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CHESSLIFE

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ON THE COVER

After all the controversy of 2022, you'd think that 2023 would be a quieter year for Hans Niemann. Not so. With lawsuits ending and controversies extending, Niemann put up the best performance of the year with his victory in Zagreb. Like Clarissa, we explain it all.

PHOTO: FIDE / DAVID LLADA

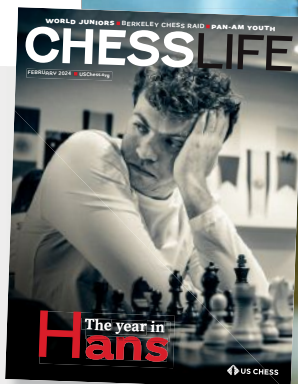


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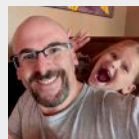
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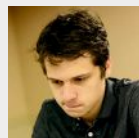
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JOHN HARTMANN
(Cover Story) is the editor of *Chess Life* and *Chess Life Kids*. He won the 2023 CJA “Story of the Year” for his earlier work on *l'affaire Niemann*.



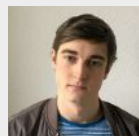
IM ROBERT SHLYAKHTENKO
(Pan-Am) is a first-year student in mathematics at Brown University and the 25th ranked American junior as of the December 2023 US Chess rating list.



IM ANDY WOODWARD
(World Junior) became an International Master at 12; now age 13, he has notched two GM norms and is working on his third. Currently the 13th ranked American junior (as of the December 2023 list), he recently finished second in the *Chess.com* Puzzle Rush Championship.



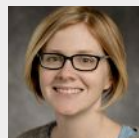
GM ABHIMANYU MISHRA
(Analysis) was youngest person to become a grandmaster at age 12 years, four months, and 25 days in June 2021. At 2627 “Abhi” is at his highest FIDE rating to date. He is the author of an autobiography with New in Chess.



GM JESPER THYBO
(The Catalan) is a former European U18 champion and a member of both the Offerspill Chess Club and the Danish national team. Find him on Li-chess (@JThybo) for lessons!



MICHAEL FITZGERALD
(Berkeley) is an award-winning newspaper columnist, retired and resurrected at *stocktonia.org*. He is also a Class A player.



KATE QUEALY-GAINER
(Books) pinch-hits for IM John Watson in this month's review. An expert on youth and teen literature, she is the Editor of the *Bulletin for the Center for Children's Books* and an adjunct professor in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

2024

World Amateur Team & U.S. Amateur Team Championship East

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Open to four-player teams with one optional alternate. Team average must be under 2200 (four highest ratings from 2024 January rating list used for ALL players—no exceptions). Teams rated over 2000 average—no more than 1000 points between boards 3 and 4. No more than two GMs on a team.

Time Control: 6SS, 40/100, SD/30 delay 5. **Rds.:** 1-7:30 Sat., 11-6 Sun., 9-3:30 Mon.

Registration: Online registration opens December 1st at official website www.njscf.org. Advance registration only—no on-site registration.

EF: \$240 online only by 1/28/24; ALL \$290 after. All teams: any changes at site or after 1/28/24—\$30 charge. **ENTRY MAXIMUM IS 325 TEAMS.** Enter early!

TEAM PRIZES: 1-5th place teams, plaque and 4 digital clocks; Top team (Denis Barry Award) U2100, 2000, 1900, 1800, 1700, 1600, 1500, 1400, 1300, 1200, 1000, each plaque and 4 digital clocks; Top college (same school), 4 digital clocks & plaque; Top high school (grades 9-12 same school), Top middle school (grades 5-9 same school), Top elementary school (grades K-6 same school), Top 2 scholastic teams (mixed schools okay) (Collins Award), Top mixed doubles (2 males, 2 females, no alternates), Top seniors (all players over age 50), Top military, each plaque & 4 digital clocks; Top company (full time only, same employer, noneducational), Top coaches (educational), Top all female, Top family (4 family members), Top

state (CT, DE, MD, MA, NJ, NY (Benjamin Award), PA, VA), each plaque; Top future team (all players under age 10), Top military college, Top parent/child (2 pairs, one parent, one child), each special plaque.

ADDITIONAL PRIZES: Best Player 1-4 and top alternate, all 6-0 scores, each digital clock. Biggest individual upset each round, engraved Cross pen. Entry fee refunded Sunday night to team with best "chess related" name. Best "chess related costumes or gimmick," 1st—gourmet dinner for 4. 2nd—gourmet dinner for 4. Surprises and special giveaways each round.

HR: See link to reserve room at www.njscf.org. Chess rates expire 1/17/2024.

Tournament Director NTD/IA: E. Steven Doyle (49 years)
Sunday night: Bughouse \$25 per team. Cash prizes.



For help forming teams contact esdoyle@aol.com

See TLA section of this issue or visit new.uschess.org/node/39739 for more details.





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U.S. CHESS TRUST



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Alice Lee

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



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Tatev's Sicilian

I look forward to WGM Tatev Abrahamyan's writings each month, and the December column on attacking against the Sicilian has convinced me to stop fearing this defense. Could we get a month's worth of her thoughts on striking back with the Black side of the Sicilian?

Xander Faber
Via email

John Hartmann responds:

If you're holding this issue, you already know. The Exchange sac... the ... d6/7-d5 break... everything. Tatev was two steps ahead of you.

Mental Imagery

I happened across an article at wired.com about how our brains recognize imagined versus real images. This article was enlightening.

Apparently I have a condition called aphantasia. I have absolutely no visual imagination. I can see pictures while I'm dreaming but while I'm awake I get absolutely nothing. I'd always assumed while growing up that when someone said "picture an apple" they were speaking metaphorically. It never occurred to me that the vast majority of people can actually think about an apple

and get a picture. Now I feel like there's something important that I've been missing out on my entire life.

A bit of further investigation led me to surveys that try to rate how vivid people's imaginary images are. So while I'm on the zero end of the spectrum apparently there's quite a range of possibility. One of my first thoughts about this ability I lack is that I can imagine how helpful it would be with chess calculation. So I'm terribly curious if there is any correlation between how vivid a person's imaginary pictures are and their rating. Have there been any studies along these lines?

Roy Mongiovi
Via email

John Hartmann responds:

Readers? Comments welcome.

Errata

Are you distracted around the holidays? It happens to a lot of us. For our part, we were pretty upset about some of the errors we've found in our December and January issues.

We made a mistake in December's "Chess to Enjoy" quiz. The answer to question 10 was incorrect. Vera Menchik played reigning champ Alexander Alekhine in 1934. Worse, the answer we gave — Rowena Bruce in 1938 — was the wrong Bruce! It was her husband, R.M. Bruce, who played Alekhine at Plymouth 1938. Thanks to Bob Avery and Bruce Leverett for the corrections.

January's issue also had a few bugs. First, we inexplicably renamed Evelyn Mills as "Evelyn Woods" in the dek to "First Moves." We also randomly spelled Alisher Suleymanov with an "i" instead of a "y" in our report on the Qatar Masters.

Apologies all around!

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

National Chess Day

A 2023 Review

COMPILED BY **MELINDA MATTHEWS AND
NATASHA ROBERTS**

N

ATIONAL CHESS DAY, WHICH falls on the second Saturday of October each year, generates numerous local and regional events that celebrate all things chess. Like chess itself, National Chess Day tournaments

reflect the imagination, diversity, and spirit of our community. Here are some highlights from 2023 events across the country. ♠

CHESS TO BENEFIT OTHERS BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

Caesar Chess hosted its 2023 National Chess Day Scholastic tournament at the Galleria's Mall Food Court to benefit Children's of Alabama, which provides specialized medical care for ill and injured children. Chief Tournament Director Caesar Lawrence and Assistant Tournament Directors Jim Griffin and Misty Vick oversaw 62 students from 23 schools.

-reported by Caesar Chess; photo by
Chibuke Ulasi



YOUTH TAKES THE LEAD CARMEL, INDIANA

Organizing a chess tournament is a huge undertaking for the most seasoned chess pros. So Carmel's National Chess Day event



Carmel, IN

was particularly notable because ninth-grader Nikhil Murugan, who founded the non-profit Summit Chess Club, served as the tournament organizer and chief tournament director. The tournament drew participants from all over Indiana as well as from Illinois, Ohio, and Texas, and boasted 99 players in six sections, including 13 first-time over-the-board players. Murugan said, "It makes me happy to see how we are aiding the growth of the chess community here."

-report and photo courtesy Jay A. Carr
and Nikhil Murugan

SETTING GOALS FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

We introduced Evelyn Mills in the January issue of *Chess Life*. The 16-year-old, who runs the Fairbanks Chess Club, took on the challenge of directing her first unrated event in early 2023, which drew 35 people. Afterwards, people asked her about hosting a rated tournament. Her first thought: "Can you give me a second? I'm only 16!" Her second thought: "Let's do it!"

On National Chess Day, Mills held Fairbank's first rated tournament since 2006, this time drawing 44 players. But Mills wasn't the only one reaching new heights. Megan Chen, from Illinois, traveled to Fairbanks to become the first woman to play a rated tournament in all 50 states (read more about Megan in an upcoming issue of *Chess Life*). Fellow Illinoisan Lawrence Cohen also checked Alaska off his bucket list of places to play.

-reported by Melinda Matthews;
photo by Miles Jordan

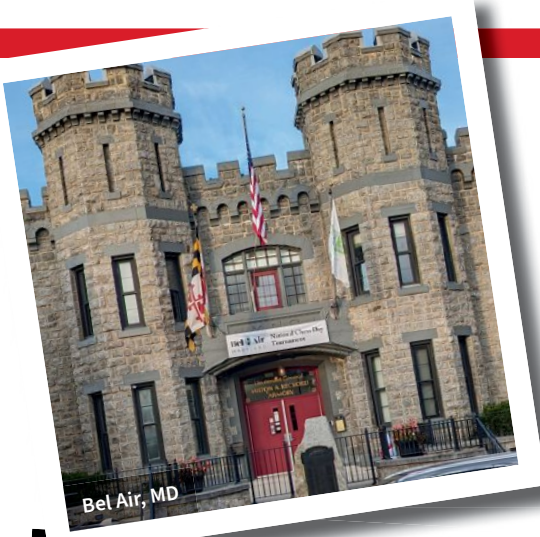
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT BEL AIR, MARYLAND

In Bel Air, Maryland, chess received the royal treatment - literally. Their National Chess Day tournament took place in the Lt. Gen. Milton A. Reckord Armory in downtown Bel Air. The Armory's castle-like design was especially appropriate, as its twin turrets resemble "a pair of rooks," said club president Matt Allman.

The Emmorton Rec Chess Club hosted its National Chess Day event with support from the Town of Bel Air and local sponsors. The tournament's downtown location is important, Allman said, as it brings people into town and gives participants "wonderful access" to Bel Air's many amenities. "It's



Fairbanks, AK



Bel Air, MD

Miami-Dade County, many of them Title I. The tournament's inclusivity is due, in no small part, to FSCL Commissioner Elizabeth Tejada, who saw a need 28 years ago and filled it. "I found out we have children in America who need love," she said.

-reported by Melinda Matthews; photo courtesy of FSCL

were offered to specific schools in order to encourage their participation.

The strategy proved successful: Seven of the 34 players were girls, and 13 unrated players earned their provisional ratings.

-report and photo courtesy of Poison Pawns Chess Club

COLLEGES JOIN IN TULANE UNIVERSITY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

National Chess Day wasn't limited to scholastics and local chess clubs – two colleges also hosted events. The Tulane Quick Chess Tournament, jointly hosted by the Downriver Chess Club and the Tulane Chess Club, took place on Tulane's campus and was the largest all-age tournament in Louisiana since 2018, with 100 total participants.

Further north, The University of Vermont's Chess Club hosted its 1st UVM Fall Chess Open. Look for interviews from these two events in upcoming Faces of US Chess profiles.

-reported by Molly McCrory (Tulane)

TEACHERS TEACH CHESS NEW YORK, NEW YORK

For National Chess Day, the organization I co-founded with Jack Aronian, Chessin1Day, led a "Chess for All" workshop at Teachers College Columbia University's annual academic festival, TC(Re)Unites. The workshop's objective was to impress the importance of chess as an integral part of teacher education.

The workshop quickly hit capacity and included a mix of people distinctively reminiscent of the eclectic crowd seen at state chess tourneys.

After introductions by Karen Aronian, Ed.D., skilled Chessin1Day instructors facilitated the day's lessons. In the back of the room, I instructed a large, enthusiastic crowd of absolute beginners while the



Hialeah, FL

great to have tournaments like this for the local community," said David Morgan, a player from Fayetteville, Arkansas.

-report and photo courtesy of Emmorton Rec Chess Club

A MELTING POT HIALEAH, FLORIDA

Tournaments in South Florida have a special vibe – one I remember well from my days as a scholastic chess parent. Where else do chess parents raise money by serving Pan con Lechon sandwiches, to be washed down with shots of thick, sweet café Cubano? Where else do players challenge each other to soccer between rounds instead of tossing the ubiquitous American football?

On National Chess Day, the Florida Scholastic Chess League hosted a tournament in Hialeah, Florida that remained true to my scholastic chess memories. Hialeah is one of the largest Spanish-speaking communities in the country, and the 348 tournament participants reflected the area's diversity, hailing from schools across

EVERYONE IS WELCOME HOUSTON, TEXAS

The Poison Pawns Chess Club's National Chess Day event focused on "attracting kids who had never played in a rated tournament, especially girls and minorities," said Tournament Director Edgar Acosta. Special discounted entry fees



Houston, TX



New York, NY

other instructors delivered expert tips to more seasoned players.

Throughout the day, the room was abuzz with lively chess camaraderie, and I believe I'm not mistaken in saying that the participants had just as much fun as I did. Our National Chess Day mission was achieved!

-reported by Laurel Aronian; photo by Bruce Gilbert

New Safe Play Policy

US CHESS HAS REVISED ITS SAFE PLAY GUIDELINES FIRST adopted in 2019 into a Safe Play Policy that became effective as of January 1, 2024. The Executive Board thanks the efforts of the Safe Play Advisory Group that was established in June 2023 to suggest revisions to the Safe Play Guidelines. This Advisory Group will continue its efforts to support the commitment of US Chess to provide a safe environment for all chess players.

As a reminder, all certified US Chess tournament directors must complete SafeSport training by June 1, 2024. US Chess has zero tolerance for abuse and misconduct and will continue to revise its Safe Play Policy to meet the needs of its members.

