

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE

IM Irina Krush (2452)
GM Boris Gulko (2561)
USA-ch Saint Louis (3), 05.10.2009

I've always enjoyed playing the legendary Boris Gulko, and somehow I have played two games against him that would go into my "Best

Games" collection. One thing that I remember about this game is that it was very tough just surviving the opening and middlegame.

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. Qc2 O-O 5. a3 Bxc3+ 6. Qxc3 d5 7. Nf3 dxc4 8. Qxc4 b6 9. Bf4 Ba6 10. Qxc7

I was clearly unprepared for this line in the Nimzo-Indian, but I am surprised that I decided to take this pawn. Falling behind in development is surely playing with fire. I'm sure I knew enough theory to know it wasn't that great, but I still decided to take it!

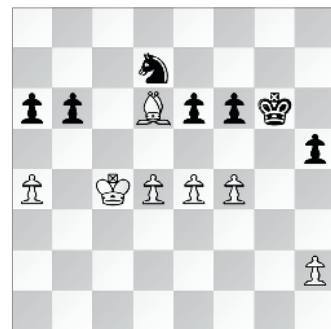
10. ... Qd5 11. Qd6 Qe4 12. Rc1 Nbd7 13. Nd2 Qg6 14. f3

I have to work so hard just to get my pieces out!

14. ... Rac8 15. Rxc8 Rxc8 16. Kf2 Qc2 17. e4 Bxf1 18. Rxf1 Qxb2 19. Qb4 Qc2 20. Qb3 Ne8 21. Ke2 Qc6 22. Nb1 Qc2+

This queen trade is handing White a small edge, but I was about to play Rf1-c1 and Boris probably didn't think the endgame was too dangerous for Black.

23. Qxc2 Rxc2+ 24. Bd2 f6 25. Kd3 Rc8 26. Rc1 Rxc1 27. Bxc1 Kf7 28. a4 Nd6 29. Na3 a6 30. Nc4 Nxc4 31. Kxc4 g5 32. Ba3 h5 33. Bd6 Ke8 34. g3 Kf7 35. f4 gxf4 36. gxf4 Kg6



37. f5+!

A pretty move to break through with the king.

37. ... Kf7

After 37. ... exf5 38. Kd5 fxe4 39. Kc6 I wonder... where shall the knight go?

38. Kb4

Black's in zugzwang.

38. ... e5 39. Kc4 b5+ 40. axb5 axb5+ 41. Kxb5 exd4 42. Kc4 Ne5+ 43. Kxd4 Ng4 44. Bg3 Ke7 45. Kd3 Nh6 46. Ke3 Nf7 47. Bf4 Kd7 48. Kf3 Kc6 49. Kg3 Kc5 50. Kh4 Kd4 51. Kxh5 Kxe4 52. Kg4 Kd5 53. h4 Kc6 54. Kh5, Black resigned.

Exploiting an extra center pawn is a classic idea. I guess I must have studied some endgame books when I was young! ♠



MAKE YOUR MOVE!

MARCH 2021 | FM CARSTEN HANSEN

This month's puzzles are from an interesting mix of events, including the traditional over-the-board tournament in Wijk aan Zee that draws some of the best players in the world, along with several puzzles from various online events.

The puzzles start from easy and gradually move toward being difficult. Try first to solve the puzzle before reading the text at the bottom of the page. If unsuccessful, play through the solution, but return to the puzzle in a week or two to see if you can now solve it. That way you gradually expand your tactical vision, and it will be more likely that you will spot tactics as they occur in your own games. Whatever you do, do not use an engine to solve the puzzles, as you will only cheat yourself out of improving your game. Solutions can be found on page 59.

TACTIC I.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC II.



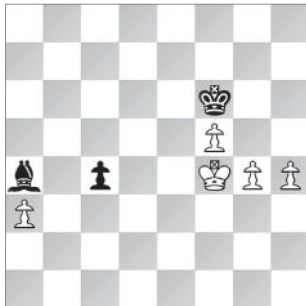
WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC III.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC IV.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC V.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC VI.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC VII.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC VIII.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC IX.



WHITE TO MOVE

POSITION 1: Welcome visitor

POSITION 2: Clearance

POSITION 3: Out of squares

POSITION 4: In all the right places

POSITION 5: Far reaching consequences

POSITION 6: Loose pieces

POSITION 7: Finding a way through

POSITION 8: Break the gates

POSITION 9: From all angles

Qualifying in the Time of COVID

*Lenderman prevails at the last minute;
Yoo shines in U.S. Championship qualifier*

By **GM ELSHAN MORADIABADI**



Years ago, when I was a senior in college, I read a redacted (censored and edited to delete contents deemed “un-Islamic” by the ministry of culture in Iran) version of *Love in the Time Of Cholera*, by Nobel Prize winner author Gabriel García Márquez. My fondness for the book did not stem from interest in Márquez’s magical realism; it was, instead, rooted in the fact that one of the key characters in the book, Jeremiah de Saint-Amour, was a chess player. While the original story had very little to do with an epidemic (*cólera*, in Spanish, can also denote passion), the catchy title and the main theme in this novel has been registering in my mind throughout 2020:

If Fermina and Florentino had to wait half a century before finally declaring their love for one another, how long will we have to wait to satisfy our *cólera* for proper classical tournaments again?

While open tournaments have been happening — albeit a fragment of what they used to be — in Europe, rated classical tournaments in the U.S. have barely exceeded the number of fingers in both hands. For me, it was most disheartening to play the 2020 U.S. Championship not only online, but also in a rapid time control. However, what can one say in the time of pandemic? There are far more important matters at stake beyond a craving

for classical, over-the-board chess.

I am not condemning the burgeoning appeal of rapid online chess during the pandemic. I just long for a chance to sit across the board and play classical chess. Although many top-players — including World Champion GM Magnus Carlsen himself — have shown a great deal of interest in online rapid events, I also believe that many elite and non-elite players alike miss classical chess.

Why did I ramble on in the above paragraphs when I am supposed to write about the U.S. Championship qualifier? I simply wanted to demonstrate how significant it feels to participate in such an important event, especially for players like me, IM Christopher Yoo, and GMs Timur Gareyev and Robert Hess, who do not have the ratings to qualify directly into the U.S. Championship. Particularly in 2020, the lack of FIDE-rated tournaments made it difficult for us to imagine being seeded into what seems to have become the strongest national championship in the world.

So, qualifying for the U.S. Championship is an extremely big deal, and winning a spot became even more coveted in the time of pandemic.

The online qualifier was unique because any US Chess member had a shot at playing in the 2021 Closed U.S. Championship. Thus, it was

not surprising that US Chess, in collaboration with *Chess.com*, devised a series of hurdles for participants before reaching the final round robin. First was a series of 10+0 Swiss events, the last of which was a 12-round event for players with ratings higher than 2400 or winners of lower section rapid events. After the final rapid, 23 players made it to the final Swiss, where a seven round 10+2 rapid decided the final eight qualifiers for the knockout section. The two finalists in the knockout each earned a seat in the U.S. Championship qualifier round-robin, a seven round classical time control (90+30) tournament with eight players. Rounding out the final field were four players selected by US Chess and two who were *Chess.com* nominees.

Although my focus is on the final round-robin, I would like to mention a few noteworthy stories:

Watch your mouse!

While I immensely enjoyed the experience of playing in a high-level classical round-robin tournament, several unforeseeable factors affected my path forward. One of these factors was the mouse-slip. In chess, a mouse-slip is when a player misplays a move by inadvertently moving their mouse in the wrong direction. As there were several mouse-slips in the past



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GMS TIMUR GAREYEV, ALEXSANDR LENDERMAN, ANDREW TANG, IM CHRISTOPHER YOO, GMS ROBERT HESS, ELSHAN MORADIABADI, DANIEL NARODITSKY. CENTER: GM DARIUSZ SWIERCZ. ALL PHOTOS COURTESY SLCC.

Participants

FINAL ROUND ROBIN

US CHAMPIONSHIP

ONLINE QUALIFIER

PRESENTED BY CHESS.COM



HESS



NARODITSKY



TANG



YOO



MORADIABADI



SWIERCZ



GAREYEV



LENDERMAN




year, most notably Garry Kasparov's against Fabiano Caruana in the 2020 Champions Showdown: Chess 9LX event, I thought I would share my own "slippery" experience during the qualifiers:

In the following game, I was playing against bullet phenom GM Andrew Tang (aka Penguimgm1) in the second round of the final Swiss. After missing an easy win in the first round, I was somewhat disheartened and played the opening moves relatively inaccurately. But Tang had a gift for me:

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED (D55)

GM Elshan Moradiabadi (2555)

GM Andrew Tang (2538)

USA-ch OQ Final Swiss (2), 12.05.2020

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. c4 e6 4. Bg5 Be7 5. Qc2 0-0 6. e3 h6 7. Bxf6 Bxf6 8. Nc3

I'd forgotten about this transposition during the game. 8. h4 is more principled.

8. ... c5

Now Black equalizes.

9. dxc5 Qa5 10. cxd5 exd5 11. Rd1 Be6 12. Bd3?!

Better (or at least closer to equal!) is 12. Nd4 Qxc5 13. Bb5 Rc8 14. Ba4 Nc6 15. Bxc6 bxc6

... my only advantage was on the clock... and against a fast player like Christopher, that's not much ...

16. 0-0 Rab8 17. Rd2 Qa5 18. Rc1 c5 19. Nde2 d4 20. Ne4 Be7 21. a3 Bb3 22. Qd3 f5 23. N4g3 and GMs Portisch and Ivkov agreed to a draw here (Budapest 1960).

12. ... Nd7 13. 0-0 Qxc3??

A premove? Surely Tang meant to play ... Bf6xc3. Because this move was played instantly, I am convinced that it was nothing but a bad mouse slip. Black is totally fine after 13. ... Bxc3 14. bxc3 Nxc5.

14. bxc3, Black resigned.

Nevertheless, Tang kept his cool, made it to the knockout stage, and subsequently earned a spot in the final round-robin.

The easy win helped me find my way back into for a tie for first and the knockout stage. However, Caïssa had another plan for me: While a win would have yielded me a share for first in the final round-robin, I mouse-slipped

in the following game against the tournament's phenom anxd future top-GM Christopher Yoo.

MOUSE MANGLES

GM Elshan Moradiabadi (2555)

IM Christopher Yoo (2455)

USA-ch Online Qualifier (2), 12.18.2020



BLACK TO MOVE

I was unable to put pressure on Christopher in the opening, and needing a draw to secure the tie for first place, he equalized comfortably. In this position my only advantage was on the clock... and against a fast player like Christopher, that's not much! But somehow the gravity of the situation got the best of the young IM and he lost patience, blundering into the following losing position:

26. ... e5??

Black can simply sit on the position with 26. ... Ne8. White cannot make much progress.

27. dxe5 Rxd3 28. Rxd3 Rxd3 29. Qxd3 Qxe5 30. Qd8+?

This mouse-slip returned the favor.

I intended to play the move 30. Qd7 which simply wins the game: 30. ... g6 31. Qc8+ Kg7 32. Qxb7 c5 33. Kg2 and here White gradually can consolidate and win. It is not exactly easy, but it is not that difficult either. In all fairness, I hallucinated and thought the two moves (30. Qd8+ and 30. Qd7) did not differ in essence; I expected ... Nc7-e8 against Qd3-d7 too. Ultimately, I feel less pain over this unfortunate mistake because I didn't realize how decisive it was during the game.

30. ... Ne8

Now White has no chance of winning, and the game shortly ended in a draw.

31. Bg4 Kh7 32. Qd7 Nd6 33. b4 g6 34. Bf3 Kg7 35. Kg2 Kf8 36. Qd8+ Kg7 37. Qc7 Kf8 38. Qb8+ Kg7 39. Qc7 Kf8 40. Qd8+ Kg7 41. Qd7 Kf8 42. Qd8+, draw.

Sweet revenge

The final round-robin's two qualifier seats went to IM Christopher Yoo, who got the better of me in the blitz section of our match, and GM Andrew Tang, who bested GM Conrad Holt in their respective final match.

Your author was a lucky last-minute addition to the event, after several well-known and strong players, including GM Alex Onischuk (ex-U.S. Champion and my coach at Texas Tech), GM Yaroslav Zhrebukh (multiple U.S. Championship participant and my teammate at Texas Tech), and GM Zviad Izoria, whom I coached during the World Team championship in 2019, declined their invitations to the tournament. So naturally I was overjoyed to participate, because the U.S. Championship is one event I will fight to take part in. It is still a worthy pursuit for a full-time 35 year old coach.

It was also interesting that I faced Tang and Yoo again within days of playing them in the earlier stages of the qualifier. After a solid start with 2/3 against GMs Timur Gareyev, Aleksandr Lenderman, and Robert Hess, I was to play against Tang, who was trailing with ½/3. While beating Andrew Tang is difficult

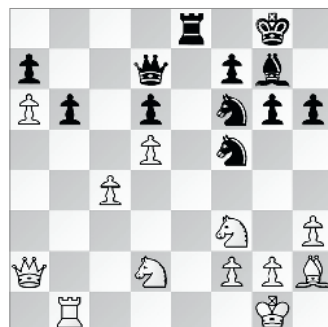
for any player who faces him with the black pieces, I tried my best to keep the game alive so I could take advantage of what seemed to be his poor form during this event. My strategy almost worked until my poor tactical form and lack of sharp eye in time trouble proved to be a decisive factor. So, Caissa taught me a harsh lesson about not honing my tactical skills before the event: Luck won't be on your side if you do not work to keep it in your favor!

