

CHESS LIFE

JANUARY 2021 | USCHESS.ORG

*A Conversation
with RZA
from the
WU-TANG
CLAN*

Reflections of a KING

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

In-depth coverage of the U.S. Chess Championships. So, Krush, Benjamin, Burke, and Yip are 2020 Champions.



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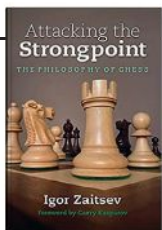


HOW TO BEAT MAGNUS CARLSEN

by Cyrus Lakdawala

B0244NIC - \$29.95

Magnus Carlsen is arguably the strongest player of all time. His dominance is such that every loss comes as a shock. This book has a thematic structure, which, together with Lakdawala's uniquely accessible style, makes its lessons easy to digest. Sometimes even Magnus gets outplayed, sometimes he over-presses and goes over the cliff's edge, and sometimes he fails to find the correct plan. And yes, even Magnus Carlsen commits straightforward blunders. Lakdawala explains the how and the why.

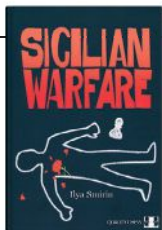


ATTACKING THE STRONGPOINT

by Igor Zaitsev

B0127RE - \$24.95

In his eye-opening title chapter, "Attacking the Strongpoint," Zaitsev makes explicitly clear a common strategic element never formalized until this book. Often overlooked by amateurs and even GMs, the idea can lead to winning tactics in many games! Topics include Combinations and Piece Harmony, Strategy and Structure and The Role of Reason and Judgment. As you read Zaitsev, you'll often find yourself thinking, "Ah, now I get it!"

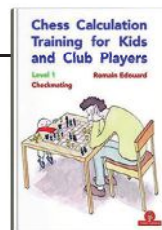


SICILIAN WARFARE

by Ilya Smirin

B0178QT - \$29.95

Sicilian Warfare is a practical guide to the most dynamic and ambitious defence against 1.e4, starting where opening theory ends and the middlegame begins. Ilya Smirin breaks down the strategic battle into easily understood elements and then looks at them in a dynamic setting. With illuminating annotations of Smirin's best Sicilian games with both colours, Sicilian Warfare offers a feast of attacking chess and a world-class guide to the most ambitious reply to 1.e4.



CHESS CALCULATION TRAINING FOR KIDS AND CLUB PLAYERS - LEVEL 1

by Romain Edouard

B0059TH - \$31.95

From the Author – Most tactics and training books are good for boosting your calculation ability, but they do not teach you how to calculate. This is the difference I want to make with my own books, by arranging the exercises in different categories so that the thinking process more closely resembles the one we have during a game. After you have completed all 276 exercises in the book you won't let your opponent's king escape when it shouldn't. Reading it should pay off quickly in terms of results! And this is exactly what I wish you.



NEW IN CHESS YEARBOOK - VOLUME #135

by Cyrus Lakdawala

B0135PYB - \$33.95

B0135HYB - \$39.95

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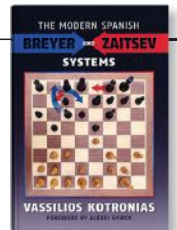
New in Chess Yearbook is the #1 guide to Chess Opening news! It is published four times per year, ensuring the most up-to-date and topic chess opening information. It includes 25-30 surveys per issue, covering all of the fashionable lines, wild gambits and even forgotten variations! If you're serious about chess, you need New in Chess Yearbooks!

THE MODERN SPANISH

by Vassilios Kotronias

B0128RE - \$29.95

The Breyer and Zaitsev Variations of the Ruy Lopez are two of the most dynamic lines played today. Examining them from both White and Black's point of view, the author discusses their strengths, weaknesses and presents suggested improvements where necessary. Kotronias' clear writing style, coupled with in depth analysis, makes for a splendid opening manual on two of the most topical – and solid – variations of the Ruy Lopez.

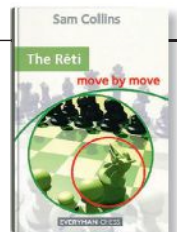


THE RETI- MOVE BY MOVE

by Sam Collins

B0533EM - \$27.95

This book examines what might be described as the "pure" Reti Opening. White starts with 1.Nf3 and intends to meet 1...d5 with the "Reti" response 2.c4. One of the major advantages of playing these systems is that they rely far more on general strategic understanding than rote memorisation. However, this does not mean that Black is not set difficult problems to solve. The Move-by-Move series provides an ideal platform to study chess openings.

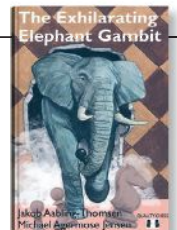


THE EXHILARATING ELEPHANT GAMBIT

by Aabling-Thomsen & Jensen

B0179QT - \$29.95

The Elephant Gambit is perhaps the boldest opening in all of chess theory. By meeting 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 with 2...d5!?, Black takes the fight to his opponent and aims to seize the initiative as early as possible. This book offers a complete repertoire for Black, based on 3.exd5 Bd6 or 3.Nxe5 Bd6 4.d4 dxe4. In return for the sacrificed pawn, Black ensures himself of quick and active development with most of his pieces pointing menacingly towards the enemy kingside.

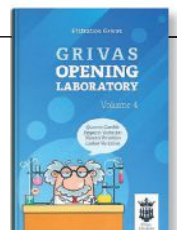


GRIVAS OPENING LABORATORY - VOLUME 4

by Efstratios Grivas

B0066EV - \$27.50

The fourth book of the best-selling series deals with 'Queen's Gambit' structures, and more specifically: The "Queen's Gambit Accepted," a quiet system which aims to preserve simple and equal/drawish positions (from Black's point of view!) and is played today at all levels. In the book you will find not only a concrete and well-structured, move-by-move presentation, but also chapters on the middlegame, endgame and tactics, those that are typical for this variation and will help you to understand it better.

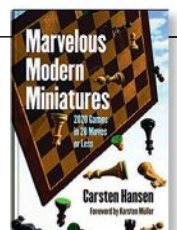


MARVELOUS MODERN MINIATURES

by Carsten Hansen

B0126RE - \$29.95

Enter the world of chess miniatures where games are decided in 20 moves or less! Marvelous Modern Miniatures features the largest collection of miniatures chess games played in the last half-century. Over 500 pages of cut and thrust! The surprising depth of the annotations (each one of the 2,020 games has meaningful comments) turns this book into a virtual course on tactics.



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WIM Thalia Cervantes

(U.S. Girls' Junior) is a familiar face to visitors to the Saint Louis Chess Club, and to those who watch their Twitch stream. After moving to the United States in 2014 to further her chess, she has played in many important events around the country.

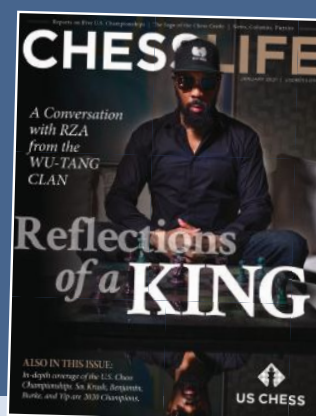
Dennis J. McGrath

(Chess Castle) is a retired Minneapolis Star Tribune reporter and editor. He began playing rated chess in his 40s, and coached his daughter Cailin's school chess team, the Glen Lake Knights, to the Minnesota K-6 state championship (first on tiebreaks), where she tied for second place. McGrath is a member of the Chess Castle of Minnesota.

ON THE COVER

Mike Relm is best known for his music/video mash-ups, live concerts, and broadcast work. In October he visited RZA at home for a photo shoot; the spectacular photo on the cover is the result of their collaboration. Look for more of Mike's work at mikerelm.com.

ART DIRECTION BY
FRANKIE BUTLER



Chess Life

JANUARY

PHOTO: MIKE RELM

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Rochelle Wu, 2017
National Girls Tournament of
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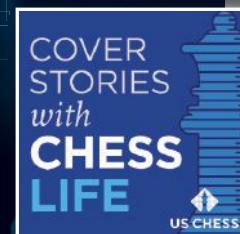
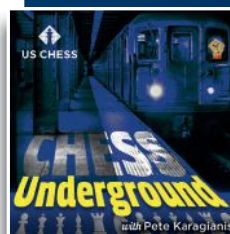
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Is it Tuesday? Then it's podcast Tuesday.

Did you know that there's a new podcast every week from US Chess?



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PODCASTS
FROM  US CHESS

Letters: *Knights and November*



MORE KNIGHT MOVES

Andy Soltis' September column continues to generate a lot of comments. It seems our readers are passionate (and opinionated!) about how to teach knight moves.

OMG! I can't believe so much controversy over the description of how the knight moves. I was taught the knight moves in the shape of the letter "L" and that was intuitive for me. Whatever works best for the student should be used to teach how the knight moves.

David Cofer
via email

I teach students from age 4½ to about ten years old at the Kings & Queens Chess Academy in New Jersey and North Carolina. I initially teach them about the L shape when introducing the knight. However, I also include both a picture of me on a horse, and another picture of a horse jumping. I proceed to explain to them how special the knight is in that it's the only piece that jumps! The knight is usually the last piece that I teach, and over time I phase out the L-shape concept as their skill/clarity improves.

Valarie Embrey
via email

In the November 2020 "Letters" section, your readers missed another option for how the knight moves: directly...from its square of origin to its legal destination square. Whether "L-shaped" or any other way, I'm sure that after a few games, very few players think about the path that the knight takes and instead see only the possible landing squares. This is true for every other piece, as well. No one spends time thinking about how a piece moves, only where, so how you choose to learn how it moves is of no lasting significance.

Gregory Winters
via email

Surely the move of a knight is less confusing than some explanations make it seem. Measure distances on a chessboard from the center of one square to the center of another, using the concept of distance from Euclidean geometry, and let the unit of distance be the distance between two neighboring squares on a rank or on a file. Then the knight's move can be described as any move from the starting square to a square that is $\sqrt{5}$ units away. It is not even necessary to think of the knight as jumping, since the line segment joining the start-point to the end-point does not pass through the center of any other square.

This explanation is based on the Pythagorean theorem, so the move of the knight can motivate a young person to learn that great gem from elementary geometry. We have chess in the service of mathematics, and mathematics in the service of chess. Three cheers for 1. Nf3. And three cheers for Euclid's *Elements*, I:47.

Stuart Clary
via email



THE NOVEMBER ISSUE

The response to our November issue was immensely positive, mirroring the public's reception of the Netflix limited series "The Queen's Gambit" that graced our cover. We made the issue free to download in the middle of the month, and it nearly burned down our servers! (Just kidding... but it did get a lot of clicks!)

Just read your story about "The Queens Gambit" miniseries. You showed great self-restraint by not

pointing out the placement of your magazine in several scenes.

Gary Shure
via email

[The] *Chess Life* November issue is great!

LM Klaus A. Pohl
via email

That article ["Instruction/Analyzing with Engines" by GM Jacob Aagaard] was the most amazing thing I have ever seen in *Chess Life*! Thanks for publishing it. It shows how great chess is and that it will never be solved as to who wins.

Harvey Lerman
via email

From the "you can't please everyone" department:

In the future please do not waste ten (!) pages on a movie review as in the November 2020 *Chess Life* for "The Queen's Gambit." This is yet another example of the propensity of *Chess Life* to publish fluffy, human-interest-type articles.

We're members of the US Chess Federation because of chess. We read *Chess Life* for chess. For example, Sam Shankland's article on the Olympiad is why we read *Chess Life*.

It's about the chess.

Joe Kuspa
via email

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

How “The Queen’s Gambit” Reimagined Chess

Walter Tevis’s novel portrayed an alternative to the Cold War game that Bobby Fischer dominated. Today, the chess world is finally catching up.



PHIL BRAY/COURTESY OF NETFLIX

Chess Gets Its Closeup

“The Queen’s Gambit” breaks the Internet (and viewing records).

By **JOHN HARTMANN**

So... seen anything good recently? It’s boom times for chess fans: the age-old game of chess is absolutely the hot new thing. After seeing a spike in popularity earlier this year with the “new chess boom” led by streamers like GM Hikaru Nakamura, the chess world saw a huge “second wave” of renewed interest after the October 23rd release of the Netflix limited series “The Queen’s Gambit.”

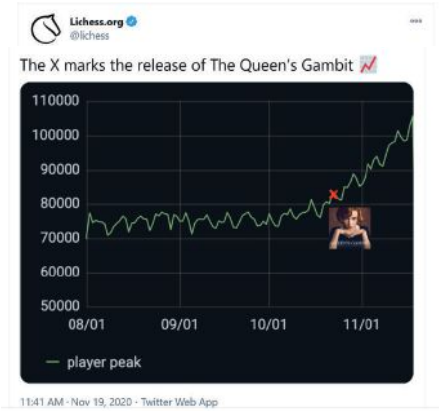
The subject of our November cover story, “The Queen’s Gambit” features Anya Taylor-Joy in a star-making turn as Beth Harmon, a Kentucky orphan with a genius for chess and a taste for tranquilizers. It features excellent performances by the supporting cast, including Marielle Heller as her adoptive stepmother Alma Wheatley, Thomas

Brodie-Sanger (Benny Watts) and Harry Melling (Harry Beltik) as her competition, and Bill Camp as her first teacher, Mr. Shaibel.

The series has gotten rave reviews from all corners of the world, boasting a highly coveted “100% Fresh” rating at *rottentomatoes.com*. And Netflix has announced that “The Queen’s Gambit” has become the most-viewed limited series on their platform. Suddenly chess is cool again, thanks to the attention brought to it by this incredibly successful limited series.

Epidemiologists often talk about how Google Trends can function as leading indicators for disease outbreaks. In much the same vein, chess websites were quick to notice the buzz generated by “The Queen’s Gambit.” Both *chess.com* and *lichess.org* reported immediate and sustained upticks in traffic

LEFT: J.C.HALLMAN’S PIECE IN *THE NEW REPUBLIC* ON “THE QUEEN’S GAMBIT;” RIGHT: GRAPHS FROM *LICHESS.ORG* (TOP) AND *CHESS.COM* (BOTTOM) SHOWING TRAFFIC GROWTH AFTER THE RELEASE OF “THE QUEEN’S GAMBIT.” FACING PAGE: “THE QUEEN’S GAMBIT” COVERAGE ON *THE TODAY SHOW*.



Time will tell whether chess is merely the latest pandemic fad, fated to go the way of banana bread baking and binge-watching “Tiger King,” but Mr. Lucas believes the heightened interest in the game is here to stay.

“I’m fond of the axiom that ‘the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior,’” he said. “And people have been playing chess for 1,500 years.”

—DAN LUCAS TO THE NEW YORK TIMES



Incredible Second Wave of Interest in Chess

erik Nov 22, 2020, 10:36 AM | 124

after the series was released, and streamers who created content related to “The Queen’s Gambit” were rewarded with larger-than-normal audiences.

The mainstream press also took notice. Media outlets of all types took the story and ran with it. From *The New Republic* to *The Guardian* to *The Today Show*, it seems like “The Queen’s Gambit” was everywhere. *The New York Times* has run (at last count) three



The overlap between chess and glamour is not new, but this is the first time I've seen it depicted so brilliantly onscreen, which takes it to an even higher level of imagination.

—JENNIFER SHAHADE TO THE NEW YORK TIMES



stories on the series, focusing on sexism in chess, the attention to detail prompted by the showrunners and consultants like GM Garry Kasparov and Bruce Pandolfini, and most recently, the sudden rush to buy chess boards, and the concomitant shortage consumers face. US Chess Senior Director of Communication Dan Lucas was among the experts quoted.

One of the most in-demand experts for those wanting to understand “The Queen’s Gambit” is WGM and US Chess Women’s Programs Director Jennifer Shahade. With her knowledge of the game and her unique perspective on women in both the chess world and society writ-large, Shahade has been interviewed by multiple print and radio outlets. In the span of just three days in late November, she appeared on two NPR

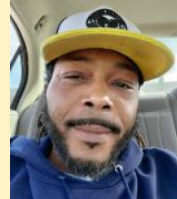
programs, was featured on *Inside Edition*, and penned an op-ed for *The Washington Post*.

Shahade parlayed her extensive connections to get showrunner / director Scott Frank and series consultant GM Garry Kasparov to spend an afternoon as guests for the US Chess Girls’ Club, which is an ongoing series of webinars for US Chess’ junior female players. Frank regaled the Zoom call attendees with stories from the set, while Kasparov dissected some of the real-life positions that Beth Harmon blitzed out against her opponents.

Between the streaming-based “new chess boom” and “The Queen’s Gambit’ effect,” 2020 was a very good year for chess. (Not great for anything else. But for chess, it was excellent.) Here’s to building on that success in 2021! 📌

FACES ACROSS THE BOARD

By AL LAWRENCE



JEROME HELM

OMAHA, NEBRASKA

“Increase the Piece”

“I grew up in the ‘hood,” Jerome told me. Gangs were a fact of life —

and too often, of death. “You’d see parents on the street corner fund-raising to get enough money for their kid’s funeral.” It was a heartbreaking scene Jerome moved away from but never forgot.

In 2017, he founded Increase the Piece Chess Club as a nonprofit with the idea of empowering youngsters to make better choices. “We offer a place for our youth as an alternative to the pressures of streets and gang violence. Just winning a simple game of chess can do a lot for a kid.” He hopes one day the club can even help with some of the expenses faced by families with at-risk kids. The name of his club is both a pun and an acronym, standing for Perseverance, Integrity, Effort, Creativity, and Enjoyment.

Twenty years ago, while in the Army, Jerome saw fellow soldiers playing chess and got curious, asking a trooper to teach him the moves. For a long time, chess was just another game. Along the way, he taught a coworker. That friend became an enthusiastic player and lit a passion in Jerome, who then played chess in the Nebraska State Games. It was the circle of chess.

Now Jerome has perfected a method that in just 15 minutes teaches how to move all the pieces. And he often follows up showing Paul Morphy’s famous Opera Game. “It offers everything, strategy and tactics.”

Jerome is ecstatic to be in the *Chess Life* issue featuring Wu-Tang Clan. “They’re big supporters of chess. I’ve been to their concerts.” His message to our cover subject: “Rome to RZA,” and “RIP ODB.”

Jerome, aka “Romey Rome,” performed on stage with the rapper “Killah Priest” at a concert. “I was the only fan in the crowd who knew every word of every song. ... he pulled me on stage! We performed the next six or seven songs together in sync. We were back-to-back, microphones up, reciting his lyrics.”

2021 Scholar Chess Player Award

DEADLINE:
MARCH 1, 2021

IF YOU ARE A HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR OR senior looking for scholarship money, read on!

If you are a current US Chess member, you are eligible to apply for a 2021 National Scholar Chessplayer Award if you:

1. Played in at least 25 regular-rated US Chess or FIDE games (not to include online games) during calendar year 2019 (entire year) AND 2020 (through November 23). Games with a time control less than game-30 delay-0 do not count toward the 25-game requirement.
2. Have shown outstanding achievement in academics and chess.
3. Completed at least one year of chess-related community service since you started the ninth grade.
4. Can articulate in an essay (of 500 words or less) how your being selected as a 2021 Scholar Chessplayer would enable you to further your education, improve your chess, and continue contributing to the chess community for the next five years of your life.

A total of five awards are available at \$3,000 each for a total of \$15,000 in scholarship money. Previous recipients of this award are not eligible. These scholarships, awarded annually by the U.S. Chess Trust, the National Scholastic Chess Foundation (NSCF), and US Chess, recognize and encourage outstanding high school students who promote a positive image of chess.

Alex Dunne retires

Alex Dunne has retired as US Chess Correspondence Chess Director after suffering a stroke, which has made him incapable of performing the duties associated with the position. Chris Bird is filling in for Alex and has begun working his way through a backlog of items relating to correspondence chess (CC). Any issues should be sent to him at correspondence@uschess.org. If something must be mailed, please send to: US Chess, Attn: Correspondence Chess, PO Box 3967, Crossville, TN 38557.

Because of the significant backlog of CC work, US Chess appreciates your patience as we work through a transition. The Executive Board is forming a task force in December to decide on a long-term strategy.

US Chess wishes Alex a healthy recovery and thanks him for his many years of service to our organization.

Applications should be submitted using the online form: <https://forms.gle/wSKX416vmgjTLCKd9>.

Documents (.doc, .pdf and other usual extensions) can be attached to the applications via this form.

Your completed application must include the following:

- Submitted application form via <https://forms.gle/wSKX416vmgjTLCKd9>
- Your uploaded high school transcripts showing all courses and grades.
- Evidence listed in the form or uploaded that you have played at least 25 US Chess or FIDE rated qualifying games during the 2019 and 2020 (through November 23) calendar year.
- A list and brief description of your best chess accomplishments.
- Examples of your community service since ninth grade or later.
- A letter of recommendation from a teacher in a current or former school you have attended in ninth, 10th, 11th, or 12th grade.
- A letter of recommendation from a chess coach or tournament director.
- A letter of support from someone other than a parent or guardian, bearing witness to the nature, duration, and impact of your chess-related community service. We also encourage you to submit newspaper articles or web-based stories as evidence.
- Your essay uploaded in the application form of no more than 500 words describing how your being recognized as a Scholar Chessplayer would help you continue contributing to the greater US Chess community over the next five years of your life.
- OPTIONAL: A recent color photograph of yourself, either a headshot or full-length.

Deadline for submitting the application form is March 1st, 2021 11:59 PM PST.

Incomplete applications will not be reviewed by the selection committee.

Awards will be announced at the US Chess 2021 SuperNationals and online at uschesstrust.org.

If you have any questions regarding this form, or if you need technical assistance in completing it, please contact Korey Kormick at US Chess at korey.kormick@uschess.org and write "2021 Scholar Chessplayer Award" in the subject line.

2020 WINNERS:



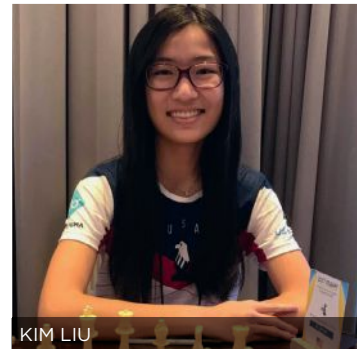
AKIRA NAKADA



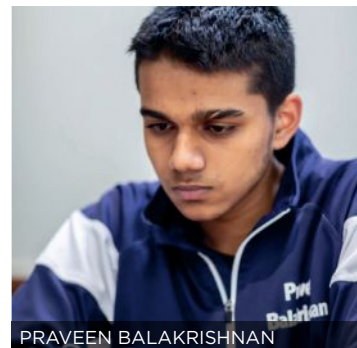
ANNIE WANG



DAVID BRODSKY



KIM LIU



PRAVEEN BALAKRISHNAN

PHOTOS: BALAKRISHNAN, BRODSKY BY HANKS; LIU COURTESY OF SUBJECT; WANG COURTESY OF SAINT LOUIS CHESS CLUB; NAKADA BY DORA MARTINEZ

ACROSS THE BOARD

By **MIKE HOFFPAUR**

PRESIDENT, US CHESS EXECUTIVE BOARD

Friends,

Happy New Year and sincerest wishes for a good 2021 from everyone at US Chess!

Many of us thought that over-the-board (OTB) chess would begin to return late in 2020, but the COVID pandemic had other ideas. I ran three OTB events in Virginia in October and November, but the turnout was mixed. People who attended were so grateful for being able to play against someone in-person, but I was saddened by the potential risk of exposure impacting what we love to do — play chess. As a result, I expect online play will continue as a primary modality of play, and one that will hold us over until we meet again at the board (and perhaps after).

Those of us who have been running online events have learned what to watch for, and how to both deter and catch players who choose to violate the Code of Ethics. Most tournament directors and organizers now know what suspicious behavior looks like — from the 800 who beats the 2100, to the higher-rated player who opts to selectively use a computer to find a move in a critical position. Please don't be “that player.” You will be caught sooner or later.

With the holiday season in our rearview mirrors, US Chess is leaning hard into 2021. The next Delegates Meeting and an Executive Board (EB) election will be fast upon us. Speaking of the election, every age-eligible member of US Chess needs to register to vote. You can expect announcements to that effect soon to gently remind you, so don't miss the opportunity to ensure you are registered to vote in the EB election. The Nominating Committee, appointed and approved by the Delegates, did a superb job identifying four fully qualified candidates for you to consider. Have a voice in the future of US Chess! Vote! On our agenda for the year are initiatives in some key areas. One area we examining closely is Chess in Education. The Netflix limited series “The Queen's Gambit” has rekindled public interest in chess, so we are taking advantage of it. We're assembling a “task force” of members with education expertise to do a deep dive into the topic. For example, we are keenly interested in the idea of helping teachers bring the benefits of chess into their classrooms.

This is not so much about “teaching people to play chess,” as it is about using chess as a vehicle to supplement academic subjects. The possibilities are significant not only in areas like math and science, but also in subjects such as the foreign languages or history. Imagine the possibilities — e.g. a classroom of 10th graders taking Spanish (Chinese, German, French, etc.) who are playing online (from home or at school) against another school abroad where the native tongue is the target language! We will keep everyone informed on our progress.

One final piece of news. I am a member of the FIDE Rules Commission. Based on recent activity at FIDE I would not be surprised if we see in 2021 the ability to play FIDE-rated chess in an online environment. The General Assembly has this issue on the Agenda for the December meeting.

Wishing all of you a safe and healthy 2021.

Mike Hoffpaur

President, US Chess 

THE 2020 EXECUTIVE BOARD



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DAVID HATER, MEMBER AT LARGE

Moral Casuistry and Sham Queen Sacs

On the ethics of arranged draws

By GM ANDY SOLTIS

AT THE GRAND CHESS TOUR'S FINAL blitz tournament of 2019 in Kolkata, India, the game between GM Magnus Carlsen and GM Vidit Gujrathi began as follows:

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. d4 exd4 5. Ng5

Here the world champion offered a draw, which was accepted. It was the shortest game of Carlsen's career. He said he was suffering from a stomachache, a chronic ailment of a globe-trotting grandmaster.

Spectators may feel cheated by "grandmaster draws" like this. But there are very different kinds of draws, some honest and some not. Here's a "not."

FRENCH DEFENSE, WINAWER VARIATION (C16)

David Bronstein
Isaac Boleslavsky
Kiev, 1944

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e5 Ne7 5. Qg4 c5 6. dxc5 Nbc6 7. Nf3? d4! 8. Bb5 Qa5! 9. Bxc6+ Nxc6?? 10. 0-0??

These were two of the world's best players. Why did they both overlook 10. Qxg7?

That wins after 10. ... Bxc3+ 11. Kf1, or 11. Kd1, or even 11. bxc3 Qxc3+ 12. Kd1. Also, 10. ... Rf8 11. Bh6 Bxc5 12. 0-0-0! gives White a major advantage; if 12. ... dxc3 13. Rd6! or 12... Bd7 13. Nxd4! and it looks very good for White.

10. ... dxc3 11. Qxg7 Rf8 12. a3! cxb2 13. axb4!

Now 13. ... bxa1=Q 14. bxa5 Qxa5 15. Bh6 favors White big time.

13. ... Qxa1! 14. Bh6 Qxf1+ 15. Kxf1 b1=Q+ 16. Ne1 Ne7?? 17. Qxf8+ Kd7 18. Bg5 Nf5

Here 19. g4! would trap the knight. For example, 19. ... b6 20. Qxf7+ Kc6 21. gxf5 Ba6+ 22. Kg2 Qxe1 23. Qxe6+ Kb5? 24. Qd7+ Kxb4 25. Bd2+.

19. c6+?? Kxc6 20. Qe8+



20. ... Bd7! 21. Qxa8 Qxb4 22. Qxa7 Kc7, Draw.

This looks like a remarkably hard-fought game — unless you know that the two players were very good friends. Too good.

As historian Gennadi Sosonko put it, when Bronstein and Boleslavsky were paired in a tournament, they often "played" the game "at home or in hotel rooms." That is, they composed the moves in advance. This apparently included bogus draws in the scandalous 1950 Candidates Tournament and its playoff.

"Grandmaster draw" is a loaded term that usually means a quick, bloodless battle. But there are ethical differences. Carlsen's spontaneous draw offer in Kolkota was honest. No one watching the game could believe it was a real fight. Bronstein-Boleslavsky was dishonestly dressed up to make it look like a real game.

And there's something in between: Two players agree to a draw in advance. They play a dozen or so "book" moves. And then they shake hands. But even here there are ethical nuances.

For example, two grandmasters may agree to draw their game before a tournament begins. This used to happen so often that David Bronstein proposed that the players fill in a "½" in the scoretable before the first round. In that way, the other players have the same inside information. No one is being deceived.

There is another kind of grandmaster draw: the composed game that is not intended to deceive.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B87)

GM Nigel Short
GM Garry Kasparov
Novgorod, 06.23.1997

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Bc4 e6 7. O-O Be7 8. Bb3 O-O 9. f4 b5 10. e5 dxe5 11. fxe5 Nfd7 12. Be3 Nxe5 13. Qh5 Nbc6 14. Nxc6 Nxc6 15. Rf3 b4 16. Rh3 h6 17. Rd1 Qa5 18. Nd5 exd5 19. Rg3 d4

This repeats, move for move, a game from an international tournament (Azmaiparashvili-Rashkovsky, Strumica 1995) that went 20. Rxc7+ Kxc7 21. Bxh6+ Kh7.

Instead of taking perpetual check, White chose 22. Bd5??. And, instead of the refutation, 22. ... Qxd5! 23. Qxd5 Kxh6 24. Qxc6+ Be6, Black allowed himself to be mated, 22. ... Be6?? 23. Bf4+ Kg8 24. Rd3 Qxd5 25. Rg3+.

Nigel Short suspected that that game was composed in advance. Since he was ailing when he played Garry Kasparov in this game, they composed their own finish in order to ridicule the fraudulent 1995 game:

20. Bd5! Bg5 21. Bxg5 Qxd5 22. Bf6! Qxh5 23. Rxc7+ Kh8 24. Rg6+ Kh7 25. Rg7+, Draw.

QUIZ FOR JANUARY

For nearly a century there has been a tradition of regularly held international team tournaments, called the Olympiad. That was interrupted by World War II and its aftermath. But the Olympiads resumed in 1950 with a 16-team tournament in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia. The United States, winner of four previous Olympiads, narrowly missed the bronze medals. The stars of the U.S. team were Larry Evans, who scored 9-1, as second reserve, GM Samuel Reshevsky, who had the third best score on first board, and George Kramer, who tied for third best score as first reserve. In this month's quiz you are asked to find the fastest winning line of play in six positions played by Americans at Dubrovnik 1950. Solutions on Page 59.

PROBLEM I.

IM Vincent Castaldi
GM Samuel Reshevsky



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM II.

GM Samuel Reshevsky
Fotis Mastichiadis



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM III.

John Boulachanis
Larry Evans



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM IV.

George Shainswit
IM Petar Trifunović



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM V.

George Kramer
Giuseppe Primavera



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM VI.

Larry Evans
Hartvig Nielsen



WHITE TO MOVE

The ethical issue gets muddier: These same 25 moves were later played in a game in an Asian women's championship. Was that honest?

I'd suggest this standard: If the moves themselves tell fans that a game is bogus, then it is on firmer moral ground. The sillier the moves, the more honest they are. Take these three examples:

1. c3 e5 2. d3 d5 3. Qc2 Nc6 4. Nf3 f5 5. Qa4 Bd6 6. e4 Nf6 7. Bg5 fxe4 8. dxe4 dxe4 9. Nfd2 Bf5 10. Bb5 O-O 11. O-O Nd4 12. cxd4 exd4 13. Qb3+, Draw.

In the same tournament this happened:

1. f4 c6 2. d4 Qa5+ 3. Nc3 d6 4. e4 Nf6 5. Bd3 e5 6. Nf3 Bg4 7. fxe5 dxe5 8. dxe5 Nfd7 9. Bf4 Bb4 10. O-O O-O 11. Nd5 cxd5 12. exd5 Be7, Draw.

And also this:

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. f4 Qa5 5. Bd3 e5 6. Nf3 Bg4 7. dxe5 dxe5 8. fxe5 Nfd7 9. Bf4 Bb4 10. O-O O-O 11. Nd5 cxd5 12. exd5 f5, Draw.

These were the mutual games of three friends in the 1988 U.S. Championship. They (GMs Joel Benjamin, John Fedorowicz, and Michael Wilder) didn't want to play real games with one another — and they made sure that anyone who looked at the moves knew it.

Isn't this illegal? Well, there is Article 11.1 of FIDE's laws of chess: "The players shall take no action that will bring the game of chess into disrepute." This rule is very rarely invoked. But it happened three times in one game, and I saw it happen.

There's a back story. This was played in an international team tournament for players under age 26. Robert Huebner of West Germany was exhausted after playing a long adjourned game. When he sat down to play Ken Rogoff, the first board of the U.S. team, he played 1. e4 and offered a draw. Rogoff accepted.