Some of the highlights of the Safe Play Policy can be seen from the outset under Scope:

This Policy applies to all US Chess rated tournaments and sanctioned activities and events. US Chess rated tournaments (over-the-board and online) include all areas with a sufficient connection to the tournament location including the tournament venue, playing area, skittles, parking lot, and hotel. Sanctioned activities and events include, but are not limited to, US Chess delegates meetings; US Chess committee meetings; US Chess executive board meetings; events with a sufficient tie to US Chess that are run by a US Chess Affiliate like chess camps, chess club meetings, etc. US Chess members shall report alleged violations of the Safe Play Policy using the procedures outlined herein.

US Chess requires its Affiliates and State Chapters to comply with this Policy for any US Chess rated tournament, sanctioned activity, and chess-related event they organize. US Chess encourages its Affiliates and State Chapters to adopt and implement this Policy for their own events and activities. Nothing in this Policy prevents an Affiliate or State Chapter from addressing complaints made during a local or state chess event. US Chess recognizes that in some instances, complaints may be

addressed immediately and more effectively by the Affiliate, the State Chapter, and/or local law enforcement.

US Chess is committed to providing a safe environment for all chess players. Common standards of decency are reflected in this Safe Play Policy, but they are not designed for the airing of petty grievances. Recognizing that membership in US Chess is a privilege, and not a right, serious complaints involving conduct with a sufficient connection to US Chess will be addressed in accordance with this Policy. This Policy will be implemented and interpreted at the sole discretion of US Chess.

Additional features of the Safe Play Policy include:

- A prohibition for US Chess members who are registered sex offenders from being present or participating in events where minors will be present or registered to compete. The burden is placed on the member to adhere to this requirement or violate the terms and conditions of membership. III. Prohibited Conduct, A. Sexual Misconduct, 3. Criminal Disposition.
- A clear statement that no statute of limitations or time bars will prevent US Chess from investigating, assessing, considering, and adjudicating any relevant conduct regardless of when it occurred. VIII. Authority and Process.
- A reservation of rights by US Chess to suspend any individual who is the subject of an investigation from participation in any US Chess sanctioned tournament, event, or program until said investigation has concluded. VIII. Authority and Process.

The Safe Play Hub on the US Chess website remains a resource for you containing information about SafeSport training, the latest version of the Safe Play Policy, as well as information on how to report a violation. Should you have further questions, please email Ranae Bartlett, Director of Operations, at ranae.bartlett@uschess.org.

DeVaughn Croxton Hired



US CHESS IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE that DeVaughn Croxton has joined the US Chess team as Director of Programs. The Director of Programs will carry out initiatives to support underrepresented communities in chess including but not limited to Women, Underserved Youth, Older Adults, and other communities as identified. Given the youth-centric nature of US Chess membership, this role also will support Scholastic Chess.

DeVaughn has a Masters in Educational Psychology from Ohio State University and a Bachelors in Physics from Michigan State

University. He is a chess coach and player, growing up playing scholastic chess in Detroit, Michigan. DeVaughn brings five years of experience to US Chess in non-profit programs and is skilled in program development and analysis.

DeVaughn's enthusiasm for chess will be infectious as he brings his energy and skill to his new role as Director of Programs. DeVaughn is presently based in Columbus, Ohio and will be relocating to St. Louis to work in the US Chess office. He can be reached at DeVaughn.Croxton@uschess.org.

PHOTO: COURTESY SUBJECT

Meyer Moves On

The Executive Board has initiated a national search for a new Executive Director.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CAROL MEYER HAS ANNOUNCED SHE WILL be leaving US Chess this month to take a position as Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director at another organization. US Chess President Randy Bauer states, “Carol has been an outstanding Executive Director for US Chess. Besides her remarkable experience and expertise as a non-profit executive, she has devoted incredible energy, time, and effort to our organization. She has built a highly qualified professional team and earned the devotion and praise of our US Chess staff. I’ve learned so much from her and will greatly miss her wise counsel. The good news is that Carol’s many contributions to US Chess will live on, even as she takes on a new and exciting professional challenge.”

Upon her hire six years ago, one of the very first things Carol wrote to the membership was, “I want you to know that my door is always open and that I’d like to hear from you. US Chess is your organization and I encourage you to share your ideas with me or with members of our Executive Board. Organizations benefit from member engagement and your voice and involvement matter.” Members who did reach out to her were not disappointed; people were often surprised to hear her answering the phone herself, listening to their ideas and concerns, then taking concrete action. This was just one of the many ways that she worked to improve the chess culture.

That level of care and attention translated into hard numbers: US Chess membership stood at 93,000 when she started; it is now at 115,000 — a 24% increase, one of the most dramatic membership increases since the Fischer Boom, and despite a crash during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meyer showed similar concern with US Chess employees, who always felt they were treated with care, respect, and understanding. “Carol was always quick with praise and to deflect positive attention from herself to her staff, who were extraordinarily loyal to her because of this,” said Senior Director of Strategic Communication Dan Lucas, who continued, “If Carol disagreed with how a matter was handled, her approach was to make you feel as if you’ve just learned something new, not to make you feel that you did something wrong. Further, it was not unusual to see Carol go from handling a high-level contracts discussion to literally rolling up her sleeves as she carried trash out to the dumpster or put together office furniture.”

Asked by *Chess Life* for a quote for this article, Carol’s response was typically humble: “I am grateful for all the contributions and support from our staff team, board, volunteers, and members during my tenure. US Chess is well-positioned for continued success and growth for years to come because of you.”

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS DURING CAROL’S TENURE

- Expanded senior staff 2018-2023
 - ▶ Senior Director of Strategic Communication
 - ▶ Development Director
 - ▶ Director of Operations
 - ▶ Director of Programs
- Successfully cultivated and solicited major gifts for new development program 2018-2023
- Transgender Policy 2018
- Formalized Women’s Chess Program 2018
- Safe Play Guidelines 2019, Policy 2024
- Title I Grants Program 2019
- Steered US Chess through COVID 2020-2022
 - ▶ Navigated the Payroll Protection Plan: No employees were laid off
 - ▶ Online rules adopted
 - ▶ National championships played online
 - ▶ Delegates meeting moved online
- Moved US Chess offices to St. Louis 2022
- Partnership with the U.S. Center for SafeSport 2023

This list only represents major highlights. Carol’s lasting influence on US Chess will be felt in countless small, day-to-day, matters.



*Thanks for everything, Carol.
You will be missed.*

2024 US Chess Federation All-America Chess Team Announced

THE UNITED STATES CHESS FEDERATION is pleased to announce the 2024 All-America Chess Team. Team members will receive team jackets and plaques by mail.

The All-America Chess Team was created in 1987 to honor the very best players ages 18 and under. The team, one of the highest national honors attainable by a young chess

player, is selected on the basis of age, rating, and chess activity during that year, similar to the selection process of “all conference” sports teams.

This year’s candidates were selected based on their age as of January 1, 2023, and their peak post-tournament rating from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. Since this award

is a “post-season” selection, the minimum rating limits in each age group are reviewed annually by US Chess staff and the US Chess Scholastic Council.

The United States Chess Federation wishes to congratulate each of the 45 members of this year’s All-America Chess Team for receiving this prestigious award! ♠

2024 US CHESS ALL-AMERICA CHESS TEAM

AGE 18 (min. rating 2500)
ANDREW HONG (CA)

AGE 17 (min. rating 2475)
JUSTIN WANG (TX)

ROBERT SHLYAKHTENKO (CA)
BALAJI DAGGUPATI (CA)
ANTHONY BI HE (WA)
MAXIMILLIAN LU (CT)

AGE 16 (min. rating 2450)
ARTHUR GUO (GA)

CHRISTOPHER WOOJIN YOO (CA)
JASON WANG (OH)
NICO WERNER CHASIN (NY)
KIRK GHAZARIAN (CA)
EDDY TIAN (NJ)

AGE 15 (min. rating 2425)

EVAN PARK (PA)
JASON LIANG (NY)
VYOM VIDYARTHI (CA)
SANDEEP SETHURAMAN (AZ)
ERIC YUHAN LI (CA)

AGE 14 (min. rating 2400)
DIMITAR MARDOV (IL)
BACH NGO (FL)
ERICK ZHAO (PA)

AGE 13 (min. rating 2350)
ABHIMANYU MISHRA (NJ)
BREWINGTON HARDAWAY (NY)
ALICE TERESA LEE (MN)
ERIC CHANG LIU (TX)
HARSHID KUNKA (TX)

AGE 12 (min. rating 2300)
ANDY AUSTIN WOODWARD (TX)
RYO WENYU CHEN (TX)
TANITOLUWA ADEWUMI (NY)
BREJESH CHAKRABARTI (FL)
ANDREW JIANG (GA)

AGE 11 (min. rating 2225)
RYAN SUN (MA)
LUCAS JIANG (CA)
AIDEN Q LIU (CA)
ESHAAN HEBBAR (NJ)

AGE 10 (min. rating 2150)
SAM LUGER (NY)
PATRICK PEIJUN LIU (CA)

AGE 9 (min. rating 2050)
ETHAN GUO (CA)
TARIQ YUE (PA)
KYLE QIYU DONG (NJ)
SHARATH RADHAKRISHNAN (OH)

AGE 8 & UNDER
(min. rating 1950)
LINXI ZHU (NY)
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Merry-Go-Round

The circular rivalry – as simple as A, B, C

BY GM ANDY SOLTIS



LET'S TALK ABOUT THREE players you may have met. In fact, you may be one of them. We'll call them A, B and C.

They've been paired with each other for years in tournaments. The results are consistent:

Player A regularly crushes Player B. Player B usually beats Player C.

It stands to reason that A is the strongest of the three. He should have a big plus score against C. But he doesn't. Player C somehow wins most of his games against A.

You can dismiss this as an anomaly, one of the rare quirks of tournament chess. But it is not rare. It happens over and over, even at the highest levels.

For example, Magnus Carlsen has an overwhelming record against the young Dutch GM Jordan van Foreest, with 12 Carlsen wins and only one loss in their decisive games at various speeds.

OK, Magnus is, well, Magnus. But van Foreest is among the world's top three dozen or so players. He has an impressive record against many colleagues.

One is a Ukrainian GM named Andrei Volokitin, who is well below him in FIDE ratings. Van Foreest has four wins and two draws against him in seven games.

So, if Carlsen crushes van Foreest, and van Foreest beats Volokitin – then Volokitin must have gotten slaughtered when he played Magnus, right?

Nope. *No one* has a better score against Carlsen: four Volokitin wins, three draws, and no losses.

ENGLISH OPENING (A33)

GM Magnus Carlsen

GM Andrei Volokitin

Biel International Festival, 07.28.2006

1. Nf3 Nf6 2. c4 c5 3. Nc3 Nc6 4. d4 cxd4 5. Nxd4 e6 6. g3 Qb6 7. Nb3 Ne5 8. e4 Bb4 9. Qe2 d6 10. f4 Nc6 11. Be3 Bxc3+ 12. bxc3 Qc7 13. Bg2 O-O 14. O-O b6 15. Nd4?



This move looks right for positional as well as tactical reasons. White threatens 16. Nxc6 Qxc6 17. e5!. He would stand well after, say, 15. ... Bb7 16. Nb5!.

15. ... Nxd4! 16. cxd4 Ba6 17. Rac1 Rac8

White's pawns are undoubled but the c4-pawn is doomed. Computers recommend the grim defense, 18. Rc2 Bxc4 19. Rfc1 b5, but few humans would.

18. e5 Nd5 19. Bxd5 exd5 20. f5

Now 20. ... Bxc4 21. Qh5 would offer slim hopes of attack by way of 22. f6 followed by 23. Qg5.

20. ... dxc4 21. f6 g6 22. Qg4 Qc6 23. Rf4 dxe5 24. dxe5 Bb7 25. Qh3 Rfe8

When Magnus was young he carried off many swindles, such as 26. Bd4 Qh1+? 27. Kf2 Qxc1 28 Qh6!, when Black must draw by perpetual check. But there were too many ways for Black to avoid that, such as 26. Bd4 Rcd8.

26. Kf2 Rxe5 27. Rcx4 Qxc4 28. Rxc4 Rxc4 29. Qd7

The rooks eventually triumph after 29. Qh6 Rf5+ and ... Rf5xf6.

29. ... Rc2+ 30. Kg1 Bc6 31. Qd4 Rd5 32. Qg4 h5!, White resigned.

The A-versus-B-versus-C phenomenon has puzzled many minds who tried to make statistical sense of chess. One of them was I.J. (Jack) Good, a British computer pioneer and World War II codebreaking colleague of Alan Turing. (You may have seen him portrayed in the 2014 movie, *The Imitation Game*.)

Good, who spent his final years in Virginia, tried to create his own chess rating system. Like the rival Elo system, it predicted the success rate of higher-rated players against lower-rated ones.

But Good acknowledged that his system did not explain the upsets inherent in A-versus-B-versus-C rivalries. He called the troubling phenomenon “triangles.”

Irving Chernev had another name for it – “merry-go-round.” A rivalry can seem to go in circles, with each player beating one other opponent.

Why does it happen? In the Carlsen case, he was lower rated when he was losing to Volokitin.

But ratings don't explain merry-go-rounds of comparable Elos. In the 2023 U.S. Championship, for example, Ray Robson defeated Hans Niemann, who bested Abhimanyu Mishra, who won from Robson.

Nor does rating difference explain upsets. In the 2022 U.S. Championship, Aleksandr Lenderman lost to fellow GM Christopher Yoo. Yoo lost to the world-class GM Wesley So. But the much-higher rated So lost to Lenderman.

In physical sports we expect to see examples of Team A beating Team B, which defeats Team C, which trounces A. In fact, you can expect to see examples of this involving six, seven, and more teams in almost every season of the National Basketball Association, National Hockey League, and Major League Baseball.

But we like to think chess is different. Chernev quoted a traditional way of thinking

QUIZ FOR FEBRUARY

▶ THE MERANO, ITALY INTERNATIONAL tournament, held 100 years ago this month, is best remembered for an opening innovation in a blunder-marred game. It began 1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 c6 4. Nf3 Nf6 5. e3 Nbd7 6. Bd3 and now Akiba Rubinstein chose 6. ... dxc4 7. Bxc4 b5 8. Bd3 a6 followed by ... c6-c5!. This became the still-debated Meran Variation. This month's quiz offers six other reasons to recall Merano 1924. In each diagram, try to find the fastest winning line of play. This will usually mean the forced win of a decisive amount of material, such as a minor piece. Solutions are on page 63.