A TOUGH RESULT

GM Andrew Tang (2538)

GM Elshan Moradiabadi (2555)

USA-ch Online Qualifier (4), 12.14.2020



BLACK TO MOVE

26. ... g5?

This was a tough result, but also a fascinating lesson for me. After deeply analyzing this game with Stockfish and his allies I am sadly convinced that most of my positional deduction were in fact erroneous.

Securing the knight on f5 is key: 26. ... h5 27. Qa3 h4 28. Bf4 Ne4 29. Nxe4 Rxe4 and Black is slightly better.

27. g4?!

The key 27. Qa3! is a hard move to see. After 27. ... g4 28. hxg4 Nxg4 29. Qd3 Black has no attack against White's king.

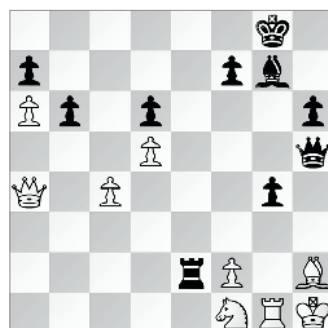
27. ... Nxg4! 28. hxg4 Nd4 29. Qa3

Now the game becomes complicated.

29. ... Qxg4+ 30. Kh1 Qh3 31. Rg1

Things are far from clear after 31. Qa4 Re4!

31. ... Ne2 32. Rg2 g4 33. Qa4 Re7 34. Ng1 Nxg1 35. Rg3 Qh5 36. Rxg1 Re2 37. Nf1??



37. ... Rxf2??

My first big miss was 37. ... Qf5! 38. Qd1 Qe4+ 39. Rg2 Rxf2 (after 39. ... Re1 40. Qxg4 Rxf1+ 41. Bg1 White is still fighting.) 40. Qxg4 (40. Ne3 h5 41. Bg3 Rf3 42. Nf1 Qxc4 and Black wins) 40. ... Rxf1+ 41. Bg1 Qxg4 42. Rxg4 Kf8 and Black is winning handily.

38. Qd7?? f5??

But this one was elementary, Elshan! It's lights out after 38. ... g3! 39. Qe8+ Kh7 40. Rxg3 Rxf1+ 41. Kg2 Rf5.

39. Qxd6 Kh7 40. Qg3 Rf3 41. Qg2 f4?? 42. Qe2??

White should have played 42. Qc2+ Kh8 43. d6 g3 44. d7 and Black is busted.

42. ... Qf5??

Better is 42. ... Qe5! keeping the game going.

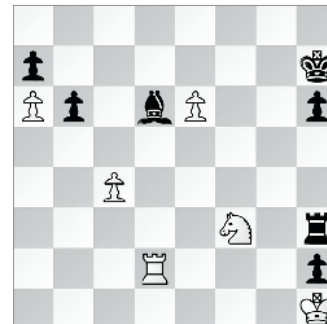
43. Nd2 Rd3 44. Bxf4??

Much cleaner is 44. Rxg4 Rxd2 45. Rxg7+ .

44. ... Rh3+ 45. Bh2 Be5 46. Rg2 g3 47. Nf3 Bd6 48. Qe6 Qxe6 49. dxe6 gxh2?!

This is an unnecessary complication. Black has easy equality after 49. ... Kg6, especially in time pressure.

50. Rd2



50. ... Bf4??

And here is my fourth blunder in this game. Caissa wouldn't let go of so many spoiled opportunities.

Black holds with 50. ... Bc5! Play can continue a number of ways: (a) 51. Ne5 Re3 52. Nc6 (52. Rd7+ Kg8 53. Nc6 Rxe6 54. Nxa7) 52. ... Rxe6 53. Nxa7 Re1+ 54. Kxh2 Ra1 55. Nc6 Rxa6; (b) 51. Nd4 Re3 52. Nb5 Rxe6 53. Nxa7 Re1+ 54. Kxh2 Ra1; (c) 51. Nxh2 Re3 52. Rd7+ Kg6 53. Rxa7 Rg3; (d) 51. Rd7+ Kg6 52. e7 (52. Rf7 Bd6 is better for Black) 52. ... Bxe7 53. Rxe7 Rxf3 54. Rxa7 Rf1+ 55. Kxh2 Ra1 and the position is finally equal.

Note that 50. ... Rxf3 loses to 51. Rxd6 Kg6 52. Rd7 Ra3 53. Rxa7 Ra2, while 50. ... Kg6 is also bad: 51. Rxd6 Rxf3 52. Rd7 Re3 53. e7 and White wins.

51. Rd3 Kg7 52. e7

Now I run into a discovered attack. The rest is simple for Tang.

52. ... Kf7 53. Ne5+ Bxe5 54. Rxh3 Kxe7 55. Rxh6 Bc7 56. Rh8 Kd6 57. Ra8 b5 58. cxb5 Bb6 59. Rc8 Bc7 60. Kg2 Kd7 61. Ra8 Bb6 62. Kxh2 Kc7 63. Rg8 Kd6 64. Rc8 Kd7 65. Rc6, Black resigned.

The Main Event

Now, after covering these two interesting stories, let us take a closer look at the round-robin. The most noteworthy observation is how the young and talented IM Christopher Yoo stole the show and almost made it to the U.S. Championship at the tender age of 14. Playing seven GMs, Yoo did not lose a single game and won two. He also had an extra game with the black pieces, which makes winning even harder in such short round-robins. The young Californian posted a 2699 FIDE rating performance.

Yoo's triumphant story ended somewhat bitterly when he lost the Armageddon match to GM Aleksandr Lenderman, who secured a spot in 2021 U.S. Championship with this win. But before we get to that, let us look at Yoo's wins and saves. Overall, what stands out in Yoo's performance is his perseverance and resourcefulness throughout the entire tournament.

... what stands out in Yoo's performance is his perseverance and resourcefulness ...

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED (D37)

IM Christopher Yoo (2455)

GM Andrew Tang (2538)

USA-ch Online Qualifier (1), 12.11.2020

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Be7 4. Nf3 Nf6 5. Bf4 0-0 6. e3 b6 7. cxd5 Nxd5 8. Nxd5 Qxd5 9. Bxc7!?



This is an interesting choice. Back in 2011 I was working on a book on the Queen's Gambit

Declined for Quality Chess which never came to pass. My analysis, then and now, shows that Black should be fine in this position. However, it requires a lot of knowledge and accuracy from both players.

9. ... Qa5+

Today's engines like this move. My analysis from 2011 (using Houdini!) ran as follows: 9. ... Bb4+ 10. Nd2 Nc6 11. a3 (11. f3 Bd7!? 12. a3 Bxd2+ 13. Qxd2 Rac8 14. Bg3 Na5 15. e4 Qb3 with initiative) 11. ... Bxd2+ 12. Qxd2 Bb7 13. f3 (13. b4 Rfc8 14. Bg3 Ne7 15. f3 Qb3 and Black has compensation — just as I thought in 2011!) 13. ... Rac8 14. Bg3 Na5 15. Rd1 Qb3 16. Bd3 Nc4 17. Bxc4 Rxc4 18. Qd3 Qxd3 19. Rxd3 Rc2 and Black had compensation for the pawn in Thiel-Singer, Bad Wiessee 2012.

10. Nd2 Ba6 11. Bxb8 Bxf1!

A novelty. White is a healthy pawn up after 11. ... Raxb8? 12. Bxa6 Qxa6 13. Qe2 Qa4 14. b3 Qc6 15. 0-0.

12. Kxf1 Raxb8 13. Nf3 Rbc8 14. Qd3

I am certain that Black's compensation is not sufficient. While I thoroughly believe that 9. ... Qa5+ should work for Black, I recommend that

our readers consider 9. ... Bb4+ first for now!

14. ... Rc7 15. Ke2 Qb4

Much better is 15. ... Rfc8.

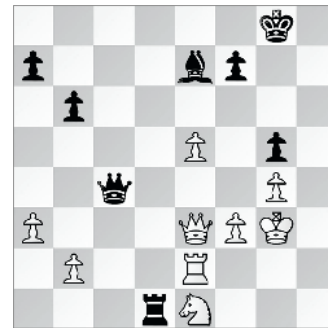
16. Rab1 Qa4 17. a3?

The right move is 17. Rhc1! Rxc1 18. Rxc1 Qxa2 19. Qb5 when White will reroute the knight to d3 and starts expanding his pawns on the kingside. It is hard to imagine any form of counterplay for Black.

17. ... Rc2+ 18. Kf1 Qc6 19. Ne1 Rc4 20. Rd1 Rc8 21. Qe2 e5 22. dxe5 Qe4 23. Rd4 Rxd4 24. exd4 Qxd4 25. g3 Qd5 26. Nf3 g5 27. h3 h5 28. g4 hxg4 29. hxg4 Rc1+ 30. Kg2 Rc4 31. Kg3 Qe6 32. Nd2 Rc5 33. Nf3 Rc4 34. Ne1 Qd5 35. f3 Rd4 36. Rh2

Tang now has full compensation for the pawn, and in a normal order of matters a draw is an expected result. But here Andrew pushes a bit too hard.

36. ... Rd1 37. Qe3 Qc4 38. Re2



38. ... Bc5??

A sad blunder in time pressure. Yoo does not give Tang a second chance from here onward.

39. Qxg5+ Kf8 40. Rh2!

The strongest winning move.

40. ... Ke8 41. Ng2 Rf1 42. Rh8+ Bf8 43. e6

A cute finish!

43. ... Qxe6 44. Qb5+ Ke7 45. Qb4+ Kd7 46. Qxf8 Qe5+ 47. f4 Qxb2 48. Qc8+ Kd6 49. Rd8+ Ke7 50. Rd7+ Kf6 51. Qh8+, Black resigned.

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B23)

IM Christopher Yoo (2455)

GM Daniel Naroditsky (2621)

USA-ch Online Qualifier (3), 12.13.2020

This was a game between the two early leaders. Yoo showed some interesting opening preparation.

1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 e6 3. Nge2 Nc6 4. g3 d5

Another path is 4. ... Nf6 5. Bg2 d5 6. exd5 exd5 7. d4.

5. exd5 exd5 6. d4 Bg4!?

I was surprised to see how much theory existed in this position prior to this game.

7. Bg2 Nxd4

After 7. ... cxd4 White should play 8. h3! Bxh3 9. Rxh3 dxc3 10. Nxc3 d4 11. Nd5 Nge7 12. Rh5 Nxd5 13. Rxd5 Qb6 14. Qg4 with a decent advantage.

8. h3 Bf3 9. Kf1 Nxe2?

A mistake.

Stockfish prefers 9. ... Qf6 10. Qd3 Bxg2+ 11. Kxg2 Nxe2 (11. ... 0-0-0? 12. Nxd4 cxd4 13. Nb5 and White is better) 12. Qxe2+ Ne7 13. Nb5 Rd8 14. Nxa7 Qe6 15. Re1 Qxe2 16. Rxe2 f6 with equality.

Another idea is 9. ... Qd7 10. Bxf3 Nxf3 11. Qxd5 Qxd5 12. Nxd5 0-0-0 and the position is balanced

And finally: 9. ... Ne7!? 10. Bxf3 Nxf3 11. Nf4 d4 (or 11. ... Nd4 12. Be3 Qb6 13. Bxd4 cxd4 14. Ncxd5 Qb5+ 15. Qe2 Qxe2+ 16. Kxe2 Nxd5 17. Nxd5 as in GM Torre-GM Rahman,

Format

OPEN QUALIFICATION

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U1600 SWISS November 21	12 Rounds, 10+0, top 8 advance, any tied advance
1601-2000 SWISS November 22	12 Rounds, 10+0, top 8 advance, any tied advance
2001-2400 SWISS November 28	12 Rounds, 10+0, top 8 advance, any tied advance
2400+ SWISS November 29	12 Rounds, 10+0, top 20 advance, any tied advance
FINAL SWISS December 5	7 Rounds, 10+0, top 8 advance - Sonnenborn-Berger
FINAL BRACKET December 6	8 player KO, 2 games 10+2 - Tiebreak 2 games 5+2 - Armageddon 2 Finalists advance to final round robin



Kolkata 2001) 12. Qxf3 dxc3 13. Qxc3 Qd6 14. Qf3 Qc6 15. Kg2 Qxf3+ 16. Kxf3 Nf5 17. Re1+ Kd7 18. c3 Bd6 with equality.

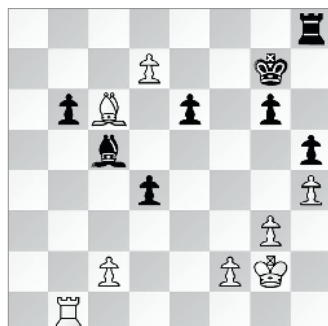
10. Bxf3 Nxc3 11. bxc3 Nf6 12. Rb1 Qd7 13. c4 Rd8?

Black had to try 13. ... Be7 14. cxd5 0-0.

14. cxd5 Bd6 15. Qe2+!

Accurate and necessary! White is already winning!