This isn't as bizarre as you think. Databases show more than 50 one-move draws, the vast majority played in the last 20 years.

But in this tournament the arbiters demanded a longer game. So the second game began 1. Nf3 Nf6 2. Ng1. Rogoff got the hint and the game ended with 2. ... Ng8 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. Ng1 Ng8, draw.

That didn't fly either. So the third game began with:

ENGLISH OPENING (A15)

Robert Huebner

Ken Rogoff

World Student Olympiad, Graz, 07.28.1972

1. c4 Nf6 2. Nf3 g6 3. Ng1?! Bg7 4. Qa4 O-O 5. Qxd7 Qxd7 6. g4 Qxd2+!



Since Rogoff had already agreed to a draw — twice — it would be wrong to take advantage of the situation and win. Therefore the ethical way was to finish the game and let everyone know it wasn't a real game.

7. Kxd2 Nxc4 8. b4 a5 9. a4 Bxa1 10. Bb2 Nc6 11. Bh8 Bg7 12. h4 axb4, Draw.

But the arbiters wouldn't accept this either. They ordered a fourth game and started Huebner's clock. He did not return and was forfeited.

While we waited for Huebner to appear, Rogoff told me that if he showed up at the last moment, Ken would be so upset that he would have left the tournament hall. He would wait until an equal amount of time was gone from his own clock.

Then his nerves would be calmed and they could play on equal terms. After all, it was the only ethical thing to do. ♠

IN THE NEWS

The latest news from the world of chess by JOHN HARTMANN



SO WINS SKILLING OPEN

Fresh off his commanding victory at the 2020 U.S. Championship, GM Wesley So spoiled GM Magnus Carlsen's 30th birthday by defeating him in a playoff at the Skilling Open on November 30.

The Skilling Open — not a true Open, but a field of 16 grandmasters — was the first stop on the new \$1.5 million “Champions Chess Tour” sponsored by the Play Magnus Group. The field was cut to eight after a two-day rapid round-robin, with So in shared third place behind co-leaders Carlsen and GM Hikaru Nakamura heading into the knockout rounds.

Nakamura fell to So in the semi-finals, setting up a two-day final round encounter between So and the current world champion. The players traded wins on day one, leaving the match tied at 2-2, and after two more wins and two draws, it was down to a blitz playoff to wrap up the second day. So took the first blitz game and drew the second to claim the \$30,000 first prize.

CARO-KANN DEFENSE (B12)

GM Wesley So (2770)

GM Magnus Carlsen (2862)

Skilling Open Finals playoff, 11.30.2020

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 Bf5 4. Nf3 e6 5. Be2 h6 6. O-O Ne7 7. a4 a5 8. Nbd2 Nd7 9. Nb3

Bh7 10. Bd2 Qb6 11. h3 Ng6 12. Qe1 Bb4 13. Bxb4 Qxb4 14. Qxb4 axb4 15. Bd3 c5 16. Nxc5 Nxc5 17. dxc5 Ra5 18. Bb5+ Ke7 19. Rfe1 Rc8 20. c3 bxc3 21. b4 Raa8 22. Rac1 Nf4 23. Rxc3 Be4 24. a5 f6 25. h4 g5 26. g3 Ng6 27. exf6+ Kxf6 28. hxg5+ hxg5



29. Nh2

Giving up the Exchange with 29. Rxe4! dxe4 30. Nd2 Ke5 31. Re3 is nearly winning for White.

29. ... Ne5 30. Rce3 Rh8 31. f3?! Rxh2 32. Kxh2 Nxf3+ 33. Rxf3+ Bxf3 34. c6 d4?

Black holds the line with 34. ... bxc6 35. Bxc6 Rh8+ 36. Kg1 g4.

35. Rf1! Rh8+

35. ... g4 loses to 36. Rxf3+! gxf3 37. cxb7 Rb8 38. a6

36. Kg1 Rh1+ 37. Kf2 Rxf1+ 38. Bxf1!

White gives up most of his advantage with 38. Kxf1 bxc6 39. Bc4 Ke5 with the idea 40. a6 Kd6 41. a7 c5.

38. ... Bxc6 39. b5 Bd7 40. a6 bxa6 41. bxa6 d3 42. Bxd3 Ke5 43. a7 Bc6 44. Bf1, Black resigned.

For more on So's big win, check out the February 2021 issue of *Chess Life*.

OLYMPIAD FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

FIDE hosted an Online Olympiad for People with Disabilities from November 20-December 3, 2020. Sixty-one teams from 45 countries took part, with Poland taking the gold medal over teams from Russia and the Ukraine.

Team USA finished in 10th place, a stellar performance for a team ranked 39th going into play. Team Captain Lior Lapid lauded the work of all the players — Michael Aigner, Griffin McConnell, Pranav Shankar, Jessica Lauser, Oskar Zoffer, and Nguyen Tran — saying “they played brilliantly, far exceeding all expectations of our team going into this Olympiad.”

First board Michael Aigner's final round victory over Brazil's Adriano Albiani Barata was particularly memorable. It was nominated for the tournament brilliancy prize.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, CLOSED VARIATION (B25)

Michael Aigner (2006)
Adriano Albiani Barata (2144)
Online Olympiad For People with Disabilities (7), 11.27.2020
Notes by Michael Aigner

**1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3. g3 g6 4. Bg2 Bg7
5. d3 e5 6. Nh3 Nge7 7. f4 d6 8. O-O O-O
9. f5!? f6**

White gets a dangerous attack after 9. ... gxf5 10. exf5 Bxf5 11. Rxf5! Nxf5 12. Be4 Ncd4 13. Qh5.

10. g4 g5 11. Nf2

The immediate 11. Nxf2 is playable, but without a clear path to victory: 11. ... fxf5 12. Bxf5 Bf6 13. Bxf6 Rxf6 14. g5 Rf7 15. h4.

11. ... Rb8 12. Be3 b5 13. Qd2 h6 14. h4! a6

Queenside counterplay comes too slowly: 14. ... b4 15. Ne2 a5 16. Ng3 a4 17. Nh3 a3 18. b3 Nd4 19. Nh5.

15. Nh3 b4 16. Ne2 Nd4 17. Ng3 Nec6

Opening the center with 17. ... d5 fails: 18. c3 bxc3 19. bxc3 Nb5 20. Bxc5.

18. Rf2!

Patience! White prepares the full army before setting off fireworks.

18. ... Bd7 19. Raf1 Be8 20. hxg5 hxg5 21. c3 bxc3 22. bxc3 Nb5 23. a4 Nc7 24. Bf3

After 24. Nxf2 fxf5 25. Bxf5 the attack is already crushing.

24. ... Bf7 25. Bd1 Na5 26. Rh2

White optimizes all the pieces.

26. ... Qe7



27. Nxf2!

Finally! Now the attack plays itself.

27. ... fxf5 28. Bxf5 Bf6 29. Bh6 Rfd8 30. g5 Bh8 31. g6 Be8

If 31. ... Bxf6 32. fxf6 Ne6 33. Nf5 Qf6 34. g7.

32. Nh5, Black lost on time.

We expect to have a full report on the Olympiad in a future issue of *Chess Life*.

RUSSIAN TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS

While over-the-board play remains the exception and not the norm here in the States, some top Russian events have returned (with proper precautions) to in-person play. The Russian Higher League was held from October 7-18, functioning as a qualifier to the 2020 Russian Championships (December 4-17) which are under way as this goes to press.

Just finished are the Russian Team Championships (November 18-29), which featured many of Russia's top players and improving juniors. The Open Team Championship was won by Medny Vsadnik (St. Petersburg), while CFM (Chess Federation of Moscow) took top honors in the Women's Division.

Games from elite Russian events are always rich, but one in particular stood out — an absolute slugfest between 2015 World Junior Champion Mikhail Antipov and IM Ruslan Musalov. A bit of the magic was drained away once a key move transmission error was discovered; still, Antipov's almost Kupreichik-ian aggression in this game nearly pays off ... and it makes for fascinating analysis regardless.

RUY LOPEZ (C77)

GM Mikhail Antipov (2607)
IM Ruslan Musalov (2348)
Russian Team Championship (6), 11.25.2020
Notes by Hartmann / Moradiabadi

**1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6
5. d3 d6 6. c4 g6 7. Nc3 Bg7 8. Nd5 Nd7
9. Bg5 f6 10. Be3 Ne7 11. Ng5?!?!**

This has to be considered a mistake, as Antipov sacrifices a piece for what is ultimately at best a perpetual. But what a mistake!

The original series of moves relayed by the organizers was 11. Nxe5 fxe5 12. Bg5, which transposes to the game, but which also leaves one wondering why Black didn't shut the whole thing down with 11. ... dxe5.

Better is 11. d4, which gives White a long-lasting advantage. After the inevitable trade on d4, Black will have difficulty executing the thematic break ... f6-f5 because of tactical problems and a lack of development.

11. ... fxf5 12. Bxf5 Bf8 13. f4

White can force a draw after 13. Nf6+ Kf7 14. Bxd7 Bxd7 15. Qf3 with various knight moves. But now the "burden of proof" falls on Antipov, who outrates his opponent by 250 points. He has to play increasingly risky (and fascinating) moves to keep the attack going.

13. ... c6!

This may be what Antipov missed. There's

no forced draw after Nd5-f6 now as the pin is broken.

If 13. ... exf4 White plays 14. O-O c6 15. Qf3 with great compensation, perhaps similar to the Muzio, while 13. ... h6 14. Bf6 Rg8 15. fxe5 dxe5 16. Qf3 gives White the initiative.

14. fxe5

After 14. O-O Black takes control with 14. ... cxd5 15. fxe5 b5!

14. ... cxd5 15. O-O

Two pieces for two pawns. It is certainly slightly unpleasant for Black, but this can't be enough compensation for the material.

15. ... b5!

Another solid move, unpinning. Black is up a lot of material and White has to find a way to ratchet up the pressure.

16. d4!?

Not 16. cxb5 axb5 17. Bxb5? Qb6+.

16. ... Qb6 17. exd5 bxa4 18. exd6



Current body count: three pieces for four pawns.

18. ... Bg7

Simple and smart, developing another piece and threatening a queen trade on d4.

After 18. ... Qxd4 19. Qf3 (with the plan of Qf3-f7+, c4-c5, Ra1-e1, etc.) 19. ... Bb7 20. Qf7+ Kd8 21. Rae1 White has pressure, but there's no knockout blow.

19. c5 Qxb2 20. Kh1 Qxd4

All White has left are tricks. Black doesn't fall for any of them.

**21. Qe1 Qe5 22. Qd2 Qxd5 23. Qe3 Qe5
24. Qf3 Qd5 25. Qe3 Qe5 26. Qf3 Qxg5**

Another way forward is 26. ... Rf8 27. Qxa8 Rxf1+ 28. Rxf1 Qxg5 29. c6 Nb6!

27. Qf7+ Kd8 28. Rae1 Be5

Precise till the end, blocking the rook's access to e7.

**29. dxe7+ Qxe7 30. Qd5 Ra7 31. c6 Qc5
32. Qe4 Nf6 33. Qxa4 Re7 34. Rb1 Ke8
35. Rfc1 Qd4, White resigned. ♠**

KEITH HARING

RADIANT GAMBIT



On View November 19, 2020 – May 16, 2021



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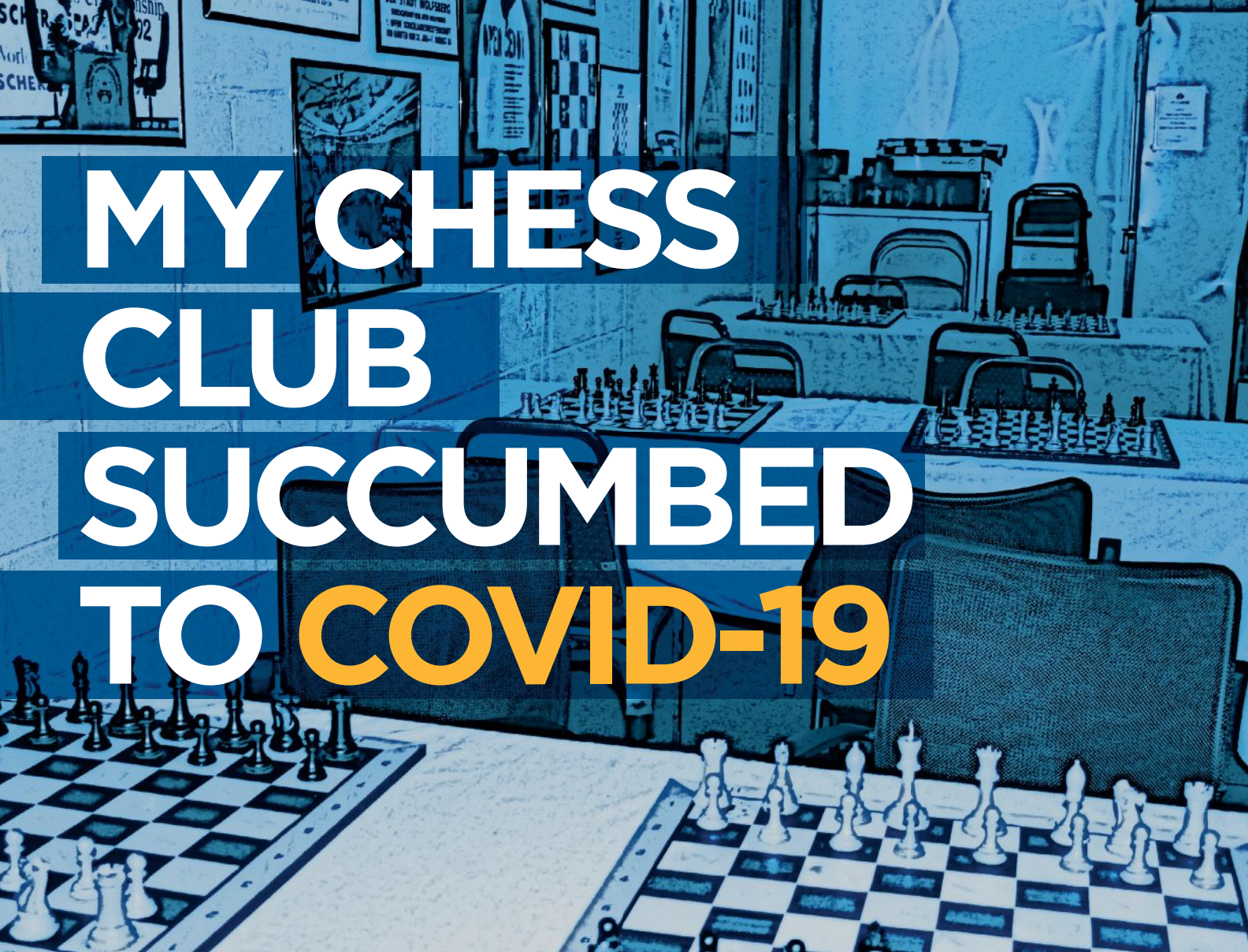
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MY CHESS CLUB SUCCUMBED TO COVID-19

Today, the Chess Castle exists only as a memory and a website. Atop the website ... is a headline offering “3 Different Perspectives on Castle Closing ...”

Text and photos by **DENNIS J. MC GRATH**

On the last day it was open, the Chess Castle of Minnesota occupied a bright, high-ceilinged, spacious room. Bookcases held hundreds of chess books. Boards and pieces were arrayed on rows of cafeteria-style folding tables. Posters from *Pawn Sacrifice* and the Fischer-Spassky 1992 match, among others, adorned the walls.

Today, the books are boxed up, the chess sets are stowed away, and the table legs are folded. The club let its lease expire at the end of September, and now all the contents of the premier chess club in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area are stuffed into a 5' X 10' locker in a commercial storage facility.

Today, the Chess Castle exists only as a memory and a website. Atop the website — *chesscastle.com* — emblazoned in red letters, is a headline offering “3 Different Perspectives on Castle Closing ...”

The separate statements, written by three of the club's principals, chronicles the sad tale of the Castle's demise. It describes the wrenching, blunt, and sometimes bitter debate about whether to stagger or during a pandemic that has dealt a body blow to over-the-board chess, or whether to shut down for the indefinite future.

Battered first by a government-ordered shutdown, and then by the reluctance of players to return once restrictions were lifted, the club's

finances nosedived. Rent bills didn't diminish, but revenue from tournament entry fees did. By the summer, the club had \$44 to its name — and thousands of dollars in unpaid bills.

When those advocating a shutdown ultimately prevailed, what once was a thriving chess club in a metropolitan area of three million people had perished. My chess club succumbed to COVID-19.

That the Castle's belongings are in a storage locker rather than a dumpster offers some hope that it will recover and reopen somewhere, some day. But as of this writing there are no plans to do so. And even the most optimistic view — sadly, but realistically — envisions a



THE AUTHOR, DENNIS MC GRATH, AT THE CASTLE.

club with limited ambitions: in a smaller space with a reduced schedule.

“I don’t think we’ll be able to reopen in full capacity until people are comfortable playing chess again,” said Dane Zagar, who became club president by default amid the turmoil over charting the Castle’s future.

While the pandemic has engineered an explosion in online chess, the reverse is true for clubs. Across the country, club websites tell of closures “until further notice,” and at least one club, made homeless by a renovation, auctioned off belongings.

The fate of the Chess Castle of Minnesota serves as a case study of the crisis facing chess clubs.

CHESS CASTLE’S HISTORY

The Castle was started in the 1970s by smokers. Minnesota was at the forefront of the no-smoking movement, and when lighting up was banned at tournaments, two players founded the Castle as a club where smoking while playing was permitted.

It opened as the St. Paul Castle Chess Club, renting space above Checker Board Pizza for 22 years, before being evicted. Then it found space in a nearby charter school. In 2001

it migrated across the Mississippi River to Minneapolis and was now called the Chess Castle of Minnesota. That’s when I became a regular, having taken up tournament chess in my 40s.

The club wasn’t much to speak of. You climbed a grim flight of stairs and stepped into a suite of small rooms that had seen better days.

“Most of the time we were in beat-up spaces ... because that was the only way we could afford it,” said Dan Voje, a fixture in Minnesota chess for decades.

With the club’s next move, things got worse. In January 2007 the club moved into the windowless basement of the Twin City Bridge Center. We unfurled vinyl boards onto wobbly card tables. Before sitting down we tested the chairs because some seemed to be discards from the card room above. A woman taught group bridge lessons in the adjoining room many nights, and the dark-paneled wall did nothing to muffle her piercing voice.

Playing conditions were so dismal that it was not uncommon for just four of us to turn up for a Thursday Knighter.

Then Roger Hale showed up. Most successful chess clubs rest on the shoulders of one or two

people. In our case, it was Roger Hale and Dan Voje, who we’ll get to a little later in this story.

Hale was the retired chairman and CEO of one of Minnesota’s largest companies — the Tennant Company — a global manufacturer of industrial cleaning equipment and supplies. He played his first rated game at age 72.

Appalled by the playing conditions, Hale set out to improve them. “The club was on life support when I got involved,” he said, accurately.

Taking advantage of depressed rents at the tail end of the 2008-09 recession, Hale secured Suite 134 in the Waterbury, a former industrial building in northeast Minneapolis that had reinvented itself as an eclectic hub of tech start-ups, a school teaching aerial circus acts, artist studios, a church, and more.

He spent thousands of his own money — along with contributions from others — to refurbish the space and build out an enticing club, which opened in October 2009. Chess posters, some in foreign languages, covered one wall, wall charts of recent tournaments covered another, and bookshelves filled the space in between. Solid Reykjavik plastic pieces stood on the tables ready for action. Over time, wooden and DGT smart boards were added.



GM WESLEY SO AND AURA SALAZAR (LEFT) PLAY BUGHOUSE AGAINST GM ANDREW TANG (HITTING THE CLOCK) AND SAMRUG NARAYANAN.

At 1,600 square feet, it could handle up to 64 players.

A club manager was hired — or rather, was finally paid for his work. Dan Voje is an iron man of Minnesota chess. A member of the Minnesota Chess Hall of Fame, he's played more than 7,000 rated games and has run nearly 2,000 tournaments as a chief tournament director since 1991. Voje had assumed the role of club manager a dozen or so years earlier, but wasn't paid for his work until the move to Waterbury, when he began receiving a modest monthly stipend.

The Castle was open three nights a week and every weekend, providing far more opportunities to play. Mondays were Action Quads. The Thursday Knighter was a month-long tournament, with one classical time control game each Thursday. Weekends offered either single-day events, or two- or three-day (starting Friday night) tournaments. Tuesday nights were for casual, unrated play.

A \$120-a-year membership felt like a bargain, and about 35 to 40 players — including GM Wesley So — paid those dues, which brought reduced entry fees for Castle events. Dozens and dozens of others paid as they played.

As word of the new quarters spread,

attendance grew, especially at the Thursday Knighter. In the last 12 months in the bridge center basement, the Thursday Knighter averaged 11 players per month. In the 12 months at Waterbury before the pandemic, it averaged 44 players.

I played in weekends from time to time, but mostly I was a regular in the Thursday Knighter. I liked the slow time controls, the stiff competition and, just as important, I enjoyed the camaraderie.

The Thursday crowd was a diverse group, unlike any of my other social circles. Over the years there was a merchant seaman, an MIT-trained computer engineer, a taxi driver, a Turkish graduate student, a Russian who had coached a young Boris Gelfand, a special needs young man, small business owners, a bus driver. The group was largely male, but a few women and young girls played, too.

Sure, there was a braggart who claimed ability far above what his rating proved, and another whose behavior got under so many players' skin that special rules were instituted solely for him.

But in a testament to the bonds that developed, many of us arrived an hour before pairings were posted, just to chat — sometimes about chess, but mostly about life — work, family, politics, the Vikings and Twins.

At the Minnesota Blizzard holiday parties just before Christmas, GM Wesley So, a Twin Cities resident, would attend with his family and he'd play bullet games against promising youngsters.

As 2020 dawned, the Castle was a vital center of chess in Minnesota. Between annual dues, tournament entry fees, and contributions from the Minnesota State Chess Association, "we were just keeping our nose above water [financially]," Hale said.

Yearly expenses ran about \$30,000 a year, with rent being the biggest item at \$20,000. Income fluctuated, but the club's checking account typically had a balance between \$6,000 and \$10,000 during the last three years, Treasurer Mike Svenson said.

But a financial challenge loomed. The club's five-year lease would expire in September and a significant rent increase was expected — one certain to strain, if not break, the bank account. Hale started scouting new locations.

"Then everything went to hell in a handbasket," he said.

The coronavirus hit Minnesota. In March, the governor issued a statewide stay-at-home order, which lasted until mid-May. The Castle's shutdown lasted longer out of concern for players' safety. It didn't reopen until July — with temperature checks, face masks and

liability waivers required.

The first tournament, a July 4th Blitz, drew six players. The Monday Action Quads that month had fields of four or six players instead of the normal 10 to 16. The Thursday Knighter was no better. In August, only 10 played.

Overall, participation was about a third of pre-pandemic numbers. Entry fees plummeted below \$1,000 a month, far below what was needed to break even. By June, the checking account was down to \$44, said Zagar. The club missed its July and August rent payments.

Meanwhile, Hale appeared to be closing in on a deal with the landlord that would forgive the unpaid rent and extend the lease for one year at a somewhat reduced rate. On August 25 he emailed that news to the club's board.

That's when things hit a flash point.



ONE WALL OF THE CLUB WAS DEVOTED TO THE MINNESOTA CHESS HALL OF FAME.

STENBERG TRUST FUND

Debate over the club's future played out in email threads among board members in which opinions became increasingly pointed. Much of the discussion centered around the wishes of a University of Minnesota math professor, Warren Stenberg, who had died 24 years earlier and had left a trust fund with the broad instruction "to promote the game of chess."

Hale was a co-trustee of the trust, which had been drawn upon sparingly and had grown to more than \$20,000. Hale wanted to use about \$10,000 to help keep the Castle afloat, and he also generously offered to personally cover any club deficit through September 30, 2021. That would ensure the club's survival with hopes that the pandemic would be behind us by then.

But he met with stiff resistance from two board members, including Zagar. With no end to the pandemic in sight, with the club losing money every month, and with the prospect of a big rent increase still looming down the road, Zagar wanted to stop the bleeding. To keep paying rent at Waterbury was like "lighting money on fire," he wrote.

"It would be better for the Castle to close until a reasonable rent is found than to blow all that money when we only need space for a max of 24 players," he added. Zagar is a Ph.D. candidate in math, "so I can punch the numbers," he said.

In particular, he objected to using the Stenberg trust money. A back-and-forth ensued over what the fund was meant to be used for and who should control it. Zagar, who is also president of the Minnesota State Chess Association (MSCA), insisted that the fund was intended for the MSCA and that that organization should decide how to use it.

Hale replied that the will establishing the trust

makes no reference whatsoever to the MSCA.

Two days after the email debate began, Zagar asserted himself. He asked to be involved in the lease negotiations and asked Hale to step down early as president.

Hale, approaching his 86th birthday, had already announced that he planned to leave as club president at the end of September. Though he had hoped that the Castle could stay on at Waterbury, he acknowledged that the argument for shutting down and reopening elsewhere post-pandemic had merit. Likewise, he felt it made sense for him to step down early and let the club's future leaders manage the transition. That's what he did, writing a graceful exit note with good wishes.

But more resignations followed. Treasure Svenson resigned, saying he was offended by the way Hale was treated.

Voje also quit, seconding Svenson's reasons. About a week before the club closed, he posted a statement on its website stating that the new leaders did a "pathetic, shabby job of informing our club members of impending changes."

He didn't fault them for the decision to close, but rather for the way they handled things. "People were coming up to me and asking, 'What's going on?'" he said.

When his critical statement was pulled from the website, denying him — as he saw it — the chance to say goodbye after two-plus decades of running the club, he angrily fired off a few ill-advised, red-hot emails, which he said he regrets.

On Sunday, September 27, the Castle held a "Final Waterbury Exerciser Quad." Eight players showed up. Afterward, the club's belongings were moved into storage.

"This was the saddest moment of my chess career, having to do this," said Zagar.

"Unfortunately, it was the only reasonable thing to do."

In the end, the pandemic cost us our chess club. And the turmoil that accompanied the closing resulted in deep wounds and fractured relationships among a group of people who have selflessly devoted themselves to Minnesota chess.

"At the end of the day, all of us are in agreement that we're trying our best to help the Minnesota chess community. We just don't all agree on what's best," Zagar said.

The bottom line is that it's all just so sad.

Now the question remains, is this just an unclear middle game, or is it a losing endgame for the Castle?

Voje worries that chess, a most difficult and demanding game, will be an easy habit for some to break while the club is shuttered. On the other hand, he said, the burst of online play drove at least two people to come to the club during the summer and buy US Chess memberships.

At year's end, the MSCA was trying to get a handle on the future by surveying Minnesota players.

Meanwhile, Zagar says the Castle will look — when the pandemic recedes — to sublet a small space perhaps a couple nights a week. He and others dream of eventually buying a building, though Zagar concedes it is only a dream for now. Others talk about filling the void left by the Castle by holding their own evening tournaments in small, hotel meeting rooms.

But until the Castle's tables are set upright again, until the pieces are spilled out onto boards, until the posters hang once again from walls, until I hear the staccato symphony of clocks being punched, I'll pine for my chess club. Especially on Thursday Knights. ♠



Reflections of a

I have always been fortunate to have had friends and acquaintances from a wide range of life paths, many of whom are leaders and luminaries in their fields. Once such acquaintance is WGM Jen Shahade, Women's Program Director for US Chess and founder of several important chess-related initiatives. It was through Jen that I met [then] World Chess Hall of Fame Director Susan Barrett, who, after learning of my own passion for chess, tapped me to develop and curate the *Living Like Kings: The Unexpected Collision of Chess and Hip-Hop Culture* exhibition to which her organization would play host.

On October 9, 2014, after delivering my final instructions to the World Chess Hall of Fame staff preparing to work the exhibition, I called Robert Diggs and invited him to the exhibition's opening. Diggs is better known in popular culture as RZA, of the groundbreaking

Staten Island, New York, hip-hop music group, the Wu-Tang Clan.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Wu-Tang Clan, and RZA in particular, have made an outsized contribution to the growth and development of chess in Black and urban

communities across the country. With lyrics and imagery replete with chess references, the Wu-Tang Clan has always been at the forefront of finding synergies between hip-hop, chess, and martial arts, where many chess practitioners once saw none. And it was always RZA leading by example.

For me, as the founder and CEO of the Hip-Hop Chess Federation (HHCF), which dedicates itself to many of the same synergies, I found RZA's passion for chess empowering. Given my own personal relationship with RZA, I knew that for an exhibition as groundbreaking as *Living Like Kings: The Unexpected Collision of Chess and Hip-Hop Culture*, RZA simply needed to be there for the opening night. Thankfully, he obliged, and history was made, with the exhibition breaking the previous opening day attendance record, which was held by an exhibit on GM



A Conversation with **RZA** from the **WU-TANG CLAN**

By **ADISA**
"THE BISHOP"
BANJOKO

KING

Bobby Fischer. When all was said and done, *Living Like Kings: The Unexpected Collision of Chess and Hip-Hop Culture* stood as the second-highest attended exhibition for the World Chess Hall of Fame.

While in St. Louis for the opening, RZA joined me for a number of adjunct activities, none being more important than our visit to the St. Louis County Juvenile Detention Center, where we had been slated to speak with at-risk youth about chess and life strategies. Seeing an opportunity to help, RZA donated \$5,000 to HHCF that day, which helped me provide training to teachers on HHCF's methodologies. Among the attendees was Detention Deputy Juvenile Officer Mike Wasem, a dynamic educator who would go on to teach for and work with HHCF. That act of philanthropy would result in a direct impact on many St. Louis youth

over the years.

Fast forward to last month, when I saw I missed a video call from Mike, who still works with the St. Louis County Juvenile Detention Center. He never calls unless it is pressing, so I immediately called him back. When he picked up I was greeted by his usual bright smile and upbeat demeanor, which was evident despite the fact that, like so many of us these days, he was wearing a mask. He was sitting in one of the nondescript detention center rooms with a young man who looked to be about 14 years of age. We'll call him Akil (not his real name). The boy's eyes were dark brown and full of silent defiance, and his almond-colored face was topped with medium-length dreadlocks that sprouted outwardly in all directions like a sunburst. He seemed nervous, but unafraid.

"Sensei, Adisa," Mike said in his booming voice. "Thank you for calling me back. I am

sitting here with a student of mine. He has a warrior's spirit and he is incredibly smart. He just needs some guidance on how to properly re-channel his mind and his body. Can you please speak with him and give him some insight on chess and jiu-jitsu?"

Whenever I speak with youth, I try to do so from a place of warmth and sincerity, and as I smiled at Akil, I could see some of the tension in his eyes begin to dissipate. As our conversation started, he began by asking how jiu-jitsu had positively impacted me. I responded by talking about self-control.

At some point he confidently shared that he had a knack for math, so I went on to explain how math relates to not only chess, but also to financial acumen, and that an ongoing pursuit of math excellence could translate into financial success later in life.

It was long and winding conversation, in

Grab some tea and listen to the sound of clear jewels in the reflections of a king.



CHESS LIFE: *When you are trying to improve your own chess game, how do you do it? Is it books? Are you watching people playing in the street? Are you playing with GZA [Gary Grice, his cousin and co-founder of the Wu-Tang Clan] online? Are you consulting with grandmasters or international masters? When you try to be measurably better in chess, what are you doing?*

RZA: It's multiple processes. I recall the first time that I realized that I need to improve. At first I was probably the best player in the crew. But the crew started improving. I had to do more play[ing]. But... the GZA himself, he started studying [chess] theory, studying books I wasn't aware of. One day at his crib he was beating me so bad, and his son Kareem, who loves his big cousin Rakeem [RZA]... so he just came over when GZA went to the bathroom, he was like, "Yo, you know my dad is in the books, right?" [laughs hard]. Then I started getting a couple of books and studying theory because theory is good. It's always good to understand what the grandmasters and people before you have already discovered. This is how science grows, how mathematics grows, this how chess grows. Then you get to a certain point... and a book is not enough information. It's good to come across international masters or grandmasters. I was fortunate, I think, through the Hip-Hop Chess Federation to meet [IM] Josh Waitzkin.

Those were fun times, man. Those first few times when we kicked it, those were amazing.

Amazing, brother. What made it special

though, also, [is] that Josh gave me a bit of advice that I took and utilized. From watching me play, he told me [about] a certain opening he thought... would be the opening to define my style, because I had a bloody attacking style, but yet I'm a ninja with it. He felt that this technique would be the one, and so I studied that technique, and then I came across international master [and] six-time [Armed Forces] champion, Emory Tate. Remember Emory?

Yeah, rest in peace to the original G.