PROBLEM 1 Rudolf Spielmann Alexey Selezniev



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 2 Ernst Grünfeld George Koltanowski



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 3 Alexey Selezniev Sandor Takacs



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 4 Alexey Selezniev Siegbert Tarrasch



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 5 Stefano Rosselli del Turco George Koltanowski



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 6 Akiba Rubinstein Dawid Przepiorka



WHITE TO MOVE

when he wrote, "Chess is a scientific game, where the better man always wins."

Chernev was a student of the very first super-tournaments. He could not explain the results of Baden-Baden 1870. It starred the unofficial world champion, Wilhelm Steinitz, and his predecessor, Adolf Anderssen. But another player, Gustave Neumann, was actually higher rated than them, according to the computations at *Chessmetrics.com*.

Neumann was impressive in beating Anderssen both times in the double-round event. Anderssen regained those points when he defeated Wilhelm Steinitz 2-0. You can probably guess what happened when Steinitz played Neumann. It was another 2-0 shutout — in Steinitz's favor.

VIENNA GAME (C29)

Wilhelm Steinitz
Gustave Neumann
Baden-Baden, 07.18.1870

1. e4 e5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. f4 d5 4. d3

This move was virtually an innovation, in place of 4. fxe5 Nxe4, and would win games for Steinitz for three decades.

4. ... dxe4 5. fxe5 Ng4 6. Nxe4 Nxe5 7. d4 Ng6 8. Nf3 Qe7? 9. Bd3!

White sacrifices a piece rather than set a trap with 9. Kf2 Qxe4? 10. Bb5+! and 11. Re1.

9. ... f5 10. Bg5 Qe6 11. O-O fxe4 12. Bxe4

So that 12. ... Qxe4 13. Re1. But 12. Re1 was one of many improvements on the way Steinitz handled the attack.

12. ... Bd6 13. Ne5 Bxe5 14. dxe5 Nd7 15. Qh5 Nf8

The e-file is fatal after 15. ... Nxe5 16. Rae1.

16. Rad1 Bd7 17. h3 Rg8 18. Kh1 Qb6 19. e6 Bxe6 20. Rd2 a5 21. b3 a4 22. Rfd1 Bd7

(see diagram top of next column)

23. Rxd7!, Black resigned.

It's over because of 23. ... Nxd7 24. Bxg6+ Qxg6 25. Qe2+ and mate soon.

The list of merry-go-round members includes every world champion. Bobby Fischer was no exception.

Fischer was famous for humiliating the top Americans in tournaments. But he found



himself in *two* merry-go-rounds in the same U.S. Championship.

In 1965 Bobby easily outplayed Pal Benko. Two rounds later Benko won from Robert Byrne. Two rounds after that Byrne scored his first — and only — victory over Fischer in his career.

In the same tournament, Fischer lost to Samuel Reshevsky, who lost to Tony Saidy, who lost to Fischer.

Anyone can find themselves in an A-B-C merry-go-round. And that's a good thing.

After all, a beginner becomes a devoted chessplayer when they find opponents they can beat. In a merry-go-round, everyone finds at least one. ♠

More Attack for Black

Wrapping up our look at attacking themes in the Sicilian

BY **WGM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN**

IN OUR FINAL INSTALLMENT of this series on attacking play in the Sicilian, we will take a look at some more common

themes from Black's point of view. As always, I urge the reader to be an active participant in their learning journey and seek out more master games in this (or any other) opening.

When it comes to sharp openings such as the Sicilian or the King's Indian, there is no substitute for experience. The more games you play, the better your feeling about where to put the pieces, when to be defending, and assessing the right time for the attack. Playing blitz games and then looking up the opening can be very helpful in this regard.

Good books and online courses are useful here; alternatively, the Lichess database is a great resource for study material. (See my April 2023 column for specific advice on using Lichess to study!) Reviewing games played by your peers is a useful method to help discover what you can anticipate facing in your own games.

I will round off this series with inspiring play from the three of the greats of our game.

COUNTER ATTACK

In positions with opposite-side castling, Black can also create a strong attack with a pawn storm. Note how Kasparov doesn't rush to castle his own king and instead initiates an attack on the queenside. Sometimes castling too quickly can mean castling into a firestorm.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, SCHEVENINGEN VARIATION (B84)

GM Michael Adams (2741)

GM Garry Kasparov (2804)

Linares (12), 03.08.2005

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Be3 e6 7. Be2 Qc7 8. Qd2 b5 9. a3

Creating a hook.

9. ... Bb7 10. f3 Nc6 11. 0-0-0



11. ... b4

Here Black is the first to attack, taking advantage of the hook White has created. The black king is safe in the center for the time being, as there is no way for White to blast open the center.

12. axb4 Nxb4 13. g4 Be7 14. g5 Nd7 15. h4 Nc5

Black holds off on castling, and instead transfers his pieces to the queenside. Mean-

while, White has started pushing his g- and h-pawns in anticipation of Black's short castling.

16. Kb1 Rb8 17. h5 0-0

It is brave to castle as the white pawns approach Black's pawn shield, but White was ready to start attacking the king in the center with a g5-g6 push, weakening the e6-pawn.

18. g6 Bf6!

Correctly ignoring the g6-pawn, Black activates his bishop instead, which serves both attacking and defensive purposes.

19. Rdg1



Now 19. gxh7+ would be met with 19. ... Kh8 20. h6 g6 when the black king finds safety behind the enemy pawns. Hiding the king behind your opponent's pawns is an excellent defensive technique — White wishes he could simply take both h-pawns off the board to open the file, but he has no way of forcing Black to capture them.

After 19. h6 fxg6 20. hxg7 Bxg7 the queen defends the seventh rank, and White's attack is not strong.

19. ... Ba8!

The bishop slides back to make the b-file available for the rook. We saw in the Kasparov game in the January issue how vital the dark-squared bishop can be on this diagonal. Almost every black piece is now aiming at the white king.

20. Bg5 Be5 21. gxh7+ Kxh7 22. Nb3

Here again 22. h6 will be met by 22. ... g6 when White has no way of opening lines to the king.

22. ... Nxc2!

With such good pieces, it's little surprise that Black can win the game tactically.

23. Nxc5 Na3+! 24. Ka2 Qxc5 25. Na4 Nc2!!

A beautiful mating net.

26. Kb1

Nothing else can be recommended. If 26. Nxc5 Rxb2 mate, while Black also wins after 26. Rb1 Nb4+ 27. Ka1 Qa5 28. Bd1 Bc6.

26. ... Qa3, White resigned.

White gave up in view of 27. Qxc2 Rfc8 28. Qd2 Qxa4.

SURVIVING THE ATTACK

Attacking in positions with same-side castling also comes with certain risks. If White pushes the pawns in front of the king, their own king can become exposed if the center opens. If the attack doesn't pan out, the overextension can leave White with long-term weaknesses.

In our next game, Judit Polgar withstands an attack and overtakes her legendary opponent with her superior pieces.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, SCHEVENINGEN VARIATION (B85)

GM Efim Geller (2525)

GM Judit Polgar (2575)

Women versus Veterans (4), Aruba, 1992

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6
5. Nc3 a6 6. Be2 e6 7. 0-0 Be7 8. f4 0-0
9. Qe1

A classical setup against the Scheveningen: White castles on the same side as Black, but will launch an attack by transferring the queen to the g3-square.

9. ... Qc7 10. Qg3 Nc6 11. Be3 Nxd4 12. Bxd4 b5

This move aims to develop the c8-bishop on the long diagonal, and also potentially undermine the e4-pawn by attacking its defender with ... b5-b4.

13. e5 dxe5 14. fxe5 Bc5!

Correctly trading the dark-squared bishops in order to leave White with the weak e5-pawn.

Black might also have tried 14. ... Nd7 15. Ne4 Bb7 16. Nd6 (16. Nf6+ Nxf6 17. exf6 Qxg3 18. hxg3 Bxf6 19. Bxf6 gxf6 is equal) 16. ... Bd5 17. Rad1 when the position is equal but the knight on d6 is a bit annoying.

15. Bxc5 Qxc5+ 16. Kh1 Nd7

(see diagram top of next column)

This is the position that I want to focus upon. White has overextended with the e4-e5 push, and now the pawn is extremely weak. End



games will favor Black as there is a clear weakness in White's camp, and without the dark-squared bishops, White's attack is less frightening. Targeting the h7-pawn with the queen and the bishop will be met with ... g7-g6, as Black doesn't have to worry about dark square weaknesses.

Black does have to consider the white knight going to e4 and then, potentially, to f6, but that does not work tactically as the e5-pawn hangs. Generally, Black would also be happy to play ... Bc8-b7 and exchange that bishop for the c3-knight, leaving White with a bishop against the knight. This situation favors Black as the light-squared bishop cannot defend the e5-pawn.

17. Rae1 Qxe5 18. Qh4

White decides to give up a central pawn in hopes of building an attack. Black still needs to remain vigilant and take the threats against the king seriously.

18. ... Qc7 19. Bd3 g6 20. Re3 Qd8 21. Qh6 f5



22. Bxf5

Now the position gets extremely messy. White's idea is to bring the knight into the attack via the d5-square, utilizing the fact that his pieces are well-centralized.

22. ... Nc5!

Polgar avoids the mess that would come with capturing the bishop and instead forces a trade of pieces.

If 22. ... Rxf5 23. Rxf5 exf5 24. Nd5 Ne5

25. Rxe5 Black keeps the balance with 25. ... Be6!! (25. ... Ra7? 26. Re8+ Qxe8 27. Nf6+ and wins) preventing the knight check at all costs. Now if 26. Rxe6 Qxd5 27. Re1 the position is entirely equal.

23. Bd3 Rxf1+ 24. Bxf1 Bb7 25. Rh3 Qc7

The black king is now fully safe as White is attacking with a limited number of pieces — neither the knight or the bishop can join the attack. The black queen is able to defend against the only threat.

26. Qe3 Rf8 27. Kg1 e5 28. Nd1 Ne6 29. c3 Nf4 30. Rg3 Qf7 31. Nf2 e4 32. Be2 Qxa2, White resigned.

The final game is one of my favorite Sicilian games from Black's point of view. Here Ulf Andersson provides a strategic masterclass. Note how he leaves himself with an isolated pawn in order to activate his pieces and shut out his opponent's bishop.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, SOZIN VARIATION (B88)

GM Miguel Illescas Cordoba (2635)

GM Ulf Andersson (2655)

Ubeda (4), 02.12.1997

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6
5. Nc3 e6 6. Bc4

White develops the bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal with the idea to pressure the e6-square after f2-f4-f5.

6. ... a6 7. 0-0 Be7 8. Bb3 Nc6 9. f4 Nxd4
10. Qxd4 0-0 11. f5 Kh8 12. Kh1 Bd7 13. Bg5 Qa5 14. Rad1 Rad8 15. Qd3



15. ... exf5!

A good strategic decision by Black. Opening the diagonal for the b3-bishop looks scary, but Black's idea is to activate his own bishop in the process. Normally, Black almost never plays this move.

16. exf5 Bc6 17. Qd4 d5!

We can now see the idea behind exchanging on f5. The break with the d-pawn is the main idea for Black in the Sicilian — if they can play ... d6(7)-d5 without major consequences, like allowing a strong e4-e5 or being saddled with a weak, isolated pawn, it's usually a huge success.

In this position, Black is left with an isolated pawn, but in return he keeps the b3-bishop out of play, controls the c3-knight, and can place his own knight on e4 eventually. And if the d5-pawn moves to d4, the c6-bishop will become a monster.

18. Qh4 Rfe8 19. Rd3 Qc5 20. Rh3



20. ... Kg8!

The beginning of a king run. It also helps that it's the only move for Black! Naturally

the horrific 20. ... h6?? 21. Bxh6 is immediately game over.

21. Bxf6

Alternatively, 21. Rg3 Kh8 22. Rh3 Kg8 would lead to a forced draw.

21. ... Bxf6 22. Qxh7+ Kf8 23. Qh8+ Ke7 24. Qh5 Rd7!

Defending the f7-pawn and opening a path for the king to escape to the queenside. Here, as in the Polgar game, Black has good control of the position with the bishops not allowing White's minor pieces to enter the game. All of Black's pieces are well placed, and once the king gets to safety, he will take control of the board.

25. Re1+ Kd8 26. Rxe8+ Kxe8



This exchange of rooks may feel dangerous for Black as the king is in the center, but we will see that it leaves White with a very tender back-rank. Remember: a weak king is only weak if it can be attacked!

27. Qh8+ Ke7 28. Nd1 d4

Without an attack, White's pieces are scattered all over the board without any harmony or purpose. We also see the weaknesses of the white king in the back-rank and the g2-pawn.

29. Qg8 Qe5 30. Qxf7+ Kd8 31. Rh8+ Kc7 32. Qe8

It looks like that White has made progress, but there are no real threats. The black king is perfectly safe, while his counterpart is under heavy fire.

32. ... Qxf5 33. Qe1 Re7 34. Qg3+ Kb6 35. Bc4 Qxc2 36. Bb3, and White resigned.

In light of 36. ... Qxg2+ (or 36. ... Re1+ 37. Qxe1 Qxg2 mate) 37. Qxg2 Re1 mate. ♠

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2:30 PM Round 3

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1:00 PM Round 6

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top 700 – 999, top U700, top 6 schools

Under 12 top 15 individuals
top 900 – 1199, top U900, top 6 schools

Under 14 top 15 individuals
top 1100 – 1399, top U1100, top 4 schools

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Mixing it up in Mexico City!



The 2023 World Junior and Girls Junior Championships

BY **IM ANDY WOODWARD**



T

HE WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP is one of the most important events of the year, and its list of alumni is a who's who of modern chess. Four winners — GMs Boris Spassky, Anatoly Karpov, Garry Kasparov, and Viswanathan Anand

— have even gone on to win the world championship.

The 60th edition of the World Junior and the 39th running of the Girls Junior were held in Mexico City from September 20 through October 2, 2023, with 235 partici-

PHOTOS: COURTESY FIDE / DAVID LLADA

pants representing 55 countries. Fourteen GMs and 30 IMs took part in the Open, while one IM, three WGMs, and 13 WIMs battled for top honors in the Girls section.