15. ... Kf8 16. Kg2 b6 17. Qc4 h5 18. a4 Qf5 19. a5 Nd7 20. Be4 Qf6 21. h4 Qd4 22. Qxd4 cxd4 23. axb6 axb6 24. Rd1 Bc5 25. Bf4 Re8 26. Re1 g6 27. d6 Ne5 28. Bxe5 Rxe5 29. d7 Kg7 30. Bc6 Re6 31. Rxe6 fxe6



Yoo maintained his advantage and now has a winning endgame. Christopher converts gradually but surely.

32. Ra1 Kf6 33. Ra7 Ke5 34. f4+ Kf6 35. Kf3 e5 36. Rc7 Rd8 37. Rc8 Be7 38. fxe5+ Kxe5 39. Bb5 g5 40. hgx5 Bxg5 41. Ke2 h4 42. gxh4 Bxh4 43. Kd3 Be7 44. Rc7 Kd5 45. Ba4 Kd6 46. Rb7 Kc5 47. Ke4 Kb4 48. Bb3 Kc5 49. Ke5 Bd6+ 50. Ke6 b5 51. Bd5 Bg3 52. Be4 Bf4 53. Ra7 Kb6 54. Ra1 Kc7 55. Ra6 Be3 56. Rc6+ Kb8 57. Rb6+ Ka7 58. Rxb5 Bf2 59. Rh5 Bg3 60. Ke7 Bc7 61. Rc5 Kb6 62. Rc6+ Kb7 63. Bd5 d3 64. cxd3 Kb8 65. Ra6, Black resigned.

These two early wins put Yoo in the lead for almost the entire tournament. Despite a few opening hiccups, he managed to draw his other five games and maintain his lead throughout the event. While such a great performance deserved a fairy tale ending, it wasn't meant to be this time. Lenderman played a solid event as well and managed to pull a couple of "Houdinis" to make his way into the final Armageddon:

SICILIAN DEFENCE, MAROCZY BIND (B36)

GM Dariusz Swiercz (2649)

GM Aleksandr Lenderman (2624)

USA-ch Online Qualifier (4), 12.14.2020

1. c4 c5 2. Nf3 g6

I was surprised by this move from Lenderman, who himself plays Maroczy

structures with the White pieces. Aleks is a practical player who tries to surprise his opponents and force them into psychologically undesirable positions.

3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nc6 5. e4 Nf6 6. Nc3 Nxd4 7. Qxd4 d6 8. f3 Bg7 9. Be3 0-0 10. Qd2 Be6 11. Rc1 Qa5 12. Be2 Rfc8 13. b3 a6

This position has been played at every level thousands of times. Swiercz's choice is the only one that promises White some chance of advantage.

14. Na4

White gets nothing after 14. 0-0 b5! 15. Nd5 (15. cxb5 axb5 and you can't touch b5!) 15. ... Qxd2 16. Bxd2 Nxd5 17. cxd5 Bd4+.

14. ... Qxd2+ 15. Kxd2 Nd7 16. g4! f5 17. exf5 gxf5 18. h3 Rf8 19. Rhf1

Swiercz avoids the well-known paths after 19. f4.

19. ... d5

A possible novelty here is 19. ... b5!? 20. cxb5 axb5 21. Bxb5 Ra5 22. Be2 f4 23. Bf2 Rd5+ 24. Ke1 Ne5 with enough compensation. Still, even this final position would require home analysis to be played comfortably during a game.

20. Nc5 Nxc5 21. Bxc5 dxc4 22. Bxc4 Bxc4 23. Rxc4 b5 24. Rc2

White has a symbolic edge but not more. A draw is a plausible outcome, but...

24. ... Rf7 25. Ke2 e5?

Quite unnecessary. Black would have an easy draw after 25. ... Rc8 26. Rfc1 fxe4 27. hxe4 Rcf8 28. Rf1 Rc8.

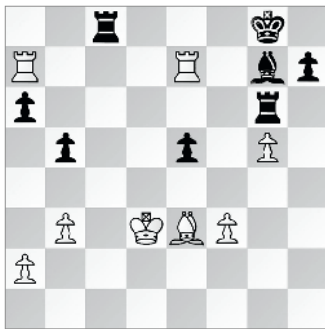
26. Be3 fxe4?!

White now has a long-lasting edge in this endgame with the pawn on e5 being a reachable target. The pawn on e7 was out of the way of Black's pieces, and the black bishop was active.

27. hxe4 Rf6 28. Rc7 Rf8 29. Bc5 Re8 30. Be3 Rf8 31. g5 Re6 32. Rfc1 Rd8 33. Ra7?!

Perhaps too ambitious. I am sure Karpov would have played 33. R1c6 instantaneously. White has a tremendous position after 33. ... Rde8 34. Rxe6 Rxe6 35. Kd3 h6 36. gxe6 Bxe6 37. Bxe6 Rxe6 38. Ra7.

33. ... Rg6 34. Rcc7 Rf8 35. Re7 Rc8 36. Kd3!



Swiercz secures a winning position, but what happens next is rather tragic for the top-seed, who was a bit out of form in this event.

36. ... Rf8 37. Ke4 Rc8 38. Rac7 Rf8 39. Rb7 Rc8 40. Rec7 Rf8 41. Re7 Rc8 42. Rbc7 Rf8 43. Red7 Re8 44. Rf7 Rd8 45. Rcd7 Rc8 46. Ra7 Rd8 47. a4 bxa4 48. bxa4 a5

White is completely winning, but if he could remove a pair of rooks from the board, it would be much simpler given the time pressure.

49. Rfc7 Rf8 50. Rxa5 h5 51. Raa7

Much easier was 51. Rb5 as it also paves the way for White's a-pawn.

51. ... h4 52. Rc2 h3 53. Rh2

More convincing was 53. a5 Rd6 54. a6.

53. ... Rc6 54. Rxh3 Rc4+ 55. Kd5 Rc3 56. Bb6 Rf4 57. Rc7??

A very hard move to explain. Still on track was 57. a5 Rd3+ 58. Ke6 Rf8 59. Rh4 and with Rh4-a4 coming, freeing the a7-rook to move, White shall win with the a-pawn.

57. ... Rxc7 58. Bxc7 Rxa4 59. Ke6

Perhaps Dariusz missed 59. Bxe5? Ra5+.

59. ... Ra3 60. Kf5 Re3 61. Bb6 Rb3 62. Bd8 Kf7 63. Bf6 Bxf6 64. gxf6 Rb1 65. Rh7+ Kf8 66. Rd7

It's a draw after 66. Kxe5 as White does not have shelter for the king: 66. ... Rf1 67. f4 Ra1 68. Kf5 Rb1 and the white king has no chance to create a serious mating net because of the Black checks from behind.

66. ... Rb2 67. Ke6 Rb6+ 68. Rd6 Rb8 69. Ra6 Rc8 70. Ra7 Rc6+ 71. Kf5 Rc1 72. Rd7 Rc2 73. Ke6 Rc6+ 74. Rd6 Rc8 75. Rb6 Ra8 76. Rb4 Ra6+ 77. Kf5 Ra1 78. Rb6 Kf7 79. Rb7+ Kf8 80. Rd7 Ra2 81. Ke6 Ra6+ 82. Rd6 Ra8 83. Kxe5 Ra1 84. Rd7 Re1+ 85. Kf5 Ra1 86. f4 Rb1 87. Ra7 Rc1 88. Rh7 Ra1 89. Rg7 Rb1 90. Rc7 Ra1 91. f7 Ra6 92. Kg5 Rg6+ 93. Kf5 Ra6 94. Rd7 Rb6 95. Ke5 Ra6 96. f5 Rb6 97. Ra7 Rc6 98. Kf4 Rb6 99. Kg5 Rc6 100. f6 Rc5+ 101. Kg6 Rg5+ 102. Kxg5, draw.

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E60)

GM Aleksandr Lenderman (2624)

GM Timur Gareyev (2606)

USA-ch Online Qualifier (7), 12.18.2020

A must win game for both players. With Yoo at 4/6 heading into the final round, three players — Gareyev, Lenderman, and yours truly — were tied for second place with 3½/6. I faced off with Yoo, while Lenderman was paired with Gareyev. Both had to win to keep hopes of a tiebreak round alive.

1. Nf3 d6 2. d4 Nf6 3. c4 Bf5

As always, Gareyev opts out of mainstream theory as soon as he can. Even here, though, there is still theory!

4. g3 g6 5. Bg2 Bg7 6. O-O O-O 7. Qb3

7. Nc3 Ne4 8. Nh4 Nxc3 9. bxc3 Bc8 10. f4 c5 is one of the mainlines that Gareyev wished to reach.

7. ... Qc8 8. Nc3 Nc6 9. Rd1

An interesting alternative is 9. d5 Nd8 10. Ne1! with the idea of Ne1-d3 or e2-e4. White can also try 10. Re1.

9. ... Ne4 10. Nd5 a5 11. Qe3?!

This is an odd square for the queen.

11. ... e6 12. Nc3 Nxc3 13. Qxc3 e5



Gareyev achieved a comfortable position. It is safe to say his opening choice paid off.

14. Be3 Bg4!

Increasing the pressure.

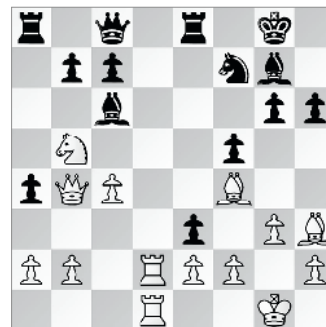
15. dxe5 dxe5 16. Rd2 Re8 17. Rad1 h6 18. Qa3 e4

Better is 18. ... a4! 19. Ne1 e4 20. Nc2 Be6 with an edge for Black.

19. Nd4 Ne5 20. Qa4 Bd7 21. Nb5 Bc6 22. Qb3 a4 23. Qb4 f5 24. Bh3

The players are making good moves so far. The position remains balanced but dynamic.

24. ... Nf7 25. Bf4 e3!



Things are still equal, but here Gareyev seizes the moment to start a fire. Unfortunately for him the smoke from that fire makes him go astray!

26. fxe3??

White needed to try 26. Bxe3 Rxe3 27. fxe3 Qe8 28. Nxc7 Qxe3+ 29. Kf1 Qe4 30. Qb6 Ng5 31. Nxa8 Nxh3 32. Rd8+ Kh7 33. Ke1 Ng5 34. R8d3 Qh1+ 35. Kd2 Ne4+ 36. Kc1 Qxh2 and while the engine spits out triple zeros, Black's two bishops are, at the very least, worthy of White's two rooks!

26. ... g5! 27. Qc5 Ne5??

Gareyev would have gone to the tiebreak had he found 27. ... gxf4 28. Bxf5 Bf8!.

28. Na7!? Qb8?

Things are already bad, but this is just losing.

29. Nxc6 Nxc6 30. Qxf5!

Now it is Black who has his king in the crosshairs, and he has no material to defend it.

30. ... gxf4 31. Rd7 Qa7 32. Qf7+, Black resigned.

After Lenderman's lucky win, Yoo and Lenderman moved into the Armageddon playoff, with each bidding on the ten minutes allotted to the player with white pieces. The lower bid received the black pieces with draw odds. This time Lenderman did not leave anything to luck. He convincingly won the game and secured a spot at the 2021 U.S. Championship.

TROMPOWSKY ATTACK (A45)

GM Aleksandr Lenderman (2624)

IM Christopher Yoo (2455)

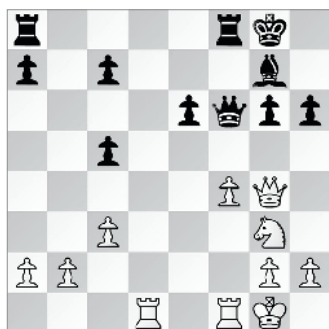
USA-ch Online Qualifier Armageddon,
12.19.2020**1. d4 Nf6 2. Bg5 e6 3. e4 h6 4. Bxf6 Qxf6 5. c3!?**

Interesting choice in an interesting opening!
This avoids forced lines.

5. ... d6 6. Bc4 g6 7. Ne2 Bg7 8. 0-0 0-0 9. f4 Qd8 10. Nd2 d5 11. Bb3 dxe4 12. Nxe4 b6 13. N2g3 Nd7 14. d5!? Nc5??

An unfortunate mistake.

Engines say the position is equal after 14. ... Nf6 15. dxe6 Bxe6 16. Bxe6 Nxe4 17. Bxf7+ Rxf7 18. Nxe4 Qxd1 19. Raxd1 Re8 20. Ng3 (20. Rde1? Rfe7 wins the knight) 20. ... Bf8 and I won't disagree with them, but it is not easy to see this line in a blitz game.

15. Nxc5 bxc5 16. dxe6 Bxe6 17. Bxe6 fxe6 18. Qg4 Qf6 19. Rad1

Black's structure is totally shattered. White must be technically winning.

19. ... Rab8 20. Qe2 Rfd8 21. Ne4 Qf5 22. g4!

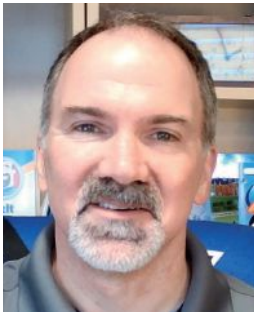
This move seals the deal. Under a lot of pressure and stress. Yoo cracks and soon the game is basically over.