Now, I never knew that if you look at Josh Waitzkin's games... they have 10 of his best games [in] his books, or if you ever get [his] app or whatever. In one game where he loses, but it's still there to teach you, it's a game against Emory Tate.

No kidding?

No kidding, yo. I didn't know this, so when Emory came to the tournament that time- **The HHCF Mind Over Matter event [March 2009] in San Francisco?**

Yeah. I played him with the technique that Josh told me to use, but I didn't realize that this guy-

Already knew the script.

At about move 20 he's like, "Well, there's a bunch of bums here, but I finally met somebody who got some theory and technique."

What better compliment can you get than that from Emory Tate? Listen, if you don't play chess and you don't know who Emory Tate is, he passed away, but he died at the chess table.

Right, yeah. Emory, actually we became friends, and so look, I'm a type of person if you beat me I can accept defeat, but if I could

live through defeat... Chess is game where you die on the board, you don't die in reality. That's what it is I think we like about it also in hip-hop. It's a chance to test your sword, to fight for your life, but yet it stays on the 64 squares. If you can improve yourself with the person that defeated you... And so me and Emory became friends, and Emory actually introduced me to the [GM Mikhail] Tal system of chess playing.

which I shared as much as I could — Moorish history and the role Moors played in gifting mathematical knowledge to Europe, strategies for overcoming disadvantages related to race and life circumstances, having pride in one's own ancestral history, and maintaining a perspective on math as a cultural duty, not a burden. He nodded affirmingly throughout our talk.

Now Akil wants to learn jiu-jitsu and play more chess, and he wants to transform his life. None of this progress would have been possible without RZA's donation and the incalculable ripple effect that the Wu-Tang Clan has had on chess and martial arts.

I recently spoke with RZA to hear his reflections on being a king on the chessboard, in music, and in life. What follows is that interview, which I dedicate to Akil and other incarcerated children around the world, for whom I have much hope for a brighter future.

Tal is like Rakim [one of the most unique rappers of all time]. Tal is the Rakim of chess, bro. You'll be like, "Oh, you watch this. You think that's cool?" And he'll just break out, and you're like, "What?"

Exactly, it hits you. What would you say "when the earth get further and further away and planets seem smaller like balls of clay?" [a Rakim lyric from *Follow the Leader*]

Him bringing me up to the Tal world, that helped me as well because he realized I was attacking. I was attacking with the style that Josh gave to the ninja attacking, but Tal [was] ninja aggressive. We spent some time with Emory, and then after you get a certain level... I think nowadays that I don't really get a lot of time to be around a lot of people, a lot of playing. I go online like anybody else. I try to practice to improve myself. I try to practice blitz games, so that my brain can move faster. Because I realize that time sometimes is my biggest enemy.

Yo, yo, you speak in so much science right now. You remember of course the movie Fresh because you were on a soundtrack, right? I'll never forget what's his name's character, the dad. The dad... You got Giancarlo [Esposito], you have- No, Fresh's dad. Fresh's dad.

Fresh's dad was Sam[uel L.] Jackson, right?
Yeah, Sam Jackson. Thank you. Remember when he's in his trailer and he's showing a game to Fresh, and he's like, "Yeah, that's a game with so-and-so," and then he shows all the top masters, he goes, "If you put them on a clock, I'll eat they a up." Yo, that to me is the essence of hip-hop chess, meaning that the pressure is on. That you feel it, and that you're going to make it happen because you have to. I love speed chess because it adds that extra pressure, man. That scene, I just used to watch that like seven times in a row sometimes. You know what I mean?**

Yeah. That was one of my favorite scenes too because it made sense to understand that it's just like a boxer could be a champion in the ring, but he could lose in the streets. Yes, with that 52 hand block! [52 Blocks is a martial arts style.]

So what is your favorite chess book or movie? When you're like, "I'm in the zone." Are you watching Fresh? Are you watching Bobby Fischer Versus the World? You know what I'm saying?

I mean, there's a new one that just came out that-

John Leguizamo?! [Leguizamo stars and directs in Critical Thinking - -ed.]

Yeah. Oh yeah so there's one that's coming out with John Leguizamo, but I think out of... look, *Searching for Bobby Fischer* was one of my favorites.

Of course *Fresh*, and [I] took it right to the speed game. But I like, I think it's called *Pawn Sacrifice*, which was Tobey Maguire playing Bobby Fischer.

I never saw that one. I was so hyped to go see it. And then some[thing] happened. I didn't.

No, it's a good watch. And so, yeah, I mean, I love when movies give us a chance to look into the minds... and even the one that really got my whole family. *The Queen of Katwe* — yeah my whole family watched that and enjoyed it. So I was happy because my son, he's just started playing, he started playing at 13. He started a little late, but that movie helped inspire him as well.

Now let me ask you this, one of the things that people talk about in terms of hip-hop as a learning tool, right? Is this idea inside sociology that, oftentimes specifically when it comes to Black people, they tend to say that, Africa was mainly an oral history kind of place, right? They didn't have necessarily the written word, which is not even accurate.

Not true.

We're not going to have that part of the conversation because we have knowledge



ADISA BANJOKO (L) AND RZA (R) AT THE OCTOBER 9, 2014 OPENING OF *LIVING LIKE KINGS: THE COLLISION OF CHESS AND HIP HOP CULTURE* AT THE WORLD CHESS HALL OF FAME

"It's always good to understand what the grandmasters and people before you have already discovered... this how chess grows. Then when you get to a certain point... and a book is not enough information."

of self. Anybody unclear will have to look that part up.

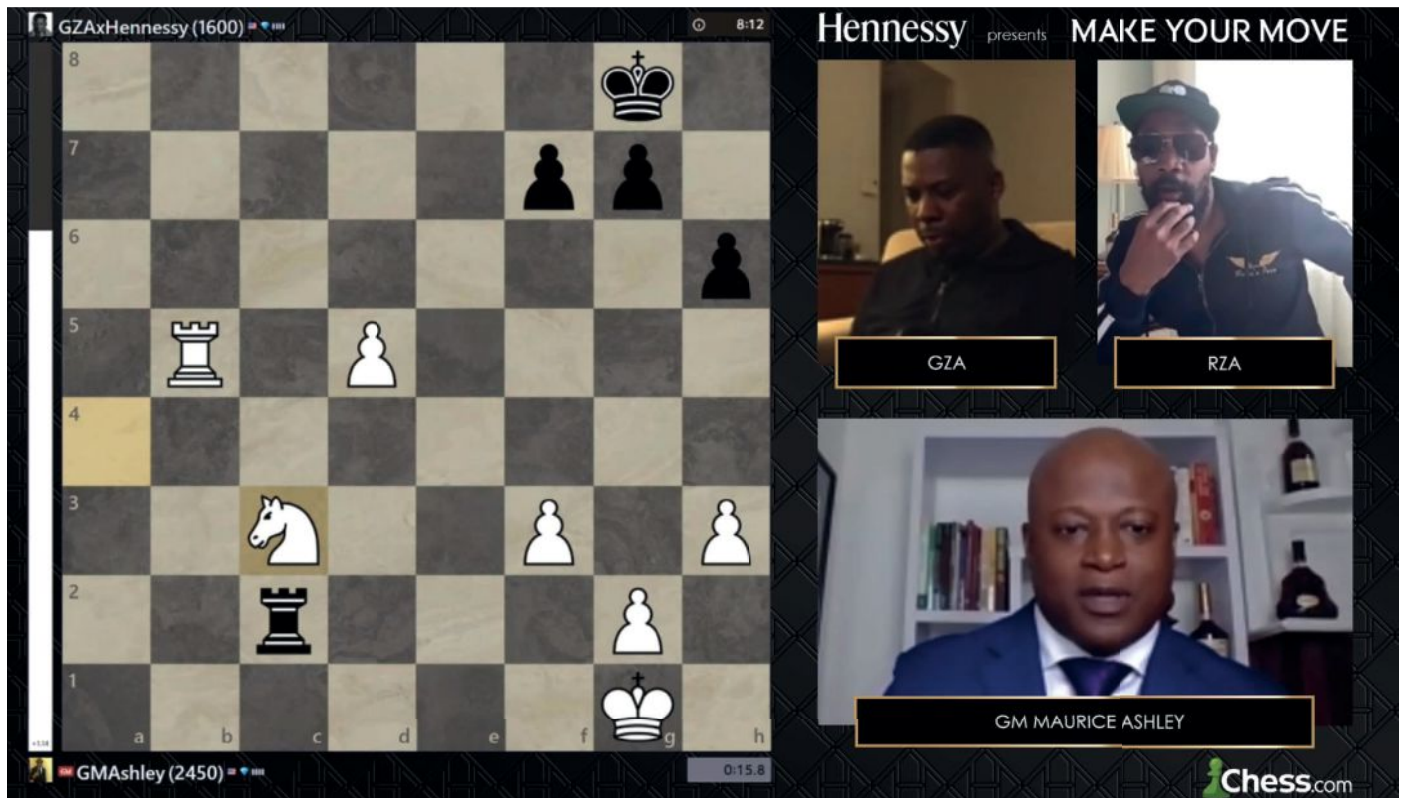
What I did want to ask you, though, is that sociologists say the sign of a literate society is a strong oral history, right? So now when you look at the evolution of hip-hop. When people said in '73, '83, it's not even music, dah, dah, dah. And now, Jay-Z got a book, Stic.man [of the rap group Dead Prez] got a book. You know what I'm saying? You see this whole movement of hip-hop.

Gucci Mane, Eminem, 50 Cent, RZA, U-God, J-Prince... [they all have books].

J-Prince got a book, you know what I'm saying? I love it. Right. Even my man Mista Fab and Mac Mall got books. What made you write *The Wu-Tang Manual*? Do you remember when you were like, "It's book time?" I'm curious to know.

Okay. Check it out. I wasn't going to write *The Wu-Tang Manual*. I felt that I was at an age and experience that I needed to write my experiences and write a book of wisdom. I thought that, you know what, I lived, I seen. I'm a Black man in America. I've been through it. I was a young millionaire. You know what I mean? I went through the criminal system and I've been through a lot.

Yeah. So I felt it was time for me to write a book of wisdom. And I sat down with a book agent. And the agent told me that's not the way to enter. You said you have to enter the book world coming from hip-hop. It's best to enter with something that gives you less risk of being unsuccessful. And I took his advice. He said, maybe if we do a book, that's more based on your music and more based on Wu-Tang like *The Wu-Tang Manual*. And I



GZA AND RZA FACED OFF AS PART OF THE MAKE YOUR MOVE CHALLENGE SPONSORED BY HENNESSY. AFTER WINNING THEIR GAME, SEEN BELOW, GZA CHALLENGED GM MAURICE ASHLEY AS SEEN IN THIS SCREENSHOT. RZA STAYED ON TO KIBITZ.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT (D30)

GZA vs. RZA

Make Your Move presented by Hennessy, 10.10.2020

Annotations by GM Maurice Ashley

This game was played at the time control of G/10+2 between two longtime rivals who rarely use a clock. The winner would take on this annotator, so there was added pressure. Some of the mistakes in the game can definitely be tied to the stress of the moment.

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. Bg5 Be7 5. a3 c6 6. Nbd2 Na6 7. e3 Nc7 8. Be2 h6 9. Bxf6 Bxf6 10. Nb3 Be7 11. O-O O-O 12. Ne5 Bf6 13. Ng4 b6 14. c5 Bb7 15. Qc2 Be7 16. Bd3 f5 17. Ne5 Qe8 18. Be2

This last move is intended to stop the queen from taking up an aggressive post at h5 as GZA has felt the attacking fury of his main rival countless times.

18. ... Bf6 19. Nf3

More conservative play by White, looking for the opportunity to strike later on.

19. ... Qg6 20. Rac1 Nb5 21. Bxb5! cxb5 22. Qd3

Capturing on b6 and penetrating on c7 with the queen (22. cxb6, 23. Qc7) would have led to immediate gains.

22. ... bxc5 23. Nxc5 Bc8 24. b4

White has a picture-perfect setup, but

consistently avoids grabbing the material presented to him. There was no issue whatsoever with 24. Qxb5.

24. ... a6 25. Nd2 e5



26. Ndb3?

More positional play when concrete action was called for. The straightforward 26. dxe5 Bxe5 27. Qxd5+ would have been crunchy.

26. ... e4!

Now Black is back in the game.

27. Qe2 h5 28. Rfe1 Be7 29. f3 exf3!?

More incisive would have been 29. ... f4! 30. fxe4 f3!

30. Qxf3 Qg4?? 31. Qxd5+ Kh7 32. h3

With the clock ticking down White misses grabbing the free rook in the corner. We commentators (GM Robert Hess and

NM James Canty were alongside me) were bouncing out our chairs!

32. ... Qg6 33. Qf3?

Missing the rook again! After the game, GZA was upset at himself.

33. ... Ra7 34. Nd3 Bb7 35. Qf2 Bh4! 36. Qf1 Bxg2?

With the clock ticking fast, Black makes an ill-considered move. Taking the Exchange was perfectly fine though White has more than enough compensation as the knights will park themselves on c5 and e5.

37. Qxg2 Qxg2+ 38. Kxg2 Bxe1 39. Rxe1 Re7 40. Nf4 Ree8 41. d5 Rf6 42. Nxe5 Rg6+ 43. Kf3 Re4 44. Nf4 Rg5 45. Nd4 Re8 46. d6 Rc8 47. d7 Rd8 48. Nde6 Rxd7 49. Nxe5+ Kh6 50. Nge6 Rd6 51. Rg1 Kh7 52. Rxe7+ Kh6 53. Rg5 Rd2 54. Rxf5 Rb2 55. Nc5 Rc2 56. Ke4 Rc4+ 57. Ke5 Rxf4 58. Rxf4 Kg5 59. h4+ Kg6 60. Kd4 Kg7 61. e4 Kg6 62. e5 a5 63. bxa5 b4 64. axb4 Kg7 65. Rf6 Kg8 66. a6 Kg7 67. Ne6+ Kg8 68. a7, Black lost on time.

Black flags at the exact moment when a stalemate chance existed with 68. ... Kh7 69. a8=Q?? It was great to see two legends of the rap game play chess for a charitable cause, and we hope to see more matchups like these in the future.

I was hanging out with my brother Quentin Tarantino one night... [some fans asked him] “You a Wu fan?” He said, “Yeah, of course.” They said, “Yeah, but did you read *The Wu-Tang Manual*?” Tarantino said, “I’m in *The Wu-Tang Manual*. Beat that!”



came with the title. First I said, no, forget you. And then I thought about it for a week or two. And was like, you know what?

I have to bring *The Wu-Tang Manual* to life because *The Wu-Tang Manual*, everybody wanted it in the movies. I said I want to bring *The Wu-Tang Manual* to life. And so I did it, but I will say I did it with, they call it, a condition. I did it with only one condition. “I’ll give you *The Wu-Tang Manual* if you promise that I will do my second book on wisdom.” And that was part of the contract and they agreed. I love *The Wu-Tang Manual*. [And] one of my proudest works that I offer the world is... my book, *The Tao of Wu*.

I mean, it’s definitely a deeper dive, right? And you get more of your personal journey out of it, but they’re both fantastic. And they’re both super foundational. And the reason I’m excited is because when I learned that part about the sociology and the oral moving into the written, it was when your book was killing, Jay-Z was killing. They’ll have that whole hip-hop drama books. The ‘hood novels, all of it’s hip-hop, you know what I’m saying? Even though it’s street related, the streets is hip-hop. So that really kind of, I love that man. And I’m grateful to you for those books. And I hope that a lot of the people that’ll be reading this interview — that they understand it. That they expand their knowledge of chess beyond the algebraic

notation.

Exactly. One funny thing about the book: I was hanging out with my brother Quentin Tarantino one night. Right. And he was hanging with me, shall I say? So he was amongst the hip-hop crowd. He came, [hung] out [at] a couple of concerts and a couple of fans came backstage and they were seeing us together. And they was my fans. They was his fans. They said, “You a Wu fan?” He said, “Yeah, of course.” They said, “Yeah, but did you read *The Wu-Tang Manual*?” Tarantino said, “I’m in *The Wu-Tang Manual*. Beat that!” [laughs hard]

So everybody has their stamp [as a producer]. Your stamp for me is the pulling of emotion. And so I’m always curious as to what you use. Now, I know you’ve talked about the EPS and the ASR-10 [beat machines for making rap music, lofi, and chillhop]. What processes are you taking now, what equipment are you using now that you’re finding is feeding you the highest level of your artistry?

Well now, I’m a composer now. So before I had to dig through tons of records and samples to find what I’ve been looking for, which is either E minor or A minor chord, right? If you listen to Wu, it’s always that major to minor. Listen to chords — B major minor, major minor. So it’s like happy, sad, happy, sad. A tug. Listen to *Tearz*, right? And you hear that, wow. It’s the E major to a B

major but when it hits that C sharp minor, that’s the tear.

So, now I can talk to you talk about it in clear language. I didn’t know when I was sampling it that that was a B that I felt.

So now I have the ability to, actually I can even talk in it now. Answering your question, I sit in front of that piano first and in front of my piano, I come up with my ideas and those ideas then evolve into a hip-hop beat or evolve into some type of musical score or cue for a movie.

All the way. That’s absolutely a fight anthem. You know what I’m saying? For real. Now, what hobbies do you have that people might not expect?

That’s a good one. A hobby that I have that people may not expect. I mean...

Well, I’ll tell you mine. Most people wouldn’t expect that I garden. I like to do plants. I’m about to start a whole bonsai tree thing. You know what I mean? Like I used to grow roses and I stopped growing roses. And so I started watching *Cobra Kai*, and I was watching *Miyagi* and I was like, that’s my OG stuff right there.

Well one of my hobbies then, I ain’t embarrassed to say, is that I love to cook yo. I love to cook, bro.

I love it. I love it. That’s great, man. No, I love cooking too, man. Like I said, I just went vegan about six months ago and I really like it, it’s really helped my

body. But what was interesting is my veganism came through meditation. And so I wanted to thank you for revitalizing my meditative practice and always being consistent and that you offered good vegan food when people are around you. And so I appreciate you in that, man.

That was a great camp [Camp Tazo; hosted in February 2020 before the lockdown], brother. I'm glad you came in and you helped the kids, you know, with the chess.

That was so cool, bro.

Cool, bro. That was a great idea. And it was, they asked me to do it.

Yeah. How did Camp Tazo come together? Tell the people who don't know about it, what it was. 'Cause it was amazing.

Well, Camp Tazo, Tazo Tea, does these camps, I think they're going to do them one every year and they choose different people to come and be the host of the camp. And they reached out to me, basically, because some of the team at Tazo, they read *The Tao of Wu* and so the beautiful thing, that's why I said *The Tao of Wu* was one of my favorite things that I've done because of what it does for people.

But anyway, they read *The Tao of Wu*. They was like, "Yo, we want to share this. Would you come to our camp and be the host and share this with a group of people?" And I was like, you know what? That's something that I feel like I'm meant to do, it don't take economics for me to do that. It's like certain things you do because that's what you're supposed to do. And that's how I felt. While they talking about the book, it comes from the book. I got to [do it].

It was so good. And we were just vibing. And then you was downstairs on the turntables with the people.

Would you agree to this? And I think, would you agree that meditation is better than medication?

Listen, I will not only wholly agree with that, I can tell you that since I went to Camp Tazo and rededicated myself to meditation, I have never been more at peace with myself. I have never carried as much joy, like genuine joy.

You look five years younger, bro.

Hey, you did it. That's you player. That's you! Reverse that... on them like bombs.

I'm telling you when I left. 'Cause I remember — see here's what you don't know. When, when I got the invitation, I was in London. Okay. And I was with my lady, and I had just seen Simon [Purkis] from Purling London. We'd been hanging out over at their offices, looking at chess boards and all of that. My birthday had just passed and I asked myself, okay, who is the 50-year-old Adisa? Does he still do jiu-jitsu? Maybe he doesn't. Does he still



THE LIVING LIKE KINGS EXHIBIT
WCHOF, OCTOBER 2014

eat meat? Maybe he doesn't. Does he meditate? Does he pray? Is he Muslim? I really was like, who are you bro? Among all that stuff, as I said, no matter what happens in your life right now say yes and worry about the details later.

I loved everybody that I met there, but that meditation really changed me. I think that the problem with sharing the value of meditation is that an individual doesn't understand it until they experience it. I can tell you what meditation is bringing me, and how it centers me and how it makes me have a better conversation with my friends or my parents or just within myself. But when you experience it, you know. So when I was with you, I got into meditation. I was doing like 10 minutes. I'm doing two hours now.

There's a lesson — I put it in a sentence. It says the body is a vehicle for the mind. So that means if it's a vehicle for the mind, it doesn't mean just when you're walking, because it's still being a vehicle. But even when you sit still, it's a vehicle because you sit still, then you can launch like a rocket.

One of my sayings is when people ask me about the benefits of yoga and meditation, I say, until you can sit with authority and conviction, you will never move with authority or conviction. You won't do it because you to have that stillness, you have to be whole and present. And so one thing, here's what I want to ask you.

So one of the first times I interviewed GM Maurice Ashley — shout out to Maurice, thank you for everything you've given the chess game — he suggested that he thought Will Smith would be an ideal opponent for you. And he gave me the impression that he thought Will might be able to holler at you, now to get you

bro. Now I spoke several times with one of Manny Pacquiao's chess coaches. And he was like, what's up with Kung Fu [RZA] versus boxing [Manny]? I was like, "Yo, I'm all down!" First question is, have you ever come across Will Smith? And what do you know about his potential chess skill?

Yeah. I never came across him on no chess board. I ran into him, I'm in Hollywood. So I run into him all the time. We never got off on one of the 64 squares, but that's the challenge I would take. If he wants to do that, let's do that.

Maurice played me before. Maurice is so imposing because he's a grandmaster. He said I had a good game, but I blundered it because I was looking at the player and not the board. So, if he thinks... Look, and that was some years ago, if he thought Will could take me from those days, maybe you would have been right.

But I don't know about now!
Right now you got to, you got to deal with what happens today.

Back then I was only breaking wood. All right. Now, [I'm] breaking bricks.
You're punching into stone. Now also I remember a while back, I think you challenged Jay-Z on video.

I remember that. Yeah.

He was kind of, I don't even think he spoke. I don't think he heard, you know what I'm saying? So here's my idea. You ready for this idea?

Go for it.

I want to organize a Hip-Hop Chess competition for charity in Monaco. I want to do this 007 style. You know what I'm saying? Aston Martins, popping up out the ride — you know what I'm saying? Kung Fu versus boxing. I think that could be hot, bro. I'm in, you know what I mean? I'm in there for the culture. I'm definitely looking to chop a couple of heads off. ♠

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SO STORMS TO 2020 U.S. CHAMP TITLE

Xiong finishes second, Robson third



By **GM ALEJANDRO RAMIREZ**

We've faced one challenge after another in 2020, and even in a sport that enjoys such a strong online presence like ours does, organizing an event with the gravitas of the U.S. Championship via the internet is a difficult thing to do. After contracts were signed and the playing field was set for April, the tournament was postponed to October due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the impossibility of safely bringing the players to St. Louis, the U.S. Championship was for the first time in its history held online. It became clear earlier this year that as undesirable as it was, holding the event in person would be both risky and difficult. I know the Saint Louis Chess Club (SLCC) explored all the possibilities to host one of their crown jewels over the board, but it was not to be.

Let's just say it: the tournament was strange. With the decision to play online, it was also decided that a rapid time control was much more suitable for internet play than a traditional classical time control. It was not a surprise when the SLCC announced the tournament would be a G/25+5 format. With the faster time control and the four-day schedule, the championships missed a certain presence and ambiance; for me, it even lacked that feeling of being in a tournament. It just isn't the same when your cat meows in the middle of the game.

Games were played on *lichess.org*, which had hosted several events for the SLCC. The anti-cheating measures employed by the club were probably as strict as you can make them during COVID-19 times, though it really is the equivalent of the honor system. But enough about that — on to the chess!

When people are presented with challenges, some will be able to rise to the occasion, and some won't. From the very first day, it was clear that three of the championship participants were sharp, focused, and showing their best chess. Most participants weren't. Switching from in-person chess to online is not as easy as it sounds. Trying to play serious games on a two-dimensional board, in which you are only used to blitzing and bulleting on, is a bigger impediment than the reader might imagine. Three people were able to overcome such an obstacle and showed a performance and mastery of the board worthy of a classical tournament. The others simply admired the front-runners throughout the event.

The names worth highlighting are GMs Ray Robson, Jeffery Xiong and Wesley So. It would not be an exaggeration to say that these players were in another level compared to the rest of the field; it was reminiscent of one of many U.S. Women's Championships in the early 2010s with dominance of GM Irina Krush, IM Anna Zatonskih, and WGM Tatev Abrahamyan. By the end of day two, So's 5½/6 was only good enough to give himself a half-point lead over the other two. The remaining participants were still



WESLEY SO



IRINA KRUSH



JOEL BENJAMIN



CARISSA YIP



JOHN BURKE



trying to figure this rapid chess thing out. Let's see some of their highlights:



RAY ROBSON

"Spicycaterpillar" was one of the earliest dominant figures of Puzzle Rush and his tactical prowess keeps being very impressive. Robson only played a few games for Team USA during the organizational fiasco that was the Online Olympiad, but here he showed that perhaps he should be given preference over other players. Robson's chess was adaptable, resourceful, and accurate considering the time constraints.

CARO-KANN DEFENSE (B10)

GM Awonder Liang (2592)
GM Ray Robson (2673)
U.S. Championship (2), 10.26.2020

1. e4 c6 2. Nf3 d5 3. Nc3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Nf6 5. Qe2 Nxe4 6. Qxe4 Nd7 7. Bc4 Nf6 8. Ne5 e6 9. Qe2 b5 10. Bd3

One of the many lines of chess that was invented last year and had a surge of popularity this year.

10. ... Qc7 11. a4

Black has overwhelming compensation after 11. Nxc6 Bb7 12. Nd4 a6.

11. ... Bd6

Even though this looks like a blunder, it's actually an intrepid sacrifice that has been played before.

12. Nxc6 b4 13. Nd4 a6 14. Nf5 Bb7 15. Nxc6

Youthful naïveté.

Correct is 15. Nxd6+ as played in Martirosyan-Keymer (*chess.com* match, g27, 09.14.20), which I assume means it was a bullet game. It's important to keep up with your bullet games nowadays!

15. ... Kf8 16. Nh5 Nxh5 17. Qxh5 Rg8!



White has two extra pawns, but the g2-pawn will soon fall and Black's king on f8 is far safer than the one on e1. The reason? White's pieces are too far away to enter the action.

18. Bxh7 Rxc7 19. d4 Bf4!

Robson is so precise in these types of positions. This move safeguards the king on f8 from potential checks and disrupts White's development. It's surprising to me how hopeless White's position is.

20. Qh4 Bxc1 21. Rxc1 f5

Suddenly White's h7-bishop is in danger.

22. Kd2 Rg4 23. Qf6+ Qf7 24. Gh8+ Ke7 25. Qe5 Rxd4+

Eliminating White's only active piece leads to a quick victory.

26. Qxd4 Rd8 27. Qxd8+ Kxd8 28. Rhd1 Qxh7 29. c3 Qxh2 30. Ke2+ Ke7 31. cxb4 Qe5+ 32. Kf1 Bf3, White resigned.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, RICHTER-RAUZER (B67)

GM Ray Robson (2673)
GM Sam Shankland (2691)
U.S. Championship (3), 10.26.2020

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 Nc6 6. Bg5 e6 7. Qd2 a6 8. O-O-O Bd7 9. f3 Nxd4

A modern twist on a variation with a long and storied history. GM Caruana had played it against Robson himself in the PRO Chess League last year, a game that Robson won. It really gained popularity online this year with GMs Dubov and Firouzja trying it. It was just blitz, but that's what 2020 chess is, after all.

10. Qxd4 Be7 11. h4 Qc7 12. Kb1 b5 13. g4 O-O 14. Qd2 b4 15. Ne2 Rfc8 16. Ng3



This is a novelty in fascinating position, especially for players of such caliber. 16. Be3 had been seen in the famous (engine) game Engineer vs. Cato the Younger according to my database. Every tempo counts here, and White's plan is clear: play Ne2-g3-h5, open up the structure on the kingside and attack. Black can meet it in a couple of different ways:

16. ... a5

Trying to blast the game open on the queenside ASAP.

Slightly unnatural is the engine suggestion 16. ... Ba4!?. More logical is 16. ... Bb5, the idea being 17. Nh5 Nxh5 18. gxf5 h6 19. Bxh6?? (19. Bxe7 Qxe7 20. Bxb5 axb5 21. Qxb4 and White emerges up a pawn, but after 21. ... Rc5 the h5 pawn will fall someday, and the endings should be close to equal even if White retains a pawn advantage) 19. ... gxf6 20. Qxf6 (20. Rg1+ Kf8 is not very scary) 20. ... Qxc2+ and mate to come.

17. Nh5 a4

If 17. ... Nxh5 18. Bxe7 Ba4 19. b3 Qxe7 20. gxf5 leaves White with an edge.

18. Bxf6 Bxf6 19. Nxf6+ gxf6 20. Bd3 a3

Played after a five minute think, this allows a tactic that Shankland would never miss in over-the-board chess. It's still a fight after 20. ... b3 21. cxb3 axb3 22. a3 Bb5! and if 23. Bxb5? Qc2+ 24. Ka1 Rxa3+!

21. e5

Played almost instantly: Qd2-h6 is coming and Black's position collapses. The a3-pawn is not threatening anything immediately.

21. ... Kf8

Hopeless is 21. ... dxe5 22. Qh6 e4 23. Bxe4 f5 24. gxf5 Qe5 25. c3! (25. Qc1 is not as accurate but also winning) as f5-f6 is too big of a threat while 25. ... bxc3 26. Bc2!! stops all Black's threats. No better is 21. ... axb2 22. Qh6 f5 23. gxf5.

22. exf6 Ke8 23. b3 Qb6 24. Bxh7

Black's position simply collapsed without any threats. Most players played on in positions they normally wouldn't because of the time control and the event being online. Sometimes people were rewarded with miracle saves, but for the most part, as was the case here, the ultimate results were never in doubt.

24. ... d5 25. h5 Bc6 26. Bg8 Kd7 27. Bxf7 Rf8 28. Bg6 Rxf6 29. f4 Raf8 30. f5 e5 31. g5 Rxf5 32. Bxf5+ Rxf5 33. h6 d4 34. h7 Bxh1 35. h8=Q Be4 36. Qe2 Qc6 37. Qc4 Qxc4 38. bxc4 Rf2 39. Qxe5 Bxc2+ 40. Kc1, Black resigned.

Robson's last round loss to GM Aleksandr Lenderman was the only thing keeping him from a higher spot than third. His score of 7½/11 would have won the title in 2017 (won by So with 7/11) but it wasn't close to good enough this year.



JEFFERY XIONG

Unpredictable and precise. It was clear to me during the U.S. Junior that Xiong was keeping the best things for the Championship. And oh boy, did he bring out the good stuff.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, SVESHNIKOV (B33)

GM Jeffery Xiong (2709)
GM Dariusz Swiercz (2649)
U.S. Championship (3), 10.26.2020

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 e5 6. Ndb5 d6 7. Bg5 a6 8. Na3 b5 9. Bxf6 gxf6 10. Nd5 f5 11. c3 Bg7 12. Bd3 Be6 13. Qh5 O-O 14. exf5 Bxd5 15. f6 e4 16. fxg7 Re8 17. Be2 Ne5 18. O-O Qf6 19. Nc2

Diverging from typical theory. The move 19. Qh3 has been seen in over 50 games, with a huge number of draws.



19. ... Nf3+

Played after a 10 minute think. It's difficult to give an evaluation on such usage of time. On one hand, this position is extremely complex and a decision like ... Ne5-f3 cannot be made lightly. On the other, 10 minutes is a lot.

20. Bxf3

White is busted after 20. gxf3 exf3.

20. ... Re5 21. Qh3 exf3 22. Ne3 fxe2 23. Rfd1

This sequence is more or less forced from 19. ... Nf3+ and is difficult to evaluate. Somewhat surprisingly, it had been reached in one master level game before!

23. ... Be6?

And also surprisingly, in both games Black makes a crucial mistake.

Better was 23. ... Bf3! 24. Rd4 Rae8 25. Qg3 and Dariusz told me after the game he reached this position, but fearing Rd4-f4 he decided to solidify things on the e6 square instead. After 25. ... Bc6 26. Rf4 Qg6 the position is harmless for Black. The knight on e3 can never move.

24. Qg3 h5

Sometimes during a game the realization creeps in that things have not gone your way. Black spent 6½ minutes here trying to find some form of counterplay. White's idea to solidify on the dark squares with Rd1-d4 and Ra1-d1 is as unstoppable as it is strong, and Black has difficulties bringing pieces into a concrete attack.