Team USA had six players make the trip to Mexico City. GM Hans Niemann was the ratings favorite in the Open section, while IMs Kirk Ghazarian, Josiah Stearman, and your author all had hopes of scoring upsets. IM Carissa Yip was the first seed in the Girls section, and she was joined by eight-year-old WCM Romi Milner. Some American university chess programs also sent players with coaches, including The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) and the University of Missouri.

Other notable players were GMs Frederik Svane and Arseniy Nesterov in the Open, along with Canadian IM Shawn Rodrigue-Lemieux, the winner of the 2022 World Youth U18, and 14-year-old prodigy IM Shreyas Royal of England. Many eyes were also on 14-year-old WIM Miaoyi Lu from China in the Girls section, who has played some incredible games in recent months.

After hearing about this tournament through one of my chess friends in New Zealand, it seemed like a good opportunity for me. With Mexico City being just a three-hour flight from my home, this was an easy trip for an international tournament. The leisurely playing schedule, with most games played at a pace of one per day, was also attractive. And I was happy to see that my friend Shreyas Royal was registered to play too.

My ultimate goal for the event was to notch my third GM norm, but without a whole lot of time to prepare — I had to get ahead on my schoolwork to be able to play — I just wanted to play good games and gain experience.

My dad accompanied me on this trip, as we figured his ability to speak a bit of Spanish would be handy. A shuttle took us to the hotel after landing at the airport, and the first thing I saw in the hotel lobby was a “Welcome Juniors” sign with a life-sized chess board! Our hotel room was nice, but the wi-fi was cutting out and almost unusable. Thankfully the hotel was located next to a large mall, and a very kind hotel staff member helped us buy a local SIM card to hotspot my dad’s phone. The workaround was a bit klunky — my laptop wouldn’t connect, so I had to use my dad’s — but everything worked well enough in the end!

The opening ceremony took place on the morning of October 21. There were speeches and live entertainment from local musicians and dancers. Then, the moment of truth —

what color would the top players take in the first round? Top seeds Niemann and Yip came to the stage and were faced with two men in sombreros, who had white and black knights under their hats. Carissa went first, chose, and the man revealed a white knight. And Hans did the same!

The tournament started that afternoon. Early rounds are usually uneventful in major events; here, my first big challenge came when I took the black pieces against Niemann in round three. This was the second round of the day — the only day where we had two games — and the pairings didn’t come out until 40 minutes before the round. Without much time to prepare, and knowing that Hans plays so many different lines, I just looked through his recent games to feel him out. In our game he played an anti-Grünfeld line, which surprised me, but I had an interesting idea that I wanted to try, and it worked out well.

ENGLISH OPENING (A15)

GM Hans Moke Niemann (2667)

IM Andy Woodward (2475)

World Junior Championship (3), Mexico City, 09.22.2023

1. Nf3 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 e5

The engines tell us that this move is not enough to reach near equality, but I think it is a good practical try to stop White from getting a strong center.

5. Nxe5 0-0 6. Nf3 Re8

Putting pressure on the e4-pawn.

7. d3 d5!

The point of the pawn sacrifice, breaking White’s center down while activating both of Black’s bishops.

8. cxd5 Nxd5 9. Bd2

If 9. Nxd5 Qxd5 due to the pin.

9. ... Bg4 10. Be2 Nb4 11. Be3 Bxf3

12. gxf3 N8c6 13. h4

This move took me by surprise. I had only seen 13. a3 previously.

13. ... Nd4

The most logical move, taking control of the dark squares.

14. Rc1

This is forced, as otherwise either (a) one of the black knights would end up on c2, or (b) White would have to give up his dark-squared bishop, which would be bad news for him.

We see more clearly why this is the case if we examine the position after 14. Bxd4? Qxd4 15. Qd2 Rad8 16. Rd1 h5. Here Black has complete control over the dark squares, whereas White has no counterplay. If he tries to go f3-f4-f5, it always runs into ... Bg7-h6.

14. ... Qd6?!

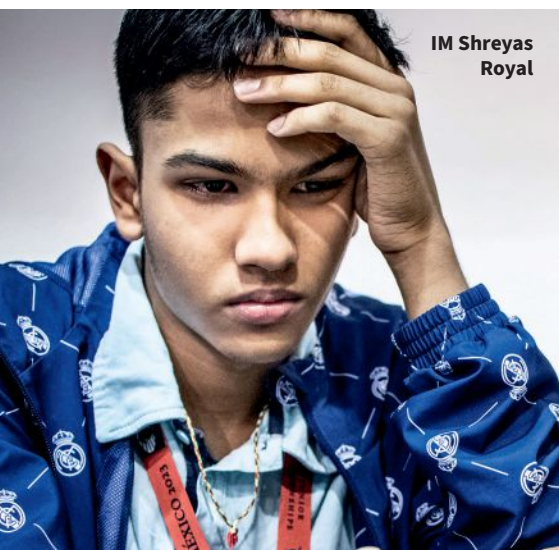
White is just slightly better after 14. ... Qd7 15. a3 Na6 16. b4 h5.

15. a3!

White needs to act fast, as Black is threatening ... Nd4xe2 followed by ... Ra8-d8, leaving the d3-pawn defenseless.



Woodward wonders how to proceed against Niemann.

GM Marc'Andria
MaurizziWGM Candela
Belen Francisco
GuercamburuIM Shreyas
Royal**15. ... Na6 16. f4 Rad8****17. b4!?**

A decent practical choice, forcing Black to make a decision.

The engine likes 17. h5 Nc5 18. Nb5!, a nice semi-tactic to gain the bishop pair and trade White's passive knight for Black's good one. After 18. ... Qb6 19. b4!, counter-attacking, the position looks really crazy, but White has enough to compensate for all of Black's attacks and gets a slight advantage.

Here's a sample continuation: 19. ... Nxe4! 20. dxe4 Nf3+ 21. Kf1 Rxd1+ 22. Rxd1 Qc6! (keeping an eye on the b5-knight) 23. Rh3! (attack and counter-attack!) 23. ... a6! 24. Na7 Nh2+ 25. Rxh2 Qxe4 26. Rh3. White has a rook, bishop, and knight for Black's queen and pawn, so "objectively" White should be almost winning. In this particular case, however, the white knight is offside on a7, so it is much closer to equal.

17. ... c5!

Now White has to make a decision. Should he push a pawn on the queenside, or in the center?

Note that 17. ... c6?! is too slow, as it allows White to block out the black bishop and control the center after 18. e5! Qe6 19. h5.

18. e5!?

The best practical move. After 18. b5?! Nc7 19. e5 Qe7 20. a4 f6 Black breaks White's center, achieving a slightly better position despite being down a pawn.

18. ... Qe7!

We see one of the points of White's previous move after 18. ... Qc6? 19. Ne4!, as the e4-square is cleared for the knight.

The move 18. ... Qe6? fails to 19. Bg4!, targeting Black's queen while improving the bishop's position and removing any ... Nd4xe2 threats. White is significantly better after 19. ... Qe7 20. Ne4 cxb4 21. Qa4!.

19. b5

White had to be careful to avoid 19. Ne4

cxb4 (a) 20. Nd6? Rxd6 21. exd6 Qxd6 with a winning position for Black. Still, if White finds the correct (b) 20. Qa4 Black should not try (b1) 20. ... Rd5?, which aims to play ... Na6-c5, but allows White initiative after 21. h5!. Instead (b2) 20. ... Nf5! is the right move.

19. ... Nc7 20. Qa4**20. ... Qe6**

Here I calculated 20. ... Qd7 for a long time before realizing White could get what he wanted with 21. b6!, trading the queens. With White dealing with a weak king in the center, a queen trade is always near the top of the priority list. The position is equal after 21. ... axb6 (or 21. ... Qxa4 22. Nxa4 axb6 23. Nxb6 Nce6 24. h5) 22. Qxd7 Rxd7 23. h5.

Also equal is 20. ... h5 21. Qxa7 Nce6, and even 20. ... Nce6 straightaway.

21. Bd1?

Here 21. Qxa7?! is met with 21. ... Nxe2 and now:

(a) 22. Kxe2 Qg4+ 23. Kd2 (23. f3? Qg2+ 24. Bf2 Ne6 and Black is winning) 23. ... Ne6 gives Black the advantage, as White's king is very weak, and Black threatens all sorts of things, including ... Qg4-f5, ... Ne6xf4, and ... c5-c4.

(b) 22. Nxe2! Qd5! and now:

(b1) 23. 0-0?! Qf3 24. Qxc5! (24. Ng3 Rxd3 25. Qxc5? Ne6 wins for Black) 24. ... Qxe2 25. Qxc7 Qg4+ peters out to a draw.

(b2) 23. Rg1 Nxb5?!. This looks like a natural human move, but it turns out that Black puts his knight in a precarious position after 24. Qxc5 Qxd3 25. a4 Na3 26. Qc3! White successfully trades queens and remains a pawn up. Instead the correct 23. ... Ne6 is equal.

The best try was probably 21. h5 g5! (not 21. ... Nxe2?! 22. Kxe2! Qg4+ 23. Kd2! Nd5 24. hxg6 hxg6 25. Rhg1 Qe6 26. Ne4 b6 27. Ng5 Qf5 28. Qe4 with a White advantage) 22. fxg5! Bxe5 23. Qc4 b6 24. a4 when we reach an unclear position.

21. ... Qf5

Targeting the d3-pawn.

22. Qc4?!

Human, all too human, but not the best. Instead White should have played 22. Ne2! Qxd3 23. Bxd4 Rxd4! 24. Qb3 (24. Nxd4? Qe4+ wins) 24. ... Ne6 25. Qxd3 Rxd3. Black will soon win one or two of the white pawns, and probably later the game, but this remained the best practical chance for White to survive.

22. ... Bh6!

With the f4-pawn in the crosshairs.

23. Ne4



The best/only chance for White to try to keep the game going.

23. ... Bxf4!

I calculated 23. ... Nd5?! for awhile, before realizing that White could keep practical

chances with the temporary queen sacrifice 24. Qxd5! Rxd5 25. Bg4 Qxf4! (25. ... Rxe5? 26. Bxf5 Rxf5 27. Ng3! Rf6 28. Ne4 Rb6 29. Nxc5 Rxb5 30. Ne4 and White is back in the game) 26. Bxf4 Bxf4 27. Nf6+ Kh8! 28. Nxd5 Bxc1 29. f4 h5 30. Bh3. While Black will be a pawn up after nabbing the a3-pawn, White has decent holding chances.

24. Nf6+ Kg7 25. Nxe8+ Rxe8 26. Qxc5 Ncx5?!

Giving White more chances; now Hans finds the resource I missed.

More precise was 26. ... Nce6! as it deprives White of the necessary time to castle. Black is winning after 27. Qd5 (or 27. Qc4 Qxe5 28. Rh3 Qf5) 27. ... Bxe3 28. fxe3 Qxd3.

27. 0-0!

In the middle of a storm, and on move 27!, White finally gets his king to safety. Now he has chances to hold the draw.

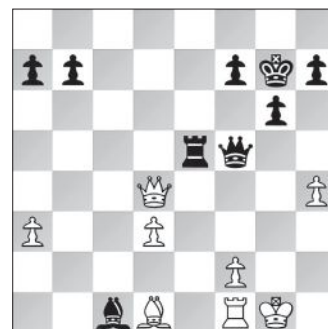
27. ... Rxe5 28. Bxd4 Nxd4 29. Qxd4 Bxc1

(see diagram top of next column)

Black is up a pawn, and has a much safer king. Is it enough to win?

30. Re1

Not 30. f4?? Be3+.



30. ... Bf4 31. Re4 Qf6!

I was very lucky to have this resource, unpinning the rook, to keep control of the position.

32. h5

It may look like White has decent drawing chances after 32. Rxf4!? Re1+ 33. Kg2 Qxd4 34. Rxd4 Rxd1 35. Rd7 a5, having entered a rook and pawn endgame down just one pawn, but White's pawns are split and very weak. Black should win this in the long run.

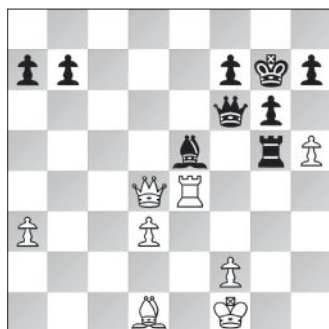
32. ... Rg5+ 33. Kf1 Be5

(see diagram next page)

King safety is often a determining factor in opposite-colored bishop middlegames. This is why I decided to keep the queens on the board — to keep the attacking opportunities alive.

The eventual Girls champion diffuses the tension before round eight.



**34. Qxa7**

Even if White had not taken the pawn, Black would still have had a great position after something like 34. Qe3 gxh5 35. f4 Bd6.

34. ... b6!

I suspect this is what Hans missed. Black cuts the white queen off on the g1-a7 diagonal, and now Black is ready to attack with ... Be5-d4 or even ... Be5-h2, threatening ... Rg5-g1+.

35. Qa8!?

Setting one last trap.

35. ... gxh5

Avoiding 35. ... Bd4?? 36. h6+! Kxh6 37. Qf8+ Qg7 38. Rh4+ Rh5 39. Qxg7+ Bxg7 40. Bxh5, winning for White.



IM Carissa Yip

36. Re3 Bh2!

The final touch, enforcing ... Rg5-g1+ followed by ... Qf6-b2+ and then grabbing the bishop on d1.

37. Re8 Rg1+ 38. Ke2 Kh6?!

The engine's way of winning is 38. ... Qb2+ 39. Kf3 Kh6!, but it looks risky to the human eye. If 40. Qc6+ Rg6.

39. Bc2?!

Getting low on time, White errs, although the best move loses as well: 39. d4! Qxd4 40. Qc6+ Kg7! (40. ... Rg6? 41. Qe4 gives White hope) and Black should win.

39. ... Qc3 40. Rc8

Now it is mate by force.

40. ... Re1+ 41. Kf3 Qf6+ 42. Kg2 Rg1+, White resigned.

As you can see in the game, Hans had a chance to draw, but he decided to enter into a slightly worse position hoping to make something out of it. I have been in this situation several times, so I completely understand his decision. Hans bounced back in the remainder of the tournament and finished strong, an unfortunate final round loss to Nesterov tempering his result.

The win over Niemann was the highlight of my event, but after that, its trajectory changed. In the fourth round I was paired with the eventual winner of the tournament, 16-year-old GM Marc'Andria Maurizzi from France. Accompanied by his coach, Marc'Andria had great preparation in our game, secured a strong position after move 20, and ground me down in the endgame. After his victory over me, Maurizzi continued to stay at the top of the leaderboard, becoming one of the youngest players ever to win the World Junior title. Here's one of his best games from the tournament.