22. ... Qf8 23. Rxd8 Qxd8 24. Nxc5 Qd5 25. Nxe6 Rf8 26. Nxf8 Bxf8 27. Qg2 Qxa2 28. Kh1 Qc4 29. f5 g5 30. Rd1 Kg7 31. Rd4 Qb5 32. Rd5 Qc4 33. Rd7+ Kf6 34. Rd4 Qb5 35. c4 Qe5 36. Qe4 Bd6 37. Qxe5+ Bxe5 38. Re4 h5 39. h3 hxc4 40. hxc4 Bxb2 41. Re6+ Kf7 42. Ra6 Bd4 43. Rc6 Be5 44. Kg2 Bf4 45. Kf3 Be5 46. Ke4 Bg3 47. Kd5 Ke7 48. Ra6 Bf2 49. c5 Kd7 50. Rxa7 Be3 51. c6+ Kd8 52. Ra8+ Ke7 53. Rc8 Bf4 54. Rg8 Kf7 55. Rd8 Ke7 56. Rd7+ Kf6 57. Rh7 Bg3 58. Rh6+ Kf7 59. Rg6 Bf4 60. Kc4 Ke7 61. Kb5 Kf7 62. Ka6 Ke7 63. Kb7 Kf7 64. Re6 Bg3 65. Kc8 Bf4 66. Kd7 Bg3 67. Re8 Bf4 68. Rc8 Kf6 69. Rxc7 Bxc7 70. Kxc7 Ke5 71. Kd7 Kf4 72. f6 Kxg4 73. f7 Kh3 74. f8=Q g4 75. Qh6+ Kg2 76. c7 g3 77. c8=Q, Black resigned.

A rather disheartening finish for Yoo, but with many years of good chess ahead of him, he should enjoy the fact that he posted a 2700 performance in a classical event. And let us all wish for the day when we can all play classical chess over the board again — hopefully in 2021! ♠

2021 U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP ONLINE QUALIFIER

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1	GM Aleksandr Lenderman	2624	*	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	4½/7
2	IM Christopher Yoo	2455	½	*	½	½	½	1	1	½	4½/7
3	GM Elshan Moradiabadi	2555	½	½	*	½	½	1	0	1	4/7
4	GM Dariusz Swiercz	2649	½	½	½	*	0	½	1	1	4/7
5	GM Timur Gareyev	2606	0	½	½	1	*	0	½	1	3½/7
6	GM Daniel Naroditsky	2621	½	0	0	½	1	*	½	1	3½/7
7	GM Andrew Tang	2538	0	0	1	0	½	½	*	½	2½/7
8	GM Robert Hess	2591	½	½	0	0	0	0	½	*	1½/7



Give Your Opponent Knightmares!

Lessons on Knight moves from “Coach Jay”

By **JAY STALLINGS**

Knights break rules! They jump, they turn, and it seems that their moves often come as a surprise. To corral these free spirits, you must guide them to their best squares. But how precisely to do that? In this article we'll cover key two ideas — creating an *ultimate* knight outpost, and finding just the right plan for *underutilized* knights.

The knight's dream is to occupy an *outpost* — a square where it is supported by a pawn, and cannot be driven away by an opposing pawn. The *ultimate* outpost occurs when, additionally, no opposing minor pieces are able to attack that knight. When you see the potential for an outpost square, give yourself this prompt to help you create an effective plan:

EXAMPLE 1

Vasily Smyslov
Iosif Rudakovsky
Moscow, 1945



WHITE TO MOVE

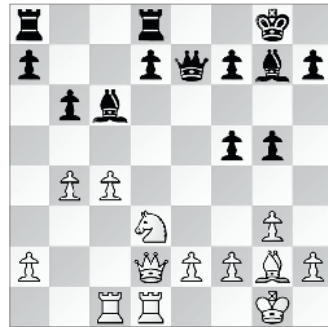
QUESTION: *What needs to be removed to make the outpost square the ultimate outpost square?*

ANSWER: *Black's light-square bishop and knight.*

Smyslov famously played 13. f5 Bc4? 14. Bxc4 Qxc4 15. Bg5! and after removing Black's knight with 15. ... Rfe8 16. Bxf6 Bxf6, his knight leapt into the ultimate outpost with 17. Nd5 and dominated the position.

EXAMPLE 2

GM Michael Adams
Jay Stallings
Simultaneous Exhibition, 2011



WHITE TO MOVE

QUESTION: *What needs to be removed?*

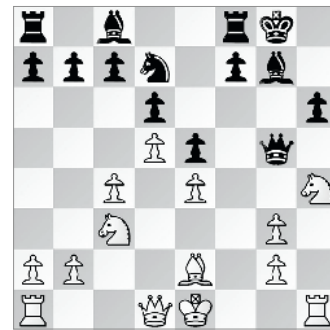
I would like to tell you that GM Adams spent enormous amounts of time at my board during this simul, but not for moves as obvious (to him) as this!

ANSWER: *His outpost square is d5, and he needs to get rid of my light-square bishop.*

After 19. b5! Be4 20. Nb4 h6 21. Bxe4 fxe4 22. Nd5 it's mission accomplished!

EXAMPLE 3

Yuri Balashov
IM Jonathan Penrose
Hastings, 1966/1967



WHITE TO MOVE

QUESTION: *What needs to be removed to turn f5 into the ultimate outpost?*

ANSWER: *Black's light-square bishop and the knight.*

14. Bg4!!

One exclaim for the positional idea of getting rid of Black's bishop, and one because he sees the tactic that allows it. *i.e.*, 14. ... h5? 15. Nf5! hxc4 16. Rh4! (better than the flashy 16. Qxg4 due to 16. ... Bf6).

14. ... Nc5 15. Bxc8 Qxg3+ 16. Kf1 Raxc8 17. Nf5

Almost a pure ultimate outpost, as Black's knight would require an arduous journey to safely attack the f5 square.

17. ... Qf4+ 18. Qf3 Kh7 19. Ke2 Rh8 20. Rh4 Qxf3+ 21. gxf3 Rcg8 22. Rah1 Ra8

This position gives us an easy segue into the other point about knights:

Repositioning an underutilized knight

As we continue our game from above, we see that Balashov has a plan for the queenside knight as well. Here is your prompt:

QUESTION: *If I could pick up my underutilized knight and place it anywhere on the board, where would it be?*

ANSWER: *The e3-square!*



WHITE TO MOVE

23. Nd1!

Knights are curious creatures that often seem to jump away from their target before settling into a dominant square.

23. ... Nd7 24. Nde3 Kg8 25. Rg1 Rh7 26. Rhg4, Black resigned.



Attacking a key square from a square with a future

When maneuvering knights, consider these two questions:

1. *Can I pick up tempi on my route?*
2. *Which square will give my knight the most options once I get there?*

In this game from 1905, Schlechter wants to grab more space and control of key squares in Black's kingside by pushing the g-pawn to g5; however, he decides to guard the f5-square first. While his knight cannot pick up any tempi en route to guarding f5, he correctly determines which route (Nd1-e3 or Ne2-g3) gives him the most flexibility after the job is done.

EXAMPLE 4

Carl Schlechter
William John
Barmen, 1905



WHITE TO MOVE

29. Nd1! Rg7 30. Ne3 Qe7 31. g5 Bd7 32. N3g4!

Now we realize why Nd1-e3 was much better than Ne2-g3. From e3, Schlechter's knight was able to move into g4 and h6, and eventually to f7 and then into the e5 outpost! If it had been at g3, the knight would have reached a dead-end. Black resigned on move 50 though he was never down material.

Six knight moves in a row!

In Salo Flohr's famous win over Max Euwe, White's knight chooses an odd, but logical, path to its destination.

EXAMPLE 5

Salo Flohr
Max Euwe
Amsterdam, 1932



WHITE TO MOVE

Flohr surely considered the differences between Ne2-c1-d3 and taking a longer route to b3. Though the path through d3 would

have given him more flexibility, he chose the longer route in order to hinder Euwe's attempt to lift his rooks to the 3rd rank.

Flohr seeks to create weaknesses by simply threatening to move his knight into menacing squares. In particular, he eyes the greener pastures of the e5 and c5 squares.

23. Nf1! Re7 24. Nh2

This threatens 25. Ng4 with tempo, followed by a knight jump to the e5-square.

24. ... Rhe6 25. Nf3 f6

Blocking the rook's path back to g6 or h6.

26. Nd2 Re8 27. Nb3 R6e7 28. Nc5

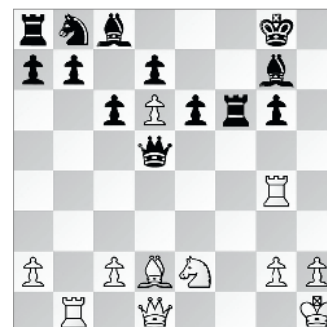
Six knight moves in a row! The game is not yet won, but White is imposing his will on Black. Euwe resigned after 46 moves.

Knight serves eviction notices

In a game that tops at least one "Computer Game of the Year" list, Leela calculates a plan that pushes Black's two most active pieces from their best squares.

EXAMPLE 6

Leela
Stockfish
CCC finals, 2020



WHITE TO MOVE

20. Nc3!

The impulsive 20. Nf4 lacks the foresight of how the knight should best be utilized.

20. ... Qh5 21. Ne4 Rf7 22. Ng3!

And though Leela could have moved the knight here directly from e2, now it has moved here with tempo after the eviction of Black's queen and rook. Black was checkmated on move 126, showing once more that computers don't know when to resign!

One final note: I would certainly regret not taking this opportunity to remind you to always look for ways to suppress your opponent's efforts for optimum knight placement.

NM Larry Smith and Patricia Brennan assisted with this article.

The Inimitable Mikhail Tal

The “Wizard of Riga” had plenty of tricks up his sleeve.

By **BRUCE PANDOLFINI**

MIKHAIL TAL (1936-92) WAS A SHINING star, but he was always hampered by poor health. One can only imagine what additional wonders he might have spun if not for his chronic illness. Yet he continued to be a top competitor through the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, he was always capable of unleashing a winning tactic, even at the last moment. Consider his 1965 quarterfinal Candidates match against Lajos Portisch. In the second round, Portisch (Black) was holding until Tal's final move. The contest began as a Caro-Kann Defense:

CARO-KANN DEFENSE (B11)

GM Mikhail Tal
GM Lajos Portisch
Candidates Match, 1965

1. e4 c6 2. Nc3 d5 3. Nf3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Bg4 5. h3 Bxf3 6. Qxf3 Nd7 7. d4 Ngf6 8. Bd3 Nxe4



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 White'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 White's move is on the next line.**

9. Qxe4 **Par Score 5**

White prefers this recapture, since it keeps the d-pawn protected. But you can accept *full credit* for 9. Bxe4.

9. ... **e6**

This advance clears the way for the king-bishop to enter the fray.**

10. O-O **Par Score 5**

White gets the king to safety.

10. ... **Be7**

A modest developing move. Black could also have played 10. ... Nf6.**

11. c3 **Par Score 5**

Tal safeguards his d-pawn. Accept *full credit* for 11. Qe2, removing the queen from an attackable square.

11. ... **Nf6**

We knew this was coming. Black drives the white queen away from the center.**

12. Qh4 **Par Score 5**

White aggressively keeps an eye on h7, anticipating Black's kingside castling. Accept *full credit* for 12. Qe2.

12. ... **Nd5**

Portisch threatens the white queen. Tal has a slight edge.**

13. Qg4 **Par Score 5**

The g7-pawn is menaced. But it would also be threatened after 13. Qg3 (*full credit*).

13. ... **Bf6**

Defending the pawn with 13. ... g6 would have weakened the dark squares.**

14. Re1 **Par Score 5**

Tal seizes the half open e-file. But you may accept *full credit* for 14. Bd2, clearing the home rank and connecting the rooks.

14. ... **Qb6**

Black plays actively, though he removes the queen from the center. Safer was 14. ... Qd7, or even 14. ... Qc7.**

15. c4 **Par Score 5**

Tal starts his attack. Has White overextended himself?

15. ... **Nb4**

Portisch continues his own aggression. Also interesting was 15. ... Bxd4.**

16. Rxe6+ **Par Score 6**

Tal can't help himself. He goes for the king. It's likely Portisch saw this sacrifice and dismissed it.

16. ... **fxe6**

A rook is a rook is a rook.**

17. Qxe6+ **Par Score 5**

Now after 17. ... Kd8 18. Qd6+ Ke8 (add 1 *bonus point* if you analyzed this line and saw that 18. ... Kc8 loses to 19. Bf5 mate) 19. Qe6+ Kd8, Black has a draw. By his own notes, Tal had considered 17. ... Be7 18. Bg6+, with all kinds of intriguing possibilities. Alas, Portisch played a third move.

ABCs of Chess

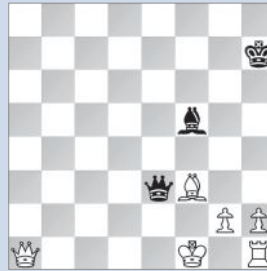
These problems are all related to key positions in this month's game. In each case, **Black is to move**. The answers can be found in Solutions on page 59.