25. Rd4 Kh7 26. Rad1

Starting from this move, the engine will inform you that White misses many wins. It's true that Jeffery had cleaner alternatives, but it's also true that Black's position is so strategically hopeless that Jeffery's technique was good enough.

26. ... Rg8 27. f4 Rc5 28. f5?! Bxf5 29. Nd5 Qh6 30. Qf2 Rxd5 31. Rxd5 Be6 32. Rxd6 Rxe7 33. Rxa6 Rg6 34. Qd2 Qg7 35. Rd6 Rg5 36. Qd3+ Bf5 37. Qd4 Qg8

Even after all this, Black hasn't come close to creating a threat against the king on g1.

38. Qf4 Be6 39. Qe4+ Rg6 40. R1d2 Kh6 41. Rxe2 Rxe2+ 42. Qxe2 Qc8 43. Qd2+ Kh7 44. Qd3+ Kh6 45. Qe3+ Kh7 46. Qg5 Qc4 47. Qxe5+ Kg7 48. Qg5+ Kh7 49. Rd4, Black resigned.

ENGLISH OPENING, SYMMETRICAL VARIATION (A30)

GM Leinier Dominguez (2758)
GM Jeffery Xiong (2709)
U.S. Championship (4), 10.27.2020

1. c4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Qb6 5. Nb3 Nf6 6. Nc3 e6 7. e4 Bb4 8. Bd3 O-O 9. O-O Bxc3 10. bxc3 d6 11. Bg5 Ne5 12. Bxf6 gxf6

Black's play is clearly on the dark squares. The ruined pawn structure on the kingside won't be easy to target, while the c-pawns will be.

13. Kh1 Bd7 14. f4 Ng6 15. Qh5

In the old days, before computers, Black might feel that allowing such pressure against h7 is unplayable. Nowadays, kids know that if it holds, it holds, and it doesn't matter if it's a bit ugly.

15. ... Kh8!

Preparing to fianchetto the rook on g7,

where it holds the h7-pawn and puts some nice x-ray pressure on the g2-pawn.

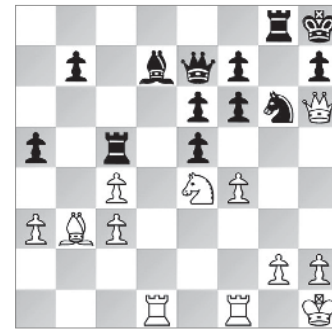
16. Qh6 Qd8 17. Rad1 Qe7 18. Bc2

A sign that Dominguez is running out of ideas. His structure is compromised, and his attack on the kingside is going nowhere. f4-f5 is never an idea because of ... Ng6-e5, and making e4-e5 work seems tactically impossible. The position is suddenly unpleasant to play.

18. ... Rg8 19. Nd2 Rac8 20. Bb3 a5 21. a3 Rc5 22. e5?

Psychological desperation. With a disappointing first day for Dominguez, he feels he needs to make something happen with White. With a worsening position and bad time situation, he tried to make the game murky, but it backfires immediately.

22. ... dxe5 23. Ne4



23. ... Bc6!

Jeffery is quick to spot such opportunities.

24. Nxc5 Nxf4

Black is down a rook, but the double attack on both the g2 and c5 squares guarantees that he will at minimum get his material back. This makes it an easy combination to play, especially as it is clear upon further inspection that White can't defend g2.

25. Rxf4 Bxe2+ 26. Kg1 Qxc5+ 27. Rfd4

If 27. Rf2 Bh3+ 28. Kh1 Qc6+! (28. ... Qxf2 29. Qxe3 is still unclear, though very good for Black.) 29. Rd5 exd5 30. cxd5 Qb6 and Black wins.

27. ... Rg6

Thwarting the perpetual on f6 and d8, which was really White's last hope.

28. Qe3 exd4 29. Rxd4 Qf5 30. Rf4 Qb1+, White resigned.

Xiong's 8½/11 is such a monstrous score that it's difficult to believe it couldn't win the tournament. On a personal assessment, I find Xiong's particular approach to this tournament extremely impressive. His attitude was that of a fighter, of someone that was confident to play out any type of position. That he scored this many points in all kinds of positions is nothing but good news for Team USA.



WESLEY SO

So was simply a bulldozer. Throughout the tournament it seemed possible for him to win in every which way there was. Grounding down slight advantages, playing novelties, executing crushing attacks. His blazing 5/5 start sparked comparisons to GM Bobby Fischer; his game against GM Sam Shankland will be memorable as a brilliancy, and I believe that it would be considered one no matter the time control.

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE (E25)

GM Sam Shankland (2691)
GM Wesley So (2770)
U.S. Championship (4), 10.27.2020

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. f3 d5 5. a3 Bxc3+ 6. bxc3 c5 7. cxd5 Nxd5 8. dxc5 Qa5 9. e4 Ne7 10. Be3 0-0 11. Qb3 Qc7 12. Bb5 e5!?

Most common here is 12. ... Nec6.

13. Ne2 Be6 14. c4

A tough choice to make. The b5-bishop is unhappy about this last move, and it weakens the d4-square. On the other hand, White will hop that knight to d5.

14. ... Nbc6 15. Nc3

Safer is 15. 0-0 but after 15. ... Na5 16. Qc2 a6 17. Ba4 Nxc4 18. Bf2 Nc6 Black gains a lot of piece play and gets his pawn back. Still, the position should be close to equal.

15. ... Na5 16. Qb4? Nec6 17. Qa4 a6 18. Bxc6



18. ... Nxc4!

Perhaps Shankland foresaw 18. ... bxc6 19. Nd5! cxd5 20. cxd5 Bd7! 21. c6 Nxc6 22. dxc6 with equality, but So goes for an amazing sacrifice.

19. Bxb7 Nxe3!

Things are unclear after 19. ... Qxb7 20. Nd1 Rfd8 21. c6 Qc7 22. 0-0.

20. Bxa8 Qxc5!

Black is a rook down and it is White to move, but two white pieces are hanging, and g2 is under attack as well.

21. Nd5!

The only way to try to fight. 21. Ne2 Nxc2+ 22. Kf1 Ne3+ 23. Ke1 Rxa8?! is positionally hopeless. (Note that 23. ... Nc2+! is even better.) No hope is found after 21. Rc1 Nxc2+ 22. Kd1 Qf2! and ... Ng2-e3+ is too strong.

21. ... Nxc2+?

So trusts in his attack, but things are not easy. Still stronger is 21. ... Nc2+ 22. Kd2 Nxa1 23. Rxa1 Qf2+! 24. Kd3 Rxa8 when (since Qa4-c2 is not playable due to the hanging rook on a1 after ... Qf2-d4+) the kingside collapses and the unsafe king dooms White.

22. Kf1 Nf4 23. Qc6!

An important resource. Black's queen doesn't have many great squares to go to, and Shankland takes advantage of that fact to put his queen in a better place while defending the bishop.

23. ... Qa5

White is still up a rook and has the move, but with such a weak king on f1 its tough to find moves.

24. Rd1??

Under pressure, Shankland loses the thread, and his position collapses. It is easy to question how such a strong player let the f4-knight survive, but things are not so easy when you're staring at a monitor and things get confusing. 24. Nxf4 exf4 is "equal" as Black should always have a way to deliver a perpetual, but likely has no more than that, i.e. 25. Rc1 Qd2 26. h4 Qd3+.

24. ... Bxd5 25. exd5 Qxa3 26. d6 Qb2

White's bizarre piece placement comes at a huge cost. ... Qb2-g2+ and ... Qb2-e2+ are devastating, and there is only enough time to prevent only one of them.

27. Qe4 Qg2+ 28. Ke1 Qxh1+ 29. Kd2 Qxh2+ 30. Kc3 Ne2+ 31. Kc4 Nd4! 32. d7 Qa2+ 33. Kc5 Qa3+ 34. Kb6 Qb3+, White resigned.

Even after his blistering start, So had to do some dirty work in the later rounds to really

separate himself from the competition. His ninth round pairing against Xiong had the superb team of WGM Jennifer Shahade, GM Maurice Ashley and GM Yasser Seirawan glued to the drama. Wesley's win was absolutely crucial:

SICILIAN DEFENSE, SVESHNIKOV (B33)

GM Wesley So (2770)
GM Jeffery Xiong (2709)
U.S. Championship (9), 10.28.2020

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 e5 6. Ndb5 d6 7. Bg5 a6 8. Na3 b5 9. Nd5 Be7 10. Bxf6 Bxf6 11. c3 Bg5 12. Nc2 Rb8 13. a3 0-0 14. h4 Bh6 15. g4

Maximum aggression. These types of pawn pushes always lead to extremely double-edged positions.

15. ... Bf4 16. Qf3 Bb7

A novelty. 16. ... Be6 is more standard.

17. g5

After 17. Nxf4 Black's "trick" to not lose a pawn is 17. ... Qf6.

17. ... Re8 18. Nxf4 exf4 19. 0-0-0

The position is chaotic. White removes the king from the center, but it certainly doesn't feel safe on the queenside.

19. ... b4!?

The start of some fantastic complications.

20. axb4 Nxb4 21. Nxb4

21. cxb4 Bxe4 22. Qh3 Qc7 23. Bd3 Bxh1 24. Rxb4 is complex, though the engine thinks the two minor pieces should prevail.

21. ... Bxe4 22. Qxf4?

It was preferable to protect the rook on h1, as we'll soon see: 22. Qh3 Qa5 23. Bd3 Bxh1 24. Qxh1 and White wins.



22. ... Rxb4

Faced with two tempting options, Jeffery chooses the wrong one. 22. ... Qa5! is both greedy and strong: 23. Bd3 (23. Nc2 Qa2 is over since b2 cannot be defended) 23. ... Bxh1 and the bishop is taboo due to the x-ray on the first rank, i.e., 24. Rxb4 Qa1+ 25. Bb1 Re2, while

24. f3! Bg2 25. h5 is a huge mess. The engine claims Black is doing well, but in practical play I don't think this is easy for either side.

23. Bd3 Bxh1 24. Qxb4 Bf3 25. Rd2

As if by magic, the smoke more or less clears. Black has another check he can throw in, but surprisingly that will be the end of his attack. The remaining pawn structure almost guarantees that Black will lose one of them, but with the weak king on c2 the conversion is far from easy. From a tactical melee we jump into a tense situation.

25. ... d5 26. Bxa6 h6!? 27. gxh6 Re4 28. Qc5 Rxh4 29. Qc8 Qxc8 30. Bxc8 Rxh6 31. Bb7 Rh5 32. b4 Kf8 33. Kb2 Rf5 34. Kb3 Ke7 35. Ka4 g5 36. b5 Rf4+ 37. Ka5 Kd6 38. b6 Rc4!

An important move. White's progress is halted. The b-pawn wants to push forward but it is difficult to do so without entombing the bishop on a8, after which there is no guarantee the pawn will reach the b8-square.

39. Rd3

It turns out that 39. Ba8 Rxc3 40. b7 Kc7 doesn't quite work for White, while after 39. Ba6 Rxc3 40. b7 Kc7 41. Rb2 Kb8 it's surprisingly difficult for White's rook to maneuver to the eighth rank. Meanwhile Black will push the d-pawn.

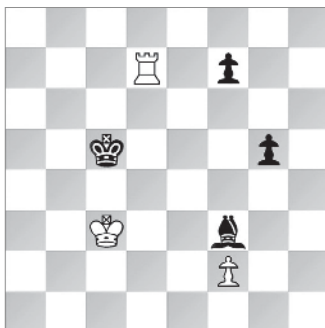
39. ... Rc5+! 40. Kb4 Rc4+ 41. Kb3 Rf4! 42. c4 Kc5 43. cxd5 Rb4+

After showing great resilience, Xiong misses 43. ... Kxb6 44. d6 Bg4! and an immediate draw. White can at most win the bishop, but will lose both of his last remaining pawns.

44. Kc3 Rxb6?!

The continuation 44. ... Be2! 45. d6 (45. Rd2 Rxb6) looks like something out of a study: 45. ... Bxd3 46. d7 Rd4 47. Bd5! Rxd5 48. b7 Rxd7 49. b8=Q but unlike a study the final position is drawn with best play.

45. d6 Rxb7 46. d7 Rxd7 47. Rxd7



47. ... f5?

The final mistake. It's natural with seconds left to find a set up where the bishop defends everything, but the resulting endgames are lost for Black.

Black holds after 47. ... Bd5 48. Kd3 Be6 49. Rd8 Bf5+ 50. Ke3 Kc4. Note that 50. ... Be6 51. Ke4 g4 is not as clean as the main line, but I'm not strong enough to explain why.

48. Kd3 Be4+ 49. Ke3 g4 50. Kf4 Kc6 51. Rf7 Kd6 52. Rxf5, Black resigned.

Hats off to the 2020 U.S. Champion on a truly remarkable performance. His 9/11 score was good for a performance rating well north of 2900.

THE OTHERS

There were, after all, other players in the event. For fourth place finisher GM Leinier Dominguez, it seemed that his engines turned on too late. In a classical tournament, starting off with a loss and a draw in the first couple of days of play can still be overcome. In a rapid four-day tournament, Dominguez's awesome last two days, in which he scored +3, was too little too late to be an even outside contender for the title. Still, it speaks volumes of Dominguez's strong state of mind and extreme professionalism to be able to have recovered from his slow start and end in a relatively positive note.

Speaking of positives, there was one player that can certainly be happy with his event outside of the top three. GM Awonder Liang had the comeback story of the championship. After starting with a dismal 0/3, it just seemed like things weren't going the teenager's way. However, day two was a roller coaster of emotions for him: after getting fabulously unlucky against Aleksandr Lenderman, in which Liang was unable to convert with an extra piece, he got extremely lucky against me, as I missed a Puzzle Rush tactic that would have won the game. Liang then played an exemplary game against GM Hikaru Nakamura.

CARO-KANN DEFENSE (B19)

GM Hikaru Nakamura (2736)

GM Awonder Liang (2592)

U.S. Championship (6), 10.27.2020

1. e4 c6

Liang trusted the Caro-Kann the entire event, and it gave him pretty good results. It's also been one of the opening trends of the year.

2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Bf5 5. Ng3 Bg6 6. h4 h6 7. Nf3 e6 8. Bd3

Currently 8. Ne5 Bh7 9. Bd3 Bxd3 10. Qxd3 Nd7 11. f4 (11. Bf4!?) seems to be the test of 7. ... e6, but either Hikaru didn't know it or wanted to go into uncharted territory.

8. ... Bxd3 9. Qxd3 Nf6 10. Bf4 Qa5+ 11. c3 Be7 12. Nf1

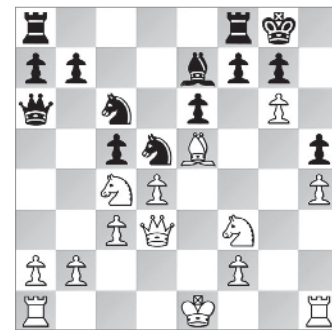
Since this was played almost immediately, one can assume it is some sort of preparation.

That being said, this is a very strange move since White can't queenside castle any time soon. The alternative 12. Ne4 Nxe4 13. Qxe4 Nd7 14. 0-0 might be a bit too dry for Nakamura's tastes.

12. ... c5 13. N1d2 Qa6 14. Nc4 0-0 15. g4?!

The start of unnecessary complications that have no foundation on general positional principles. White needs to know he can castle queenside before embarking on such adventures, but with the queen on a6 constantly eyeing that a2 pawn it is clear that White's king will never find a safe haven. All of White's eggs are on the rip-apart-the-black-king basket.

15. ... Nd5 16. Be5 Nc6 17. g5 h5 18. g6



You could argue this is the losing move, but it's such a logical follow up to the previous play. Inertia plays a big role in our chess decisions.

18. ... cxd4 19. Nxd4 Nxd4 20. Qxd4 Rac8

The start of a bunch of tempo moves that simplify the position into a winning black advantage.

21. Ne3 Bc5 22. Qe4 Bxe3 23. fxe3 fxg6 24. Bd4

The line 24. Qxg6 Rf7 25. Rg1 (25. Bd4 e5!?) 25. ... Nxe3! 26. Bxg7 looks absolutely terrifying for Black, and yet it all works out! 26. ... Rf1+ 27. Kd2 (27. Rxf1 Qxf1+ 28. Kd2 Nc4+ 29. Kc2 Qf2+) 27. ... Rf2+ 28. Kc1 Rc2+ 29. Kb1 Rg2!! and it is White that gets mated.

24. ... Rf5!

White's pawn sacrifice on the kingside has simply closed down the position on that front. His king remains weak and Black enjoys a massive light-square advantage.

25. a3

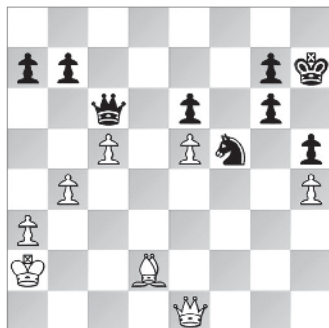
Slow, but it is hard to recommend a useful plan that is not evacuating that king on e1.

25. ... Rcf8 26. 0-0-0 Kh7 27. Rhg1 Nf6 28. Qc2 Ng4

Black's king is pretty safe, in case you couldn't tell. The next many moves are not the most accurate by either player, but let's remember that it's a rapid game.

29. e4 Rf1 30. c4 R1f3 31. e5 Rc8 32. c5

Rcf8 33. Kb1 Rf1 34. Ka2 Rxd1 35. Rxd1
Rd8 36. Rd2 Qc6 37. b4 Rd5 38. Bc3 Ne3
39. Qc1 Nf5 40. Qe1 Rxd2+ 41. Bxd2



The position has simplified into a won endgame for Liang. His knight is an octopus and White's king is permanently weak, while Black's is permanently safe.

41. ... Qd5+ 42. Kb2 Qd3 43. Bg5 Nd4 44.
Qc3 Qe2+ 45. Kb1 Qxe5 46. a4 a6 47. Kb2

Qe2+ 48. Qd2 Qe4 49. Qc3 e5 50. Qc4
Qg2+ 51. Kb1 Qc6 52. a5 Nb5 53. Kc1 Qh1+
54. Kd2 Nd4 55. Qd3 Qg2+ 56. Kc3 Qa2 57.
Qd1, White resigned.

Awonder's attitude also reflected that of a champion. He explained in the post-mortem to this game that it is not sufficient to try to hold on against these top players — you must try to beat them! I have to admit that I feel inspired by his words, which I will strive to adopt in my approach to future tournaments. They should be an inspiration to you too, reader, when you face stronger opposition!

On the flip side of the success stories, the single most tragic result was certainly that of the defending champion. Hikaru Nakamura is arguably the best rapid/blitz player online, with GM Magnus Carlsen being the other clear candidate. Nakamura finishing on a minus score on this tournament would've been unthinkable before the games started.

Maybe it's the constant streaming taking a toll, or maybe it was the new cool venue he was playing from.

Team SoloMid, a professional e-sports organization, added Nakamura as part of their team, and he played the event from their headquarters. There were some hiccups. During his round against me, for example, some random person came into his room and Nakamura burst into laughter while trying to shoo said intruder out of the room. I could hear this because part of the tournament regulations mandate that the players are connected via a Zoom call. Not very professional, but hardly Nakamura's fault — just 2020 things! What exactly went wrong for America's top-rated rapid player is something that he will have to figure out, but it is something that I hope he figures out quickly: FIDE is still hoping to hold the over-the-board Olympiad next year.

LEGITIMACY

It would be ignoring the elephant in the room if we avoided discussing how legitimate this event appears in the public eye. Shortly before the tournament started, Nakamura told his Twitch channel that if he won this year, his new crown would propel him to 5½ instead of six U.S. Championships. It is true that the tournament had all kinds of online problems: feedback loops creating weird noises, multiple mouse slips, my cat Soy Maria being extremely unhappy and vocal with the quality of my play. It is my opinion, though, that the U.S. Championship is the reflection of changing times and new challenges that chess players need to cope with.

I don't think the world is ready, or by any means willing, to see online rapid tournaments overtake classical chess as the standard of player after the pandemic is over; however, for the time being this is our situation. I will understand the people that don't want to list this year's event in their "U.S. Championship history books," but the official determination is done by US Chess and they are the ones that legitimized this event, giving it their imprimatur. I agree with their decision.

At the end of the day, and thanks to the great effort of the Saint Louis Chess Club and the entire staff that makes these things run, we got stellar performances by Wesley So, Jeffery Xiong, and Ray Robson that will go down in history, and not just because they happened online.

Speaking for myself: a big thanks to the Sinquefeld family for sponsoring and hosting the event. This has been an indescribably difficult year both emotionally and financially for many people, and we can certainly say we are lucky that this year's event was organized so well. Finally, and a bit outside the scope of this article, a huge congratulations to GM Joel Benjamin for the incredible historic feat of being the only person to win the Junior, Championship, and Senior U.S. titles. He might not remember, but he was one of the grandmasters who deeply inspired me. In my youth I had analyzed his games and read about him in multiple magazines, but I only first met him at my first Olympiad: 2002 in Bled! ♣

2020 U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP - OCTOBER 26-29, 2020

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1	GM Wesley So	2770	*	1	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	9/11
2	GM Jeffery Xiong	2709	0	*	1	1	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	8½/11
3	GM Ray Robson	2673	½	0	*	½	1	1	1	1	0	1	½	1	7½/11
4	GM Leinier Dominguez	2758	½	0	½	*	½	½	0	½	1	1	1	½	6/11
5	GM Sam Shankland	2691	0	½	0	½	*	1	½	0	1	½	1	½	5½/11
6	GM Awonder Liang	2592	0	0	0	½	0	*	½	1	½	1	1	1	5½/11
7	GM Sam Sevian	2660	½	½	0	1	½	½	*	½	½	½	0	½	5/11
8	GM Hikaru Nakamura	2736	½	0	0	½	1	0	½	*	½	½	1	½	5/11
9	GM Aleksandr Lenderman	2634	0	½	1	0	0	½	½	½	*	0	½	1	4½/11
10	GM Dariusz Swiercz	2649	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	1	*	½	½	3½/11
11	GM Alejandro Ramirez	2567	0	0	½	0	0	0	1	0	½	½	*	½	3/11
12	GM Elshan Moradiabadi	2555	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	*	3/11

KRUSH WINS EIGHTH U.S. WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

Last year's champ Jennifer Yu tells the tale

By **WGM JENNIFER YU**

As tournaments all crept online due to COVID-19, it seemed that a set of conventional over-the-board U.S. Championships would be a pipe dream. The U.S. Women's Championship, like so many other tournaments, was postponed in March, and things looked no better by the time late August rolled around. Fortunately the Saint Louis Chess Club came up with a solution, moving the tournament onto *lichess.org* and featuring a rapid format. Instead of a one round a day event that spanned two weeks, this year's tournament would see three games each day, and it would be finished in just four days. There was also a bonus — the prize fund would stay the same!

It's become redundant for me to say each year that I don't know what to expect before the championships, but this edition introduced a lot of new elements. While this would be my sixth time playing in the Women's Championship, it would be my first time as the defending champion. Any result other than first place would be a "disappointment."

I thought this would influence my attitude entering the event, but there were many other factors that kept me grounded. I won last year's event by a large margin, but that could be attributed to good form and a whole lot of luck instead of significant improvement in my play. I knew realistically that last year's score of 10/11 might never happen again. Perhaps this equanimity was the bright side of a tough year for me, which saw constant setbacks and my dropping more than 100 FIDE rating points last summer.

Another thing: rapid chess isn't exactly my cup of tea. I was grateful for the opportunity to play in the 2020 U.S. Girls' Junior Championship two weeks prior to the U.S. Women's Championship, giving me a feel for the online format and time control. For some reason, the U.S. Juniors always has been one of my worst events; I say, "We'll get 'em next time" — at least until I become too old and no longer qualify!

This year was no different — I had an up-and-down event, finishing tied for fourth place

— so my attitude going into the U.S. Women's Championship can be summed up in one word: "Ehhh." I had practiced the time control quite a bit before the event and worked hard preparing, so I figured I would accept any result I got. Maybe it would've been better to enter the tournament with the mindset of a defending champion and the confidence boost and pressure that comes with it, but that wasn't the case.

One final fact keeping my expectations at bay was the strength the U.S. Women's field — and every year it gets stronger. Such growth isn't unexpected when half of the field is made up of juniors, and it's always fun seeing upgraded titles in front of participants' names every year, like some sort of new iPhone release.

This year the field gained two new International Masters: IM Carissa Yip and IM Annie Wang. Yip had an astounding year, becoming a WGM and an IM while shooting up the rating chart to become one of the top girls in the world. A clean win over reigning Women's World Champ Ju Wenjun at the 2020 Cairns Cup didn't hurt either. This undoubtedly made her one of the favorites, which she justified with a stellar performance.

The field was mostly made up of U.S. Women's Championship veterans, but we saw the debuts of two juniors, WFM Martha Samadashvili and WIM Thalia Cervantes. The unpredictability of the field has made it impossible to predict the eventual champion in recent years, with a trend of "dark horse" winners and contenders in 2017 (WGM Sabina Foisor), 2018 (Wang), and 2019 (me), while IM Anna Zatonskih and GM Krush each have a handful of titles underneath their belt. I was sure the new format would play towards the strengths of some while nullifying others, making the competition even more unpredictable than usual.

In the end GM Irina Krush won her eighth U.S. Women's Championship with 8½/11, outplaying the field and maintaining her lead for most of the rounds after the first day. With 8/11, second-place finisher IM Carissa Yip provided the most resistance for Krush, even



WGM JENNIFER YU

leading the field for a time after three straight wins in rounds six through eight. Both Krush and Yip won their last two games on the last day, showing how closely contested the title was. IM Dorsa Derakhshani finished in third place, upsetting several players on the way to her 7½/11 score.

The top two finishers clashed early in the tournament, playing an exciting and dynamic game. Yip dominated the position out of the opening, putting extensive pressure on Krush's king and taking advantage of her lack of development. But after Yip missed a few shots, Krush caught up in development and turned the tables on Yip's king.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, KERES ATTACK (B81)

IM Carissa Yip (2421)

GM Irina Krush (2429)

U.S. Women's Championship (3),
10.21.2020

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 e6 6. g4 h6 7. Rg1 g5

This move stops the g4-g5 push, but the reason it probably has not been played much is because it also creates a hook, allowing White to go h2-h4 and put pressure on g5. More usual is 7. ... Nc6 8. h4 h5 9. gxh5 Nxh5 10. Bg5 Nf6 11. Qd2.

8. Be3

Another idea is 8. h4 — Yip does this idea in the game but it is also possible here without committing the bishop to e3 (in case Black captures on h4) — 8. ... gxh4 (after 8. ... Rg8 9. hxg5 hxg5 10. Be3 Nc6 11. Qd2 Nxd4 12. Bxd4 White's position is much more comfortable due to better piece placement and control over the center) 9. g5 hxg5 10. Bxg5 Be7 11. Qd3 and White castles queenside with initiative.

8. ... a6 9. h4 Rg8 10. Qd2 Nfd7 11. hxg5 hxg5 12. 0-0-0 b5

Here, White has a large positional advantage



because of the activity of her pieces and lead in development. But what to do now? It's not immediately obvious how she should continue, but Yip skillfully demonstrates the feel for dynamics and initiative that she has used to collect many grandmaster scalps.

13. Nf3

A very sensible move, adding pressure to the g5-pawn to gain a tempo before pushing the e-pawn and opening up the e4-square for the c3-knight.

The problem with Black's position is the underdeveloped pieces and king in the center. When the king is stuck in the center, you should blow the center up! Therefore White should have tried 13. e5! opening up the h1-a8 diagonal and targeting one unfortunate looking rook. 13. ... Nxe5 (13. ... dxe5 14. Nxe6! fxe6 15. Bg2! and the rook falls) 14. Bg2 d5 (14. ... Ra7 15. Nxe6!) 15. Rge1! It's often counterintuitive to look for nonforcing moves improving your position after sacrificing material. However, this quiet move ends the game. Even though Black's central pawns look stable now, the bomb ignited by 15. Rge1 is Nd4xe6 blowing up Black's center! Material doesn't matter when the king is completely exposed. For example, 15. ... Bb7 (15. ... Nc4 16. Qd3 Bb7 17. Nxe6 fxe6 18. Bb6! Qxb6 19. Nxd5 is winning) 16. Nxe6 fxe6 17. Bd4.

13. ... Be7 14. e5! dxe5 15. Ne4

A cute shot is 15. Nxf7! Bxf7 16. Bg2! Ra7 17. Ne4 Bxe3 18. fxe3 and the weak dark squares around the king are sufficient compensation for the piece. Both g4-g5 and Ne4-f6 are coming.

15. ... Bb7 16. Nfxg5 Bd5 17. Bg2 Nc6?!

The best way to develop the black pieces is 17. ... Nb6 18. Rh1 N8d7 as it doesn't allow the Ne4-d6 idea, but Black is still under a lot of pressure.



18. f4?

Once the black rook is allowed to develop, Krush creates sufficient counterplay to ease the pressure away from her own king. After all, one of the best ways to defend is to attack!

A king in the center is a breeding ground for tactics. The bishop on d5 is what is holding together the black position. Once it is exchanged, the center falls apart, exposing the vulnerable black king: 18. Nd6+! Bxd6 19. Bxd5 exd5 (19. ... Bb4 20. Bxc6 Bxd2+ 21. Rxd2) 20. Nxf7 Kxf7 21. Qxd5+ Kg7 22. Qxc6 and White wins.

18. ... Rc8 19. a3

Less effective now is 19. Nd6+ because after 19. ... Bxd6 20. Bxd5 there is 20. ... Bb4 and the c6 knight is now protected so Bxc6 is no longer possible like before 21. c3 exd5 22. Qxd5 Rxf7 23. fxg5 Ne7 24. Qh1 with equality.

The best way to continue the attack still is removing the d5-bishop: 19. Nxf7 Kxf7 20. Nc3 Bxg2 21. Qxg2 and the position is complicated with the material imbalance and soon-to-be exposed black king. Trying to exchange the d5-bishop doesn't work: 19. Nc3? exf4 20. Bxf4 Bxg5 21. Nxd5 and Black can get away with 21. ... exd5, planning to trade queens with ... Bg5xf4 and ... Qd8-g5.

19. ... b4 20. a4?

Yip dominated the board since the opening,

but Krush has been slowly building up her position, and now she seizes the opportunity to counterattack the white king. This forces Yip to retreat her pieces to defend, decreasing her control over the center.

I don't blame Yip for not going for the risky 20. Nd6+ Bxd6 21. Bxd5 bxa3 22. Nxf7 Bb4 (22. ... exd5 23. Nxd6+ Ke7 24. Qxd5 is winning) 23. c3 (if 23. Qd3? exd5 24. Nxd8 a2!) because White's king is looking awfully open now. However, this would've been a better alternative than the game, where Krush's attack is even more dangerous. Play might continue 23. ... Qe7 (23. ... axb2+? 24. Kb1 Kxf7 25. f5 gives White a big edge) 24. Nh6 exd5 25. Nxf7 axb2+ 26. Kxb2 Qe6 27. cxb4 d4 28. Bf2 and things are very unclear since Black has sufficient counterplay with the strong center and weak king on b2. How the tables have turned! The engine says this is equal but I can easily see Black delivering a crushing blow soon, especially in a rapid game.

20. ... b3! 21. Nc3 Bxg2 22. Qxg2 exf4

It is tempting to go into this variation where Yip is forced to sacrifice her knight. However, practically, shorter time controls seem to favor the player who sacrifices material. It is much harder to defend accurately when low on time, than to attack.

Better is 22. ... Nb4! with the dual threat of ... Nb4-a2+ and ... b3xc2, forcing White to capture on b3. This allows the exchange of the knights, opens up the white king, and prevents Yip's counterplay: 23. cxb3 (23. Nxf7 Kxf7 24. fxe5 Na2+) 23. ... Na2+ 24. Kc2 exf4 25. Nxe6 fxe6 26. Bxf4 Qb6.

23. Nxf7 Kxf7 24. Bxf4 bxc2?

There's just enough time for the black king to escape to d8 after 24. ... Nb4 25. cxb3 Ke8 26. Qh2 Qb6. Once the king is momentarily safe, Black can start attacking White's weak king again. Although White definitely has some compensation for the piece, this avoids the perpetual that happened in the game.

25. Qxc2

Allowing the white queen to enter Black's kingside hints at an upcoming perpetual.

25. ... Nb4 26. Qh7+ Rg7 27. Qh5+ Kg8 28. Rh1

The black king cannot escape checks on h8 and h5.

28. ... Na2+ 29. Kc2 Nxc3 30. Qh8+ Kf7 31. Qh5+ Kg8 32. Qh8+ Kf7 33. Qh5+ Kg8, draw.

Krush's final-round victory over WIM Emily Nguyen was a very nice positional squeeze that secured her eighth U.S. Women's Championship title.