RUY LOPEZ (C70)

GM Marc'Andria Maurizzi (2555)

GM Ivan Schitco (2514)

World Junior Championship (9), Mexico City, 09.29.2023

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Bc5!?

The fourth most common move. More popular are 4. ... Nf6, 4. ... d6, and 4. ... b5.

5. 0-0 Nge7

Once again, the fourth most common move! Black is trying to get White out of book and just play chess. It turns out that Maurizzi

has a pocket full of ideas, even when he is caught by surprise.

6. c3 Ng6 7. d4 Ba7 8. Bg5 f6 9. Be3 d6!?

A very rare move, and apparently a specialty of the young Indian IM Aradhya Garg! With six games prior to this game (three by Aradhya!) compared to the 164 with 9. ... 0-0, this was definitely not expected.

10. d5?!

Not the best move, but worth a try. Better was 10. Nbd2 0-0 11. Re1 followed by a normal game.

10. ... Bxe3?!

Necessary was 10. ... b5!, as Black can't allow White to have so much play so fast. Things are equal after 11. Bxa7 (or 11. dxc6 bxa4! 12. Bxa7 Rxa7 13. Qxa4 Bg4) 11. ... Nxa7 12. Bc2 0-0.

11. dxc6 b5 12. fxe3 bxa4 13. Qxa4 0-0**14. c4!**

This is the only move to snatch the advantage. White's next moves are Nc3-d5 and b2-b3 if necessary.

14. ... f5 15. Nc3!

Here 15. exf5?! looks normal, undoubling the pawns, but it's a mistake. Black has an edge after 15. ... Bxf5 16. Nc3 Bd3!.

15. ... fxe4 16. Nd2!

Stronger than 16. Nxe4?! Bf5 17. Nfd2 Rb8 which looks equal to me.

16. ... Bf5 17. Ndxe4 Qh4 18. c5

Not the only possibility, but this was (I suspect) played with White's next move in mind.

White could also try 18. Ng3!? Bd3 19. Rxf8+ Rxf8 20. Qa5!, with a double attack, threatening both the c7-pawn and Qa5-d5+, nabbing the bishop. Black has to play 20. ... Rf7!, defending against both threats. After 21. c5 d5! 22. Nxd5 Qd8! 23. Nc3 h5! anything could happen.

The best move is 18. Qc2!, self-pinning the knight to the queen, but this also stabilizes the position. Now b2-b3, Rf1-f2, and Ra1-f1 are in the air. White is a bit better after 18. ... Ne7 19. Qe2! Nxc6 (or 19. ... Bxe4 20. g3) 20. Ng3 Be6 21. Nd5! Bxd5 22. cxd5 Ne7 23. e4 Ng6 24. Qc2 Nf4 25. Nf5 Qg5 26. Rf3 Rf7 27. Raf1 Raf8 28. Kh1.

18. ... d5



19. Nd6!!

A stunning knight sacrifice, crashing through the position!

19. ... Qxa4

Black must be careful. Here 19. ... cxd6 20. Qxh4 Nxh4 21. cxd6 is lights out, as the pawns supported by the rooks and knight are too strong.

20. Nxa4 Bd3?!

Here 20. ... cxd6? is met by the cute intermediate move 21. Nb6!, and White should win after 21. ... dxc5 (or 21. ... Rab8 22. c7 Rb7 23. cxd6 Rxb6 24. Rxf5) 22. Nxa8 Rxa8 23. Rxf5.

The right move is 20. ... Be6!, and again White has 21. Nb6!!, similar to the game. Here White is a bit better after 21. ... Rab8 22. Nd7 Rxf1+ 23. Rxf1 Ra8.

21. Nb6!!

A picturesque position, isn't it? The two white knights and the rook on f1 are all hanging!

21. ... Bxf1 22. Nxa8 Rxa8 23. Rxf1



Now the position has calmed down a lot, and it is much easier to show how White has the advantage. He is up a pawn, and his opponent's king is cut off.

23. ... Rd8?

Here 23. ... d4!? 24. exd4 exd4 25. Re1 d3 26. Nc4 may give the best chances to hold. Naturally 23. ... cxd6 24. cxd6 is unplayable for Black, but

24. b4!!

A very easy move to miss, showing Maurizzi's full strength. White consolidates his extra c6-pawn, and proceeds to make use of its full potential.

24. ... Ne7 25. Rf7! Nxc6 26. Rxc7 Nxb4



27. Rb7?!

Correct is 27. Nf5! d4 28. exd4 exd4 29. c6! Kf8 30. a3!. This is a pretty move, kicking the knight away from its attack on the c6-pawn. White wins after 30. ... d3 31. axb4 d2 32. Ne3 Re8 (32. ... d1=Q+ 33. Nxd1 Rxd1+ 34. Kf2 is an easy win) 33. Nd1! Re1+ 34. Kf2 Rxd1 35. Ke2 Rb1 36. Kxd2 Rxb4 37. Kd3.

27. ... a5 28. a3?

Losing all the advantage. It was again more accurate to play 28. Nf5 d4 29. exd4 exd4 30. a3!, hitting the b4-knight and pushing it to an uncomfortable position.

28. ... Nd3?

Returning the favor. Black had to cover the c7-square with 28. ... Na6! 29. Nf5 Nxc5 30. Rxc7+ Kh8 31. Ra7 Nb3 when Black's disadvantage is manageable.

29. c6! Nc5

Or 29. ... Rxd6 30. Rb8+ Kf7 31. c7 Rc6 32. c8=Q Rxc8 33. Rxc8 and wins.

30. Rb6!?



WCM Romi Milner



The key round seven matchup between Yip and WIM Miaoyi Lu.

Here 30. Ra7 Ne6 31. Nf7 was probably easiest.

30. ... Ne6 31. Nb5 Rc8 32. c7! Nxc7 33. Rc6

The black knight is pinned, so he has to give up the Exchange.

33. ... Nxb5 34. Rxc8+ Kf7 35. a4!

Putting the final nail in the coffin. The black knight is dominated by White's rook.

35. ... Nd6 36. Rc5 Ke6 37. Rxa5, Black resigned.

Maurizzi showcased great understanding of the position, and proved that he is a well-deserving champion.

I returned to form in round five, defeating Peruvian IM Saul Rodriques Flores Daniel

Quillas in a complicated struggle where both sides could easily have gone wrong. Then came the rest day, which was much needed! Most players went on a tour organized by the event staff, but my friend Shreyas and I decided to stay put and try to recharge our batteries.

Unfortunately my tournament started going downhill when play resumed. A loss to UTRGV's IM Gleb Dubin, followed by two draws in rounds seven and eight, dropped me down the crosstable. Then came a win and a loss, followed by a final round pairing with another UTRGV member, Turkish IM Ekin Baris Ozenir. I got a slightly better position out of the opening against Ozenir, but I spent too much time doing so, and I wasn't able to convert my advantage with the time that remained.

The tournament ended sooner than I wanted, but I was happy to attend the closing ceremony with both old and new friends. The ceremonial fire was lit once more, and the winners were crowned. I ended up blitzing the night away with Shreyas!

Maurizzi was the deserving winner in the Open section, edging out GMs Nesterov, Luka Budisavljevic (who plays for the Missouri chess team), and Mamikon Gharibyan on tiebreaks. All four players scored an excellent 8½/11.

First prize in the Girls section went to Argentinean WGM Candela Belen Francisco Guecamburu. Starting as the second seed, Francisco Guecamburu benefitted from better tiebreaks to take the title over Yip and WGM Beloslava Krasteva (another Mizzou player!), all of whom also finished with 8½/11. While Yip was (as she reported in the January issue) a bit disappointed in her performance in Mexico City, it did get her in fine shape to win the U.S. Women's Championship just days later! Here's one of her best games from the World Girls Junior, her round seven win over Switzerland's WIM Sofiia Hryzlova.

FRENCH DEFENSE, TARRASCH VARIATION (C07)

IM Carissa Yip (2372)
WIM Sofiia Hryzlova (2215)
World Girls Junior (7), Mexico City,
09.27.2023

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nd2 c5 4. exd5 Qxd5 5. Ngf3 cxd4 6. Bc4 Qd6 7. 0-0 Nf6 8. Re1!?

An interesting sideline, played much less often than the mainline beginning with 8. Nb3.

8. ... Nc6 9. Nb3 Be7

Not the most popular, but it has been played by Duda and Kamsky, and it leads to unique positions.

10. Nbx4 Nxd4 11. Nxd4 0-0



12. Bd3!?

Interesting, and rare. The point is Black can't take the knight on d4 due to the discovery with Bd3xh7+. In the meantime, White is freeing his knight to go to f3 without worrying about the queens being traded.

More often seen is 12. c3 Qc7 13. Bb3 with a typical, equal position.

12. ... a6 13. Nf3 Rd8 14. Ne5 Bd7 15. Qf3!?

This is a decent practical choice, but I think there was a slightly better way for White to proceed: 15. b3, with the idea of Bc1-b2, Qd1-e2, and Ra1-d1 and a pleasant position. A sample line is 15. ... Bc6 16. Bb2 Rac8 17. Qe2.

15. ... Bc6 16. Nxc6 bxc6!?

It was important to recapture with 16. ... Qxc6!. Taking with the queen was correct because White must now trade queens to create a weakness in the position, but simplifying the position gives Black more chances to draw against a higher-rated opponent.

17. Bf4 Qd5 18. Qe2!

Avoiding the queen trade. White has the two bishops, so she can use it to attack the opponent's king.

18. ... a5 19. Be5 Nd7



IM Andy Woodward

PHOTO: COURTESY FIDE / DAVID LLADA

20. Bc7!

A nice move, leveraging the black rook off of the d-file before retreating. This creates a small weakness in Black's camp.

20. ... Rdc8 21. Be4!?

Another intermediate move. I'm not sure if it is objectively best, but it does force the black queen to an awkward square.

White is also better after 21. Bg3.

21. ... Qc5 22. Bg3 Nf6 23. Bf3 Bd6 24. Bxd6 Qxd6 25. Rad1 Qc5 26. Qe5!?

This lets go of the pawn, and the advantage. I don't know if it was an oversight or a sacrifice, but best was to play 26. c3 a4 27. a3 and stabilize the position.

26. ... Qxc2 27. Rc1 Qa4 28. a3 h6 29. h3

Black is a pawn up, but it's starting to get hard to find productive moves. What she would like to do at the proper moment is to sacrifice back the pawn and gain enough counterplay to equalize. Easier said than done, of course!

29. ... Nd5

Now White plays a series of forcing moves that lead to a winning advantage.

Black's clearest path to equality was 29. ... Ra6! with the positional threat of ... Ra6-b6 followed by ... Rc8-b8.

30. Re4 Qb3 31. Rg4!

Taking aim at the weak king.

31. ... g6



32. Be4

Now White is hitting the g6-pawn, forcing Black to make another decision.

I suspect Carissa calculated the interesting candidate move 32. Rxc6+!?, but it only leads to a draw after 32. ... fxc6 33. Qxe6+ Kg7 34. Be4! Qxb2 35. Qxc6+ Kf8 36. Qxc6+ Qg7 37. Qd6+ Ne7 (37. ... Qe7 38. Qh6+) 38. Rc5 when White has nothing more than a repetition.

32. ... Ne7 33. Rg3 Qb8 34. Qf6 Qd6 35. Rcc3!

Preparing to go Rc3-d3, or even Rc3-f3, targeting the f7-pawn.

35. ... Rc7 36. Rcd3 Nd5?



Black cracks under the pressure. It was necessary to sit and be patient with 36. ... Qc5 37. Rc3 Qd6.

37. Rxd5!!

The beginning of a winning combination.

37. ... cxd5

Naturally 37. ... exd5?? drops the queen.

38. Bxc6!

Ripping open Black's king cover. The bishop cannot be taken because it is checkmate by force:

38. ... Rc1+?

If 38. ... fxc6? 39. Rxc6+ Kh7 40. Rxc6+ Kg8 41. Rh8 mate, and if 38. ... Qxc6? 39. fxc6 fxc6 40. Qxc6+ Rg7 41. Qxc6+ Kh7 42. Qxd5 White picks up too many pawns, and with them, the game.

The only try was 38. ... Kf8! but after finding a few only moves, White gets a clearly better position: 39. Bxf7 Rxf7 40. Qh8+ Ke7

41. Qxa8 Qc5 42. Qb7+! Kf8 43. Qb8+! Ke7 44. Kh2!.

39. Kh2 fxc6 40. Qxc6+ Kf8 41. Qxc6+ Ke7 42. Qg7+

I think 42. Qxc1 was also good enough.

42. ... Ke8 43. Qg8+ Kd7 44. Qxa8

White is up two pawns, with a much safer king, so the game is pretty much over.

44. ... Qc7 45. Qf8 Kc6 46. Qe8+ Kd6 47. Re3 Rc2 48. Qxe6+ Kc5+ 49. Re5, Black resigned.

A beautiful showcase of attacking chess by the once and reigning U.S. Women's Champion!

I didn't play as many good games as I had hoped for, but I was able to spend lots of time with my chess friends. That, for me, is the best part of my tournament experience: eating, laughing, and taking walks together is a highlight for me. My Dad also enjoyed getting to know some of the players, coaches, and event organizers.

I once saw this quote somewhere: "Life is not a competition, but a journey to become the best version of you." The experience of playing against some best juniors in the world inspired me to continue my journey towards becoming a better chess player. I'm thankful for this opportunity, and I hope to play the World Junior again someday! ♠

You can read archival copies of "My Best Move" on uschess.org, click on "Chess Life Magazine," and then "Archives."



It's not all stressful! Royal (L) and Woodward (R) play blitz.

The Double Swiss Gambit

How I won the Pan-American U18 Open Championship in startling fashion.

BY **IM ROBERT SHLYAKHTENKO**

IN RECENT YEARS, I have rarely competed in major youth tournaments, and, to tell the truth, I have even more rarely performed well in them. Youth events uniquely train the ability to handle the pressure of playing as top seed, as well as the ability to defeat weaker players with consistency and ease. Having restricted myself mostly to playing in invitational events and strong swisses, I came to realize that I had lost some of these skills. For this reason, I decided to participate in the 2023 Pan-American Youth Championships in Chicago: while I did not stand to gain much even from first place, the training value of the tournament was real. Additionally, as this was both my last year of eligibility and the first time the championships were held within the United States, it seemed like an opportunity not to be missed.