March Exercise: One way to get additional practice on your openings for the Black pieces is to try to play the same moves for White. So, if you play the Caro-Kann (1. e4 c6), you might try playing 1. c3 for White. Or if you play the French Defense (1. e4 e6), you could try 1. e3 for White. Such an approach might invigorate your opening play. It will certainly get you out of the book, while offering fresh insights. It might get your creative chess juices going. Of course, with White, you will have an extra move if you aim for the same setups. Use it wisely!

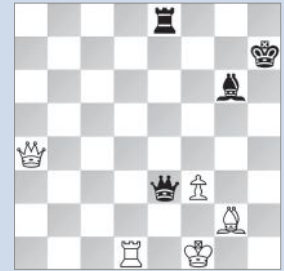
PROBLEM I.
Mating net



PROBLEM II.
Mating net



PROBLEM III.
Mating net



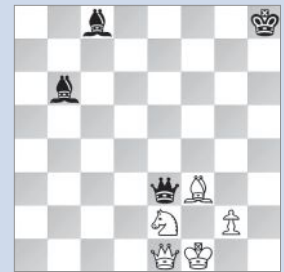
PROBLEM IV.
Mating net



PROBLEM V.
Mating net



PROBLEM VI.
Mating net



17. ... **Kf8****

18. **Bf4** **Par Score 6**

Tal threatens mate in three, but Portisch can defend himself.

18. ... **Rd8**

Also worthy of consideration were 18. ... Qd8 and 18. ... Be7. It's not easy defending against Tal.**

19. **c5** **Par Score 6**

Black's options are limited.

19. ... **Nxd3**

Portisch opts to sacrifice his queen. But 19. ... Qa5 would have been met by 20. Re1 (*1 bonus point*).**

20. **cx b6** **Par Score 5**

20. ... **Nxf4**

Black has a rook, bishop, and knight for the queen, but his pieces are disorganized.**

21. **Qg4** **Par Score 5**

White saves the queen with a gain of time.

21. ... **Nd5**

Black's turn to save something. His knight.**

22. **bxa7** **Par Score 5**

The a7-pawn could become dangerous. Black has to be careful.

22. ... **Ke7**

Portisch connects his rooks.**

23. **b4** **Par Score 5**

White has the undermining b4-b5 in mind.

23. ... **Ra8**

Black chooses to deal with the dangerous pawn. On 23. ... Nxb4, White had 24. Re1+, as well as 24. Rb1 Rxd4 25. Qg3.**

24. **Re1+** **Par Score 5**

24. ... **Kd6**

Also possible was 24. ... Kd8, when Black is still in the game.**

25. **b5** **Par Score 6**

Tal tries to weaken the knight, while retaining the possibility of a timely b5-b6.

25. ... **Rxa7**

Finally, a real mistake. Both 25. ... Kc7 and 25. ... Rhd8 offered better defensive chances.**

26. **Re6+** **Par Score 5**

Accept *1 bonus point* for seeing that 26. ... Kd7 is met by 27. Rxf6+.

26. ... **Kc7****

27. **Rxf6** **Par Score 6**

A final shot, on the last move of the game! However Black takes on f6, White wins the h8-rook with a queen check on g7.

27. ... **Black resigned**♠



TOTAL YOUR SCORE TO DETERMINE YOUR APPROXIMATE RATING BELOW:

Total Score	Approx. Rating
95+	2400+
81-94	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

A New Look at Two Chess Titans

Publishers continue to rediscover chess history

by **IM JOHN WATSON**

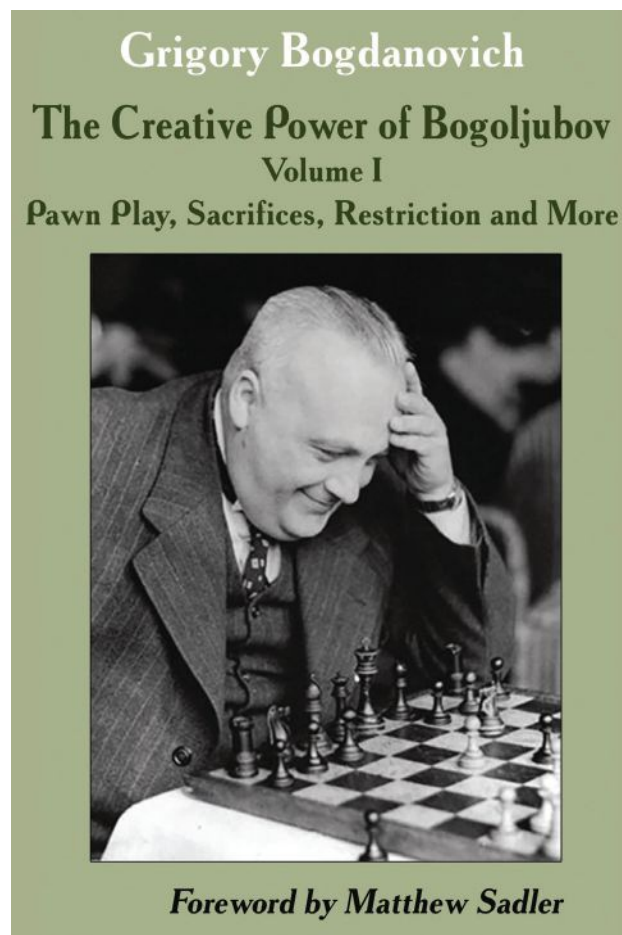
In most major sports, our memory of past players is preserved by film replays on TV (and recently, on YouTube). We are also regularly reminded of historic sporting achievements by sports show announcers and hosts. In the chess world, however, it's much easier for players' careers and accomplishments to be forgotten. This is particularly true if they never appeared in World Championship matches.

I'd be surprised if today's young online players know much (if anything?) about GMs Lev Polugaevsky, Lajos Portisch, Efim Geller or Svetozar Gligorić, all of whom my generation saw as giants. More recently, players such as GMs Alexei Shirov and Vasyl Ivanchuk are superstars whose games inspired a generation, but I doubt they, although still active, are often on the radar of the current crop of young masters. The reality is that it's only because of the efforts of chess authors and publishers that our knowledge of prominent players and events survives. So it's particularly important and gratifying that publishers continue to produce books about the history of chess.

One fairly new company, Elk and Ruby Publishing House, has put out many such works over the past few years about, for example, GMs Alexander Alekhine, David Bronstein, Vasily Smyslov, Evgeni Vasiukov, and Mikhail Tal, ranging from pure biography to games collections. They also have books about studies, openings, and newer players such as GMs Garry Kasparov, Magnus Carlsen, and Sergey Karjakin. E-book versions of many of these are available on the Forward Chess app (www.forwardchess.com).

I particularly enjoyed *The Creative Power of Bogoljubov: Volume I*, a much-needed addition to the literature now out from Elk and Ruby. It is the first of two volumes by International Master and chess coach Grigory Bogdanovich. The book begins with a 59-page section, "The Biography of Efim Bogoljubov," which covers the course of GM Bogoljubov's life from his youth in the Ukraine, his internment during World War I, and his successes in the 1920s and 1930s to his later career in Germany. The author includes a lot of previously unpublished material, including letters written by Bogoljubov about his issues with the Soviet chess authorities and his plans for a match with GM Jose Raul Capablanca, as well as an earlier match with Alekhine, both of which never came about.

Bogoljubov has been rather neglected by historians, considering that he played two World Championship matches versus Alekhine in 1929 and 1934. True, he lost both matches fairly decisively, but he was arguably



past his prime at ages 40 and 45, respectively. Surprisingly, most writers don't include him in the elite of his time, even though his tournament record in the 1920s was replete with impressive successes. In Jeff Sonas' Chessmetrics historical ratings, we find him consistently in the top four in the world in the mid-to-late 1920s, including a brief stint at #1.

Volume I has 90 complete games and 104 game fragments. These are organized by theme; for example, imaginative play, “luck” piece and pawn sacrifices, play with rook’s pawns, the pawn phalanx, “restriction play,” and Bogoljubov’s handling of exchanges and the center. Taken as a whole, the book is a valuable primer on chess strategy. I found the chapter on pawn sacrifices particularly interesting and instructive; Bogoljubov prepared numerous pawn sacrifices in the opening, and was fond of sacrificing pawns for positional compensation, even when the queens were traded in the process.

For me, the most surprising discovery was how modern and diverse Bogoljubov’s openings were. The biographical section points out how dedicated the young Bogoljubov was to opening study, and you get the impression that this continued throughout his career. Some of the openings look like they could have been played last week.

The games and extracts are well-chosen and thoroughly annotated. Most of them are too long to show here, but here’s a pretty brilliancy:

FRENCH DEFENSE, ALEKHINE-CHATARD ATTACK (C14)

Efim Bogoljubov
Rudolf Spielmann
Stockholm 1919

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bg5 Be7 5. e5 Nfd7 6. h4 Bxg5 7. hxg5 Qxg5 8. Nh3 Qe7 9. Qg4 g6 10. Nf4 a6 11. O-O-O c5 12. Qg3 Nb6 13. dxc5 Qxc5 14. Bd3 Qf8



15. Be4!! dxe4

Bogoljubov analyzed 15. ... h5 16. Bxd5! exd5 17. Ncxd5 Nxd5 18. Nxd5 Qh6+ 19. Kb1 0-0, when 20. Rxh5! Qxh5 21. Nf6+ wins.

16. Nxe4 N8d7 17. Qc3! Qe7 18. Nf6+ Nxf6

If 18. ... Kd8 19. Qa5! Kc7 20. N4d5+.

19. exf6 Qf8 20. Qc7 Nd7 21. Nd5! exd5 22. Rhe1+ Ne5 23. Rxe5+ Be6 24. Kb1! Rd8 25. Rxd5 Rxd5 26. Rxd5 Bxd5 27. Qc8, mate.

Petrosian Year by Year: Volume I (1942-1962) is part of a two-volume set, also

published by Elk and Ruby. It is a collaboration by Hungarian International Master Tibor Karolyi and Armenian FIDE Master Tigran Gyozyalyan. Karolyi has written a number of high-quality works about leading players, including multi-volume series on GMs Tal, Kasparov, and Anatoly Karpov, along with individual works on GMs Veselin Topalov and Judit Polgar. This volume covers GM Tigran Petrosian’s early career. It stops in 1962, the year of his victory in the Curaçao Candidates tournament, and the event that qualified him to play in his 1963 World Championship match versus GM Mikhail Botvinnik.



Petrosian has a much more elevated reputation than Bogoljubov, of course. Nevertheless, he isn’t often included in top-10 lists of the greatest chessplayers, or even mentioned in related discussions. This despite the fact that he won two World Championship matches (both against elite opponents), something that neither GMs Boris Spassky, Bobby Fischer, Tal, nor Smyslov can claim. In addition, he was an eight-time Candidate, won four USSR Championships, and scored a staggering 78 wins against a sole loss (with 50 draws) in 10 Chess Olympiads, winning six individual gold medals. For all that, he never really captured the public imagination in the way other champions did. I believe that was because, like Smyslov, he didn’t have a clear or colorful style that was able to be easily described.

Karolyi and Gyozyalyan structure the book chronologically around Petrosian’s tournaments. Event by event, they provide verbal descriptions of each round; these are followed by the annotated games themselves, which are the essence of the book. There is also a nice selection of photographs, lengthy introductions by the authors, and a section called “Petrosian’s Remarkable Exchanges.”

Petrosian gained a reputation for mercilessly squeezing his opponents from a safe position of defensive solidity, but in fact that describes only a minority of his games, and he was always a fine tactician. Here’s a game from Petrosian’s early career, which might remind us of one by Tal or Kasparov:

GRÜNFELD DEFENSE, FIANCHETTO VARIATION (D75)

Tigran Petrosian
Iosif Pogrebissky
Tbilisi 1949

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nf3 Bg7 4. g3 O-O 5. Bg2 d5 6. cxd5 Nxd5 7. O-O c5 8. e4 Nf6 9. e5 Nfd7 10. Ng5!?

This aggressive and fearless move characterizes a fair amount of young Tigran’s play. Objectively it’s not very sound.

10. ... cxd4 11. f4 Nc5!? 12. b4! f6 13. exf6 exf6 14. Nxh7! Kxh7 15. bxc5

An unclear position, which Petrosian handles beautifully.

15. ... Nc6 16. Bb2 Qc7 17. Nd2 Be6 18. Ne4 Rad8

Here a central move such as 19. Nd6 suggests itself, or 19. Qa4 followed by Ra1-d1.

19. h4!

But Petrosian goes for the king! This is much stronger than it first appears.