SLAV DEFENSE, EXCHANGE VARIATION [D10]

GM Irina Krush (2429)
WIM Emily Nguyen (2280)
U.S. Women's Championship (11.4),
10.24.2020

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. cxd5 cxd5 4. Bf4 Nf6 5. e3 Nc6 6. Bb5 Bf5 7. Nf3 a6 8. Bxc6+ bxc6 9. O-O e6?

Black should not block the bishop from returning to d7 yet, since the c6-pawn now becomes tough to defend. Now is a good time to exchange the f4-bishop off with 9. ... Nh5 10. Qa4 Bd7 11. Nc3 Nxf4 12. exf4 and White has an edge.

10. Nbd2

10. Qa4! took advantage of the backwards c6-pawn immediately: 10. ... Qb6 11. Rc1 Rc8 12. Ne5 and it falls 12. ... Nh5 13. Nxc6 Qb5 14. Nc3! Qxa4 (14. ... Qxc6? 15. Nxd5 Qxa4 16. Rxc8+ Kd7 17. Nb6+ is winning) 15. Nxa4 with an advantage.

10. ... Qb6 11. Nb3 Be7 12. Rc1 O-O 13. Ne5 Rfc8 14. g4!

While Black is preoccupied with the c6-pawn, Krush gains space in the kingside and provokes more weaknesses. This is an example of the principle of two weaknesses in action!

14. ... Be4 15. f3 Bg6 16. h4 h6 17. Nxb6 fxb6 18. Qc2 Kf7 19. Kh2

An interesting option is to go for the same idea as the game with Rf2-Rg2, but without placing the king on the h-file where it may get in the way and defend b2 if Black ever plays ... a5-a4: 19. Rf2 Nd7 (19. ... a5 20. Rg2 g5 21. hxb5 hxb5 22. Bxb5) 20. h5 Nf8 21. Be5.



19. ... a5

Black is holding on after 19. ... Qd8 20. Rg1 Nd7 21. h5 Nf8.

20. Rg1 g5 21. hxb5 hxb5 22. Bxb5 Rh8+ 23. Kg2 Nxb4

This regains the pawn, but at a cost. Krush pounces on the newly opened f-file and doesn't let go.

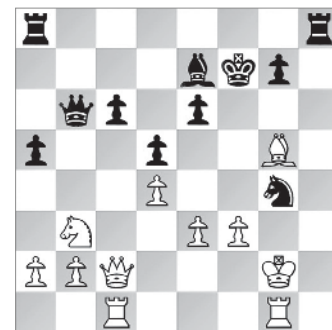
(See diagram top of next column)

24. fxb4 Bxb5 25. Rgf1+ Ke7

The alternative 25. ... Bf6 is met by 26. Qxc6! and not 26. g5? Qc7 27. Rf4 e5 with equality.

26. Qg6 Bf6 27. g5 Rag8 28. Rh1 Qb5 29. Kf3

Slightly better is 29. Kf2, which resembles the game but with the subtlety that the white king can run to e1, preventing ... Qb5-e2, i.e. 29. ... Rxh1 30. Rxh1 Rf8 31. Ke1.



29. ... Rxh1 30. Rxh1 Rf8 31. Kg3 Qe2 32. gxf6+ Rxf6

The best try to hold on is 32. ... Kd8 but to no avail: 33. Rh7 Qxe3+ 34. Kh2 Qf2+ 35. Qg2 Qf4+ 36. Qg3 and the checks run out.

33. Qxg7+ Rf7 34. Qg5+ Kd7 35. Nc5+ Kc7 36. Qe5+ Kb6 37. Qb8+, Black resigned. ♠

2020 U.S. WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP - OCTOBER 21-24, 2020

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1	GM Irina Krush	2429	*	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	½	1	1	½	8½/11
2	IM Carissa Yip	2421	½	*	½	½	0	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	8/11
3	IM Dorsa Derakhshani	2270	½	½	*	1	½	1	0	½	1	½	1	1	7½/11
4	WGM Jennifer Yu	2315	0	½	0	*	1	0	½	1	1	½	1	½	6/11
5	WIM Ashritha Eswaran	2244	0	1	½	0	*	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	5½/11
6	WGM Tatev Abrahamyan	2358	0	0	0	1	0	*	0	1	1	1	1	½	5½/11
7	WIM Emily Nguyen	2280	0	0	1	½	1	1	*	0	0	1	0	½	5/11
8	WFM Martha Samadashvili	2215	½	½	½	0	0	0	1	*	1	0	½	½	4½/11
9	IM Annie Wang	2384	½	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	*	1	0	½	4/11
10	WIM Thalia Cervantes	2311	0	0	½	½	1	0	0	1	0	*	½	½	4/11
11	WGM Sabina Foisor	2228	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	½	1	½	*	1	4/11
12	IM Anna Zatonskih	2420	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	*	3½/11

THE 2020 U.S. SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP



Benjamin wins Senior after winning Junior (2x) and U.S. Championship (3x)

By **GM JOEL BENJAMIN**

The invitation to the 2020 U.S. Senior Championship came as a welcome surprise. It seemed impossible for the Saint Louis Chess Club to make up all the tournaments canceled by the COVID-19 pandemic, but I should have known not to underestimate their resolve. The Senior, along with the other four national championships, moved online in a steady stream of entertainment and drama. All of this was pulled off in less than a month, and with a notable absence of glitches.

Most of the usual suspects returned from last year's inaugural Senior Championship, with GMs Jaan Ehlevest, Max Dlugy, and Alex Fishbein replaced by GM Patrick Wolff and two qualifiers: GM Dmitry Gurevich from the 2019 U.S. Senior Open, and FM Shelby Getz from the 2019 National Tournament of Senior State Champions. I thought my chances of winning were as good as anyone else's, but taking first by a point and a half was beyond my wildest dreams!

The first day was something of a trial, though IA Chris Bird and the other arbiters did a great job of explaining all the Zoom and Skype connections, camera placement, and other technical issues. GM Gregory Kaidanov always seems ready for anything, as we see from this ingenious effort.

KING'S INDIAN, FIANCHETTO WITHOUT C4 (A49)

GM Gregory Kaidanov (2549)
GM Patrick Wolff (2552)
U.S. Senior Championship 2020 (1),
10.17.2020

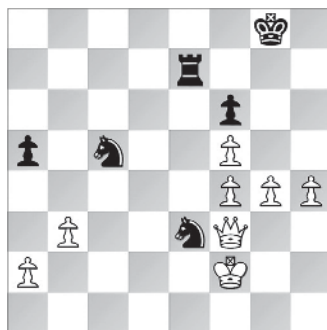
1. Nf3 Nf6 2. g3 g6 3. b3 Bg7 4. Bb2 0-0 5. Bg2 d6 6. d4 b5 7. 0-0 Bb7 8. Nbd2 Nbd7 9. c4 bxc4 10. Nxc4 c5 11. Rc1 a5 12. dxc5 Nxc5 13. Nd4 Bxg2 14. Kxg2 Qd7 15. f3 Rfb8 16. Qd2 Nd5 17. e4 Nb4 18. Bc3 Qb7 19. Rcd1 Qa6 20. h4 h5

Looking to keep the h-file closed, Wolff exposes his king to more immediate danger. 20. ... a4 would favor Black after 21. Bxb4 21. ... Bxd4 or 21. Ne3 e5 22. Ndf5 gxf5 23. Bxb4 Rxb4 24. Qxb4 Qe2+.

21. Nf5! gxf5 22. Bxg7 Kxg7 23. Qg5+ Kf8 24. Qh6+ Kg8 25. Qg5+ Kf8 26. Qh6+ Kg8 27. Nxd6 exd6 28. Rxd6 Qxd6?

It's hard to see without a computer — especially in a rapid game — that 28. ... Qa7 29. Qg5+ Kf8 30. Rh6 Ke8 offers nothing more than perpetual check. Even better would be 28. ... Qe2+ 29. Rf2 Qe1, as 30. Qg5+ Kf8 31. Rh6? Qc3 would only be dangerous for White.

29. Qxd6 Ne6 30. exf5 Rd8 31. Qe5 Nf8 32. Qe3 f6 33. Qh6 Nd5 34. Re1 Re8 35. Rxe8 Rxe8 36. Qxh5 Re2+ 37. Kf1 Re5 38. Kf2 Ne3 39. f4 Re7 40. Qf3 Nd7 41. g4 Nc5



42. Qxe3

Not strictly necessary to win, but eliminating knight fork possibilities is a practical approach in a blitz finish!

42. ... Rxe3 43. Kxe3 Na6 44. Kd4 Nb4 45. a4 Nc2+ 46. Kc5 Kf7 47. h5 Ne3 48. g5 Nxf5 49. Kb5 Nd4+ 50. Kxa5 f5 51. Kb6 Ne6 52. a5 Nxf4 53. a6 Nd5+ 54. Kb7 f4 55. a7 f3 56. a8=Q f2 57. Qa6 Ke7 58. Qe2+, Black resigned.

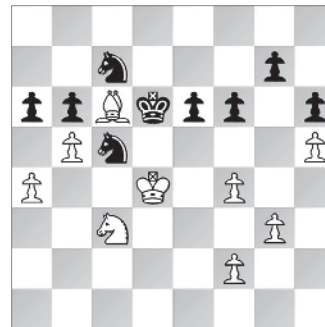
Other players had more difficulty acclimating to online rapid play. I defeated GM Alex Shabalov on time without even a scramble, and outplayed GM Alexander Goldin with the clocks running low. I resolved to play faster in the rest of my games!

After Kaidanov made a nice save in the endgame in our third-round game, I went into the second day in great position, but I couldn't stand prosperity.

ENGLISH OPENING (A11)

GM Dmitry Gurevich (2399)
GM Joel Benjamin (2506)
U.S. Senior Championship 2020 (4),
10.18.2020

1. Nf3 Nf6 2. g3 d5 3. Bg2 c6 4. 0-0 Bg4 5. c4 e6 6. d3 Nbd7 7. Be3 Bxf3 8. exf3 dxc4 9. dxc4 Bc5 10. Qe2 0-0 11. Nc3 Qe7 12. f4 Bxe3 13. Qxe3 Qc5 14. Qxc5 Nxc5 15. b4 Nd3 16. Rab1 Rad8 17. Rfd1 Rd4 18. Rd2 Rfd8 19. Rbd1 R4d7 20. b5 cxb5 21. cxb5 Nc5 22. Rxd7 Rxd7 23. Rxd7 Nfxd7 24. Kf1 Kf8 25. Ke2 Ke7 26. Ke3 Kd6 27. Kd4 Nf6 28. h3 Ne8 29. Bf3 Nc7 30. h4 h6 31. h5 f6 32. Bg2 b6 33. Bc6 a6 34. a4



The move 34. ... Nb3+ might offer some winning chances, as 35. Kc4? Na5+ collects a pawn. Almost any rational move would at least be comfortably drawn, but I got stars in my eyes and rushed a combination.

34. ... Nxa4??

Now 35. Nxa4 axb5 would likely win, but after...

35. Ne4+

Now my position is suddenly hopeless.

35. ... Ke7 36. bxa6 b5 37. a7 Nb6 38. Kc5 Na4+ 39. Kb4 Nb6 40. Nc3 Kd6 41. Bb7 Kd7 42. Nxb5 Nca8 43. Bxa8 Nxa8 44. Kc5, Black resigned.

Seniors can be accident prone, I guess. I didn't know if it was better to get back on the horse fifteen minutes later rather than have a lot of time to stew about it, but I resolved to play safely and not let things snowball out of control. Unbeknownst to me, Patrick was coming off a twelve-move loss to Getz and probably wasn't feeling his best either.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, MOSCOW VARIATION (B50)

GM Joel Benjamin (2506)

GM Patrick Wolff (2552)

U.S. Senior Championship 2020 (5),
10.18.2020

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. Bb5+ Bd7 4. Bxd7+ Nxd7 5. O-O Ngf6 6. d3 g6 7. Re1 Bg7 8. c3 O-O 9. d4 cxd4 10. cxd4 e5 11. dxe5 Nxe5 12. Nxe5 dxe5 13. Nc3 Qb6 14. Qe2 Rfc8 15. Bg5 Bf8 16. Bxf6 Qxf6 17. Nd5 Qe6 18. Rac1 Rxc1 19. Rxc1 Rc8 20. Rc4 Kg7 21. Qc2 Rxc4 22. Qxc4 Qc6



The engine correctly assesses the minor piece endgame as drawn with proper play, but I was happy to enter it. White's position is very easy to play, while human error at some point is likely for Black.

23. Qxc6 bxc6 24. Ne3 Kf6 25. Nc4 Ke6 26. Kf1 Bc5 27. Ke2 Bd4 28. f3 h5 29. b3 h4 30. h3 Bc5 31. Kd3 Bb4 32. a3 Bc5 33. b4 Be7 34. Na5 Kd6 35. Kc4 Bg5 36. Kb3 Kd7 37. Ka4

Right after I played this I felt 37. Nc4 first would be more accurate, but Black stills shows surprising resources in the variation 37. ... Ke6 38. Ka4 Bd8 39. b5 cxb5+ 40. Kxb5 Be7 41. a4 f6 42. Kc6 Bb4 43. Kb7 Bc5 44. Na5 Kd6 45. Nc6 Kd7 46. Nxa7 Bxa7! 47. Kxa7 Kc7 with equality.

37. ... Be3 38. Nc4 Bd4 39. Ka5 Kc7 40. Ka6 f6 41. a4 Bf2 42. b5 Bd4?

The game is decided only after this subtle error. Wolff had to highlight the advantage of the bishop with active play — 42. ... cxb5 43. axb5 g5! 44. Na5 Kd6! 45. Nc6 Kc5 46. Nxa7 Kc4 with White's pawns coming under attack. Black draws by one tempo after 47. Nc6 Kd3 48. b6 Bxb6 49. Kxb6 Ke2 50. Kc5 Kf2 51. Kd5 Kxg2 52. Ke6 Kxh3 (52. ... Kxf3 53. Kxf6 Kxe4 54. Kxg5) 53. Kxf6 g4!!

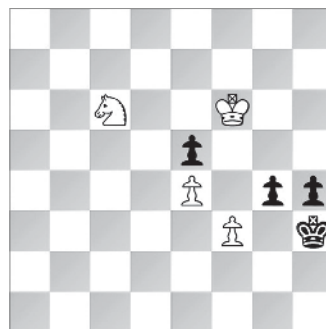
(See diagram top of next column)

After 54. fng4 Kxg4 White cannot stop the h-pawn and maintain his last pawn.

43. Na5 cxb5 44. axb5 Kb8

Now 44. ... Kd6 45. Nc6 Kc5 46. Nxa7 Kc4 47. Nc6 is too slow by one move.

45. Nc6+ Ka8 46. Nxa7! Bxa7 47. b6 f5



ANALYSIS AFTER 53. ... g4

The pretty point is 47. ... Bb8 48. b7 mate.
48. bxa7, Black resigned.

In round six I won another knight versus bishop ending against GM Alex Yermolinsky, albeit after botching the move order in the opening and falling way behind on the clock while trying to minimize the damage. I did okay with the endgame, but I could have so easily lost at various points in the game. The winner in such a strong field of wily veterans will always have a little luck on their side.

I could feel I had good chances to win another endgame — this one with rooks — against GM Igor Novikov, but was content not to risk a loss with a time pressure blunder. The draw kept a half point edge on Novikov, with a more favorable schedule left for me. I steered for a strategic draw against GM Larry Christiansen, knowing worst case would be a share of first going into the last round. The game didn't take that long, so the other games were still going on when I bolted upstairs to check out the action on my iPad.

ENGLISH OPENING (A13)

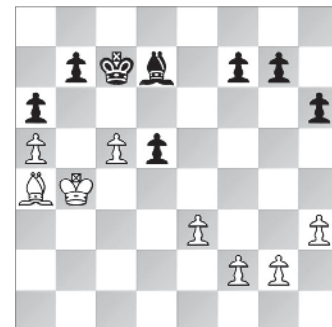
GM Alex Yermolinsky (2486)

GM Igor Novikov (2554)

U.S. Senior Championship 2020 (8),
10.19.2020

1. Nf3 d5 2. c4 e6 3. e3 Nf6 4. b3 c5 5. Bb2 Nc6 6. cxd5 exd5 7. Be2 Bd6 8. O-O

O-O 9. d4 cxd4 10. Nxd4 Re8 11. Nd2 a6 12. N2f3 Ne5 13. Nxe5 Bxe5 14. h3 Bd7 15. Qd3 Rc8 16. a4 Qe7 17. Ba3 Bd6 18. Bxd6 Qxd6 19. Bf3 h6 20. Rfc1 Rxc1+ 21. Rxc1 Rc8 22. Rxc8+ Bxc8 23. Qc3 Bd7 24. a5 Kf8 25. b4 Ke7 26. Nb3 Be6 27. Nc5 Qc7 28. Qd4 Kf8 29. Kf1 Qc6 30. Ke1 Nd7 31. Kd2 Nxc5 32. Qxc5+ Qxc5 33. bxc5 Ke7 34. Kc3 Kd7 35. Bd1 Kc6 36. Kb4 Kc7 37. Ba4 Bd7



I popped in around here with a wave of relief. White has a huge advantage, with black pawns fixed as targets for White's bishop. And this advantage is in very good hands.

38. Bc2

It's too early to liquidate: After 38. Bxd7 Kxd7 39. Kc3 Kc6 40. Kd4 Kb5 41. Kxd5 Kxa5 Black has sufficient counterplay to draw. But note that White would win if his kingside pawns were more advanced, so the pawn endgame hangs over Black's head.

38. ... Kc6 39. f4 g5?

This blunder accelerates the end, but I am sure stouter defense would have just treated us to Yermo's beautiful endgame technique. One possible line is 39. ... Bc8 40. Ba4+ Kc7 41. Be8 f6 42. g4 Be6 43. Kc3 Kd8 44. Bg6 Kc7 45. Kd4 Kc6 46. Be8+ Kc7 47. f5 Bg8 48. Ba4 Bf7 49. Bb3 Kc6 50. e4, etc.

40. fng5 hxg5 41. Ba4+ Kc7 42. Bxd7 Kxd7 43. Kc3, Black resigned.



The game viewer did not give results, but as the moves terminated here I surmised that Yermo had come through for me. After 43. Kc3 Kc6 44. Kd4 Kb5 45. g3! the outside passed h-pawn would be decisive.

I had expected to have to win the last round, but now I had a full point cushion, and I was paired against FM Shelby Getz, the lowest rated player in the competition. Getz had acquitted himself quite respectably with a win and several draws. His opening repertoire is unorthodox, to put it mildly.

I learned of his comments in the interview after day two only after the tournament. Apparently, he was looking forward to more opportunities to demonstrate the effectiveness of 1. a3. And on the last day he pulled off a neat trick:

ANDERSSEN'S OPENING (A00)

FM Shelby Getz (2298)
GM Gregory Kaidanov (2549)
U.S. Senior Championship 2020 (7),
10.19.2020

1. a3 Nf6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 e6 4. Bg5 c5 5. e4 cxd4 6. Qxd4 Nc6 7. Bb5 Be7 8. exd5 exd5 9. Bxf6 Bxf6 10. Qc5



Getz has somehow managed to reach a well-respected line in the Goring Gambit Declined with colors reversed! The extra temp (a2-a3) is not useful, but Kaidanov soon had to accept a draw from an inferior position.

ANDERSSEN'S OPENING (A00)

FM Shelby Getz (2298)
GM Joel Benjamin (2506)
U.S. Senior Championship 2020 (9),
10.19.2020

1. a3 Nf6 2. d4 g6 3. Nc3 d5 4. Bg5 Bg7 5. Qd2 h6 6. Bf4 c5 7. e3 0-0 8. 0-0-0

This was the first new move of the game. His game with Igor Novikov continued 8. dxc5 Nbd7 9. 0-0-0 Nxc5 10. Nf3 Nce4 11. Nxe4 Nxe4 12. Qxd5 Qb6, with a lost position for White. Knowing that game, I had checked possible improvements on the engine and found nothing to fear. It seemed strange for Getz to go for this line again, not because it's weird, but because it has no surprise value the second time around.

8. ... Nc6 9. f3 Nh5! 10. Be5

I was happy to play 10. dxc5 Nxf4 11. exf4 d4, but this is even easier for Black.

10. ... Nxe5 11. dxe5 Bxe5 12. Nxd5

I saw 12. Qxd5 Qxd5 13. Nxd5 e6 as a better path for White, but with zero risk for Black.

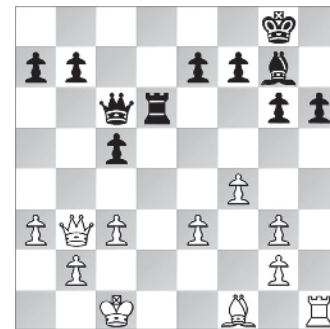
12. ... Be6 13. Ne2?! Bxd5 14. Qxd5 Qc7 15. f4? Bg7

Maurice pointed out post-game that I missed 15. ... Bxb2+ 16. Kxb2 Rad8 (the thought only occurred to me on the next move), but it would take more than that to bring me down. If anything, I was too calm here. I figured as long as I didn't risk too much or get into time pressure I couldn't possibly lose.

16. Ng3 Rad8 17. Qb3 Rxd1+

Keeping my search focused, I missed 17. ... Nxf4 18. Rxd8 Rxd8 19. exf4 Qxf4+ 20. Kb1 Rd1+ 21. Ka2 Qc1 (winning), but it's not worth it because of 19. Bc4!

18. Kxd1 Rd8+ 19. Kc1 Nxc3 20. hxc3 Rd6 21. c3 Qc6

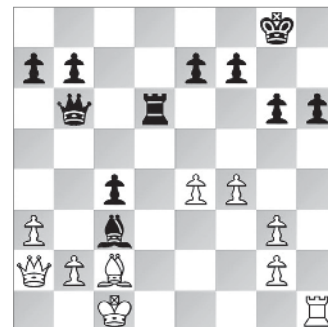


I anticipated 22. Bc4 e6 23. Rd1 Rxd1+ 24. Qxd1 Qxg2 25. g4, when Black might win only after a protracted struggle. Getz sank into thought and I realized he might decline my generous draw offer.

22. Qc2? Qd5 23. e4?! Qa2 24. Bd3 c4 25. Qb1

If 25. Be2 Bxc3! 26. bxc3 (26. Qxc3 Qa1+ 27. Kc2 Qxh1) 26. ... Qa1+ 27. Qb1 Qxc3+ 28. Qc2 Qxa3+ 29. Qb2 Qe3+ 30. Kb1 Rb6.

25. ... Qb3 26. Bc2 Qb6 27. Qa2 Bxc3



28. Rd1

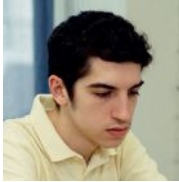
It's all over after 28. bxc3 Qe3+ 29. Kb2 Rb6+ 30. Ka1 Qxc3+.

28. ... Qe3+ 29. Kb1 Rxd1+ 30. Bxd1 Qd3+ 31. Bc2 Qf1+ 32. Bd1 Qxd1, mate.

Congratulations to the other winners! I was especially happy to see my former student John Burke triumph and Irina Krush come back from her coronavirus ordeal. We all look forward to these tournaments returning to in-person play, but the combined online championships did have some positives.

The spectator experience was as good as it's ever been, and the gathering of all the groups, even if for just the opening and closing, had a pleasant feel to it. At the opening, GM Hikaru Nakamura related that many of the senior players inspired him when he was in his early years. At the closing, GM Wesley So (who I have never actually met) said I was his favorite player growing up. It's possible to reach out and touch each other, even while we are all forced apart. ♠

BURKE TAKES 2020 JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP



After “regulation” tie, he defeats Xiong in Armageddon playoff

By **GM JOHN BURKE**

This year marked the third time I’ve competed in the U.S. Junior Championship, and it was certainly the most unique of my entries. The online format and G/25+5 rapid time control took some getting used to, but we youngsters grew up playing online, so I suspect that most of us weren’t too far out of our element. I was especially pleased this year when I saw that GMs Jeffery Xiong and Sam Sevia were participating, as they usually skip this event, and I’m always glad to play the strongest competition I can.

Now that I’ve had time to look back at all the games from the tournament, including those of my competitors, I think the quality of our play was decent under the circumstances. Sure, there were “time scramble” moments with blunders that would never happen in classical games, but there were many interesting ideas seen as well.

I was particularly impressed by Sevia, who recovered from a poor start to win his last four games. These things are common in rapid chess, which more than anything is dictated by your form and ability to get into a rhythm. It was not what we’re used to for the U.S. Junior Championship, but to be frank, I was grateful that this tournament was happening at all.

I was satisfied with my performance on the first day, despite the fact that in round one I bungled a very promising position against Xiong and went on to lose. I won’t lie — at that moment I felt very pessimistic about my chances for the rest of the tournament, since I expected Xiong to rack up a large score against the rest of the field, and I was already a point off the pace. I won my next two games to finish the day on a plus score, intentionally sidelining my knight against IM Joshua Sheng and using years-old preparation in the French Tarrasch against IM Christopher Yoo.

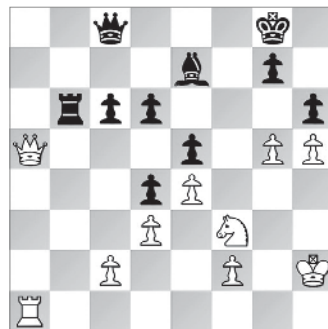
After a theoretical draw against IM Bryce Tiglian to start the second day, it was time for the crucial game against Sevia, the number two seed in the field.

ACCURACY MATTERS

GM John M Burke (2538)

GM Samuel Sevia (2660)

U.S. Junior Championship (5), 10.14.2020



POSITION AFTER 31. Qa5

Sevia has to play accurately to survive. I have the pleasant option of being able to decide between opening the g-file with g5xh6, or creating back rank problems for him with g5-g6.

31. ... Rb8

Black has a neat saving idea with 31. ... Qg4! 32. Qxb6 Qf4+! 33. Kg2 Qg4+ 34. Kf1 Qxf3 and he should have enough to deliver a perpetual here.

32. Qa2+ Kh8

32. ... d5!! looks insane, but once I take the pawn with e4xd5 he has ... Qc8-f5 in many lines. Play continues 33. exd5 Kh8 34. dxc6 e4! which cuts off the queen’s ability to defend my knight from d5. After 35. dxe4 Qg4 it’s still super sharp, but it seems like Black is holding his own.

33. gxf6 gxf6 34. Rg1 Qf8 35. Qe6

Now the attack is at full steam, and Sevia makes a decisive mistake.

35. ... Qf4+?

Sevia could have fought on with 35. ... Rb2.

36. Rg3

With the bishop undefended, he is forced to transition to a losing endgame.

36. ... Qf6 37. Qxf6+ Bxf6 38. Rg6 Rf8 39. Rxh6+ Kg7 40. Rg6+ Kf7 41. Kg3 Rb8 42. Kg4 Rb1 43. Kf5 Be7 44. h6 Rh1 45. Rg7+ Kf8 46. Rh7 Ke8 47. Ke6 Bf8 48. Ng5 Rg1 49. Ra7, Black resigned.

It was after this game that I felt extremely good about my chances to win the tournament, for the first time since round one. I rounded out the day with a draw against FM Christopher Shen, while Xiong lost to Sevia. This meant that Jeffery and I would be tied for the lead with three rounds to go at 4/6.

My mindset was relatively calm before the last day. I told myself that if I was at least in contention before the final round, I would be happy. If Jeffery happens to win all his games and I don’t, what can I do? I can only control my own destiny, so there’s no point worrying about other players. It just adds to the stress.

Things got off to a rocky start against GM Nicolas Checa, as he achieved a winning bishops of opposite colors endgame. Checa stumbled as he tried to force matters prematurely, giving me an escape hatch to make a draw. With that stroke of luck behind me, now it was crunch time — Jeffery had taken a half point lead over me. I knew it was do-or-die playing White against GM Brandon Jacobson. After achieving a nice position from the opening, my technique wasn’t perfect, but I kept the game under control and eventually delivered.

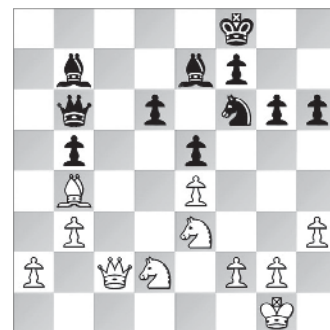
Xiong managed to win a drawn rook ending against Christopher Yoo, and he had the white pieces against Tiglian in the last round, so it was clear to me that a draw and a loss for me would probably amount to the same thing. I was black against IM Praveen Balakrishnan, who is not an easy player to beat, but I figured I’d just play the Sicilian and take it from there.

SMALL TACTICS

IM Praveen Balakrishnan (2485)

GM John M Burke (2538)

U.S. Junior Championship (9), 10.15.2020



POSITION AFTER 26. ... Kf8

27. Kf1

The problem for White is that it’s not easy for him to make a neutral move here. The king on f1 will prove to be a target a few moves down the road.

27. ... Qd4 28. Bc3 Qc5 29. b4 Qc6

Everything comes with tempo. My threat of ... Nf6xe4 forces him to weaken the g1-a7 diagonal, which I immediately occupy with my bishop.

30. f3 Bd8 31. Qd3 Bb6 32. Nb3 Nh5

Objectively, I should have kept control of the d5 square, but I was too impatient to create threats and keep him under pressure, especially as he was down to less than 20 seconds.

33. Na5??

The king on f1 finally becomes a factor. Balakrishnan is okay after 33. Nd5 but defending the rest of the game with little time would still have been a difficult task.

33. ... Bxa5 34. bxa5 b4, White resigned.

The threat of ... Bb7-a6 wins a piece and the game.

After my game finished, I checked in on Xiong, who I saw was on the worse end of a rook endgame, but it looked like he would be able to hold. It wasn't until after the tournament (and this is probably for the best) that I realized that Jeffery had in fact been dead lost earlier in this game. If I knew that at the time, it would have psyched me out; as it happened, I was thrilled to make it to a playoff. Sometimes ignorance is bliss!

The playoff format was two games of G/10+2, and if the score was still tied, then we'd play an Armageddon game. I didn't do any preparation in the limited time I had between games; I figured that it was more important to give my eyes a rest rather than try to predict his opening in ten minutes. As luck would have it, as White in the first game I got a Rossolimo line on the board that I had prepared very recently, but not for Jeffery.

I couldn't remember the details very well, so I convinced myself that with the faster time control it was more important to pick a move quickly rather than continue to waste time analyzing. This strategy backfired almost immediately, as I played my knight to the wrong square and had to defend a grim position. Being worse within 15 moves as White was definitely not part of the plan, but I buckled down, found a few tricks to stay afloat, and suddenly he let me slip out of the bind and draw.

It wasn't just the fact that I'd saved the game that surprised me, it was the way I had gone from tied down to completely fine in the span of a couple moves. I wasn't used to Jeffery giving away those positions so easily, and I got the sense that if I didn't crack, I'd have a real shot to win this thing.

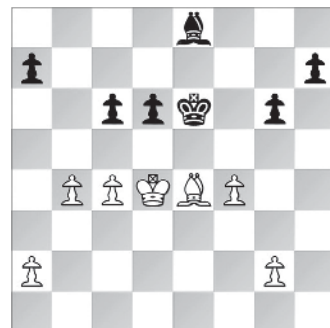
The second playoff game was nervy, as I had to defend a bishop endgame that apparently



was only lost for me at one moment early on, based on a subtlety that isn't easy to understand with little time.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

GM Jeffery Xiong (2709)
 GM John M Burke (2538)
 U.S. Junior Championship playoff (2),
 10.15.2020



POSITION AFTER 31. f4

31. ... h6?

Trying to play ... g6-g5 and get my pawns off the light squares looks natural, but this gives White a chance to advance his pawns.

32. c5

I want to play 32. a4! c5+, but it doesn't work as my g6-pawn hangs at the end: (32. ... Kd7 33. a5 Kc7 34. g4 looks like a win for White.) 33. bxc5 dxc5+ 34. Kxc5 Bxa4 35. Bxg6 and White wins.

32. ... g5

Xiong's win is gone, and I'm able to hold with passive defense.

33. fxg5 hxg5 34. Bf3 Ke7 35. a4 Bd7 36. Be4 Ke6 37. Bd3 Ke7 38. Be2 Be8 39. Bg4 Bf7 40. Bf3 Be8 41. Be4 Bd7 42. Bd3 Be8 43. Ba6 Bd7 44. Bb7 Be8 45. Ke4 Bd7 46. Ba6 Be6 47. Kd4 Bd7 48. Bc4 Be8 49. Bd3 Bd7 50. Be4 Be8 51. Bf3 Bd7 52. Be2 Be8 53. Bd3 Bd7, draw.

It was all going to be decided with Armageddon, where White would have five minutes, and Black would have four with draw odds. There was no increment. I won the random draw and chose Black, which I thought was worth the time disadvantage.