The main attraction of the Pan-American Youth is that the winner of each section earns a title directly; in the case of the U18 Open, the players were fighting for the International Master title. This revealed my secondary purpose in playing: as an IM already, I felt rather protective of my status!

I prepared relatively dutifully and arrived at the tournament feeling ready and motivated. But, as always, my actual form did not coincide with my expected one: disaster struck immediately.

In the first round, I outplayed Merric Hu



Singh (L) versus Shlyakhtenko (R)

PHOTO: COURTESY ORGANIZERS / DESHAUN ADAMS

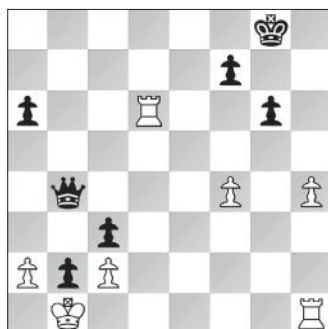
quite well; achieving a seemingly risk-free advantage, I won a pawn and the conversion seemed to be only a matter of time. However, I began to play very cautiously, addressing my opponent's threats without creating any of my own. When consolidating a material advantage, one of the most important techniques is restricting the activity of the enemy pieces. Very often this can be accomplished simply by attacking the opponent's active pieces, forcing them to retreat. I failed to do this; instead, my pieces were the ones to fall into passive positions, my opponent gradually equalized, found several excellent moves, and I — under pressure in the time scramble — even lost.

Of course, this result was unwelcome, but in principle, nothing was ruined yet. It is not unheard of for the top seed to win a tournament after losing the first game, especially since they are helped by easier pairings in the next several rounds. A few wins in a row could easily put me back at the top of the crosstable.

It was not to be. I was unable to regain my composure after the first-round loss and played the next game under the influence of an emotional desire — to win quickly and at all costs. This is precisely the wrong strategy against a lower-rated player — the feeling that your opponent wants to crush you only inspires tenacious resistance. As Black, I plunged into head-spinning complications, handled them badly, and only barely emerged into an equal endgame. Now was the time for me to admit that the game had not gone as planned, maximize my concentration, and confidently make a draw. Instead, I continued to play carelessly, and carelessness in chess is inevitably punished.

BODYBLOW

Juan Pablo Lyon (2055)
IM Robert Shlyakhtenko (2488)
Pan-American U18 Open (2),
08.13.2023



WHITE TO MOVE

33. Rd3

I lost my sense of danger here. The main risk for Black is that all the kingside pawns are traded, and this is what exactly what happened in the game. Instead, Black should try to exchange his c3- and b2- pawns for White's kingside pawns.

33. ... a5?!

Correct is 33. ... Qxf4!.

34. Rf1 Qc5?

The right move is 34. ... f5! as prophylaxis against f4-f5. Black should not worry about losing the c3-pawn — in fact, Black should be happy if White captures the c- and b-pawns, as that would only serve to expose the first player's king.

35. f5!

Now Black's position is very unpleasant — perhaps not even holdable.

35. ... Kg7

This loses very simply, but even without this move I do not see any way to save the position in the long-term.

36. Rg3 Qe5

The alternative 36. ... Qb5 is no better; for instance: 37. Rgg1 Qe2 (preventing h4-h5) 38. fxxg6 fxxg6 39. Rf5!.

37. Rg5! Qf6 38. Rfg1 Kh6 39. fxxg6 fxxg6

40. Rxa5 Qxh4 41. Rag5

The rest is easy.

41. ... Kg7

After 41. ... Qxg5 42. Rxxg5 Kxxg5 43. a4 Black's king is just outside the square.

42. Rxxg6+ Kf7 43. R6g3 Qh8 44. Re3 Qf6

45. a4 Qf4 46. Rxc3 Qxa4 47. Rf1+ Ke6 48. Re3+ Kd5 49. Rd1+ Kc5 50. Rc3+ Kb6 51. Kxb2 Qf4 52. Rb1 Qa4 53. Kc1+ Ka5 54. Rcb3 Qa2 55. Rb8 Qa3+ 56. R1b2 Qe3+ 57. Kb1 Qe1+ 58. Ka2 Qe4 59. R8b3 Qd5 60. Ka1 Qd1+ 61. Rb1 Qd4+ 62. c3 Qd6 63. R3b2, Black resigned.

Losing one game was to some extent understandable; losing two in a row was unimaginable. Even worse, the quality of my play left much to be desired. In these circumstances, it was impossible to think of a good result anymore, and I briefly even considered withdrawing. After a lot of introspection, I made the decision to simply take the rest of the tournament game by game and see what would happen.

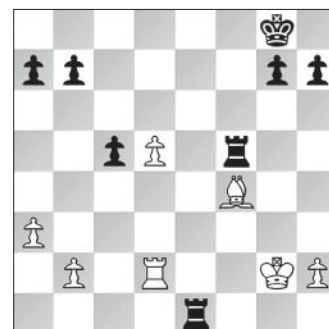
The silver lining is that my next two

rounds were both against much lower-rated opponents, and, though they were hardly spectacular games, I won both of them. While they may not have seemed important externally, these games were crucial for me psychologically: I was able to use these two rounds to reset and slowly start changing the situation.

Unfortunately, the danger was not yet over: I was still playing very poor chess. In my next game, against Roger Zhang, I tried to play “innovatively” in the opening but soon crossed the thin line between creativity and folly. It has to be said that my opponent punished my mistakes extremely well, on several occasions making moves that I had barely considered. After only 20 moves, I found myself with no developed pieces, an uncastled king, and only a flimsy pawn cover to serve as a shield. At this point, I was tempted to resign, but thankfully I remembered the advice of Magnus Carlsen: in a lost position, you just have to play one move at a time and try to stave off immediate defeat. I managed to hobble my way into an endgame down an Exchange, and then... well, it must be seen to be believed.

BACK IN IT

IM Robert Shlyakhtenko (2488)
Roger Zhang (2202)
Pan-American U18 Open (5),
08.15.2023



WHITE TO MOVE

White's position is clearly lost, but my opponent was in severe time pressure. With a G/90+30 time control, the clock became a weapon.

40. Bb8 Rf7

I think 40. ... Re4! was the simplest win. White cannot stop ... Re4-d4.

41. Bxa7 c4 42. Bf2 Re4

Stronger was 42. ... Rc1!. After 43. d6 Rd7 44.



Shlyakhtenko
struggling in
round two

Kf3 Kf7! the priority should be for Black to blockade the d7-pawn, preferably with his weakest piece (the king). Play could continue 45. Ke4 Ke6 46. Bg3 Rf7 and the rest should not be overly difficult.

43. d6 Rd7 44. Kf3

White wins two tempi attacking Black's rook.

44. ... Re5 45. Bg3 Rc5?

Allowing White to activate his king. Instead Black had to play 45. ... Rf7+! 46. Kg2 Re8 to keep White's king at bay.

46. Ke4 c3 47. bxc3 Rxc3 48. Kd5!



All of a sudden, White is gaining dangerous counterplay. With little time, my opponent was unable to prevent it.

48. ... Rxa3?

Now 48. ... Kf7 had to be played, though by now there is no win. 49. Rf2+ Ke8 50. Re2+! Kf8 51. Ke6 and White's activity is sufficient for a draw.

49. Ke6 Rd8 50. d7 Ra6+?

The stronger 50. ... Re3+ 51. Kd6 Kf7 complicates White's task. Black will sacrifice his rook for the d7-pawn under much better circumstances than the game.

51. Ke7 Raa8 52. Bc7 Rxd7+ 53. Rxd7

The game has turned around completely. In view of the continued passivity of Black's pieces, the win is not difficult.

53. ... b5 54. Be5

It turns out that 54. Rd8+ also eventually wins, but it requires greater precision than the game continuation.

54. ... b4 55. Rb7 h6 56. Ke6 Ra6+ 57. Kf5 g6+ 58. Ke4 Rc6 59. Kd5 Ra6 60. Rxb4 h5 61. Rb8+ Kf7 62. Rb7+ Kg8 63. h4 Kf8 64. Bd6+ Kg8 65. Ke6 Rc6 66. Rd7 Rc4 67. Rd8+ Kh7 68. Be5 Rc6+ 69. Kf7, Black resigned.

Mate is inevitable.



Herh Singh

My next game, against Jack Heller, followed a similar pattern. After obtaining a decent position, I lost the thread completely and had to resort to an all-or-nothing attack that only succeeded due to my opponent's time pressure. I understood that this kind of fortune would not last long, and that I needed to change my approach if I wanted to continue winning. In round seven, I resolved to play more calmly, and, for the first time in the tournament, won a decent game:

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE, SÄMISCH VARIATION (E24)

IM Robert Shlyakhtenko (2488)
IM Vaith Karthik (2240)
Pan-American U18 Open (7),
08.16.2023

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. a3 Bxc3+ 5. bxc3 d6 6. f3 Nc6 7. e4 h6

Black prevents Bc1-g5, but this move is not without drawbacks.

Only a few days before this game was played, Carlsen had reached the same position (by transposition) in the World Cup. There he played 7. ... e5 against Keymer, but after 8. Ne2 b6 9. Ng3 White's position was preferable because of the weak f5-square.

8. Bd3 e5 9. Ne2 0-0 10. 0-0

Eventually, White wants to play f3-f4. This pawn break has the potential to energize each one of White's pieces, so Black must take measures to prevent it. This defines the play for the next few moves.

10. ... Re8 11. Qc2

White could have tried another plan, well-known in these positions, that intends to exploit the hook created by the h6-pawn: 11. Ra2 b6 12. h3 Ba6 13. g4! Na5 14. Ng3! Bxc4 15. Rg2 with a dangerous initiative.

11. ... Qe7 12. Bd2!?

During the game, I was very happy with this move. It seems more natural to develop the bishop to the e3-square, but then the e-file would be blocked and it would be harder to get ready for f3-f4.

12. ... b6 13. Rae1 Na5 14. f4 Ba6?

The first serious mistake: the f5-square is now undefended.

Two other moves are better. First, 14. ... c5 15. Ng3 Nc6 was possible. After 16. fxe5 (not 16. d5? exf4!) 16. ... dxe5 17. d5 Na5 Black is definitely worse, but solid.

Second, 14. ... Nh5 was a very good continuation. Its main purpose is to prevent

Ne2-g3; without this move, it is much harder for White to develop his kingside initiative.

15. Ng3 Nd7

Bad is 15. ... Bxc4? in view of 16. Nf5 Qf8 17. fxe5 dxe5 18. Nxh6+!. Instead, it was best to admit the mistake and return with 15. ... Bc8.

16. fxe5 dxe5 17. Nf5 Qf8



White wins after 17. ... Qxa3 18. Bxh6!.

18. d5?

A crude move. Here 18. Rf3 does not work, since Black is just in time to defend with 18. ... Re6 19. Rg3 Rg6. For this reason, the simple 18. Re3! is correct: now 18. ... Re6 19. Rg3 Rg6 20. Rxc6 fxc6 21. Nxh6+! wins the queen.

18. ... Nc5 19. Rf3 Nxd3 20. Qxd3!

Despite the mistake on move 18, White's position is still winning. There are simply too many pieces attacking on the kingside.

20. ... Bc8

It's clear that 20. ... Nxc4 21. Bc1! leaves Black in a deadly pin.

The critical move was 20. ... Bxc4, where I calculated 21. Nxh6+! (the simple 21. Qe3 followed by Rf3-g3 is also good) 21. ... Kh7 (the critical move; 21. ... gxh6 22. Rg3+ Kh8 23. Qf3 loses) 22. Qe3 gxh6! 23. Qf2! (23. Rf6? would be a grave mistake because of 23. ... Qc5!) and White wins, since Rf3xf7+ and Rf3-f6 are both threatened.

21. Nxh6+!

All the pieces are ready, so it's time to strike.

21. ... gxh6 22. Rf6 Qg7 23. Ref1 h5 24. Bh6 Qh7

Capitulation, but there was nothing better.

25. Qe3! Re7 26. Qg5+ Kh8 27. Bf8, Black resigned.

With five wins in a row, and as if by magic, I found myself in theoretical reach of first

place. This endeavor would require me to win my last two remaining games as well — not necessarily the easiest task. In the eighth round, playing Black against Eugene Yoo, I tried to avoid concrete continuations and attempted to keep the tension for as long as possible. In time trouble, my opponent succumbed to the pressure and lost the game.

Now everything became purely mathematical. In first place was the undefeated Hersh Singh, who was having the tournament of his life. I had a half-point less, and so our pairing in the last round was forced. Everyone else was too far behind to compete for first place. A win would give me the title of Pan-American Champion outright; Hersh needed only a draw.

Here another psychological part of youth tournaments became very relevant. Hersh faced enormous pressure — by drawing our game, he would gain not merely victory in the tournament, but also the title of International Master. While caring just as much about winning, I did not feel the stress of the event to the same extent. Our game turned out to be my best in the whole tournament:

FOR ALL THE MARBLES

IM Robert Shlyakhtenko (2488)
Hersh Singh (2241)
Pan-American U18 Open (9),
08.18.2023



BLACK TO MOVE

White's control of the h-file gives him a clear advantage. Since Black has no counterplay, the only question is whether White's advantage is enough to break through. The correct method in such positions is as follows. First, White must maximize the pressure on the kingside (e.g., by tripling on the h-file). Even if Black's position does not collapse immediately, his forces will be completely tied to this weakness. This in turn makes it very difficult for him to quickly transfer his pieces to other sectors of the board, leaving him particularly vulnerable to an attack on



Advaith Karthik



Roger Zhang



Juan Pablo Lyon

the queenside. Ultimately, by alternating threats on both sides of the board, White will gradually destabilize Black's position with decisive effect.

19. ... f6 20. Rh6 Rf7 21. Qh2 a6

Creating a weakness on the b6-square, but it is difficult to do without this move. Black needs all three heavy pieces on the seventh rank to defend the h7-knight.

The alternative 21. ... Bd7 would allow 22. Ba6! and the a8-rook cannot come to Black's aid.

22. Be2

A more accurate execution of the plan would begin with 22. Qh1!, intending Rd2-h2.

22. ... Ra7 23. Kf2 Kf8 24. Qh5

Preventing ... Kf8-e8 on account of Rh6xh7.

24. ... Rg7 25. Rh1

Also good was 25. a4!?

25. ... Qf7 26. Qh3

Obviously, the trade of queens is not in White's interest.