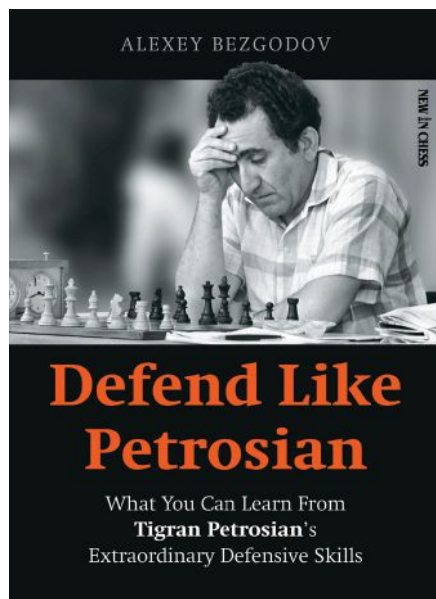
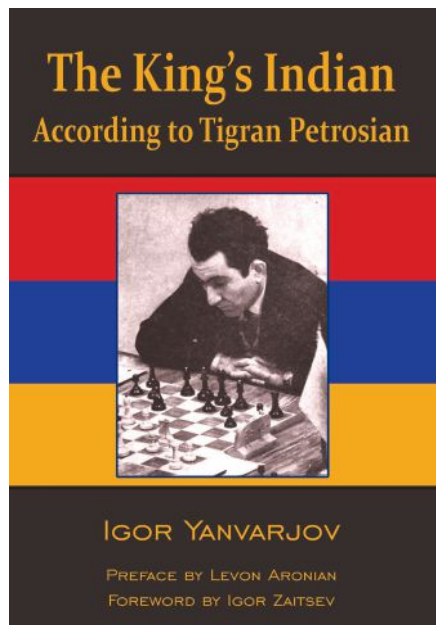
19. ... Qd7 20. h5 Bg4? 21. hxc6+

Kxg6



22. f5+! Bxf5

Black may have been counting upon 22. ... Qxf5, but 23. Qb1! is decisive, e.g., 23. ... Qe5 24. Nxf6+ Bf5 25. Rxf5! Qxf5 26. Be4.



23. Nd6 Bg4 24. Be4+ Kh5 25. Rf4! f5

The queen is immune: 25. ... Bxd1 26. Rh4+ Kg5 27. Bc1, mate.

26. Rxg4! fxg4 27. Qd2 Rh8 28. Kg2, Black resigned.

Now Ra1-h1 with mate will follow.

In recent years, publishers have accorded Petrosian fresh attention. In 2019, Russell Enterprises put out *The King's Indian According to Petrosian* by Igor Yanvarjov, a deep investigation of Petrosian's many games on both the White and Black sides of the King's Indian. In 2020, New in Chess released *Defend Like Petrosian: What You Can Learn From Tigran Petrosian's Extraordinary Defensive Skills*.

The latter book, written by GM Alexey Bezgodov, contains an excellent selection of 176 annotated games. Out of these, 78 form an

overview of Petrosian's career with an emphasis on Petrosian's defense; the rest are organized in 14 chapters, each featuring one of his best-known opponents, including Botvinnik, Tal, Spassky, Karpov, and the best players from the 1950s through the early 1980s. Here's an example from a time in which Petrosian's strength had declined, but he was still able to demonstrate sly ingenuity under pressure:

WHERE'S THE WIN?

Garry Kasparov
Tigran Petrosian
Moscow 1981



WHITE TO MOVE

White has played a fine game and the winning method looks straightforward, but finishing Petrosian off was never easy:

32. f5 g5 33. Bxg5! fxg5!?

Perhaps 33. ... Kf7 is objectively better, but this lures White into playing a simple and apparently winning sequence:

34. Qxg5+ Kf8 35. Qf6+?

35. f6! would have generated too much pressure after 35. ... Qf7 36. Qxe5, but this is hardly clear and Kasparov, in severe time pressure, sees that he can win his piece back:

35. ... Ke8 36. Ra1

Where can the bishop go?

36. ... Qe7!!

Kasparov was shocked that Petrosian played this instantly. Suddenly Black stands better. Instead, 36. ... Bd7? loses to 37. Qh8+ Bf8 38. Qxh7.

37. Qe6!?

White has a terribly passive ending after 37. Qxe7+ Kxe7 38. Rxa4 when his h-pawn falls.

37. ... Rd6! 38. Qg8+ Qf8 39. Qg3 Qxh6!?

40. Rxa4??

Cracking at the time control, but White was in a bad position anyway.

40. ... Qc1+ 41. Kf2 Qxb2+ 42. Kf3 Kf7, White resigned.

As mentioned, Petrosian has been stereotyped as a rather passive positional

player. In part, this reputation stems from the many relatively short draws he conceded, not only in important matches versus his peers, but also against inferior opposition when he was pacing himself in tournaments.

But his play in these three books is hardly timid. Nor are the games models of simplicity and clarity in the same way that Capablanca's play might be described, for example. Rather, he engages in countless back-and-forth struggles of great complexity, with many tactical nuances. And Petrosian didn't shy away from taking risks. He would make surprising and even objectively inferior moves, but ones that confused his opponents, in order to create problems. Botvinnik is quoted as saying that he was unable to anticipate Petrosian's moves, and I think that must have been true for most of his opponents.

Another factor that has influenced Petrosian's image is that, for a World Champion, his opening preparation could be remarkably shallow, and he had a weakness for dubious but provocative lines. Bezgodov correctly identifies this as a weakness, and in his book about Petrosian's defensive skills, the reason that Petrosian is so often scrambling to dig up resources or simply survive is because he is so often put on his back foot early on in the game.

Congratulations to publishers and authors for expanding our knowledge of these great players. As I have said before, study of their games can be a useful and inspiring complement to other means of improvement, and certainly a healthy break from endless online blitz games. ♠

Bezgodov, Alexey. Defend Like Petrosian: What You Can Learn From Tigran Petrosian's Extraordinary Defensive Skills. New in Chess, 2020. ISBN paperback: 9789056919238, 272 pages. (Available from uscfsales.com; product code B0243NIC, \$24.95.)

Bogdanovich, Grigory. The Creative Power of Bogoljubov, Volume I: Pawn Play, Sacrifices, Restriction and More. Elk and Ruby Publishing House, 2020. ISBN paperback: 9785604071076, 405 pages. (Available from uscfsales.com; product code B0031ER, \$34.95.)

Karolyi, Tibor and Gyozyalyan, Tigran. Petrosian Year by Year: Volume I (1942-1962). Elk and Ruby Publishing House, 2020. ISBN paperback: 9785604177020, 484 pages. (Available from uscfsales.com; product code B0033ER, \$34.95.)

Yanvarjov, Igor. The King's Indian According to Petrosian. Russell Enterprises, 2019. ISBN paperback: 9781941270578, 424 pages. (Available from uscfsales.com; product code B0121RE, \$34.95.)



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TOURNAMENT LIFE ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Board authorizes a temporary change in the US Chess Grand Prix (GP) rules for the period March 4, 2020 through March 31, 2021 out of concern for the unforeseeable impacts the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) could have on participation in GP events. The change allows organizers with guaranteed prize funds to change the status of their prize fund without first seeking US Chess permission to make the change. More specifically, organizers who have announced "XXXX in Guaranteed prizes" (or similar words) for their GP events shall be allowed to re-state their prize funds in their publicity as "XXXX in Projected prizes based on ### players," where ### represents the number of players in last year's event rounded to the nearest five players. For new GP events lacking historical attendance data, the organizer shall specify a "based on" number of players as part of the Projected Prize Fund language in their publicity. This decision includes all GP tournaments that already have been advertised in Chess Life. For any GP events being publicly advertised (whether by TLA, another website, flyers, emails, social media, etc.), organizers shall take all necessary steps to ensure their revised pre-tournament announcements call attention to this change in prize fund status and provide the appropriate "Projected based on XXX players" in the language of their updated publicity. US Chess asks that the chess community support this temporary change in the spirit that it is intended. The Executive Board shall revisit this matter as necessary.

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

Online

20th Annual Queen City Classic Virtual Tournament on ChessKid.com

SATURDAY, MARCH 13, 2021
14 Scholastic sections including rated and non-rated. Non-rated sections include Grades K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7-9 and 10-12. Rated sections include K-3 Open, 4-6 below 800, 4-6 Open, 7-9 Open and K-12 Open. USCF membership is not required for the non-rated and K-3 rated sections. In each section, 1st place individuals and teams will receive a large medal. **\$20 early bird entry fee** prior to Feb. 19. **\$25 entry fee** February 20 - March 5. Entry Fee includes participation medal and QCC face mask. Registration closes Friday March 5th. **NO DAY-OFF - REGISTRATION.** Schedule: Matches begin at 10:00 am. Grandmasters will provide commentary on live stream. Entry/Info: 1-866-PSCHES (772-4377) or www.queencityclassic.org

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

53rd annual New York State Scholastic Championships (out of state welcome)

SATURDAY, MARCH 13, 2021-SUNDAY, MARCH 14, 2021
6SS, G/60+10, at Internet Chess Club. Open to students in schools in the US or Canada. Must be on Zoom using real name to be eligible for prizes (see ccazoom.com for Zoom setup). Championship players with wrong Zoom camera angle, if not corrected after notice, are ineligible for prizes. Team prizes based on top 4 scores from same school. In 10 sections: High School Championship, open to all K-12 born after 9/1/01. Top NYS grade 9-12 qualifies for Denker tournament of HS Champions. High School Reserve, Open to K-12 under 1500 or unrated. Junior High School Championship, open to all K-9 born after 9/1/05. Top NYS grade 6-8 qualifies for Barber tournament of Grade 6-8 Champions. Middle School Reserve, open to K-8 born under 1200 or unrated. Elementary Championship, open to all K-6 born after 9/1/08. Top NYS K-5 qualifies for Rockefeller tournament of Grade K-5 Champions. Elementary Reserve, open to K-6 under 1000 or unrated. Elementary Novice, open to K-6 under 600 or unrated. Primary Championship, open to all K-3 born after 9/1/11. Primary Reserve, open to K-3 under 800 or unrated. K-1 Championship, open to K-1 born after 9/1/13. Championship Prizes: Plaque to top 10 players and top 5 teams each section; free entry to all CCA tournaments (limited to players in NY or adjacent states/provinces) 4/10/21-8/10/21 to 1st, 4/10/21-6/10/21 2nd, 4/10/21-5/20/21 to 3rd. Plaque to top U1800, U1600, U1400 in HS; U1600, U1400, U1200 in JHS; U1400,

U1200, U1000 in Elem, U1200, U1000, U800 in Primary, U700, U500, U300 in K-1. Reserve & Novice Prizes: Plaque to top 10 players and top 7 teams each section and top U1200, U1000, U800, Unr in HS Reserve, top U1000, U800, U600, Unr in Middle School Reserve, top U800, U600, Unr in Elementary Reserve, U600, U400, U300, Unr in Primary Reserve, U400, U300, U200, Unr in Elementary Novice. **Entry fee** at chessaction.com: \$58 by 2/28, \$68 by 3/5, \$78 by 3/9, \$90 after 3/9, entry after 2 pm EDT 3/12 may have required half point bye in round 1. New players (first CCA event on ICC), enter by 3/11 or risk not being paired for round 1. **Log in to playcca.com** 30 minutes before play begins; rounds begin each day at: EDT 10 am, 1:15 pm & 4:30 pm. Half point byes available all rounds, limit 2 byes, must be claimed with registration & cannot be changed. **Online Regular rated** (will not affect OTB ratings); **Online Regular ratings** used for pairings & prizes. OTB regular rating used if no online regular. **USCF membership** required; may join with entry (special rates at chessaction.com). \$15 service charge for refunds. \$20 fee for switching sections 3/9-12; no switching after 3/12. Substitutions from advance player list pay \$90. **WARNING: YOU MUST BE LOGGED IN WHEN PAIRINGS ARE ISSUED, OR YOU MAY NOT BE PAIRED.**

2021 Virtual Scholastic Chess Exposition

MONDAY, MARCH 15, 2021-MONDAY, MARCH 22, 2021

7 or 5 Rd. G/60+10. SS. Online via Chess.com's platform. Four Sections: **OPEN**, U1000, U500 and **UNRATED**. EF: \$12 by 12/31; \$15 by 2/10; \$18 by 3/5 and \$25 thereafter. USCF membership required (except in Unrated). Prizes: Plaques for Top 25% (including ties) in each section. Medals to all who don't win plaques. **ALL:** Play one game each day; games must start between 4-8pm on weekdays and 12-3pm on weekends. Two ½ point byes are available. Sections may be merged if low turnout. For advance registration and more information: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2021-virtual-scholastic-chess-exposition-tickets-129962927615>.