At the start of the game it looked like it was turning into a disaster for me, as I was playing both badly and slowly in a double rook ending, and I found myself down a pawn, but I was able to create counterplay and harass his king with checks. As the time was ticking, he hesitated at a few crucial moments, even spending 30 seconds on one move, and I began to realize he was not putting the position away in time.

Our clocks kept running, and it was clear that his passed pawns were going to make a touchdown, while my rook checks were going nowhere. Given the time control I wasn't really caring about the objective evaluation of the position at this point, as I understood that playing quickly was more important. He was able to queen his pawns but ran out of time in the end, and I won the game and the title.

Needless to say, I could never have imagined winning the U.S. Junior Championship in this manner, and if I'm honest, my main satisfaction from the tournament came from the main event, rather than the playoff. After losing the first round, I was able to score 6½/8, and with the exception of a game or two, I was pleased with the quality of my play. Being able to prevail in the playoff was just icing on the cake.

I'd like to thank Rex Sinquefield, Dr. Jeanne Sinquefield, and everyone at the Saint Louis Chess Club for this wonderful event. I'm sure it must've been a pain to organize, but it ran just about as smoothly as it could've under the circumstances. I'd also like to thank GM Susan Polgar, FM Paul Truong, and my teammates at Webster for their help before and during the tournament. I look forward to playing in the upcoming U.S. Championship, and I'm still holding out hope that we'll be able to gather in person! ♠

YIP WINS THIRD CONSECUTIVE U.S. GIRLS' JUNIOR

Wang Finishes Second, Wu Third

By **WIM THALIA CERVANTES**

This was not my first year participating in the U.S. Girls' Junior Championship. But it was my first experience playing in such a significant tournament online with a rapid time control, and I suspect I am not the only one who experienced an adjustment this year. We have all had to sharpen our tactical skills, our time scramble skills, and even our mouse handling skills to be more competitive.

Personally, I am glad that the most important chess tournaments in the United States were not canceled and that I was invited to play in the U.S. Girls' Junior and U.S. Women's Championships. For me, I have to say that it does feel a lot less real to be playing on a computer than on an actual chess board with your opponent in front of you. The tension is missing, and I think that is a huge factor, as chess players often use psychology during their games.

During the U.S. Junior Girls' Championship this year I was not exactly sure what to expect, as I had never played a tournament like that before. The set up was nine games (three per day for three days) with a time control of G/25+5 and around 10 to 15 minutes between the games. Usually in a classical time control, one has 90 minutes plus 30 more after the game reaches move forty, and a 30 second increment on each move, so this means that the new rapid format forces us to be faster and more practical.

Going into the tournament, I definitely wanted to win it, but I knew there was also a lot of tough competition. For the final standings, the top three winners were (in place order) IM Carissa Yip, IM Annie Wang, and WIM Rochelle Wu. Going into the event, Yip and Wang were favorites according to their rankings and titles, but we also had to keep an eye on WGM Jennifer Yu, as she had won the U.S. Women's Championship in 2019. And in the end I finished tied for fourth place with her.

Here's the battle between Yip and Yu. It was

a crazy game with chances for both sides, but eventually Yip took the full point.

RUY LOPEZ, ARCHANGEL VARIATION (C78)

IM Carissa Yip (2421)

WGM Jennifer Yu (2315)

U.S. Girls' Junior Championship (7), 10.11.2020

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. O-O b5 6. Bb3 Bb7 7. Re1 Bc5 8. c3 d6 9. a4 O-O 10. d4 Bb6 11. Bg5 h6 12. Bh4 g5!?



This may look like a really scary move to make, and right now, I think it is! Usually when Black makes this move it is to get rid of the annoying pin of White's bishop, forcing it to go back to g3 while we gain some space on the kingside. In considering whether to sacrifice the knight on g5 to open the king's defenses, or any kind of attacking sacrifice really, there are usually some general factors that can help us with our decision. The main consideration, of course, is how fast the rest of White's pieces can join the attack, and then we start considering smaller elements like, "How long does it take for the queenside knight to join the attack?" or "Can my rooks get into the game?" I am sure both players had all of these kinds of questions in mind going into the variation.

Sometimes Black prefaces the ... g7-g5 push by exchanging on d4: 12. ... exd4 13. cxd4 (13.



WIM THALIA CERVANTES

axb5 axb5 14. Rxa8 Bxa8 15. Na3 dxc3 16. bxc3 g5 and here the knight sac doesn't work, as evidenced by Sjugirov's correct decision against Matlakov: 17. Bg3 Re8 18. Qb1 Ne5 19. Nxe5 dxe5 20. Nxb5 h5 21. h4 Ng4 22. hxc5 Qxg5 23. Qc1 Qf6, White resigned GM Sjugirov (2675)-GM Matlakov (2685) Cheliabinsk 2020) 13. ... g5 14. Nxc5 hxc5 15. Bxc5 Nxd4 16. Bd5 Ne6 17. Bh4 Bxd5 18. exd5 Ng7 19. Qf3 Re8 20. Nc3 Rxe1+ 21. Rxe1 Bd4 and here GM Niklas Huschenbeth chose 22. Ne4 in a 2019 draw against GM Sam Shankland, although there are other options like 22. h3 and 22. Re4.

13. Nxc5 hxc5 14. Bxc5 Kg7?

This is the usual move after the sacrifice on g5, but here it is a bit slow. Much more effective is 14. ... exd4! transposing to the line shown above.

15. Re3!

The rook is ready to swing to the kingside to help the attack and put more pressure on the pinned f6-knight.

15. ... Ne7

After 15. ... Rh8? 16. Rf3 none of the black pieces are in time to defend the knight.

16. Rg3

Maybe this move gives Black enough time to defend, but practically speaking it is very tough to hold on.

Perhaps better is 16. a5 Ba7 17. Rh3 Ng6 (17. ... Rh8? 18. Bxf6+ Kxf6 19. Qf3+ leads to mate; and after 17. ... Bxe4 18. Bh6+ Kg8 19. Nd2 Bg6 20. Qf3 Black can't defend everything at once on the kingside.) 18. Qf3 Rh8 19. Rxh8 Nxh8 20. Qh3 and White wins.

16. ... Bxe4 17. Qd2?

This move shifts the evaluation, as it allows Black to cover the king with the bishop. It's hard to be completely accurate in a rapid game!

17. ... Rg8?

Now White regains her chances. Yu had to play 17. ... Bg6! 18. Bh6+ Kg8 19. Bxf8 Qxf8 and Black has withstood the attack.

18. Bxf6+ Kxf6 19. Qh6+ Bg6

Relatively best is 19. ... Rg6 20. Qh4+ Kg7 21. Qxe4 giving White a big edge, while 19. ... Ng6 20. a5 (this can be played in a lot of variations here) 20. ... Ba7 21. Nd2 Bc6 22. dxe5+ dxe5 23. Rd1 Qe8 24. Nf3 leaves Black in serious trouble.

20. Nd2 d5 21. Re1 Ke6 22. Rxe5+

The position is really tough to defend for Black.

22. ... Kd7 23. Rge3 Re8 24. Bxd5

24. Qh3+ f5 25. Bxd5 would have been an improvement over the game continuation.

24. ... c6 25. Bf3 Nf5

More resilient was 25. ... Bc7 but the position is already lost: 26. Rxe7+! Rxe7 27. Bg4+ f5 (27. ... Kd6 28. Qf4+ Kd5 29. Bf3+ Re4 30. Bxe4+ Bxe4 31. Qxf7+ Kd6 32. Nxe4 mate is a pretty mate in the middle of the board.) 28. Qxg6 fxe4 29. Qxg4+ Ke8 30. Ne4 and the knight is threatening to jump to f6 while the black king is stuck in the center.

26. Rxf5! Rxe3

It's mate in one after 26. ... Bxf5? 27. Qxc6 mate.

27. fxe3 Bxf5 28. Qxc6+ Ke7 29. Qxa8

White has four pawns more in a simple endgame. It's more than enough to win.

29. ... bxa4 30. Nc4 Bd3 31. Nxb6 Qxb6 32. Qb7+ Qxb7 33. Bxb7 Kd6 34. Kf2 f5 35. Ke1 Kc7 36. Bd5 Kd6 37. c4 a5 38. Kd2 Bf1 39. h4, Black resigned.

My shared fourth place was a fair result, and it mirrored my ranking in the field before the tournament started. I think I could have done better, but all in all, I think it was entirely fine. The tournament was a fun experience, and I even played a few good games. Here's one of my most interesting ones.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED, RAGOZIN DEFENSE (D38)

WIM Thalia Cervantes (2311)
Ruiyang Yan (2093)
U.S. Girls' Junior Championship (4),
10.10.2020

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. Nc3 Bb4 5. Bg5 h6 6. Bxf6 Qxf6 7. Qa4+ Nc6 8. e3 Bd7

The main move is 8. ... 0-0 and it's what I expected from my opponent. 9. Rc1 (9. Be2 is also a move) 9. ... Qg6 and here the idea is to not allow the white bishop to come out. A sample line: 10. Qc2 Qxc2 11. Rxc2 Rd8 12. a3 Bf8 13.

Nb5 Rd7 14. cxd5 exd5 15. Bd3 has been played by strong grandmasters, and I probably would have played this way in the game.

9. Qb3

I liked the move I played more, but 9. Qc2 is an option. In the game Moradiabadi-Blatny there were tactical tricks that favored White: 9. ... dxc4 10. Bxc4 0-0 11. 0-0 e5? (better is 11. ... Bd6) 12. Nd5! Qd8 13. Nxe5 Nxe5 14. Nxb4 (14. dxe5! is an improvement) 14. ... Nxc4 15. Qxc4 c6 16. Nd3 and White won in 27 moves in GM Moradiabadi (2549)-GM Blatny (2344), Las Vegas 2018.

9. ... dxc4 10. Bxc4 0-0 11. 0-0 Qe7 12. Be2

Not allowing any ... Nc6-a5 ideas.

12. ... Bd6 13. Ne4



13. ... Nd8?!

This is a strange move, and in general one should be skeptical about making moves that are not pretty. The position is a little uncomfortable to play for Black here since White has a space advantage, so maybe finding the right plan was hard.

A possible alternative is 13. ... a5 14. Rfd1 a4 15. Qc4 e5 as it feels like ... e6-e5 is the pawn break she should play.

14. Nxd6

This move is not technically precise, because I am making trades while having the space advantage. In general, when you have a space advantage you want to keep pieces on the board, and especially the minor pieces. As this was a rapid game, I just wanted to get rid of my opponent's pair of bishops so they would not become an issue in the future. Moves like Rf1-c1, Ra1-c1 or Nf3-e5 were all better.

14. ... Qxd6

If she takes with pawn, we get in an almost symmetrical pawn structure, but my pieces are better located and I already dominate the c-file, i.e. 14. ... cxd6 15. Rfc1 Bc6 16. Nd2 Bd5 17. Qd3.

15. Ne5 c6?!

This is another move that I found dubious, as it shuts down the only square available to the d8-knight, and limits the d7-bishop's

possibilities. It keeps the position closed but makes White's space advantage even greater.

Looking for trades with 15. ... Nc6 16. Nxd7 Qxd7 17. Qxb7 Rab8 18. Qa6 Rxb2 19. Bf3 would have been a better option for Black but White is still better here.

16. Rac1 f6

I am guessing my opponent disliked the limited space for her pieces so she played 16. ... f6 with the idea of getting the knight out. The tradeoff is that it weakens the e6-pawn and the g6-square in the process. 16. ... Be8 first would have been better so there are less weaknesses after ... f7-f6.

17. Nd3

A better option was 17. Ng6 Rf7 18. f4.

17. ... Rb8 18. Rfd1 Be8 19. Nc5 Bf7 20. a4

Restricting possibilities on the queenside.

20. ... Qe7 21. a5 Rc8 22. Bc4 Re8 23. Qc2 b6 24. axb6 axb6 25. Nd3?!

Better was 25. Ne4 f5 26. Ng3 Nb7 27. Ba6 tying down Black's pieces.

25. ... Rc7 26. Nf4

I think at around this point we were both trying to move quickly, as we were under three or four minutes on our clocks.

26. ... Nb7 27. Ba2 f5

I think Yan needed to try 27. ... Rec8 to try and break with ... c6-c5 as soon as possible.

28. Nd3 Nd6 29. Ne5 Rec8 30. Qb3 b5 31. h3 Kf8?!

Another strange move, but we are low on time and the increment is only five seconds so we can't afford to think much!

After 31. ... c5 32. dxc5 Rxc5 33. Ng6! White has this nice idea: 33. ... Qf6 34. Rxc5 Rxc5 35. Qa3 with a big advantage.

32. Rc2 Qe8 33. Rdc1 g5?

Black is weakening her position too much. Relatively best was another waiting move like 33. ... Kg8.

34. Qb4 Ke7

The king on e7 is under a lot of pressure, and it makes it really easy to play for White. With the rapid time control we have to move fast so there is not much time to find the killer blow, but making natural aggressive moves works.

35. f3

Trying to open the center.

35. ... Bg6

Black has no chance after 35. ... Qf8 36. e4 Be8 37. Qb3 Qg8 38. Re1.

36. Rc5 Kf6 37. Nxb6 Kxb6 38. Re5!

Usually if there are too many weaknesses in the opponent's position sooner or later there will be simple tactics that we need to spot.

38. ... Nc4 39. Bxc4 bxc4 40. Qxc4 Kf6 41. e4 f4 42. Rc5 Rb7 43. Qc3


Easier is 43. d5 exd5 44. exd5 Kg7 45. b4.

43. ... Kg6 44. d5 exd5 45. exd5 Rcb8 46. Rxc6+ Kh5

Black is busted after 46. ... Kh7 47. Re1 Qf8 48. Ree6.

47. Qf6 Qf8 48. Qe6 Rxb2 49. Qg4, mate.

I think overall this event was a learning experience for the players, as this type of setup is a product of the current times and we are not very used to it. I think the Saint

Louis Chess Club, US Chess, and all the individual organizers and staff involved did a great job of making these events possible for us. Everything was smoothly run, well organized, and easy to understand. The arbiters made everything clear for us and there were not any major hiccups at any moment. I am very thankful I was able to participate! 

2020 U.S. SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP - OCTOBER 17-19, 2020

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	GM Joel Benjamin	2506	*	0	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	6½/9
2	GM Dmitry Gurevich	2399	1	*	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	1	5/9
3	GM Gregory Kaidanov	2549	½	½	*	½	½	1	0	1	½	½	5/9
4	GM Igor Novikov	2554	½	½	½	*	½	½	0	1	½	1	5/9
5	GM Larry Christiansen	2567	½	½	½	½	*	0	1	0	1	½	4½/9
6	GM Patrick Wolff	2552	0	1	0	½	1	*	½	1	½	0	4½/9
7	GM Alexander Yermolinsky	2486	0	½	1	1	0	½	*	0	½	½	4/9
8	GM Alexander Shabalov	2528	0	½	0	0	1	0	1	*	1	½	4/9
9	GM Alexander Goldin	2542	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	*	1	3½/9
10	FM Shelby Getz	2298	0	0	½	0	½	1	½	½	0	*	3/9

2020 U.S. JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP - OCTOBER 13-15, 2020

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	GM John Burke	2538	*	0	1	1	1	½	1	1	½	½	6½/9
2	GM Jeffery Xiong	2709	1	*	0	½	1	1	1	1	½	½	6½/9
3	GM Samuel Sevian	2660	0	1	*	0	½	1	1	1	1	½	6/9
4	GM Brandon Jacobson	2487	0	½	1	*	0	½	1	½	1	1	5½/9
5	IM Christopher Yoo	2455	0	0	½	1	*	0	½	1	1	1	5/9
6	GM Nicolas Checa	2527	½	0	0	½	1	*	0	0	1	1	4/9
7	IM Praveen Balakrishnan	2485	0	0	0	0	½	1	*	1	1	½	4/9
8	IM Joshua Sheng	2474	0	0	0	½	0	1	0	*	½	1	3/9
9	FM Christopher Shen	2354	½	½	0	0	0	0	0	½	*	1	2½/9
10	IM Bryce Tiglon	2393	½	½	½	0	0	0	½	0	0	*	2/9

2020 U.S. GIRLS' JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP - OCTOBER 9-11, 2020

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	IM Carissa Yip	2421	*	1	1	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	7½/9
2	IM Annie Wang	2384	0	*	½	1	1	0	½	1	1	1	6/9
3	WIM Rochelle Wu	2029	0	½	*	0	1	½	½	1	1	1	5½/9
4	WGM Jennifer Yu	2315	0	0	1	*	1	1	½	0	½	1	5/9
5	WIM Thalia Cervantes	2311	0	0	0	0	*	1	1	1	1	1	5/9
6	WIM Emily Nguyen	2280	½	1	½	0	0	*	½	1	1	0	4½/9
7	Ruiyang Yan	2093	½	½	½	½	0	½	*	0	½	1	4/9
8	WFM Sophie Morris-Suzuki	2043	½	0	0	1	0	0	1	*	0	0	2½/9
9	WFM Martha Samadashvili	2215	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	1	*	½	2½/9
10	Alice Lee	1967	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	½	*	2½/9



MAKE YOUR MOVE!

JANUARY 2021 | FM CARSTEN HANSEN

This month's puzzles are mostly from online events, including a couple from the U.S. Championships. Coincidentally, all of the puzzles are from Black's perspective.

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 1-2 weeks to see if you can now solve it. That way you gradually expand your tactical vision, and it will be more likely that you will spot tactics as they occur in your own games. Whatever you do, do not use an engine to solve the puzzles, as you will only cheat yourself out of improving your game.

TACTIC I.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC II.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC III.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC IV.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC V.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC VI.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC VII.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC VIII.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC IX.



BLACK TO MOVE

POSITION 1: Loose pieces
 POSITION 2: 1-2 combination
 POSITION 3: Kingside weakness

POSITION 4: Ill-considered adventure
 POSITION 5: One pin, two pins
 POSITION 6: One run, one destination

POSITION 7: The weakest point
 POSITION 8: Rattling the right ones loose
 POSITION 9: Precision incision



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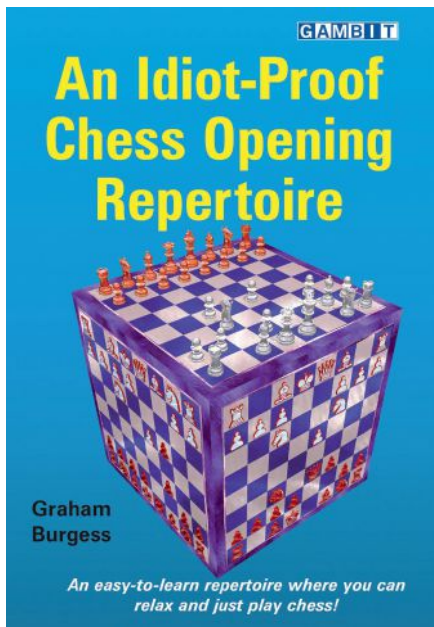
See TLA section of this issue
for complete details.



A One-Stop Shop

Ignore the title: FM Graham Burgess' book is a smart buy

By IM JOHN WATSON



Graham Burgess has been one of the major figures in the chess publishing world over the past 30 years. As an author, he wrote some of the first cutting edge opening works on the Alekhine Defense and Slav, and co-authored two classic volumes on the King's Indian Defense with John Nunn. In 1997, he co-founded Gambit Publications with Nunn and Murray Chandler. Gambit became the leading company for quality chess books by titled players, with Burgess serving as editor for around 300 chess books over the years. He has written 30 himself, covering a range of subjects including major bestsellers including *The Mammoth Book of Chess*, *Nunn's Chess Openings*, several books on chess puzzles and traps, and three books in the popular "Chess for Kids" series.

Burgess' new book, *An Idiot-Proof Chess Opening Repertoire*, offers the reader a complete repertoire for White and Black. Normally repertoire books are for one color, and in the case of Black, they are often limited to defense against a particular first move (e.g., 1. e4 or 1. d4). Assembling a complete repertoire covering both colors in one volume requires an efficient choice of variations which should be both practical and easy to understand.

Burgess explains that "my aim was to construct a repertoire that avoids excessive simplification as well as overly static or symmetrical structures. We'll also sidestep 'megatheory' and all-or-nothing tactical shootouts where a single slip will lead to instant loss... So how should one 'idiot-proof' a repertoire? For the Black openings in this book, I was particularly looking for lines that give White little choice and that feature an early pawn Exchange that leads to an asymmetrical structure and few exchanges of pieces. I also wanted lines that avoid long-term 'problem pieces', such as a bad bishop inside a pawn chain. Against 1. e4, the Scandinavian (1. ... d5 2. exd5 Qxd5) was therefore an obvious choice."

Let's take a look at one of his main lines:

1. e4 d5 2. exd5 Qxd5 3. Nc3 Qd6

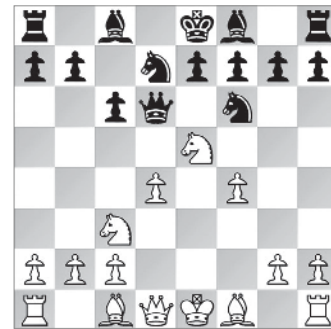
Burgess comments: "After remaining in the shadows for a long time, this move has emerged in the 21st century as a reliable option and the main line of the whole opening. Perhaps it was neglected because White can 'gain further time' by attacking the queen with his minor pieces. However, this gain of time is normally a mirage since those pieces are usually ones that have already moved and/or arrive on squares where they are not stable and will have to move again."

4. d4 Nf6 5. Nf3 c6 6. Ne5

This is by far the most popular move here (and the most successful one), eliminating Black's ... Bg4 and preparing either Bc1-f4 or f2-f4, among other ideas. Against other moves, Black's usual plan is ... Bc8-f5 or ... Bc8-g4 followed by ... e7-e6, with smooth development.

6. ... Nbd7 7. Bf4

7. f4 is a very dangerous move which has discouraged Black from playing this line.



This intends 7. ... e6 8. g4! or 7. ... Nb6 8. g4!, both of which have tremendous winning records for White. Instead, Burgess recommends 7. ... a6!, the merits of which he explains as follows: "Despite being virtually untested, this may well be the correct move. One key idea is that in some lines Black would like to play ... c6-c5, gaining central counterplay and undermining the support for the e5-knight. With b5 covered, this move is far more likely to work. Meanwhile, Black keeps options of set-ups with either ... e7-e6 or ... g7-g6, and the fact that he hasn't yet plumped for one or the other makes it harder for White to find moves that are equally useful against both — and that don't fall foul of ... c6-c5."

After 7. ... a6, White has numerous options, but a very critical one is 8. g4 (8. Be2 e6, when 9. g4 isn't as dangerous after 9. ... Qc7 10. g5 Nd5) 8. ... Qc7 9. g5 Nd5 10. Ne4 (10. Nxd5 cxd5 11. Bd3 Nxe5 12. fxe5 Bh3!; 10. Qf3 Nxc3 11. bxc3?! Nxe5 12. fxe5 Be6) 10. ... Nxe5 11. fxe5 Bf5 12. Bg2 0-0-0 13. 0-0 e6 14. Qe2 c5 (14. ... Qb6!? 15. Qf2 Nc7 16. c3 h6 is an interesting alternative) 15. c4! Nb6 16. Nd6+ Rxd6! 17. exd6 Bxd6 with interesting compensation for the Exchange. Burgess continues the analysis of this position for another 10 moves to illustrate where both sides' chances lie.

7. ... Nd5 8. Nxd5

8. Nxf7?? loses to 8. ... Qe6+; if 8. Nxd7?! Nxf4; and after 8. Bg3 Nxc3 9. bxc3 Nxe5 10. Bxe5 Qd5 is equal.

8. ... Qxd5

Here White has to get his pieces out while Black completes his development.



9. Be2!?

Sacrificing a pawn. The main alternative is 9. Nf3 Nb6 (9. ... Nf6 10. Be2 Bf5 probably favors White slightly after 11. c3, but Black stands solidly, and if White plays the routine 11. 0-0? instead, Black has 11. ... Qe4! with a double attack on f4 and c2) 10. Be2 Bf5! 11. Bg3 (11. 0-0? Qe4!) 11. ... e6 (or 11. ... Qa5+ 12. c3 Qa4!?) 12. 0-0 Be7 13. a4 a5 14. Ne5 Qd8 15. c3 Nd5 16. Bf3 Ra6. White doubtless has a small theoretical advantage here, but Black has no weaknesses and the player who plays best tends to win such positions.

9. ... Qxg2 10. Bf3 Qh3 11. Qe2

White has some compensation for the pawn. This looks dangerous, but after

11. ... Qf5

Black should be fine; for example, 12. Nd3 (12. Bg3 Nxe5 13. Bxe5! f6 14. Bg3 Qe6!) 12. ... g6 13. 0-0-0 Nb6 14. Rhe1 (14. Kb1 Bg7 15. Rhe1 0-0! 16. Qxe7 Bxd4) 14. ... Qe6!. Now White has to exchange queens, and 15. Qxe6 Bxe6 16. Nc5 Bd5 17. Bg4 f5 18. Bh3 0-0-0 gives the first player only limited pressure for the pawn.

Against 1. d4 Burgess suggests playing a clever hybrid version of the Queen's Gambit Accepted and Slav Defense. If I were forced to take only one line from this book to combine with the rest of my normal repertoire, I would definitely consider this one:

1. d4 d5 2. c4 dxc4 3. Nf3

Both 3. e3 e5 and 3. e4 e5 are main lines of the Queen's Gambit Accepted whose theoretical status is fine for Black. Unlike most of the repertoire, these lines can get very tactical, so you need to put a fair amount of time into learning the details, but they are well established and surprises are unlikely.

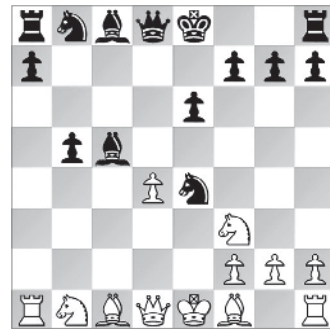
3. ... c6

Here's the clever part: by this means Black avoids the many complex main lines arising after 3. ... Nf6 4. e3 and 5. Bxc4, the analysis of which can fill an entire book.

4. e3

Black holds on to the pawn after 4. e4 b5. White can recover it, but Black will catch up

in development in the meantime. One main line runs 5. a4 e6 6. axb5 (6. b3?! Bb4+! 7. Bd2 Bxd2+ 8. Qxd2 [8. Nbx2d2?? c3 9. Nb1 b4] 8. ... cxb3 9. axb5 Nf6!) 6. ... cxb5 7. b3 Nf6! 8. bxc4 (8. e5 Ne4! 9. bxc4 Bb4+) 8. ... Nxe4 9. c5 Bxc5!



10. Bxb5+ (10. dxc5 Qxd1+ 11. Kxd1 Nxf2+ 12. Ke1 Nxh1 13. Bxb5+ Bd7) 10. ... Bd7 11. Bxd7+ Qxd7 12. dxc5 Qxd1+ 13. Kxd1 Nxf2+ 14. Ke2 Nxh1, a position that leads to equality with best play.

4. ... Be6!

The point. A number of strong grandmasters have this position in their repertoire. White has numerous approaches here and you'll have to put some work into learning how to respond to each. Here's an example of a particularly critical line: 5. Nc3 b5 6. a4 (6. b3 Qa5; 6. Ng5 Bd7 intending ... e7-e5 or ... e7-e6) 6. ... b4 7. Ne4 Nf6 8. Ned2 (8. Nxf6+ exf6; 8. Nc5?! Bd5) 8. ... c3! 9. bxc3 bxc3 10. Nb1 (10. Nc4 Bd5 11. Ba3 e6 12. Bxf8 Kxf8 13. Qc2 c5! with equality) 10. ... Qa5! 11. Qc2 Nd5 12. Ba3 (12. Ra3?! Na6!) 12. ... Nd7! 13. Be2 g5! 14. 0-0 (14. Nfg5? Nxe3) 14. ... g4 15. Ng5 (15. Ne1 Rc8! 16. Nd3 Bf5 17. Qb3 e5!?) 15. ... Nxe3 16. fxe3 Qxg5 "with complex play ahead."

For White, Burgess supplies a complete repertoire with 1. c4, the English Opening. By itself, learning how to play 1. c4 could be a strong incentive for acquiring this book. I wouldn't call the English "idiot-proof," but the suggested lines are relatively safe and certainly less vulnerable to opening disasters than 1. e4 or 1. d4. One theme is to play the Botvinnik c4 / e4 pawn structure when possible. I can't begin to outline the whole repertoire in a short review, but here are a few snippets from important lines:

1. c4 e5

After 1. ... Nf6, we have:

a) White can play the same Botvinnik formation against the King's Indian setup, e.g., 1. ... Nf6 2. g3 g6 3. Bg2 Bg7 4. Nc3 0-0 5. e4 d6 6. Nge2 e5 7. 0-0;

b) 1. ... Nf6 2. g3 c6 3. Bg2 d5 4. Nf3 and 2. ... e6 3. Bg2 d5 4. Nf3 are Reti Opening variations that Burgess covers in depth.

c) Every book that proposes a repertoire for

both colors runs into the awkward question of "What do I play against myself?" In this case, the intersection comes in the position after 1. ... c5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3. g3 g6 4. Bg2 Bg7, which is Burgess' recommendation for Black, and now 5. d3, when once again a Botvinnik structure will often arise, for example, 5. ... e6 (5. ... Nf6 6. e4 d6 7. Nge2 0-0 8. 0-0) 6. e4 Nge7 7. h4!? h6 8. Be3 d6 and either 9. f4 or 9. h5 g5 10. f4 gxf4 11. gxf4 with a complicated game in store, as in GM Levon Aronian-GM Magnus Carlsen, St. Louis Blitz 2019. Burgess suggests that the lines after 5. d3 e6 are sufficiently rich that both sides can be happy with the subsequent play.

2. Nc3 Nc6

White can also aim for an e4/c4 structure in the line 2. ... Nf6 3. g3 Bb4 4. e4, as played by Carlsen versus GM Fabiano Caruana in their World Championship match, e.g., 4. ... Bxc3 5. dxc3 Nxe4?! (5. ... d6 6. f3 followed by Nh3-f2 and Be3) 6. Qd5! Nf6 7. Qxe5+ Qe7 8. Qxe7+ Kxe7 9. Bg2 with a favorable bishop-pair ending.

3. g3 g6 4. Bg2 Bg7 5. e4 d6 6. Nge2 f5

Or 6. ... Nf6 7. 0-0 0-0 8. d3 Nh5 9. Rb1!? f5 10. exf5 Bxf5 (10. ... gxf5 11. f4) 11. h3 followed by b2-b4.

7. d3 Nf6 8. Nd5 0-0 9. Bg5

White has pressure, even in a simplifying line such as

9. ... Ne7 10. Nxf6+ Bxf6 11. Bxf6 Rxf6 12. exf5

Or 12. d4 with some advantage.

12. ... Nxf5 13. 0-0 c6 14. d4

I think that this book succeeds very well in its aim of giving the reader (the "idiot"!) a complete repertoire that makes it hard to get into trouble in the opening even if one doesn't play perfectly. In some cases it's not a truly "simple" repertoire, but that's just not realistic in modern chess. Overall, it's quite a bit easier to master the basic ideas in this repertoire than if you're Black trying to play 1. e4 c5 or 1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6, for example, or White playing 1. e4. A student or club player could do worse than to adopt all of the book's suggestions whole, whereas a master or professional player will find a number of original ideas that could be extremely useful on any level.

I should also mention that this entire book can be purchased for use on the free Gambit Chess Studio app, which I have used and think is one of the best chess ebook readers around.

Burgess, Graham. An Idiot-Proof Chess Opening Repertoire. Gambit Publications, 2020. ISBN Paperback: 9781911465423. 191 pages. (Available from www.uscfsales.com, product code B0209GB, \$22.95.)

Just Another Morphy Win

One of dozens of unknown Morphy gems

By BRUCE PANDOLFINI

WHAT CAN BE SAID ABOUT THE ONE and only Paul Morphy (1837-1884) that hasn't already been said? His persona is larger than life, as grand as the grandest chess set. If, during any historical period, we measure playing strength by rating disparity between the world's two top competitors, an argument could be made that Morphy was the strongest player of all time. He won brilliantly so often that his amazing victories seem routine. Consider his Parisian triumph over Franz Schrufer in 1859. Morphy was not winning throughout the game. But there's little doubt how it was likely to turn out.

TWO KNIGHTS DEFENSE (C56)

Paul Morphy
Franz Schrufer
Paris 1859

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d4 exd4
5. O-O 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.**

6. Re1 **Par Score 5**

One advantage of quick kingside castling is that the king-rook can enter the fray, attacking and pinning along the e-file.

6. ... **d5**

Black defends the knight and opens the c8-h3 diagonal for use of the queen-bishop.**

7. Bxd5 **Par Score 5**

This line was popular then. With correct play, Black is fine.