26. ... Kg8



After 26. ... Ke8? White wins with 27. Nh5 Rg6 28. Rxd7!, but 26. ... b5 was possible. In this case White would gradually shift his attentions towards preparing a3-a4.

White has tripled his heavy pieces on the h-file, but Black's defensive line remains intact. Has White really improved his position there to the maximum?

27. Rh2!

From the game Alekhine – Nimzowitsch, San Remo 1930, we know that the queen is best placed behind the rooks. White prepares Qh3-f1-h1.

The direct 27. Rb1! is equally strong.

27. ... Rg6 28. Rh5 Rg7 29. Qf1 Kf8 30. Rh6

Now Black faces a dilemma.

30. ... Ke7

Black temporarily breaks the connection between his heavy pieces, making this the perfect moment to open a second front.

Here 30. ... Kg8 loses to a beautiful combination: 31. Qh1 b5 32. Nh5 Rg6 33. Rxd7! Qxd7 34. Ng3! Qg7 35. Nf5 Bxf5 36. exf5 and the rook on g6 is trapped. Once I saw the move 34. Ng3, I realized White's position was winning.

31. Qb1 b5 32. a4!

(see diagram top of next column)

Black's position collapses.

32. ... Rb7

The immediate capture 32. ... bxa4 loses material to either 33. Qb6 or 33. Qb8.

33. axb5 axb5 34. Qa2 Nc4 35. Qa8 Nb6

36. Qa6



Also decisive is 36. Qxb7+!? Bxb7 37. Nf5+.

36. ... Rb8 37. Qxb5 Bd7 38. Qa5!

A precise square for the queen.

38. ... Nf8

With 38. ... Nc8 Black defends every entry square, except one — 39. Qc7!.

39. Qa7

Now there is no escape, as Black's defenses are stretched too thin.

39. ... Ra8 40. Nf5+ Ke8 41. Nxd6+ Ke7 42. Qxb6 Qg8 43. Rh8 Ng6 44. Rxd8 Rxd8 45. Nf5+ Kf7 46. Nh6+ Ke8 47. Qb8+, Black resigned.

Miraculously, 0/2 became 7/9, and last place turned into first. A rare success for the "double swiss gambit!"

As I left the playing hall, a sense of relief washed over me: a nightmare had been averted, and I knew now that I had the ability to come back even from such a terrible start. In terms of the quality of my play, the result was hardly anything to be proud of. All the same, it was a very nice feeling to finally win a junior event at this level! ♠

**XXXIII PAN-AMERICAN YOUTH CHESS FESTIVAL
AT A GLANCE**

AUGUST 11-18, 2023 | CHICAGO, IL

U18 OPEN: 1st: IM Robert Shlyakhtenko, 7/9. 2nd-4th: Hersh Sing, CM Max Rusonik, Neil Dokjnas, 6½. **U18 GIRLS:** 1st-2nd: Kelsey Liu, WFM Erin Bian, 7/9. 3rd: Sahana Aravindakshan, 6½. **U16 OPEN:** 1st: FM Erick Zhao, 8/9. 2nd-3rd: FM Santiago Zacarias Rodriguez, Krish Bhandari, 6½. **U16 GIRLS:** 1st: FM Zoey Tang, 8½/9. 2nd: WFM Maria Teresa Jimenez Salas, 7. 3rd: Angela Liu, 6½. **U14 OPEN:** 1st-2nd: Sihan Tao, Issac Wang, 7½/9. 3rd: Leo Lin, 7. **U14 GIRLS:** 1st: Chloe Gaw, 7½/9. 2nd-4th: Blanco Maria Fernanda Herrada, Avery Yu, Chloe Wang, 6½. **U12 OPEN:** 1st-2nd: CM Ryan Sun, Yiding Lu, 7½/9. 3rd: Aiden Q. Liu, 7. **U12 GIRLS:** 1st-2nd: Megan Althea Paragua, Rae Chen, 7½/9. 3rd-5th: Jwalanthi Ram, Michelle Zhang, Audrey Keyan Li, 6½. **U10 OPEN:** 1st: CM Ethan Guo, 7½/9. 2nd-3rd: Sharath Radhakrishnan, Kyle Qiyu Dong, 7. **U10 GIRLS:** 1st: Mia Fernanda Guzman Garcia, 7½/9. 2nd: Lara Qiu, 7. 3rd-4th: Ashley Qian, Alicia Zhu, 6½. **U8 OPEN:** 1st-2nd: Sasha Milo Schaefer, Sriansh Katta, 7½/9. 3rd-5th: Yi Sha, Aiden Linyuan Li, Raben Goel, 7. **U8 GIRLS:** 1st: Abigail Zhou, 7½/9. 2nd-4th: Lillian Han, Celine Chen, Alice Shen, 7.

For full results, visit panamyouth2023.com or chess-results.com/tnr765740.aspx?lan=1&art=0&turdet=YES&flag=30

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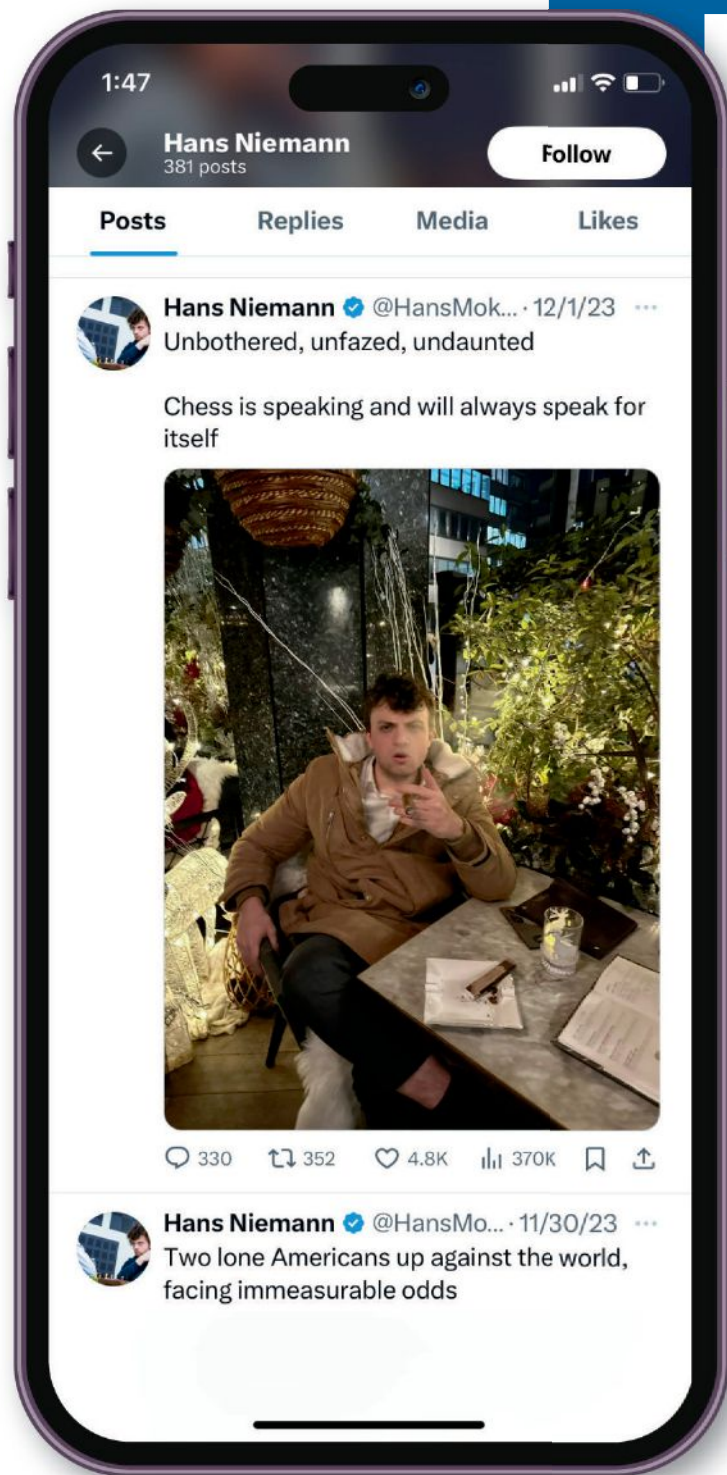
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THE HANS



Hans Niemann grabs attention online, and strives to back up his boasts. ***This is the year in Hans.***

BY JOHN HARTMANN

HE DESCRIBED HIMSELF as a “limousine-riding, jet-flying, kiss-stealing, wheeling-dealing, son-of-a-gun.”

Others called him the dirtiest player in the game.

Many professional wrestling aficionados consider Ric Flair to be the greatest ever to enter the squared circle. Certainly he was one of its most effective heels.

For those unfamiliar with the term, a heel (in professional wrestling parlance) is a bad guy who actively tries to draw “heat” (a negative reaction) from a crowd. Flair was a master of the art; with his bottle-blond hair, his propensity for cheating and cheap shots, and his undeniable charisma, Flair could work an arena into an angry lather like few others.

IMAGE: TWITTER

FLAIR

But what made Flair ahead of his time was that he was a heel whom the crowds also liked. It wasn't just that he moved fluidly from "face" (good guy) to heel depending on opponent and situation; more to the point, the dastardly Flair could also generate quite the "pop," or positive crowd reaction, especially in the later years of his career. In this way he was a progenitor of modern heels like "Stone Cold" Steve Austin, whose anti-social, anti-authoritarian actions led to adulation.

So why all this about grizzled grapplers? Has *Chess Life* lost all sense and credibility?

One of the more curious turns in modern chess is the increasing tendency for top players to grow their audiences through content creation. Hikaru Nakamura streams on Twitch and Kick. Fabiano Caruana hosts the "C-Squared" podcast with his friend and trainer, Cristian Chirila. Anish Giri is the queen bee of chess Twitter.

And then there's Hans Niemann.

I would argue that there's a more than a bit of Ric Flair in Hans Niemann, who seems to have taken Flair's advice that "to be the man, you've got to beat the man" to heart, while adopting no small piece of Flair's heelish tendencies for himself. He is making a place for himself in the chess ecosystem as a top heel — a haughty, brash, "the world is against me but I will prevail" kind of persona. It's calculated; after all, grandmasters are excellent at calculation. And it's engrossing.

We told the story of Niemann's victory over Magnus Carlsen at the 2022 Sinquefeld Cup in our January 2023 issue, along with all of its aftermath — the lawsuits, the Elon Musk tweet that vibrated throughout

the chess world, the renewed focus on fair play online and over-the-board. Niemann's alleged method of cheating became an internet meme, jumping from the chess world into broader consciousness, and providing the plotline for a particularly memorable episode of *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*.

So what has happened since our last recounting? Here is "the year in Hans."

After a lackluster performance at the 2022 World Rapid and Blitz, Hans went dark for a few months, and his social media accounts — most notably *@HansMokeNiemann* on X/Twitter — went quiet as well. He reappeared

in early April at the Menorca Open, where he finished in shared first place, and resumed his peripatetic lifestyle with appearances in the Kazakhstan Cup, the Baku Open, the Sharjah Masters, and the Dubai Open before turning to the States for a 1000GM open event in Las Vegas.

While Hans the chessplayer may have

The once-unspoken fears of top players about **online and over-the-board cheating** are now widely discussed.

taken a break, his legal team was certainly busy. The \$100 million defamation suit filed against Carlsen, PlayMagnus, *Chess.com*, Danny Rensch, and Hikaru Nakamura plowed forward, with each new motion acting as chum for swarming chess Twitterati.

After the case was dismissed in late June by a federal judge, *Chess.com* announced on

Left: Niemann's post-Zagreb celebratory Tweet. Below: Hans puts content creators like Hikaru Nakamura on notice.



Hans Niemann  @HansMokeNiemann · Oct 11, 2023 ⋮
 Would you rather be feared or loved?



Hans Niemann  @HansMokeNiemann · Nov 30, 2023 ⋮
 Two lone Americans up against the world, facing immeasurable odds

Victorious 53 years apart at the legendary Tournament of Peace

8/9: 2946 performance rating

I know of no better life purpose than to perish in attempting the great and the impossible



August 28 that all parties had “resolved their differences.” Niemann was “fully reinstated to *Chess.com*,” and Carlsen was quoted as saying that he “acknowledge[d] and [understood]” the *Chess.com* report that “found no determinative evidence” that Hans had cheated over-the-board. (*Chess.com* did, however, note that they “reaffirm[ed]” their October 2022 findings, presumably including their assertions about his online fair play violations.) “I am willing,” Carlsen said, “to play Niemann in future events, should we be paired together.”

With the lawsuit settled, Niemann returned to social media the next day. “Did you miss me?,” he asked cheekily, before saying that his troubles had “invigorated” him and that he would someday be the best chess player in the world. “It’s time to let my chess speak for itself.”

But silence doesn’t generate heat.

Just days later, and while streaming, Niemann defeated former world champion Vladimir Kramnik in an online blitz game. The rematch, with Kramnik playing Black, went **1. e4 f6 2. d4 g5**, at which point Niemann grimaced and resigned.

The meaning was clear: Kramnik thought that Niemann was cheating against him, effectively thumbing his nose at his opponent with his offered self-mate.

While Kramnik’s investigative abilities are, shall we say, a bit dubious, the complete lack of veracity or proof was no barrier to a renewed social media firestorm. Kramnik recorded a couple of videos that bordered on tin foil hat territory, while Niemann roguishly made a “proposal” that Kramnik “examine” his chess in an in-person training camp to get better insight into his “interesting style.”

That camp never took place. Kramnik’s proposed dates, if Niemann is to be believed, clashed with his late September participation in the World Junior Championships. (He later teased his followers with a photo of a chess board from “Switzerland,” where Kramnik lives.)

The top-seed in Mexico City, Niemann suffered an early loss to IM Andy Woodward — see his report and analysis of their game elsewhere in this issue — and missed out on the podium after a final-round defeat at the hands of GM Arseniy Nesterov.

It is possible that Hans’ attention was divided during the World Junior. He took shots at Nakamura on social media for ana-

Top, bottom: Questions and answers from Niemann’s Twitter feed. Center: Piers Morgan asks the tough questions.

IMAGES: TWITTER (TOP, BOTTOM), YOUTUBE (CENTER)

lyzing his loss to Woodward, bitterly calling Nakamura his “biggest fan” and a “retired player.” He played in an online tournament during the event. And in one of the strangest bits of video you’ll see, he spent 20 minutes on September 25 being remotely interrogated by Piers Morgan about his alleged cheating methods. (It’s on YouTube, and it’s totally surreal.)