18th annual Southern Class Championships

SATURDAY, MARCH 20, 2021-SUNDAY, MARCH 21, 2021

5-SS, G/45+10, at Internet Chess Club. \$5000 guaranteed prizes. Must be on Zoom (use real name) to be eligible for prizes (side/rear camera angle). In 5 sections. **Master-Expert** (2000/up): \$500-250-150-100, Under 2200 \$300-150, top Florida resident \$100 bonus. **Class A** (1700-1999): \$400-200-140-100. **Class B** (1500-1799/Unr): \$400-200-140-100. **Class C** (1300-1599/Unr): \$400-200-140-100. **Class D/E** (under 1400/Unr): \$360-180-120-80, Under 1200 \$200-100. **Unrated prize limits:** Class D/E \$80, Class C \$160, Class B \$240. **Entry fee** at chessaction.com: \$85 by 3/18, \$100 by 11

am EDT 3/20, entry after 9 am EDT 3/20 must take half point bye in rd 1. **New players** (first CCA event on ICC) enter by 3/18 or risk not being paired for round 1. GMs \$40 from prize. **Log in to playcca.com** 30 minutes before game, rounds begin EDT 11 am, 1:30 pm, 4 pm, 6:30 pm & 9 pm. **Regional EF discount:** \$20 less to residents of Florida, Georgia or Alabama. **Half point byes:** available all rounds, limit 2 byes, must be claimed with registration & cannot be changed. **Online Regular rated** (will not affect OTB ratings), **Online Regular ratings** used for pairings & prizes (OTB Regular used if no Online Regular). \$15 service charge for refunds. **WARNING: YOU MUST BE LOGGED IN WHEN PAIRINGS ARE ISSUED, OR YOU WILL NOT BE PAIRED.**

CCA March Open

SUNDAY, MARCH 21, 2021

5-SS, G/30+10, at Internet Chess Club. \$2000 guaranteed prizes. Must be on Zoom (use real name) to be eligible for prizes (side/rear camera angle). In 3 sections. **Open Section:** Open to all, \$400-200-100, top U2200 \$140, U2000 \$120. **Under 1900/Unr Section:** \$250-130-70, top U1700 (no Unr) \$120. **Under 1500/Unr Section:** \$200-100-50, U1300 (no Unr) \$120; unrated limit \$80. **Entry fee** at chessaction.com: \$47 by 3/19, \$65 by 11:30 am EDT 3/21, entry after 10 am EDT 3/21 must take half point bye in rd 1. **New players** (first CCA event on ICC) enter by 3/19 or risk not being paired for round 1. GMs \$40 from prize. **Log in to playcca.com** 30 minutes before game, rounds begin EDT 11 am, 1 pm, 3 pm, 5 pm, 7 pm. Half point byes: Available all rounds, limit 2 byes, must be claimed with registration & cannot be changed. **Online Regular rated** (will not affect OTB ratings), **Online Regular ratings** used for pairings & prizes (OTB Regular used if no Online Regular). \$15 service charge for refunds. **WARNING: YOU MUST BE LOGGED IN WHEN PAIRINGS ARE ISSUED, OR YOU WILL NOT BE PAIRED.**

7th annual Mid-America Blitz

FRIDAY, MARCH 26, 2021

111-SS, G/3+2, at Internet Chess Club. \$600 guaranteed prizes. Must be on Zoom (use real name) to be eligible for prizes (side/rear camera angle), see ccazoom.com. One section, open to all. **Prizes** \$200-100-60, top U2100 \$90, U1800/Unr \$80, U1500 \$70. **Entry fee** at chessaction.com: \$27 by 3/25, \$40 by 7 pm CDT 3/26, both \$10 less if playing in Mid-America Open 3/27-28, no entry after 7 pm CDT 3/26. **New players** (1st CCA event on ICC) should register by 3/24. GMs \$25 from prize. **Log in to playcca.com** 30 minutes before game. **Round 1** begins 8 pm CDT. **Other rounds ASAP;** 15 minute break after round 6. Should finish by 11 pm CDT. **Half point byes:** Available all rounds, limit 2 byes, must be claimed with registration & cannot be changed. **Online Blitz rated** (will not affect OTB ratings), **Online Regular ratings** used for pairings & prizes (OTB Regular used if no Online Regular). \$15 service charge for refunds. **WARNING: YOU MUST BE LOGGED IN WHEN PAIRINGS ARE ISSUED, OR YOU WILL NOT BE PAIRED.**

HERITAGE EVENT

25th annual Mid-America Open

SATURDAY, MARCH 27, 2021-SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 2021

6-SS, G/75+10, at Internet Chess Club. \$5000 guaranteed prizes. Must be on Zoom (use real name) to be eligible for prizes (side/rear camera angle), see ccazoom.com. In 4 sections. **Major Section:** Open to 1900/over. \$600-400-200-150, top U2200 \$300-150, top Missouri resident \$100 bonus. **Under 2000/Unr Section:** \$400-280-150-100, U1800 (no Unr) \$240-120. **Under 1700/Unr Section:** \$340-200-120-80, top U1500 (no Unr) \$180-90, unrated limit \$150. **Under 1400/Unr Section:** \$280-150-100-60, U1200 (no Unr) \$140-70; unrated limit \$80. **Entry fee** \$83 at chessaction.com by 3/25, \$100 by 1:30 pm CDT 3/27, must take round 1 bye after 10 am CDT 3/27. **New players** (1st CCA event on ICC) should register by 3/25. **Regional EF discount:** \$20 less to residents of Central Time Zone. **GMs \$60** from prize. **Log in to playcca.com** 30 minutes before game. **Rounds begin** each day: CDT 11 am, 2:30 pm & 6 pm. **Half point byes:** Available all rounds, limit 2 byes, must be claimed with registration & cannot be changed. USCF membership required; may join with registration. **Online Regular rated** (will not affect OTB ratings), **Online Regular ratings** used for pairings & prizes (OTB Regular used if no Online Regular). \$15 service charge for refunds. **WARNING: YOU MUST BE LOGGED IN WHEN PAIRINGS ARE ISSUED, OR YOU WILL NOT BE PAIRED.**

North American Class Championships

FRIDAY, APRIL 2, 2021-SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 2021

6-SS, G/120+10, at Internet Chess Club. \$10,000 guaranteed prizes. Must be on Zoom (use real name) to be eligible for prizes (side/rear camera angle), see ccazoom.com. In 5 sections. **Master-Expert** (2000/up): \$1000-500-300-200, top Under 2200 \$600-300. **Class A** (1700-1999): \$800-400-300-200. **Class B** (1500-1799/Unr): \$800-400-300-200. **Class C** (1300-1599/Unr): \$800-400-300-200. **Class D/E** (under 1400/Unr): \$700-400-240-120, top Under 1200 \$360-180. **Unrated prize limits:** Class D/E \$150, Class C \$300, Class B \$450. **Entry fee** at chessaction.com: \$105 by 3/31, \$130 by 2 pm EDT 4/2, entry after 10 am EDT 4/2 must take half point bye in rd 1. **New players** (first CCA event on ICC) enter by 3/31 or risk not being paired for round 1. GMs \$100 from prize. **Log in to playcca.com** 30 minutes before game, rounds begin EDT 11 am, & 4:15 pm each day. **Half point byes:** available all rounds, limit 2 byes, must be claimed with registration & cannot be changed. **Online Regular rated** (will not affect OTB ratings), **Online Regular ratings** used for pairings & prizes (OTB Regular used if no Online Regular). \$15 service charge for refunds. **WARNING: YOU MUST BE LOGGED IN WHEN PAIRINGS ARE ISSUED, OR YOU WILL NOT BE PAIRED.**

**25th annual
MID-AMERICA OPEN**
March 27-28 on ICC
6 ROUNDS, G/75+10
\$5,000 GUARANTEED PRIZES
See Online Events or chessevents.us.

NORTH AMERICAN CLASS
April 2-4, Easter weekend on ICC
6 ROUNDS, G/120+10
\$10,000 GUARANTEED PRIZES
See Online Events or chessevents.us.

CCA April Open**SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 2021**

5-SS, G/45+10, at Internet Chess Club. \$2000 guaranteed prizes. Must be on Zoom (use real name) to be eligible for prizes (side/rear camera angle). See ccazoom.com. In 3 sections. **Open Section:** Open to all, \$400-200-100, top U2200 \$140, U2000 \$120. **Under 1900/Unr Section:** \$250-130-70, top U1700 (no Unr) \$120. **Under 1500/Unr Section:** \$200-100-50, U1300 (no Unr) \$120; unrated limit \$80. **Entry fee** at chessaction.com: \$47 by 4/8, \$65 by 11:30 am EDT 4/10, entry after 10 am EDT 4/10 must take half point bye in rd 1. **New players** (first CCA event on ICC) enter by 4/8 or risk not being paired for round 1. GMs \$40 from prize. **Log into** playcca.com 30 minutes before game, **rounds begin** EDT 11 am, 1:30 pm, 4 pm, 6:30 pm, 9 pm. **Half point byes:** Available all rounds, limit 2 byes, must be claimed with registration & cannot be changed. **Online Regular** (will not affect OTB ratings), **Online Regular** ratings used for pairings & prizes (OTB Regular used if no Online Regular). \$15 service charge for refunds. **WARNING: YOU MUST BE LOGGED IN WHEN PAIRINGS ARE ISSUED, OR YOU WILL NOT BE PAIRED.**

Regionals

MARYLAND**MARYLAND CHESS TOURNAMENTS (NORTH PENN CHESS CLUB)**

Maryland Chess runs 21+ annual K-12 tournaments every other Saturday from September through June &

12+ annual 1-day or multi-day open tournaments for adults & K-12 players on weekends. See www.MD-Chess.org for tournament announcements, registration for tournaments, updated wallcharts, live standings, signup for K-12 & open e-newsletters, lists of coaches & clubs, camp announcements, & news. K-12 MD players who compete in the Varsity section (for players rated 1600+) of 1 of 8+ annual MD-Sweet-16 Qualifiers can qualify for the \$48,000+ scholarship to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County awarded annually. UMBC is a perennial top-10 contender for the collegiate national chess championship.

FLORIDA**MARCH 20, 2021-MARCH 21, 2021****18th annual Southern Class Championships**
See Online Events.**MISSOURI****MARCH 27, 2021-MARCH 28, 2021****25th Annual Mid-America Open**
See Online Events.**MONTANA****JUNIOR GRAND PRIX****St. Patrick Open****SATURDAY, MARCH 13, 2021-SUNDAY, MARCH 14, 2021**

5 SS G/90; +15. Rated scholastic 3/13 9a-12 - Doubletree Hotel, 27 N. 27th St. Billings, MT 59102 Rm block \$94/

night. Call (406) 252-7400. EF \$35, Jrs-\$20, Scholastic \$10. USCF & MCA (or other state) memberships required. **Reg:** 8:15-8:45. **Rds.:** 9:00, 1:00, 5:30/8:30, 12:30. **\$\$:** (b/20A) 1st-\$100, 2nd-\$50, Biggest upset/classes TBD. **Pre-reg:** mattsondm@gmail.com d/t space limitations.

NEW YORK**MARCH 13, 2021-MARCH 14, 2021****53rd annual New York State Scholastic Championships (out of state welcome)**
See Online Events.**MARCH 21, 2021****CCA March Open**

See Online Events.

APRIL 2, 2021-APRIL 4, 2021**North American Class Championships**
See Online Events.**APRIL 10, 2021****CCA April Open**

See Online Events

PENNSYLVANIA**North Penn Chess Club**

Main & Richardson - St. John's UCC, 500 West Main St., Lansdale, PA 19446. See www.northpennchess-club.org for schedules & info or 215-699-8418.

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**US CHESS
18th ANNUAL**

2021 E-mail Correspondence Chess Electronic Knights Championship

\$800 FIRST PRIZE (plus title of US Chess electronic Knights Champion and plaque)
2ND PLACE \$500 • 3RD \$300 • 4TH THRU 10TH PLACE \$100 EACH • ENTRY FEE: \$25

These US Chess Correspondence Chess events are rated and open to all US Chess members with e-mail access. Your US Chess membership must remain current for the duration of the event, and entry fees must be paid in U.S. dollars. Maximum number of tournament entries allowed for the year for each player is ten. Note: Prize fund based on 200 entries and may be decreased proportionately per number of entries assigned. Golden Knights and Electronic Knights Championships are 7-player sections, one game with each of six opponents.

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Four-player, double round-robin with rating-level (0000-1499; 1500-1799; 1800-2000+) pairings (unrateds welcome). 1st-place winner receives a John W. Collins certificate. Entry fee: \$7.

EMAIL RATED EVENTS (NEED EMAIL ACCESS)

☐ Lightning Match

Two players with two or six-game option. Entry fee: \$5.

☐ Swift Quads

Four-player, double round-robin format. 1st-place prize US Chess CC entry credit of \$30. Rating-Levels 0000-1499; 1500-1799; 1800-2000+. Entry fee: \$10.

☐ Walter Muir E-Quads (webserver chess)

Four-player, double round-robin webserver format tournament with class-level pairings. 1st-place receives a certificate. Entry fee: \$7.

Please check event(s) selected.

NOTE: Except for Lightning Matches, Swift Quads, Walter Muir E-Quads & Electronic Knights, players will use post office mail, unless opponents agree to use e-mail.

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Solutions

Page 11 / CHESS TO ENJOY

PROBLEM I. 27. Qe5! threatens 28. Qxa1 but also 28. Qe8+! and mates. White only drew after 27. Re7? Ra2+. **PROBLEM II.** 18. Ng5!, e.g. 18. ... Qf6 19. Qxh7+ Kf8 20 f4. Or 18. ... f5 19. Bxe5 and Bc4+. **PROBLEM III.** 33. Re1! threatens 34. Rxe2 Qxe2 35. Nf5+ and Qxe2. Black resigned after 33. ... Bd3 34. Ng4+ Kg6 35. Qg5+ (35. ... Kh7 36. Qh5+ Kg8 37. Re8 mate or 35. ... Kf7 36. Qh5+ g6 37. Qh7+ Kf8 38. Qh8+ Kf7 39. Nh6 mate). **PROBLEM IV.** 32. Qh3! threatens 33. Bxc5 and 34. Qxe6, e.g. 32. ... Rxd6 33. exd6 Qf8 34. Re7+, Black resigns. **PROBLEM V.** 23. ... d4! 24. Bxd4 Rxd4 25. exd4 Nxf3+ 26. Kf1 Nxd4 or 26. ... Bd6. **PROBLEM VI.** Black only drew after 29. ... exd5? but could have won with 29. ... Nc2!, threatening ... Nxe1, e.g. 30. Rc1 Ne3 or 30. Rf2 exd5.