7. ... **Qxd5**

The defense 7. ... f5 is weaker.**

8. Nc3 **Par Score 5**

Morphy exploits the double pin along the d- and e-files. Still, this was a known variation, and Black remains okay.

8. ... **Qh5**

Black's queen did have better places to go, but the overall evaluation stays about the same. Black's position is fine.**

9. Nxe4 **Par Score 5**

With this capture, White threatens a few things.

9. ... **Be6**

Black closes the e-file. Give yourself *1 bonus point* if you fantasized 9. ... Bg4?? 10. Nf6+ Kd8 11. Re8 mate.**

10. Neg5 **Par Score 5**

White mounts the pressure. But judicious development would allow Black to retain a slight edge. Accept *full credit* for either 10. Nxd4 or 10. Bg5.

10. ... **Bb4**

This looks decent, developing with an attack. But 10. ... 0-0-0 was better.**

11. Rxe6+ **Par Score 6**

What's a Morphy game without sacrifice and interesting tactics? You may accept *full credit* for 11. Nxe6.

11. ... **fxe6****

12. Nxe6 **Par Score 5**

White's knight prevents castling either way. It also menaces two serious forks.

12. ... **Qf7**

Black guards both forking squares, c7 and g7.**

13. Nfg5 **Par Score 5**

As before, you may accept *full credit* for 13. Qe2. Morphy's natural approach leans toward using light forces to strive for more.

13. ... **Qe7**

Black gets his queen to safety and tries to secure the e-file.**

14. Qe2 **Par Score 5**

The white queen enters the game, and does so with threats.

14. ... **Bd6**

It's getting tricky. Black could also have tried 14. ... Kd7, but combinations would still be in the air.**

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.

January Exercise: Whenever you meet up with a chess principle, aphorism, rule of thumb, or pithy piece of chess wisdom, put it in a file worthy of being revisited. More than that, to show that you fully grasp it all, rewrite it in your own words. This confers greater command over it. If there's a relevant position, put that in the file as well. Then get even more imaginative. Create an entirely new position you think illustrates the idea adequately. With the passage of time, you will doubtlessly assimilate the concept. You might even become more fluent at chess expression.

PROBLEM I. Mating net



PROBLEM II. Mating net



PROBLEM III. Mating net



PROBLEM IV. Mating net



PROBLEM V. Mating net



PROBLEM VI. Mating net



15. Nxc7+ Par Score 5

The pin along the e-file makes this capture possible. While Black is not yet losing, it would have been easy to feel lost against Morphy.

15. ... Kd7

Possibly, 15. ... Kd8 was a little safer. Possibly.**

16. Qg4+ Par Score 5

This is the natural follow-up. Black has only one practical move.

16. ... Kd8**



17. Nf7+ Par Score 6

Morphy sacs to complete his development. But this check was probably not best. Accept *full credit* for checking with either knight on e6.

17. ... Qxf7

There was no other legal move.**

18. Bg5+ Par Score 5

White activates his last minor piece, clearing the back row.

18. ... Be7

Black might have tried 18. ... Ne7. Under such relentless pressure, it's easy to go awry, especially when you're facing Paul Morphy!**

19. Ne6+ Par Score 5

The position now favors Morphy, though Black keeps defensive hopes. It ain't over yet.

19. ... Kc8

But this is just an outright losing move. The end is in sight.**



20. Nc5+ Par Score 6

Morphy's discovery is a killer.

20. ... Kb8

Add *1 bonus point* for seeing that 20. ... Kd8 is zonked by 21. Qd7 mate.**

21. Nd7+ Par Score 5

It's looking very familiar. Morphy is going to win in Morphy-like fashion.

21. ... Kc8**

22. Nb6+ Par Score 6

Double check! *Deduct 1 point* for 22. Ne5+, which only wins the queen.

22. ... Kb8

Again, 22. ... Kd8 permits 23. Qd7 mate.**

23. Qc8+ Par Score 6

Philidor's Legacy coming up.

23. ... Rxc8**

24. Nd7 mate. Par Score 5

A smothered mate! ♠



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

Information for Players

US CHESS MEMBERSHIP REQUIRED FOR ALL EVENTS

If not a member, add dues to advance entry fee or pay them with entry fee at site.

U.S. Championship Qualifier. Tournament in which qualification spots for the U.S. Championship are awarded.

American Classic. Generally, an event that has been held by one organizer for the last three years and has attracted more than 400 players each year.

Heritage Event. Tournament held at least 25 years.

Regular Chess. Total playing time for each player is greater than 65 minutes (mm+ss > 65). **Quick Chess.** Total playing time for each player is more than 10 and less than 30 minutes (10 < mm+ss < 30). **Dual (both regular and quick).** Total playing time for each player is from 30 to 65 minutes (30 < mm+ss < 65).

Blitz Chess. Total playing time for each player is from 5 to 10 minutes inclusive and the primary time control must be at least 3 minutes. 5 < mm+ss < 10. All rounds must use the same time control.

RATING CLASSES

In most events, you don't have to win the tournament to win a prize—you can win a class prize as a top scorer of your rating group, or a section prize in a section restricted to your rating group. These rating groups are:

Senior Master: 2400 & up • **Master:** 2200-2399 • **Expert:** 2000-2199 • **Class A:** 1800-1999 • **Class B:** 1600-1799 • **Class C:** 1400-1599 • **Class D:** 1200-1399 • **Class E:** 1000-1199 • **Class F:** 800-999 • **Class G:** 600-799 • **Class H:** 400-599 • **Class I:** 200-399 • **Class J:** 199/below

Some tournaments use different groups such as 1900-2099, and some have “under” prizes or sections including all below a specified level.

RATINGS INFORMATION

You never lose your rating, no matter how long it has been since you last played. If you return after a long absence, please tell the director and US Chess your approximate rating and last year of play.

If you have a FIDE rating, or a rating or category from any other country, no matter how many years ago, you are not unrated. FIDE or foreign ratings may be rejected or have adjustment points added. If details are not announced, players wishing to use such ratings should contact the organizer in advance.

For foreign players with multiple ratings (US Chess, FIDE, CFC, FQE, other foreign), the highest rating is used, with possible adjustment points added, unless otherwise announced.

Ratings based on 4-25 games are called “provisional ratings” to indicate they are less reliable than established ratings. However, such ratings are valid for pairing and prize purposes at all US Chess-rated events, unless otherwise stated.

A tournament director (TD) may assign an estimated rating to any player, and may expel an improperly rated player from an event.

HOW TO ENTER IN ADVANCE

Entering by mail or online (if available) is easier for both you and the tournament organizer and often costs less. Check the tournament life announcement (TLA) ads for entering options. Along with entry fee, send full name, address, US Chess ID number,

expiration date, and section desired (if any). Also, give your last official US Chess rating (from Player/Ratings Look-Up). If you are unrated, or have a rating from many years ago, be sure to indicate this.

Mailed entries are usually not acknowledged unless you enclose a self-addressed postcard. If entering online, print confirmation of entry. They are refundable if you withdraw before round one is paired, unless otherwise stated.

For national events, refund requests must be submitted in writing no later than 30 days after the tournament ends. Any requests made after this date may not be honored.

HOTEL-MOTEL RATES

Rates listed are often special chess rates—you must request “chess rates” or you will be charged more. The chess rates may be unavailable if not reserved several weeks in advance, or if the block of chess rooms is used up. Hotel-desk personnel are often poorly informed about chess rates—if that is the case, ask for the sales office or contact the tournament organizer.

WHAT TO TAKE TO A TOURNAMENT

Along with a pen or pencil and your US Chess identification card (or current *Chess Life*), take a chessboard, set, and clock if you have them.

For prizes of \$600 or more, bring your U.S. Social Security card. If you have no Social Security number, the organizer must deduct 30 percent from your prize for the IRS (this includes foreigners).

Warning! The use of a cell phone in the tournament room is prohibited at most tournaments. If your cell phone rings in a room with games in progress, you could be penalized, or even forfeited.

IF YOU MUST WITHDRAW

If you enter by mail and cannot attend, or must drop out of a tournament in progress, it is important you give notice before pairings are started, so no one is deprived of a game. Mail entrants should send withdrawal notices at least a week beforehand—phone any later than this. To withdraw by phone on the tournament day, call the site and ask specifically for “the chess tournament.” E-mail withdrawals several days in advance are acceptable if the TD's e-mail address is listed. Any later than this, both e-mail your withdrawal and call the tournament site as the TD might not have access to his (her) e-mail account. If you forfeit without notice, you may be fined up to the amount of the entry fee.

TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS

Tournament director certification is an endorsement of professional competence only. Such certification does not in itself render any tournament director an agent of US Chess, nor is any affiliate an agent of US Chess.

TOURNAMENT LIFE: ABBREVIATIONS & TERMS

All tournaments are non-smoking with no computers allowed unless otherwise advertised.

BLZ:	Blitz rated.	Memb. req'd:	Membership required; cost follows. Usually refers to state affiliate.
QC:	Quick Chess events.	Open:	A section open to all. Often has very strong players, but some eligible for lower sections can play for the learning experience.
\$\$Gtd:	Guaranteed prizes.	Quad:	4-player round robin sections; similar strength players.
\$\$b/x:	Based-on prizes, x = number of entries needed to payfull prize fund. At least 50% of the advertised prize fund of \$501 or more must be awarded.	RBO:	Rated Beginner's Open.
Bye:	Indicates which rounds players who find it inconvenient to play may take 1/2-point byes instead. For example, Bye 1-3 means 1/2-point byes are available in Rounds 1 through 3.	Rds:	Rounds; scheduled game times follow. For example, 11-5, 9-3 means games begin 11 a.m. & 5 p.m. on the first day, 9 a.m. & 3 p.m. on the second day.
CC:	Chess club.	Reg:	Registration at site.
dx:	Time delay, x = number of seconds.	RR:	Round robin (preceded by number of rounds).
+xx:	Time increment, xx = number of seconds added after each move.	SD/:	Sudden-death time control (time for rest of game follows). For example, 30/90, SD/1 means each player must make 30 moves in 90 minutes, then complete the rest of the game in an hour.
EF:	Entry fee.	SS:	Swiss-System pairings (preceded by number of rounds).
Ent:	Where to mail entries.	Unr:	Unrated.
FIDE:	Results submitted to FIDE for possible rating.	W:	Site is accessible to wheelchairs.
G/:	Game in. For instance, G/75 means each side has 75 minutes for the entire game.	WEB:	Tournaments that will use a player's online rating.
GPP:	Grand Prix Points available.		
HR:	Hotel rates. For example, 60-65-70-75 means \$60 single, \$65 twin, \$70/3 in room, \$75/4 in room.		
JGP:	Junior Grand Prix.		



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More information:

chessevents.us

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 January 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 XXXX 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 USCHESS.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>

Nationals

HERITAGE EVENT • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2021 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - West (Online Event)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 2021-SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2021

Scholastic side event on Jan 31, 2021 via chesskid.com. US Chess online rated event affecting player's US Chess online regular rating. Players must have current US Chess membership. Teams: Four-player teams, average rating of four highest must be under 2200, difference between ratings of board 3 & 4 must be less than 1000. January 2021 Supplement OTB or ONL rating, whichever is the higher; CCA min, & TD discretion used to place players accurately. Player's account on chess.com must be current and in good standing. Two sections (1800+, u1800) based on team average rating. **Time Control:** 6SS, G/60+10. **Schedule:** 1800+: Sat/Sun: 9a, 1p, 4p; u1800: Sat/Sun: 9:15a, 1:15p, 4:15p. **Prizes:** Commemorative plaques and clocks for Top 3 teams in each section. Commemorative medals to Top scorer of each board (1-4 & reserve), all players of the top "Female" team, top "College" team, top "High School" team, top "Elementary School" team, top "Club" team, and top "Family" team. Free online tournament entry to the Top 3 best team names. **Scholastic side event on Sunday, Jan 31, 2021 via chesskid.com.** Player's account on chesskid.com must be current and in good standing. **Time Control:** 5SS, G/20+10; Teams: average rating must be under 1400. **Schedule:** Sun 9:30a, 11a, 12:30p, 2p, 3:30p. **Prizes:** Commemorative trophies to Top 5 teams. Registration: online via millibary.org/usatw, registration closes Friday, 1/29 @ 6PM. Absolutely no same day registration accepted. **Main Event EF:** \$160/team or \$40/player by 1/23. 1/24-29: \$20 extra per player or \$40 per team. A change fee equal to the late fee will apply for any changes, other than by request. Scholastic EF: \$30/player, \$120/team by 1/25. **Contact:** Organized by Abel Talamantez and Judit Szatary, Chief TD. John McCumiskey. For questions or help in forming teams email chessroom@millibary.org.

HERITAGE EVENT • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

World Amateur Team & 2021 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - East (Online Event)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2021-SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2021

50TH Anniversary, since 1971! 6SS, game 60 delay 10 seconds. Open to 4- player teams-no alternate. Team average (4 highest ratings—2021 January Rating list) must be under 2200. Teams rated over 2000 average no more than 1000 points between board 3 and 4. The higher of online or USCF will be used as of January 2021. Touchdown page at ICC for rules and info on allowed advance practice: <https://play.chessclub.com/usate>. EF: \$160 postmarked by 1/25/2021 After ALL-\$200 all teams, No Entries after 2/10/21.

Check out official website www.njscf.org. **Prizes:** 1-5th Place teams, Engraved wooden anniversary chess set/leather box; Top Team (Denis Barry Award) U2100, 2000, 1900, 1800, 1700, 1600, 1500, 1400, 1000 each 4 Engraved Wooden anniversary sets/leather box; Top college team (same school) 4 Digital Clocks & 4 heavy weighted plastic Hastings chess sets in engraved leather bags. Top HS team (grades 9-12 same school), Top Middle School (grades 5-9 same school), Top Elementary School (grades K-6 same school), Top Scholastic team (Collins Award), Mixed Doubles (2 males, 2 females), Seniors (all players over age 50), each 4 Digital Clocks to top team; Company Team (same employer-non educational), Top Coaches (educational), Top team all female, Family (4 family members), each 4 heavy weighted plastic sets in engraved bags. State teams—CT, DE, MD, MA, NJ, NY (Benjamin Award), PA, VA, each plaque top team; Special Plaques: Top Future team, (all players age 10), Top Military College, Top Parent/Child (2 pairs, one parent, one child), Best Player 1-4 -All G-6 scores each Digital clock. Entry fee refunded to team with Best "Chess related" name, -- Best "Chess Related costumes or gimmick"—entry refunded. **Sat 2/13 Rds. 10-2-7, Sun 9-1-6. Surprises and special give-aways!! Two days only! Grandmaster commentary. Same hysterical event with great chess!! Best pajama prize. Best masks award, team with best slippers.** For help forming teams and more information contact: noreenchess@gmail.com or esloye@aol.com. Chks payable to NJSCF, mail by 1/25/21 to: NJSCF, 17 Stonehenge Road, Morristown, NJ 07960. (Include Team name, Captain, players full names, USCF Expiration, ID numbers and ratings in board order). No team can include more than two GMs. Include SASE for confirmation if wanted. No registered or certified mail accepted.

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2021 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - North (Online Event)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2021-SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2021

Online provider TBA. Open: 6SS, G/60-inc. 10. Open to 4 player teams, no alternates. Team average (Higher of regular rating and online regular rating from Jan 2021 Rating List used) must be under 2200. EF: \$160 per team if received USPS or online by 6pm Feb. 5, \$180 if received USPS or online by 6pm Feb. 12, \$200 online until 6pm Feb. 19. Individuals wishing to play send \$50 received by USPS or on-line by 6pm Feb. 15, \$60 by 6pm Feb. 18, and request to be put on a team. (Note: we guarantee you will play but can't guarantee which board you will play or the ratings of your team). See www.chessweekend.com for more info, team rules and categories, complete prize list, and online fair play rules. Prizes: Winning team qualifies for national play-offs. Awards to top 3 teams, top teams U2000, u1800, u1600, u1300, u1000, top college team, top HS team, top junior team (HS and under), top K-8 team, top mixed doubles team (2 men and 2 women), top female team, top senior team (all 50 & over), best team name, best costume or theme, best streamer, and top individual score each board. Prizes: are online bookstore credit or Amazon gift cards. Rounds: Saturday 10:00am, 1:15pm, 4:30pm; Sunday 10:00am, 1:15pm, 4:30pm. Register after 12/15/20 at www.chessweekend.com. Checks made payable and sent to: Chess

Weekend, 21694 Doud Ct., Frankfort, IL 60423; include team's name and roster (plus ID#), captain's email and phone number. Info: www.chessweekend.com, glen@chessweekend.com.

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2021 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (Online Event)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2021-SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2021

One Section, 6SS, G/60-inc. 10. Open to 4-player teams, No Alternates. Team average (All 4 Team Members - Jan 2021 Rating List) must be under 2200. US Chess rated. Higher of Regular US Chess rating or Online Regular US Chess rating used. EF: \$160 per team if received online by Feb. 12, \$180 if received online by Feb. 19, \$200 online after Feb. 19. No entries accepted after 12 noon (Central Time) Feb. 26. See <https://www.kingregistration.com/tournaments> for more info, team rules, complete prize list, and online fair play rules. **PRIZES:** Winning team qualifies for national play-offs. Awards to Top 3 teams, Top teams U2000, U1800, U1600, U1300, U1000, Top College Team, Top K-12 Team, Top Mixed Doubles Team (2 male and 2 female), Top Senior Team (all 50 & over), Top All-Female Team, Top Military Team (active or retired Armed Forces members), and Top Individual Score each Board, 1 - 4. All members of team finishing in First Place overall get Champion's Plaque. Each member of top three teams gets commemorative clock. All members of winning teams of other categories get US Chess Sales Gift Certificate and commemorative medal. See tournament website for additional details. **ROUNDS (Central Time):** Saturday 10:00am, 1:15pm and 4:30pm; Sunday 10:00am, 1:15pm and 4:30pm. Register at <https://www.kingregistration.com/tournaments> (Texas Chess Association). **Mailed Entries:** Entry fee determined by postmark and must be mailed (postmarked) NLT Feb. 20. Checks payable to Texas Chess Association. Include Team's name, team members and US Chess IDs, and Team Captain's name, email address and phone number. Mail to: Franc Guadalupe (TCA President), 305 Willow Pointe Drive, League City, TX 77573. For more information, please email fdalupe@aol.com or renategarcia1@gmail.com.

after 9 pm MST 1/8. **Regional EF discount: \$30 less to residents of Mountain time zone.** GMS \$50 from prize. Log into playcca.com 30 minutes before game. **Rounds begin** MST 10 am, 12:30 pm, 3 pm, 5:30 pm, 8 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.**

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

5th Annual NY State Girls Championship Online at Internet Chess Club!

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 2021-SUNDAY, JANUARY 10, 2021

Open to all girls born after 1/10/01 in US and Canada, out of state welcome—Now with reduced entry fees! Online entries at www.chessgirls.win (2-Day Championship sections): \$58 thru 12/31/20, \$75 by 6 pm EST 1/7; (1-Day sections): \$53 thru 12/31/20, \$70 by 6 pm EST 1/7. All sections: \$100 after 6 pm EST 1/7/21. Entries after 12 pm EST 1/8 may be required to take bye(s) and must already have activated their ICC account. Entries may not be accepted less than 8 hours before game. Entries may be subject to waiting list. Active ICC account required (no additional charge) to play (includes 6-month ICC membership: www.chessclub.com). In 8 sections. Each section has its own age, (grade) and rating requirements (Championship sections open to all who are under age (and grade) limits; unrated allowed all sections). **Playing both days are: Open Championship**, open to all girls born after 1/10/01 (top NYS K-12 girl qualifies for 2021 National Girls Tournament of Champions), K-6 **Championship and K-3 Championship**; each is a 6-SS, G/60, + 10, Rounds begin 10 am-1-4 pm EST each day. The 5 non-Championship sections and the K-1 Section are each 1-day, 5-SS, G/30, + 5. **Playing on Saturday are:** K-9 Under 1000, K-3 Under 600; **Rounds begin Sat.** 10 am-12-4-6 pm EST. **Playing on Sunday are:** K-12 Under 1200, K-6 Under 800, K-1 Championship. **Games begin:** Sun. 10 am-12-2-4-6 pm EST. K-1 is open to grades 1/below born after 1/10/13. Both K-6 sections open to grades 3/below born after 1/10/11. Both K-12 Under 1200 section open to grades 12/below born after 1/10/01. K-9 Under 1000 Section open to grades 9/below born after 1/10/05. **Trophies or plaques to top 8 each section and top 2** in each 1-day section. **Bonus Grade medals:** top 3 scorers K/below in K-1 section, top 3 below 9th Grade in K-12 U1200, top 3 below 7th Grade in K-9 U1000, top 3 below 4th grade in K-6 U800, and top 3 below 2nd grade in K-3 U600 (you can win trophy, plaque and medal). All players scoring 4 or more (5 or more in 2-Day sections) who don't win a trophy or plaque receive a medal! **Playoff for 5-0 or 6-0 (after fair-play review is completed), may be fast game.** Trophies or plaques also to top 4 teams each section (top 3 scorers from same school - team, all on team must attend same school: no combined teams; even if one school "feeds" another). **Option for claiming awards:** Awards may be delivered first to schools or coaches. Winners outside of NY, NJ or CT are responsible for shipping costs. **Individual free entry prizes** (in each 2-Day Championship section): **Free entry to 3 specified Continental Chess tournaments** thru 12/31/21 to 1st, 2 free entries to 2nd, 1 free to 3rd & 4th! One free entry to 1st & 2nd in each 1-day section! Free entries courtesy of Continental Chess and are valid for CCA non-scholastic tournaments. See www.chessgirls.win, www.chesscenter.cc or www.chesstour.com for complete details and restrictions. **All:** Out-of-state eligible for free entry prizes in Championship Sections, players only in NY, CT, NJ, MA, PA, VT, ON or QC eligible for free entry prizes in non-Championship sections; top NYS player and team in each Championship section are NY Champions. All players in 2-Day Championship Sections must be visible on Zoom with side/rear camera angle; Zoom also required for prize eligibility in 1-day sections. **Prizes not official until after fair-play review of games is completed** (may take about 3 weeks before prizes are then mailed out). **Online Blitz rated** (will not affect OTB ratings), but Jan. 2021 official online regular ratings used for pairings and prize eligibility (OTB regular ratings used if no online regular rating), except unofficial ratings at uschess.org usually used if otherwise unrated. TD reserves right to assign estimated ratings to players with non-USCF ratings. Limit 1 bye, committed before R2. **Players must stay logged into ICC when round starts in order to be paired!** Info on logging into ICC, setting up free ICC accounts, using Zoom, etc.: www.chessgirls.win (see TLA for NYS Girls Championship, 1/9-10, for other info).

Online

NY State Girls Championship Friday Night Blitz — Online On Internet Chess Club!

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 2021

8-SS, G/3+2. **Online entries at www.chessgirls.win:** \$30 thru 1/7, \$40 until 12 pm EST 1/8, \$10 less to parents, alumni and those with NY State Girls Championship, Jan. 9-10. Active ICC account required (no additional charge) to play (includes 2-month ICC membership). **Plaques:** top 3, Top U1800, U1500/Unr. Round 1 begins: 7 pm EST, other rounds ASAP (should finish by 10 pm EST). Must be on Zoom to be eligible for prizes. **Prizes not official until after fair-play review of games is completed** (may take about 3 weeks before prizes are then mailed out). **Online Blitz rated** (will not affect OTB ratings), but Jan. 2021 official online regular ratings used for pairings and prize eligibility (OTB regular ratings used if no online regular rating), except unofficial ratings at uschess.org usually used if otherwise unrated. TD reserves right to assign estimated ratings to players with non-USCF ratings. Limit 1 bye, committed before R2. **Players must stay logged into ICC when round starts in order to be paired!** Info on logging into ICC, setting up free ICC accounts, using Zoom, etc.: www.chessgirls.win (see TLA for NYS Girls Championship, 1/9-10, for other info).

Mountains Open

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 2021

5-SS, G/45-10, at Internet Chess Club, \$4000 guaranteed prizes. Must be on Zoom (use real name) to be eligible for prizes (side/rear camera angle). In 4 sections. **Major Section:** Open to 1900/over. \$500-300-200-100, top U2200 \$240-120. **Under 2000/Unr Section:** \$350-200-120-80, U1800 (no Unr) \$180-90. **Under 1700/Unr Section:** \$300-180-120-60, top U1500 (no Unr) \$140-70, unrated limit \$150. **Under 1400/Unr Section:** \$200-150-100-50, U1200 (no Unr) \$100-50; unrated limit \$80. **Entry fee \$68 at chessaction.com by 1/6: \$90 by 10:30 am MST 1/9, must take round 1 by**

53rd annual
LIBERTY BELL OPEN
January 16-18, 2021 on ICC

6 ROUNDS, G/120+10
\$5,000 GUARANTEED PRIZES

See Online Events or chessevents.us.

order to be paired! Info on logging into ICC, setting up free ICC accounts, using Zoom, etc. www.chessgirls.win. Questions: director@chessgirls.win or 347-201-2269; leave message, email is much better). This tournament will contribute at least \$1 per entry to the NYSCA Scholastic Fund. School purchase orders payable to: Chess Center of NY, PO Box 4615, New Windsor, NY 12553.

CCA January Action

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10, 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 1/8, \$65 by 11:30 am EST 1/10, entry after 9 pm EST 1/9 must take half point bye in rd 1. GMs \$40 from prize. **Log into playccca.com** 30 minutes before game, rounds begin EST 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.**

8th Annual Liberty Bell Open Blitz

FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 2021
11-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). One section, open to all. **Prizes** \$200-100-60, top U2100 \$90, U1800/Unr \$80, U1500 \$70. **Entry fee** at chessaction.com: \$27 by 1/14, \$40 by 7 pm EST 1/15, both \$10 less if playing in Liberty Bell Open 1/16-18, no entry after 7 pm EST 1/15. **New players** (1st CCA event on ICC) should register by 1/14. GMs \$25 from prize. **Log into playccca.com** 30 minutes before game. **Round 1 begins:** EST 8 pm, CST 7 pm, MST 6 pm, PST 5 pm. **Other rounds ASAP;** 15 minute break after round 6. Should finish by 11 pm EST. **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.**

AMERICAN CLASSIC • HERITAGE EVENT

53rd Annual Liberty Bell Open

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 2021-MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 2021
6-SS, G/120-10, at Internet Chess Club. \$5000 guaranteed prizes. Must be on Zoom (use real name) to be eligible for prizes (side/rear camera angle). In 4 sections. **Major Section:** Open to 1900/over. \$600-400-200-150, top U2200 \$300-150, top Pennsylvania 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 1/14, \$100 by 3:15 pm EST 1/16, must take round 1 bye after 10 am EST 1/16. **Regional EF discount:** \$20 less to residents of PA, NJ or DE. GMs \$25 from prize. **Log into playccca.com** 30 minutes before game. **Rounds begin** each day: EST 11 am & 4:15 pm, CST 10 am & 3:15 pm, MST 9 am & 2:15 pm, PST 8 am & 1:15 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.**

8th Annual Golden State Open Blitz

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 2021
11-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). One section, open to all. **Prizes** \$200-100-60, top U2100 \$90, U1800/Unr \$80, U1500 \$70. **Entry fee** at chessaction.com: \$27 by 1/21, \$40 by 6 pm PST 1/22, both \$10 less if playing in Golden State Open 1/23-24, no entry after 6 pm PST 1/22. **New players** (1st CCA event on ICC) should register by 1/21. GMs \$25 from prize. **Log into playccca.com** 30 minutes before game. **Round 1 begins:** 7 pm PST, 8 pm MST, 9 pm CST, and 10 pm EST. **Other rounds ASAP;** 15 minute break after round 6. Should finish by 10 pm PST. **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.**

12th Annual Golden State Open

SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 2021-SUNDAY, JANUARY 24, 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). In 4 sections. **Major Section:** Open to 1900/over. \$600-400-200-150, top U2200 \$300-150, top California 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 1/21, \$100 by 12:30 pm PST 1/23, must take round 1 bye after 9 am PST 1/23. **New players** (1st CCA event on ICC) should register by 1/21. **Regional EF discount:** \$20 less to California residents. GMs \$60 from prize. **Log into playccca.com** 30 minutes before game. **Rounds begin** each day: PST 10 am, 1:30 pm & 5 pm, MST 11 am, 2:30 pm & 6 pm, CST 12 noon, 3:30 pm & 7 pm, EST 1 pm, 4:30 pm & 8 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.**

Greater NY Scholastics Friday Night Blitz—Online At ICC!

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2021
8-SS, G/3-2. **Online entries** at www.gnyssc.com: \$30 thru Jan. 28, \$40 until 3 pm EST Jan. 29, \$10 less to parents, alumni and those with Greater NY Scholastics, Jan. 30-31. **Active ICC account required** (no additional charge) to play (includes 6-month ICC membership); entries after Jan. 28 must already have activated their ICC account. **Plaques awarded** to Top 3, Top U1800, U1500/Unr. **Round 1 begins:** 7 pm EST, other rounds ASAP (should finish by 10 pm EST). **Must be on Zoom** to be eligible for prizes. **Prizes not official until after fair-play review of games is completed** (may take about 3 weeks before prizes are then prepared and mailed out). **Online Blitz rated** (will not affect OTB ratings), but Jan. 2021 official Online regular ratings used for pairings and prize eligibility (OTB regular ratings used if no Online regular rating), except unrated ratings at usChess.org usually used if otherwise unrated. TD reserves right to assign estimated ratings to players with non-USCF ratings or Unrateds. **Limit 2 byes, commit before Rd. 3. Players must stay logged into ICC when round starts in order to be paired!** Info on logging into ICC, setting up free ICC accounts, using Zoom, etc. www.gnyssc.com (see TLA for Greater NY Scholastics, 1/30-31, for other important info).

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • AMERICAN CLASSIC • HERITAGE EVENT

Greater NY Scholastic Championships Online At The Internet Chess Club!

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 2021-SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2021
Kasparov Chess Foundation, along with Chess Center of New York and Little House Of Chess, present to you the Greater NY Online Scholastic Chess Championships — At The Internet Chess Club! Jan. 30 or 31 or 30-31. Open to all in US and Canada born after 1/31/01. **Online entries** at www.gnyssc.com: **1-Day Sections Early Entry Fee:** \$50 thru Jan. 17, \$60 Jan. 18-22, \$80 Jan. 23-26. **2-Day Championship Sections Early Entry Fee:** \$60 thru Jan. 17, \$70 Jan. 18-22, \$90 Jan. 23-26; **online fees are only valid using our website.** All Sections Late Fee: \$100 after Jan. 26 until registration closes. **May be limited to 2,000 players** (possibly even smaller limit will apply). **Entries after 12 pm EST** Jan. 29 may be required to take bye(s) and must already have activated their ICC account. **Entries might not be accepted** less than 12 hours before game. **Entries may be subject to waiting list.** **Active ICC account required** (no additional charge) to play (includes 6-month ICC membership: www.chessclub.com). **In 12 sections!** Each section has its own age, grade and rating requirements (Championship sections open to all under grade and age limits; unrated allowed all sections). **The top 4 Championship sections** are each 2 days (High School Championship, Junior High Championship, Elementary Championship, Primary Championship): 6-SS, G/60 + 10 inc. **Games begin:** Sat. 10 am-1-4 pm EST both days. **The K-1 Championship and the 8-Non-Championship sections** are each 1-day, 5-SS, G/30 + 5 inc. **Playing only on Saturday** are: K-1 Championship, High School Under 1900, High School Under 1200, Elementary Under 1400, Elementary Under 900. **Games begin:** Sat. 10 am-12-2-4-6 pm EST. **Playing only on Sunday** are: Junior High Under 1300, Primary Under 1000 and Primary Under 700. **Games begin:** Sun. 10 am-12-2-4-6 pm EST. **K-1 section** open to grade 1/ below and born after 1/31/13. **All 3 Primary sections** open to grades 3/below and born after 1/31/11. **All 3 Elementary sections** open to grades 6/below and born after 1/31/08. **All 3 Junior High sections** open to grades 9/below and born after 1/31/05. **All 3 High School sections** open to grades 12/below and born after 1/31/01. **Plaques** to at least the top 20% of players in each section (may include some rating class awards). **Plaques also** to top 8 teams in each Junior High and High School section and top 10 teams in Elementary, Primary and K1 sections (top 4 scores from same school — team, all on team must attend same school; no combined teams, even if one school "feeds" another). **Bonus Grade medals:** top 3 Kindergarten/below in K1 Championship, top 3 Grade 1/below in Primary U700, top 3 Grade 6/below in Junior High U1300, top 3 Grade 8/below in High School U1200 (you can win medal and plaque. All players scoring 4 or more (5 or more in Championship) who don't win a plaque receive a medal! **Playoff** if 5-0 in non-Championship or 6-0 in Championship (after fair-play review is completed), may be fast game. **Option for claiming awards:** Awards may be delivered first to schools or coaches. **Winners outside of NY, NJ or CT** are responsible for shipping costs. **Individual prizes** (each 2-Day Championship section): Free or reduced price entry to specified Continental Chess tournaments thru 12/31/21 to 1st, thru 9/30 to 2nd, thru 8/25 to 3rd, thru 4/30 to 4th. **Individual prizes** (each 1-Day non-Championship section): Free or reduced entry to specified Continental Chess tournaments thru 10/15/21 to 1st, thru 7/15 to 2nd, thru 4/30 to 3rd. **Team prizes** (each 2-Day Championship section): free or reduced entry to specified CCA tournaments thru 8/25/21 to 1st team, top 4 scores, thru 4/30 to 2nd team! **Team prizes** (each 1-Day section): free or reduced entry to specified CCA tournaments thru 7/15/21 to 1st team, top 4 scores. **Free/reduced prize entries** are also valid for CCA *non-scholastic* tournaments. See www.chesscenter.cc

or www.gnyssc.com or www.chesstour.com for complete details and restrictions. **High School Mixed Doubles Bonus Prizes** (best male/female 2-player "team" combined score among all 3 High School sections after 5 rounds): chess sets to 1st 5 Mixed Doubles teams: free entry to specified CCA tmis. thru 8/25/21 to 1st team, thru 4/30 to 2nd. **Mixed Doubles** teammates may play in different sections, may attend different schools, but team must average U2200 and must sign up on-site (no extra charge) before rd. 3; teammate pairings avoided but possible. **All:** Out-of-state eligible for all prizes, except only players in NY, CT, DE, NJ, MA, PA, VT, OH or QC eligible for free/reduced entry prizes in non-Championship sections. All players in K-12, K-9, K-6, K-3 Championship Sections must be visible on Zoom with separate camera including side/rear camera angle in order to be eligible for prizes; Zoom also required for prize eligibility in K-1 and non-Championship sections. **Results not official until after fair-play review of games is completed** (may take about 3 weeks before prizes are then prepared and shipped or delivered). **Online Regular rated** (will not affect OTB ratings), Jan. 2021 official Online regular ratings used for pairings, section and prize eligibility (OTB regular ratings used if no Online regular rating), except unrated ratings at usChess.org usually used if otherwise unrated. TD reserves right to assign estimated ratings to players with non-USCF ratings or Unrateds. **Substitutions from advance entry list** charged late fee. **Section switches** subject to \$10 extra charge per player thru 1/26, \$20 extra later (no switches on game day). \$15 service charge for each player refund. **Limit 2 byes, must commit before Round 3. Players must stay logged into ICC when round starts in order to be paired!** Info on logging into ICC, setting up free ICC accounts, using Zoom, etc. www.gnyssc.com and www.chesstour.com applies to players, parents, coaches and spectators. Questions: director@gnyssc.com or 347-201-2269 (leave message, but email is much better). **Tournament will contribute \$1 per entry** to the NYSCA Scholastics Fund. Info: www.gnyssc.com. **School purchase orders:** Chess Center of NY, PO Box 4615, New Windsor, NY 12553.

Church, 3975 Vaughn Rd, Montgomery, AL. Two sections: **OPEN** (prizes b/10, 70%GTD): 1st \$200, 2nd \$100, U1900/unrated \$100. **U1700** (prizes b/10, 70%GTD): 1st \$175, 2nd \$100, U1400/unrated \$100. **EF:** \$40 by January 9, \$45 thereafter. Registration: Send name, USCF ID, section, and EF (payable to "Evangel Church") to Doug Strout, 6000 Camelot Ct, Montgomery, AL 36117 (email: dstrou@bellsouth.net)

Tom Nard Memorial VII

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2021
4SS, Game/45 + 10 second increment per move. Round times: 9:30, 11:30, 2:30, 4:30. (Half-point byes available, limit 1, request before round 1) Location: Evangel Church, 3975 Vaughn Rd, Montgomery, AL. Three sections: **OPEN** (prizes b/20, 70%GTD): 1st \$250 + 1, 2nd \$100, U2000/unrated \$100, **U1800** (prizes b/20, 70%GTD): 1st \$200 + 1, 2nd \$100, U1500/unrated \$100, **U1200** (prizes b/20, 70%GTD): 1st \$150 + 1, 2nd \$100, U1000/unrated \$100. **EF:** \$40 by February 20, \$45 thereafter. Registration: Send name, USCF ID, section, and EF (payable to "Evangel Church") to Doug Strout, 6000 Camelot Ct, Montgomery, AL 36117 (email: dstrou@bellsouth.net)

CONNECTICUT

JANUARY 9-10, 2021, 5th Annual NY State Girls Championship Online at Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

JANUARY 29, 2021, Greater NY Scholastics Friday Night Blitz Online At The Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

JANUARY 30-31, 2021, Greater NY Scholastic Championships Online At The Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

DELAWARE

JANUARY 30-31, 2021, Greater NY Scholastic Championships Online At The Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

INDIANA

2021 Southern Indiana Open/Reserve (U1800)
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2021
Southern Indiana Open/Reserve(U1800) MASKS MANDATORY. 1 bd. per day from September through June & 12+ annual 1-day or multi-day open tournaments for adults & K-12 players on weekends. See www.MDChess.org for tournament announcements, registration for tournaments, updated wallcharts, live standings, sign up for K-12 & open e-newsletters, lists of coaches & clubs, camp announcements, & news. K-12 MD players who compete in the Varsity section (for players rated 1600-) of 1 of 8+ annual MD-Sweet-16 Qualifiers can qualify for the \$48,000+ scholarship to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County awarded annually. UMBC is a perennial top-10 contender for the collegiate national chess championship.

MARYLAND

MARYLAND CHESS TOURNAMENTS (NORTH PENN CHESS CLUB)

Maryland Chess runs 21+ annual K-12 tournaments every Saturday from September through June & 12+ annual 1-day or multi-day open tournaments for adults & K-12 players on weekends. See www.MDChess.org for tournament announcements, registration for tournaments, updated wallcharts, live standings, sign up for K-12 & open e-newsletters, lists of coaches & clubs, camp announcements, & news. K-12 MD players who compete in the Varsity section (for players rated 1600-) of 1 of 8+ annual MD-Sweet-16 Qualifiers can qualify for the \$48,000+ scholarship to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County awarded annually. UMBC is a perennial top-10 contender for the collegiate national chess championship.

Grand Prix

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • US CHESS GRAND PRIX HERITAGE EVENT • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • US CHESS GRAND PRIX POINTS: 15 (ENHANCED)

Land of the Sky XXXIV

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2021-SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2021
5SS, 40/120,SD/30 d5 (U12 is G/90 d5). Weekend before Super Bowl. If postponed, the tournament will be held. **Confirm at** <https://achievementtesting.info/chess> Prizes: \$11,000 b/200 fully paid. **Open (FIDE-rated):** \$2375: \$1000-400, 2299-2200 \$400-250, U2200 \$200-125, (top 4 gtd 27%) Asheville (FIDE-rated, Under 2200): \$3750 Buncombe (Under 1700): \$3750 U12 (Under 1200): \$1100. **Biggest Upset** in Tmt: \$25. **EF (Open, Asheville, Buncombe):** \$96 by 1/23. **EF (U12):** \$48 by 1/23. **"No-prize" EF** for under age 18 in Asheville, Buncombe, U12: \$24 by 1/23. **Unrated EF** in Asheville, Buncombe, U12: \$24 by 1/23 (eligible for unrated prize only). **ALL:** On-site entries \$10 more. Add \$48 to play in a section more than 300 points above your rating. 1 section max. **Rds:** 1st rd, either Fri 7pm or Sat 9am (G/90 d5), then Sat 1pm - 7pm, Sun 9am - 3pm. **Byes:** One 1/2 pt bye avail any rd, declare by rd 2. **Location:** Crowne Plaza Resort Asheville, One Resort Dr., Asheville, NC 28806. **HR:** Reserve early at 828-254-3211 or 800-773-3211 and mention tournament. **Ent:** WW, PO Box 1123, Weaverville, NC 28787 <https://achievementtesting.info/chess>

Regionals

ALABAMA

Evangel 2021 Open

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 2021
4SS, Game/45 + 10 second i4SS, Game/45 + 10 second increment per move. Round times: 9:30, 11:30, 2:30, 4:30. (Half-point byes available, limit 1, request before round 1). Location: Evangel

12th annual
GOLDEN STATE OPEN
January 23-24, 2021 on ICC
6 ROUNDS, G/75+ 10
\$5,000 GUARANTEED PRIZES
See Online Events or chessvents.us.

MASSACHUSETTS

JANUARY 9-10, 2021, 5th Annual NY State Girls Championship Online at Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

JANUARY 30-31, 2021, Greater NY Scholastic Championships Online At The Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

NEW JERSEY

JANUARY 9-10, 2021, 5th Annual NY State Girls Championship Online at Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

JANUARY 29, 2021, Greater NY Scholastics Friday Night Blitz Online At The Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

JANUARY 30-31, 2021, Greater NY Scholastic Championships Online At The Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

NEW YORK

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

7th Long Island CC January Open
THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 2021-THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2021

5SS, 6/90;d5. United Methodist Church, 470 East Meadow Avenue, East Meadow, NY 11554. Open to all. \$(b/20 pd. ent.): \$110-90. Top U-2000, U-1500/unnr. \$60 ea. EF(cash only): \$35. Non-LICC members +\$10. UNRATED FREE! Reg: 6:45 - 7:15 PM, no adv. ent., Rds: 7:30 PM ea. Thursday, 2 byes 1-5. Info: www.licchessclub.com.

JANUARY 8, 2021, NY State Girls Championship Friday Night Blitz Online at Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

JANUARY 9-10, 2021, 5th Annual NY State Girls Championship Online at Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

JANUARY 29, 2021, Greater NY Scholastics Friday Night Blitz Online At The Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

JANUARY 30-31, 2021, Greater NY Scholastic Championships Online At The Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

NORTH CAROLINA

Land of the Sky XXXIV

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2021-SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2021
See Grand Prix.

PENNSYLVANIA

North Penn Chess Club

Main & Richardson - St. John's UCC, 500 West Main St., Lansdale, PA 19446. See www.northpennchessclub.org for schedules & info or 215-699-8418.

JANUARY 9-10, 2021, 5TH ANNUAL NY State Girls Championship Online at Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

JANUARY 30-31, 2021, Greater NY Scholastic Championships Online At The Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

VERMONT

JANUARY 9-10, 2021, 5TH ANNUAL NY State Girls Championship Online at Internet Chess Club
See Online Events.

US Chess Membership Rates: Premium (P) and Regular (R)

(U.S., CANADA, MEXICO)

Type	1 yr	2 yr
Adult P	\$49	\$95
Adult R	\$40	\$75
Senior (65+)	\$40	\$75
Young Adult P (25 & UND)*	\$35	\$65
Young Adult R (25 & UND)*	\$26	\$48
Youth P (16 & UND)*	\$30	\$55
Youth R (16 & UND)*	\$22	\$40
Scholastic P (13 & UND)*	\$25	\$45
Scholastic R (13 & UND)*	\$17	\$30

Premium membership provides a printed copy of Chess Life (monthly) or Chess Life Kids (bimonthly) plus all other benefits of regular membership. Regular membership provides online-only access to Chess Life and Chess Life Kids. Youth provides bimonthly Chess Life, Scholastic bimonthly Chess Life Kids, others listed above monthly Chess Life. See www.uschess.org for other membership categories. Dues are not refundable and may be changed without notice.

**Ages at expiration date of membership being purchased*

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Thank you for being the sustaining force behind all our initiatives, and for making all of our programs possible.

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Berkeley, CA 94702
510-843-0150
tournaments@berkeleychessschool.org
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1562 1st Ave #189
New York, NY 10128
212-475-8130
info@chessnyc.com
www.chessnyc.com

Continental Chess Association

P.O. Box 8482
Pelham, NY 10803
201-347-2269
director@chess.us
www.chesstour.com

Marshall Chess Club

23 West 10th Street,
New York, NY 10011
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PaperClip Pairings

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Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis

4657 Maryland Avenue,
St. Louis, MO 63108
314-361-CHESS
info@saintlouischessclub.org
www.saintlouischessclub.org

San Diego Chess Club

2225 Sixth Avenue,
San Diego, CA 92101
619-752-4377
chucnglo@aol.com
www.sandiegochessclub.org

WilliamsburgTutoring.com

David Green
60 Broadway
Brooklyn NY 11249
info@ChessNYC.com
www.WilliamsburgTutoring.com

US CHESS SILVER AFFILIATES

Chess Center of New York (NY)

www.chesscenter.cc

Jersey Shore HS Chess League (NJ)

shorehschessleague@yahoo.com

Oklahoma Chess Foundation (OK)

www.OCFchess.org

En Passant Chess Club (TX)

td_edg@twc.com

Little House of Chess, Inc. (NY)

littlehouseofchess.com

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www.chessset.com

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www.evangelchurch.me

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516-739-3907

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www.spartachessclub.org

Michigan Chess Association (MI)

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For all information on becoming a Gold or Silver Affiliate, please visit www.uschess.org/content/view/7905/95.

2020 US CHESS GRAND PRIX STANDINGS

	NAME	STATE	PTS.
1	IM JOHN DANIEL BRYANT	CA	66.50
2	FM ROBERT SHLYAKHTENKO	CA	58.50
3	GM ALEXANDER SHABALOV	PA	57.50
4	IM AARON GRABINSKY	MO	48.60
5	IM ZURABI JAVAKHADZE	TX	48.00
6	IM HANS NEIMANN	CT	47.20
7	GM FRANCESCO RAMBALDI	MO	44.00
8	GM FIDEL CORRALES JIMENEZ	MA	42.00
9	IM JUSTIN JOSEPH SARKAR	NY	41.20
10	IM PRAVEEN BALAKRISHNAN	VA	38.00
11	IM BRANDON JACOBSON	NJ	38.00
12	GM KAMIL DRAGUN	TX	36.40
13	GM ILLIA NYZHNYK	MO	36.00
14	GM TIMUR GAREYEV	KS	34.00
15	GM ANDREY STUKOPIN	TX	33.40

2020 AWARDS

\$12,500

IN CASH PRIZES!

FIRST PRIZE: \$5,000!

2nd: \$2,500 | 3rd: \$1,000

4th: \$900 | 5th: \$800

6th: \$700 | 7th: \$600

8th: \$500 | 9th: \$300

10th: \$200

The Grand Prix point totals reflect all rated event information as of December 1, 2020 for the 2020 Grand Prix.

An updated 2020 Junior Grand Prix standings list will appear in an upcoming issue.

Classifieds

Chess Life accepts classified advertising in these categories: Activities, For Rent, For Sale, Games, Instruction, Miscellaneous, Services, Tournaments, Wanted. Only typed or e-mailed copy is accepted. Absolutely no telephone orders. Rates (per word, per insertion): 1-2 insertions \$1.50, 3-6 insertions \$1.25, 7 + insertions \$1.00. Affiliates pay \$1.00 per word regardless of insertion frequency. No other discounts available. Advertisements with less than 15 words will cost a minimum of \$15 per issue. Post office boxes count as two words, telephone numbers as one, ZIP code is free. Full payment must accompany all advertising. All advertising published in *Chess Life* is subject to the applicable rate card, available from the Advertising Department. *Chess Life* reserves the right not to accept an advertiser's order. Only publication of an advertisement constitutes final acceptance. For a copy of these complete set of regulations & a schedule of deadlines, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: *Chess Life* Classifieds, PO Box 3967, Crossville, TN 38557. Ads are due two months prior (by the 10th) of the issue cover date you want your ad to appear in. (For example: October CL ads MUST be submitted no later than August 10th). You can e-mail your classified ad to tl@uschess.org.

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Solutions

Page 11 / CHESS TO ENJOY

PROBLEM I. 12. ... axb4! 13. Qxa8 Nb6 traps the queen. **PROBLEM II.** Black blundered by accepting a draw instead of winning with 24. ... Nxf2! and 25. ... Qxe3(+). **PROBLEM III.** 26. ... Qg5! threatens 27. ... Qxg2 mate. This wins after 27. g3 Bxg3! and 27. g4 Qh4. **PROBLEM IV.** 36. ... Nxa3! 37. Nxa3 Rxc1 and 37. bxa3 Rc3+ 38. Kd2 Rxf3 wins. **PROBLEM V.** 34. Bd4! threatened 35. Rxh6 mate and led to 34. ... Nxd4 25. Qxc8! Rxc8 26. e8=Q. Also lost is 34. ... Kh7 35. Bxg7! Kxg7 36. Qg4+ Kh7 37. Qf5+ Kg7 38. Qf6+ Kg8 39. Re3! with Re3-g3+ to follow. **PROBLEM VI.** 31. Rxd7! Rxc1 32. Rd8+ Bf8 and now 33. Bh6 Qa3 34. Nd7 is fastest.

Page 46 / MAKE YOUR MOVE!

TACTIC I. 22. ... Nxb3! Black exploits White's loose pieces. If White now captures 2. Rxc7, then 2. ... Nxd2+ followed by 3. ... Nxb1 wins a piece for Black. Note that Black has an excellent alternative in 22. ... Nxe4! with the same plan as above and after 23. Bc4, then 23. ... Nxd2+ 24. Rxd2 e4! Black doesn't let White play a2-a4, securing the bishop, and intends to follow up with ... a4-a3 with a decisive advantage. **23. Rbc1** Or 23. Rbb2 Bxb2 24. Rxc7 Nxd2+ 25. Ke1, and here Black untangles his pieces with 25. ... Nb1 26. Rxb7 Bc3+ 27. Kf1 Bb4, with a decisive advantage. **23. ... Nxd2+** and **White resigned.** G. Shahade-Priasmoro, Titled Tuesday 2020. **TACTIC II.** 20. ... Ng4+! Black exploits that White's queen cannot move to deliver a nasty 1-2 punch that wins material. **21. Kh3 Qxg3+ 22. Kxg3 Ne3** The point behind the previous knight move: Black wins an Exchange. **23. R5f3 Nxf1+** and **White resigned,** perhaps a little prematurely, but White's dejection is easy to understand. Al. Zubarev-Rakotomaharo, Titled Tuesday 2020. **TACTIC III.** 18. ... Bxc3! Clearing the e-file and setting up the next barrage of moves. **19. bxc3 Qxf1+ 20. Kxf1 Bh3+ 21. Qg2** White has no choice as 21. Kg1 Re1 mate ends the game immediately. **21. ... Bxg2+ 22. Kxg2 Re1** White resigned as the endgame is trivially won for someone like Dubov: Black forces White to put his central pawns on the dark squares, allowing Black's king to easily penetrate the queenside, for instance, 22. ... Re1 23. h4 Rd8! (forcing the pawn forward) 24. d4 Rc8 25. Bb2 Rxa1 26. Bxa1 b5 (fixing the pawns on dark squares) 27. Kf3 Re8 (cutting off White's king) 28. Bb2 f6, and Black's king will decisively join the fun. **0-1** Yoo-Dubov, Titled Tuesday 2020. **TACTIC IV.** 16. ... Ba6! In the game, Black failed to see the much bigger prize that could be picked up at relatively little effort and instead went for 16. ... Ng4 **17. g3?? Rb6** (17. ... Ba6! was again the way to go) **18. Qa5?** (here, White should have played 18. a4 Qc6 19. Qa5 Be6 20. Ba3 and White survives) **18. ... h4?** (18. ... Ba6! was once more better although not as good as on the previous two moves) **19. Qxd5 hxg3 20. hxg3 Qe7 21. Qe4 Qd8 22. Qf4??** (22. Qd5 Rd6 23. Qb3 is playable for White) **22. ... Bh6,** trapping the queen and soon **Black won** in Bhakti-Diaz Villagran, Titled Tuesday 2020. **17.**

Re1 Nd7 The trap is being shut around White's queen; now both ... Rb8-Ra8 and ... Rb8-Rb7 are threatened. **18. Bxd5** This saves the queen but not the game. **18. ... Bd3! 19. Qa5 Bxd4!** Black exploits the fact that the e-pawn is pinned. If Black played the immediate 19. ... Rb5? then 20. Qc3 Rxd5 21. Qxd3 Bxd4 22. Ra2 would be playable for White. **20. Ra2 Rb5** and Black wins a piece. **TACTIC V.** 21. ... Nf3+! Black violently breaks open White's king shelter. **22. gxf3** Everything loses; for instance, ignoring the knight doesn't help: 22. Kh1 Qh4! 23. h3 Nd4! 24. exd4 Qxh3+ with mate on the next move courtesy of the bishop on c6. **22. ... Qg5+ 23. Kh1 Qh5!** Keeping the pawn on f3 pinned two ways: c6-h1 and h5-e2. Black cannot allow herself to be careless. After 23. ... Qg4 24. e4!, White not only saves herself, she is winning. **24. Ne4 Bc7!** This is the second arrow in Black's precise attack: the individual attacks can be defended rather easily, but the combined force of the queen and both bishops is unstoppable. **25. Ng3** Stopping the attack against h2, but reopening the diagonal for the bishop on c6. **25. ... Bxf3+ 26. Kg1 Bxg3** and **White resigned.** E. Nguyen-Samadashvili, U.S. Women's Championship 2020. **TACTIC VI.** 20. ... Rxf2! Black takes advantage of White's lack of development to send the white king on a run. **21. Kxf2 Qxh2+ 22. Ke1** White accepts the invitation but strictly speaking, a better, albeit insufficient try was 22. Kf1 e4! (but not 22. ... Rf8+?? when White survives after 23. Rf3! Qh1+ 24. Kf2 Bb6+ 25. d4 Qh2+ 26. Ke3 and Black has nothing better than a perpetual check.) 23. Bxe4 Nxe4 24. Qb3+ (or 24. Rxe4 Rf8+ 25. Rf4 Bxf4 and Black forces mate) 24. ... Kh8 25. Qf7 Nxe4 26. Rxe4 Bxe4 27. Kxe4 Bxe4 28. Qe3 and Black has a winning advantage. **22. ... Gg1+ 23. Ke2 Qg2+ 24. Kd3** Or 24. Ke1 Rf8 and White's king will not survive for long. **24. ... e4+ 25. Kd4 Bb6+ 26. Ke5 Nc4+ 27. Ke6 Qh3+ 28. Ke7 Bc5 mate** This is a nice conclusion in Reshef-Dragun, Texas Collegiate Finals 2020. **TACTIC VII.** 23. ... Bc6! Zeroing in on the weakest spot in White's camp: the g2-square. **24. Nxc5** Nothing really works for White, so accepting Black's sacrifice will at least force Black to prove he has something; for instance, 24. Bc2 Bxe4 25. Bxe4 f5 26. Bc2 Nxf4 easily wins for Black. **24. ... Nxf4!** A further threat to g2, but even 24. ... Qxc5! wins, e.g., 25. fxe5 Bxg2! 26. Kxg2 Nxe5+ 27. Kh1 Qc6+ 28. Rd5! Ng4! (everything else is much less convincing) 29. Qf4 exd5 30. cxd5 Qxc3 and Black has a decisive advantage. **25. Rxf4 Bxg2+ 26. Kg1 Qxc5+ 27. Rfd4 Rg6!** Not allowing an inconvenient check on f6. **28. Qe3 exd4 29. Rxd4 Qf5 30. Rf4 Qb1+** and **White resigned.** Dominguez Perez-Xiong, U.S. Championship 2020. **TACTIC VIII.** 18. ... b5! Black can win a pawn with 18. ... Bxc3 19. bxc3 Rxc3 20. Rxc3 Qxc3 but he has a bigger prize in sight. **19. Qa5** Or 19. Bxf6 gxf6 20. Qa6 Rfd8 when Black's pieces are far more ideally placed than their white counterparts, for instance, 21. Re1 Qc5 22. Ne4 Qc2 23. h3 f5 24. Re2 Qa4 when Black despite his odd pawn structure has an overwhelming positional advantage. **19. ... b4! 20. Qxb4?** A mistake; after 20. Qxe5 Bxe5 21. Na4 Rxc1+ 22. Rxc1 Bxa2, Black has a large advantage but White can still put up a fight. **20. ... Qf4!** Suddenly, there are a lot of loose pieces in White's camp: the bishop on h4

is hanging and ... Bxf2+ is threatened. **21. Be4!** **Rc4!** and it is game over for White. In the game, Black played the mistake **21. ... Nxe4?** but was rewarded when **White resigned** prematurely (Esipenko-Khusnutdinov, Titled Tuesday 2020), as **22. Qxd4 Rc4 23. Ne2 Qxh4 24. Rxc4 Bxc4 25. Ng3 Qf6 26. Qxc4 Qxf2+** would have given Black a significant advantage, but White could still fight. **TACTIC IX.** 17. ... e3! White has an extra pawn and the bishop pair, but Black has a lead in development and White's king is uncastled. The text move addresses the weaknesses in White's camp by providing access to more weak squares. **18. Bxe3!** In the game, White collapsed rapidly: **18. 0-0? Bxh3 19. Kh2 Bxf1 20. Bxf1 Ng4+ 21. Kg2 Qe4+** and **White resigned** in R. Bator-Arman, Swedish Team Championship 2020. **18. ... Rab8! 19. Qa4 Rb2!** For the time being, this rook prevents White from castling. **20. Qd1** Or 20. Rd1 Re8! (slowly improving the position of all of the pieces) 21. d5 (also 21. Kf1 Bxh3+!! 22. Rxh3 Rxe3! 23. fxe3 Qf5+ 24. Kg1 Qxh3 wins for Black) 21. ... Bd7 22. Qxa7 Qc2 23. Rd2 Qc1+ 24. Rd1 Rxe2+ 25. Kxe2 Qxc4+ 26. Ke1 Bb5 (after the departure of the e2-bishop, the light squares are fatally weak) 27. Rd2 Ne4 28. Qd4 Qc1+ 29. Rd1 Qc2 30. Rd2 Nxd2 31. Qxd2 Qb1+ 32. Qd1 Qb2 and White will not survive for long. **20. ... Re8! 21. Qd3 Bf5 22. Qc3 Rc2 23. Qb3 h5!** and White is in a vice-like grip that is difficult to get untangled from, for instance, **24. Rg1** or 24. Kf1 Ne4! **24. ... Bxh3 25. Bd3 Bf5 26. Qxc2 Bxd3** and Black has a decisive attack.

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PROBLEM I. Mating Net: Black mates in three: **1. ... Ng3+ 2. Kg1 Gf1+ 3. Rxf1 Ne2 mate.** **PROBLEM II. Mating Net:** Black mates in two: **1. ... Na3+ 2. bxa3 Qb6 mate.** **PROBLEM III. Mating net:** Black mates immediately: **1. ... Ne3 mate.** **PROBLEM IV. Mating net:** Black mates in two: **1. ... Nd3+ 2. Kd1 Rd2 mate.** **PROBLEM V. Mating net:** Black wins in two: **1. ... Ne2+ 2. Kh2 Rh4 mate.** **PROBLEM VI. Mating net:** It is mate in two: **1. ... Ne2+ 2. Kh2 Bf4 mate.**

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MY BEST MOVE

Dr. Robert F. Keating

Golden Knights and Iowa State Champion

Like many chess players, I started out playing chess with my dad. My passion for chess grew with my first chess computer and books, and I managed to win my high school championship four years running, something I had boldly told my dad I would do early on in ninth grade.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, I enjoyed good success with correspondence chess, with a peak rating around 2400. I started playing in regular tournaments in 2004, and I won the Iowa State Championship and Iowa Open in 2011. Later that year, I earned my National Master certificate amidst a 21-game winning streak.

As an amateur chess player, my game is based largely on having a decent opening repertoire, tactical awareness, and basic endgame knowledge. Positional and strategic elements certainly exist, but more often than not, the outcome of my games is determined by whoever makes fewer significant mistakes. Having the opportunity and guts to play a legitimate positional sacrifice is challenging.

The Chicago Open is one of the largest tournaments in the Midwest and provided the setting for the game that featured my best move.

RUY LOPEZ, CHIGORIN VARIATION (C99)

Robert Keating
Alex Richter
Chicago Open, 2015

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. O-O b5 6. Bb3 Be7 7. Re1 O-O 8. h3 d6 9. c3 Na5 10. Bc2 c5 11. d4 Qc7 12. Nbd2 cxd4 13. cxd4 Nc6 14. d5

Keeping the central tension with 14. Nb3 is more often preferred but the knight can be pushed back by ... a5-a4. Closing the center provides White with a space advantage and time to catch up in development.

14. ... Nb4 15. Bb1 a5 16. Nf1 Bd7 17. Bd2

17. a3 was tempting, but I did not want to give Black a potential hook on the queenside.

17. ... Na6 18. Bd3 Nc5 19. Rc1 Qb7 20. Bb1 b4



Having the opportunity and guts to play a legitimate positional sacrifice is challenging.



Black enjoys a seemingly solid position with better development behind the closed center. The c5-knight has a solid outpost, and after ... Rf8-c8, Black may continue to expand on the queenside. White has tried 21. Ng3, 21. g4, and 21. Bg5 with mixed results.

21. Rxc5!

MY BEST MOVE: A good example of how a positionally motivated sacrifice can radically alter the nature of a position. For the Exchange, White wins a pawn and gains undisputed control of the now mobile center

with a dominating space advantage and open lines to the kingside.

21. ... dxc5 22. Nxe5 Bb5 23. Ne3 Nd7 24. N5g4 c4 25. Nf5 Nc5 26. d6

26. Bh6! wins more quickly but I failed to find 27. Qd4 f6 28. e5! after 26. ... gxh6.

26. ... Bd8

Black's army is effectively bisected, with the majority of his pieces separated from his king, at which all White's pieces are aiming.

27. Nxc7!

The most direct way to break down Black's castle is to simply bash in the front wall. White's pieces proceed to storm the edifice until the enemy monarch is subdued.

27. ... Nd3 28. Bxd3 cxd3 29. Bh6 Qc6 30. Nf5 f6 31. Bg7

Threatening mate with 32. Ngh6.

31. ... Kf7 32. Ngh6+ Ke8 33. Qh5+ Kd7 34. Nd4 d2 35. Qf5+ Ke8 36. Qe6+ Be7 37. Qxe7, mate. ♚

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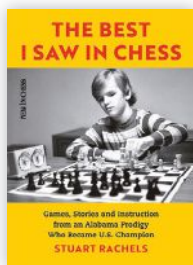
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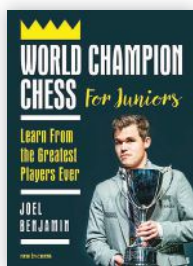
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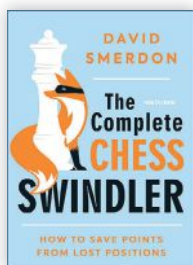
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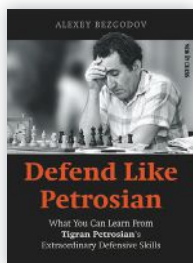
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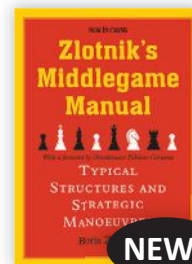


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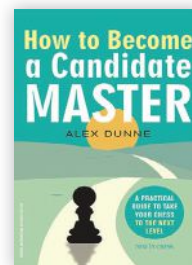
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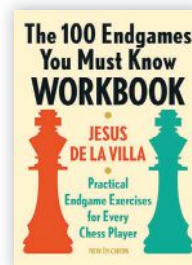
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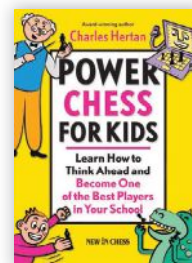
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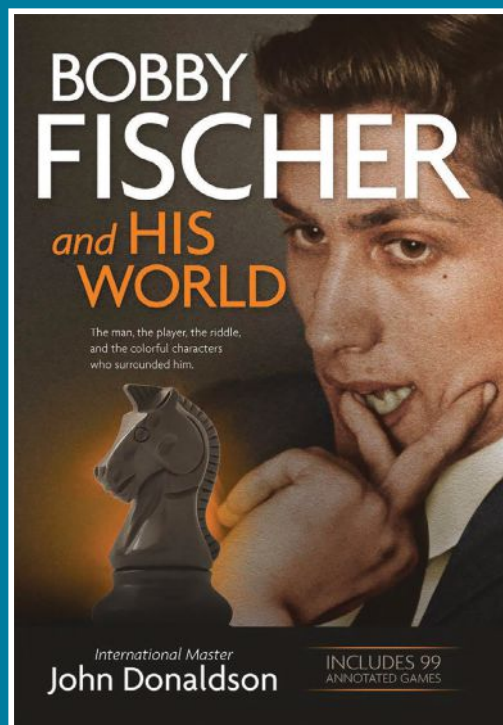
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