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PROBLEM I. Mating Net: Black wins in two moves: 1. ... Qe3+ 2. Kf1 Bc4 mate. **PROBLEM II. Mating Net:** Black mates in 3: 1. ... Bd3+ 2. Be2 Qxe2+ 3. Kg1 Qe3 mate. **PROBLEM III. Mating net:** Black mates in 2: 1. ... Bd3+ 2. Rxd3 Qe1 mate. **PROBLEM IV. Mating net:** It is mate in three: 1. ... Qxg1+ 2. Kxg1 Bd4+ 3. Kf1 Rg1 mate. **PROBLEM V. Mating net:** Black mates by 1. ... Qxe2+ 2. Qxe2 Rxe2 mate. **PROBLEM VI. Mating net:** Black mates in 2: 1. ... Qxf3+ 2. gxf3 (or 2. Qf2 Qxf2 mate) Bh3 mate.

Page 39 / MAKE YOUR MOVE!

TACTIC I. 25. ... Nc4! 26. Rbe2 b6 The queen is trapped. **White resigned.** Karwowski - Mokshanov, Titled Tuesday 2021. **TACTIC II.** 27. Nxf7+ and **Black resigned** as Black has no way of stopping Qe5+ with mate to follow. Zhigalko - Lysyj, Titled Tuesday 2021. **TACTIC III.** 16. Nxd5! Black's clumsily organized pieces allows White this strike that wins a pawn. 16. ... cxd5 17. Qxd5 Rb8 18. c6 The point behind the knight sacrifice: Black's knight on d7 is trapped. 18. ... Rd8 19. cxd7 Bxd7 and after 20. Rac1 White has won a pawn and has clearly better chances. In the game, Fabiano played 20. Ne5? when 20. ... Be6 21. Qe4 Bxe5 22. dxe5 Qe7 23. Qe3 Rbc8 when Black's activity provided good compensation for pawn and eventually a **draw** was the happy result for Black. Caruana - Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2021. **TACTIC IV.** 52. ... c3! Black can also win with 52. ... Bb5!! 53. a4 c3! (53. ... Ba6 also wins) 54. g5+ Kf7 55. Ke3 Ba6 transposing to our main line. 53. g5+ Kf7 54. Ke3 and now Black had 54. ... Bb5!! In the game, Black missed his chance and played 54. ... c2 which led to a **draw** after 55. Kd2 Kg7 56. h5 Bb3 57. Kc1 Ba4 58. Kb2 Bb3 59. Kc1 Ba4 60. Kb2 and neither side can make progress in Anton Guijarro - Tari, Wijk aan Zee 2021. 55. a4 Ba6 The bishop has to stay on this diagonal to prevent the white king from getting closer to the c3-pawn. Therefore, also 55. ... Bc4 and 55. ... Bf1 would have won for Black. 56. h5 Kg7 57. a5 Bb5 58. f6+ Kf7 59. h6 Kg6 White is in zugzwang because any move with his king will let the c-pawn

queen. Black can continue to put White in this zugzwang until he has captured all of White's pawns. 60. f7 Kxf7 61. h7 Kg7 62. g6 Ba6 and it would have been pointless for White to continue. **TACTIC V.** 25. e6! Opening the long diagonal to prevent Black's rook from a6 to move to h6 to be used as a defender. Note that 25. Qh5?? Rh6 wins for Black. 25. ... Rxe6 26. Qh5 26. Qh3 is just as good. 26. ... d4 The point behind White's 25th move is that now 26. ... Rh6 is not possible due to 27. Qxh6 because the g7-pawn is pinned. A much better defense is 26. ... Qd7 although White also win in that case but the line is a lot longer: 27. Bf5+ Kg8 28. Qh7+ Kf8 29. Bxg7+ (or 29. Qxg7+ Ke7 30. Bf6+ Kd6 31. e4 Qxa4 32. Ra1 Qd7 33. exd5 Bxd5 34. Rd1 Kc6 35. Re5 and White is winning) 29. ... Ke7 30. e4 Qxa4 31. Ra1 Qd7 32. exd5 Bxd5 33. Rd1 Kd6 34. Re5 and White is winning. 27. Bg6+ and **Black resigned.** Taghizadeh - Bajarani, Pan-Am Intercollegiate 2021. **TACTIC VI.** 17. Ncxb5! A thunderbolt that exploits the loose pieces in Black's set-up. 17. ... axb5 18. Nxc6! Bxc6 19. Qc3! The point: a double threat, hitting both c6 and h8. 19. ... O-O 20. Qxc6 d5 21. exd5 Rfc8 22. d6 and White eventually won. Espenko - Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2021. **TACTIC VII.** 33. ... g4! In the game Black played the less accurate 33. ... dxe4 but was immediately rewarded when White played 34. gxf4?? (34. fxe4 Nh5 35. Qf5 Nf6 would have kept Black's advantage within limits) 34. ... gxf4+ 35. Qg2 exf3! 36. Qxg6+ Rxg6+ 37. Kh1 f2! 38. Bh3 Nc4 39. Rxc4 Re1+ and **White resigned** in Wojtaszek - Caruana, Wijk aan Zee 2021. In any case, an impressive conclusion to a great game by Caruana. 34. Bc1 Or 34. fxe4 Qxg4 35. Rd4 Nh3+ 36. Bxh3 Qxh3 37. Qf1 Qxf1+ 38. Kxf1 Ng4 and Black has a decisive advantage. 34. ... Nh3+ 35. Bxh3 gxf3 36. Bf4 If 36. exd5, then 36. ... Nd3! 37. Rxd3 Re2 38. Rd4 Rxf2 and Black is winning. 36. ... dxe4 37. Bxe5 Rxe5 and Black has a decisive advantage. **TACTIC VIII.** 14. ... h4! Crashing through to White's king. 15. hxxg4 Or 15. Nxxh4 g5 (but not 15. ... Rxh4 16. Bxxg4 and White survives) 16. Bxxg4 (also 16. hxxg4 gxf4 17. Bf3 hxxg3 18. Bxe4 dxe4 19. f4 Qe7 wins for Black, e.g., 20. Qe2 Rh2 21. Qxe4 Qh4) 16. ... gxf4 17. f3 and several moves win for Black, for instance, 17. ... Bg6 and 17. ... Qxg3+. Also 15. Nfe1 loses after 15. ... Nxf2 16. Rxf2 hxxg3 17. Rf3 Rxxh3 18. Bf1 Rh4 and White will not survive Black's attack. 15. ... hxxg3! 16. Ne3 Or 16. Bd3 g2! 17. Bxe4 gxf1=Q+ 18. Kxf1 dxe4 and it is curtains for White. 16. ... g2! 17. Nxxg2 Everything loses, but this does so immediately. 17. ... Bxxf3 and **White resigned** as he cannot prevent mate. Drygalov - Dragun, Collegiate RUS-USA 2021. **TACTIC IX.** 19. Bc4+! Strictly speaking, White could also have played 19. Bh6!, transposing to the same line. 19. ... Kh8 20. Bh6!! gxxh6 Or 20. ... Re7 21. Nf5 gxxh6 22. Qg4 Ng6 23. Nxe7 Nxe7 24. Rxd7 and White is winning. Also 20. ... Rad8 loses after 21. Bxxg7+ Kxxg7 22. Qg4+ Ng6 23. Rxd7+ and White breaks decisively through. 21. Qg4! The threat of Qg8 costs Black a piece but White keeps the attack going. 21. ... Ng6 22. Rxd7 Black has no defense against White's invading forces. 22. ... Re7 23. Nxxg6+ hxxg6 24. Rad1 Rxd7 25. Rxd7 Bf8 26. Kg2 Rd8 27. Qxxg6 and **Black resigned.** C. Bauer - Sonis, Cappelle Online Blitz 2021.

MY BEST MOVE

FM Doug Eckert

Enjoying a Second Chess Wind

I started playing chess in 1979 at age 15, a veritable dinosaur by today's standards, earning my master title by 1983. I won the U.S. Junior Open in both 1983 and 1984, and I was just young enough to play in the 1984 US Junior Championship, where I finished in fourth place. As the lowest rated player in the twelve-person field, I was happy with the result, thinking that it would be the high-water mark of my chess lifetime.

I made my career as a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) specializing in international tax and mergers and acquisitions; it turns out that, at least for me, analyzing chess combinations is rather like putting together a tax merger and acquisition deal, and the skills I honed in chess helped propel my CPA career. I retired at the end of 2018, and at the age of 54, to spend more time with my family, along with traveling and playing chess.

I had to set aside chess due to the rigors of my profession during the 1990s and early 2000s. But then Dr. Jeanne and Rex Sinquefeld opened the Saint Louis Chess Club, and the second half of my chess life started.

The Saint Louis Chess Club hosted its first U.S. Championship in 2009. When one of the players fell ill and had to withdraw, I was drafted to take her place, playing the final six rounds of the Championship. The fact that I was not totally killed in that event rekindled my interest in playing competitively again.

Rex was kind enough to place me on the Board of Directors of the Saint Louis Chess Club. That association has allowed me to meet and get to know the finest players in the world. With all the great players visiting the Club, I am enjoying the best the chess world has to offer on an up close and personal basis.

SPORTSMANSHIP MATTERS

FM Doug Eckert (2272)

Tyrell Harriott (2181)

North American Open, 12.29.2012

(see diagram top of next column)

My Best Move was played in the 2012 North American Open in Las Vegas. My opponent sacrificed a pawn putting me under immense pressure.

31. Nd1?



... analyzing chess combinations is rather like putting together a tax merger and acquisition deal.



White should try 31. Nb5 Nxb5 (if 31. ... Qc2? 32. Na3 with a big advantage) 32. axb5 Qc2 33. Qxe5! and I saw the idea that follows, but not that it only works by sacrificing a rook with check: 33. ... Qxb1+ 34. Kg2 f6 35. Qe6+ Kh8 36. Bxf6 Rg8 37. Bxg7+! with a perpetual.

31. ... Qc2 32. Ra1 Nb3?

My friend GM Jacob Aagaard constantly reminds us our calculations are usually wrong on the first move of the variation ... in this case, it was the second move I neglected. Black has 32. ... Bc1! 33. Bxd4 Qxd1+ 34. Kg2 exd4 35. Qc6 Qxe2 36. Rxc1 Qxd3.

33. Qxe5 f6 34. Qe6+ Kh8 35. Bxf6 Rg8?

Now this move loses. It's a draw after 35. ... Nxa1 36. Bxg7+.

36. Ne3!

MY BEST MOVE, which I had seen as a trap when playing my 31st move.

36. ... Bxe3 37. Qxe3 Kh7

The only move that avoids mate is 37. ... Qd2 but of course it loses.

38. Qe4+ Kh8 39. Qg6 Qd2 40. e3, Black resigned.

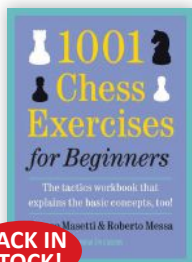
What made 36. Ne3 so memorable was not that it was my best move objectively, but its aftermath. Tyrell congratulated me, called his wife over and said, "you have to take my picture with Doug! Look at this move and what happened to me! I need my picture with anyone that can do that." Tyrell's enthusiasm for the art of chess itself made the move great. His sportsmanship and attitude made a lasting impression and I'll be forever grateful to him for providing that moment. ♠



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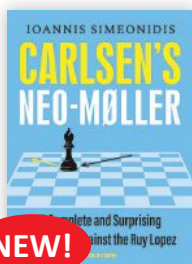
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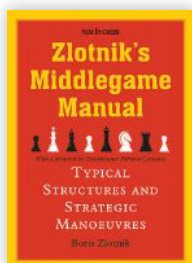
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NEW!

A Complete and Surprising Repertoire Against the Ruy Lopez
Ioannis Simeonidis

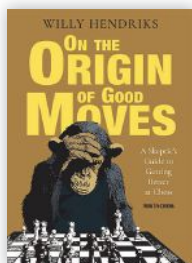
Magnus Carlsen revolutionized the old Møller Attack, one of the sharpest variations against the Ruy Lopez. Ioannis Simeonidis is the first to investigate the Neo-Møller. He made lots of exciting discoveries and proves that it's a very playable system, also for club players. White players of the Ruy Lopez are going to thoroughly dislike this early deviation!



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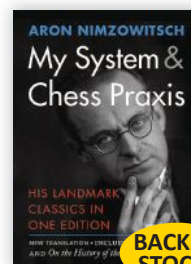
Richard James, British Chess News

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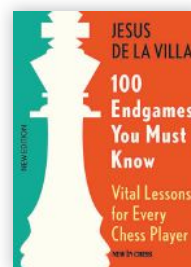
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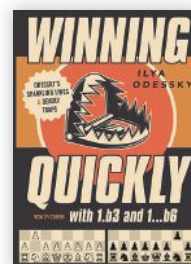
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GM Glenn Flear, Yearbook 136

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Peter O'Brien, British Chess Magazine



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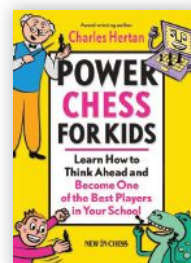
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Dr Alexey W. Root



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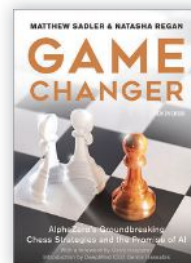
Matthew Sadler & Natasha Regan

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