This was followed by the U.S. Championship in October, where Niemann finished with an even score, and the FIDE Grand Swiss, where he scored +1. The tweets (xeets?) kept coming: “The chess has spoken” on October 6 after a win over Sam Sevian, “Would you rather be feared or loved?” after a draw with Jeffery Xiong on October 11, and his picking a fight with Levy Rozman over clickbait on October 28.

After these so-so results came Zagreb, and what for anyone else would have been a career-defining success.

With a score of 8/9 against a field with an average rating of 2595, Niemann’s performance rating of 2946 was the highest TPR in classical play for 2023. And it wasn’t simply that Niemann won seven games; if you take a close look at the games, this wasn’t a case of outlier luck. He steamrolled the opposition.

Predictably, grumbles of cheating from his opponents were to be heard. (Any success, it seems, will be interpreted by some as evidence of foul play.) GM Ivan Cheparinov took to Facebook to “congratulate” the tournament winner, saying that he had played with many top players, including Nakamura, who “is not even close to Niemann’s level.”

Then GM Ivan Sokolov boo-hoo’d on Twitter that it was “hard to fight 98[%] accuracy,” lamenting a purported lack of fair play checks before their game. (There was a 15-minute broadcast delay that was expanded to a full hour after the game with Sokolov.) Even the organizer got in on the action, describing “indications” of cheating to a reporter from *Afterposten*.

Niemann reveled in the controversy, stoking the flames further (like any good heel!) by likening himself to Bobby Fischer, first in a Twitter tweak of Sokolov — “I like the moment when I break a man’s ego,” echoing Fischer’s line on the Dick Cavett show — and then by noting that Fischer had also won in Zagreb. He celebrated with a cigar, staring straight into the camera for his followers

while proclaiming himself to be “unbothered, unfazed, undaunted.”

Expectations were understandably high for his next tournament, the London Chess Classic that started less than a week after Zagreb ended. But here his performance was more muted. Against a slightly stronger field, he could “only” muster an even score.

Was this more evidence of cheating in Zagreb? It’s impossible to prove a negative, but despite all the social media chatter and questioning, the answer is, of course, no. A different set of opponents, coupled with the natural variance of a still-improving player, is sufficient to explain the result, which was quite good by any normal standard.

The year in Hans ended as quietly as it began. His last social media post for 2023 was dated December 12, a boastful photo from the London closing ceremony with his friend M. Amin Tabatabaei. He had reasonable results in the World Rapid and Blitz, held in Uzbekistan in the final days of December. There was no game with Carlsen there, and no claims of cheating leveled by his opponents.

Looking back some 15 months to that fateful day in St. Louis, it’s difficult to explain just how much has changed in such a short amount of time. The once-unspoken fears of top players about online and over-the-board cheating are now widely discussed, and it’s not just Kramnik’s creative math driving the conversation.

Still, there is no consensus on what is to be done, and no clear path forward. The FIDE report on the Niemann – Carlsen case was a damp squib, clearing Niemann of over-the-board wrongdoing, while fining Carlsen for his withdrawal from the Sinquefeld Cup. The question of whether and how to punish online malfeasance beyond individual playing platforms remains open.

In all of this I imagine Hans Niemann, phone in hand, watching and waiting. Twitter followers equals eyeballs equals appearance fees. When will the next “scandal” hit Twitter, Reddit, and YouTube? How can he work the crowd to love/hate him in the process?

And how much of this is now part of what it means to be a chess professional? ♣



Right: The chess may speak for itself, but someone has to post the content. Niemann gets help from Moussard and Tabatabaei.

ONE FROM ABHI

A wild game from the 2023 FIDE Grand Swiss

BY GM ABHIMANYU MISHRA



JUST DAYS AFTER HIS STRONG finish at the 2023 U.S. Championship, GM Abhimanyu Mishra traveled to the Isle of Man for the 2023 FIDE Grand Swiss. There he scored 5½/11, including wins over GMs Alexander Donchenko and Vasyl Ivanchuk. Here he annotates his round five victory over Donchenko; for his notes to his fascinating game with Ivanchuk, check out the New in Chess Blog: www.newinchess.com/blog/post/prodigy-vs-legend.

We'll have more on the Grand Swiss, and its implications for the 2024 Candidates race, in upcoming issues. ~ed.

LONDON SYSTEM (D02)

GM Alexander Donchenko (2676)

GM Abhimanyu Mishra (2592)

FIDE Grand Swiss 2023 (5), Isle of Man, 10.29.2023

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. c3

This move order aims to reach a London while avoiding some of the forced lines. The cons of this move order (as opposed to 3. Bf4) is that in the 3. ... Bf5 lines, White will have to move his c-pawn again.

3. ... Bf5 4. Qb3 Qc8 5. c4 dxc4 6. Qxc4 e6 7. Nc3 a6 8. Nh4 Bc2!?

Not giving up the bishop pair! This might look a bit strange, but the bishop cannot be attacked for now.

9. Bf4 c6 10. e3

Here 10. Rc1 fails to 10. ... b5! 11. Nxb5 axb5 12. Qxc2 Bb4+ and 13. ... Rxa2 next.

10. ... h6

Still theory — if online blitz games count!

11. Nf3 Nbd7 12. Rc1 Bg6

While I suspect there isn't much difference between this move and 12. ... Bh7, I thought that having the h7-square available for the king might be useful down the line in case of a check on the back rank.

13. Be2 Be7 14. Qb3 0-0 15. 0-0 b5

Gaining space on the queenside.

After 15. ... Nh5, 16. Be5 was my concern as I cannot comfortably capture on e5. Now if 16. ... Nhf6 (and not 16. ... Nxe5? 17. dxe5 as the knight is stranded on h5) 17. Bg3 I didn't see why I should give him a free tempo with the bishop.

16. a4 Qb7 17. h3 Rfc8

Preparing for the position to inevitably open up.

18. Nd2 Nb6

Played with some ideas of shifting one of the knights to d5, or even capturing on a4 at the correct moment.

19. Bh2 Ra7



By defending the queen, I now “threaten” to capture on a4. This could be allowed, for example, with 20. Rfe1.

20. a5!?

An interesting decision, locking up the queenside and hoping to take advantage of the weak c5-square.

Alternatives include (a) 20. Rfe1!? bxa4 21. Nxa4 Nxa4 22. Qxa4 Qxb2 23. Nc4, when despite being a pawn down, White should have some slight plus due to the weak black pawns and the misplaced queen. After 23. ... Qb4 24. Qa1! Qb7 Black's position remains quite defensible. The engine also suggests (b) 20. Ra1!?, preventing ... b5xa4 and maintaining the tension for now.

20. ... Nbd5 21. Bf3 Nxc3?!

This is a bit rushed. I was worried about White gaining access to the c5-square after something like Nc3-e4, but it turns out that the a5-pawn is very weak after the maneuver ... Qb7-d7-d8! For example, Black has no problems after 21. ... Qd7! 22. Nce4 Nxe4 23. Nxe4 Qd8 24. Ra1 Bb4.

22. bxc3 Qd7

Planning to play ... c6-c5.

23. Rfd1



23. ... c5!?

Already I was planning the queen sacrifice, as I felt that my position would be easier to play in the resulting imbalance.

The alternative was 23. ... Qd8, but I was worried about 24. Qa2 c5?! (Black should play something else — perhaps 24. ... Bh5 25. Bxh5 Nch5 26. c4 with a good position for White) 25. dxc5 Bxc5 26. c4 b4 27. Nb3 Rd7 28. Qa4 when we reach a position I don't want. White has an amazing b3-knight, with threats of Nb3xc5 followed by Qa4xb4, as well as the constant threat of Bf3-b7 to capture the a6-pawn.

24. dxc5 Bxc5

Also interesting is 24. ... Rxc5 25. Bb8 Rb7 according to the engine! After 26. Bxb7 Qxb7 the light-squared bishop is worth as much as a rook!

25. Ne4 Nxe4 26. Rxd7 Rxd7

(see diagram top of next column)

27. Be5?!



Donchenko starts to err. Instead 27. Bxe4! had to be played in order to maintain a slight advantage. After 27. ... Bxe4 28. Rd1 Bd3 29. Rd2 Rcd8 the engine gives a slight plus for White, but I feel that breaking down Black's position is next to impossible.

27. ... Rd5!

Asking where the bishop is going.

28. Bd4 Bxd4 29. exd4 Rxd4

And there goes a pawn!

30. cxd4 Rxc1+ 31. Kh2 Nd2!

In this position the f2-pawn is next to useless, making 31. ... Nxf2? a mistake. White plays 32. d5 exd5 33. Qxd5 with Qd5-a8+ followed by Qa8xa6 next and equal chances.

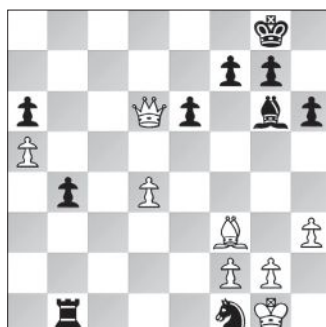
32. Qa3 Nf1+ 33. Kg1 Rb1 34. Qd6

Activating the queen. White should still make a draw here, but already he has to play quite precisely.

34. ... Nd2+ 35. Kh2 Nf1+

Repeating once to get closer to move 40 and gain some time on the clock.

36. Kg1 b4



37. d5?

An error in a tough position.

Instead 37. Qxa6! had to be played. The lines just narrowly hold for White: 37. ... b3 38. Qb7 b2 (if 38. ... Nd2+ 39. Kh2 Nxf3+ 40. gxf3 Kh7 41. a6 Bc2 42. Qxf7 Ra1 43. Qb7 Rxa6 44. Qb4 Ra2 45. Qc3 Black cannot promote

the b-pawn) 39. a6 Nd2+ (or 39. ... Ng3+ 40. Kh2 Rh1+ 41. Kxg3 b1=Q 42. Qxb1 Rxb1 43. a7 with equality) 40. Kh2 Nxf3+ 41. gxf3 Ra1 42. Qxb2 Rxa6 and Black is still pressing but White should make a draw with best play.

37. ... exd5?

Returning the favor.

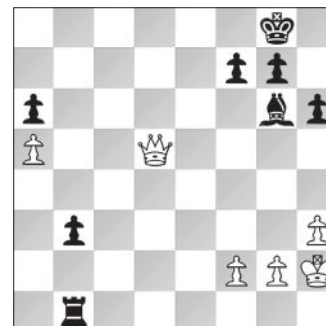
Correct was 37. ... b3! 38. dxe6 Nd2+! (38. ... fxe6? 39. Qxe6+ Kh7 40. Be4! wins for White, and was the reason I wrongly avoided this line in the game) 39. Kh2 Nxf3+ 40. gxf3 fxe6 41. Qxe6+ Kh7 and now ... b3-b2 followed by a rook check is impossible to stop!

38. Bxd5?

The final mistake.

It's next to impossible to find in a classical game, but 38. g4!! manages to miraculously save the position! After 38. ... Nd2+ 39. Kg2 Nxf3 40. Kxf3 b3 41. Qxa6 Be4+ 42. Kf4. Now after 42. ... b2 43. Qb5 Black does not have a way to vacate the b1-square and promote, and after 42. ... Ra1 43. Qb7 Bc2 44. Ke5! Rxa5 45. f4 Ra2 46. f5 White generates enough counterplay to hold!

38. ... Ne3+ 39. Kh2 Nxd5 40. Qxd5 b3



41. Kg3?!

This hastens the end, but the alternatives don't help much either.

After 41. Qb7 (a) 41. ... Bc2? throws away the win as 42. Qxa6 b2?? (42. ... Ra1 43. Qc4 Rxa5 44. Qc3 is still equal) 43. Qc8+ wins the bishop. Instead Black should play (b) 41. ... Kh7!, which is prophylaxis against a queen check on c8. After 42. f3 (or 42. Qxa6 b2 43. Qb5 Rh1+ and wins) 42. ... Bc2 and now, in comparison to the 41. ... Bc2? line, this works. After 43. Qc6 Ra1 followed by ... Ra1xa5 and ... Ra5-b5, the connected passers will be unstoppable.

41. ... Rd1!!, White resigned.

The b-pawn cannot be stopped after (a) 42. Qxd1 b2, (b) 42. Qxb3 Rd3+, or (c) 42. Qb7 which fails to 42. ... Rd2 preparing ... b3-b2. ♠

Control the Catalan

A complete repertoire for Black against the Catalan Opening

BY GM JESPER THYBO



The Catalan is very popular these days, as it leads to interesting play without much risk for White. In this article, I will show you one way to deal with the Catalan. I have used this line myself in many of my own classical games.

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. g3 dxc4 5. Bg2

This is the ambitious move, and the one most Catalan players will try. The c4-pawn will be recaptured later, or White can also play for compensation. The alternative 5. Qa4+ will be covered later, as will lines where White plays an early Nb1-c3.

5. ... c6



This is the move I suggest, intending to support the c4-pawn with ... b7-b5. Now White has three main replies: 6. Ne5, 6. a4, and 6. 0-0, and we will treat each in turn.

A fourth move, **6. Qc2**, has been played in some games, but it seems a bit illogical to me. Black will still be able to play ... b7-b5. To wit: **6. ... b5 7. 0-0** (after 7. a4 Bb7 8. 0-0 Nbd7 I would surely take Black and the extra pawn!) **7. ... Bb7 8. Rd1 Nbd7 9. b3** (9. Ne5 Nd5 is equal) **9. ... cxb3 10. axb3** and now **10. ... c5!** is a nice way to open things for the b7-bishop. The position is equal.

6. Ne5

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. g3 dxc4 5. Bg2 c6 6. Ne5 Bb4+

This is an important check, provoking White to make a concession. Don't play 6. ... b5? 7. Nxc6 Qb6 8. Na5! when Black is in trouble!

7. Bd2

We see one of the points of Black's play after 7. Nc3 Nd5!, when Black plays to keep the pawn. There are three options for White here.

(a) If 8. Qc2? Nxc3 9. bxc3 Qxd4! and Black makes use of the pins.

(b) After 8. Bd2 b5 (8. ... Nb6!?) 9. 0-0 0-0! 10. a4 a5! Black is fine in this double-edged position. If 11. axb5 we insert 11. ... Bxc3! and then recapture on b5.

(c) The key move is 8. 0-0!?, sacrificing even more material. Play continues 8. ... Nxc3 9. bxc3 Bxc3:



POSITION AFTER 9. ... Bxc3

Now White has a number of options.

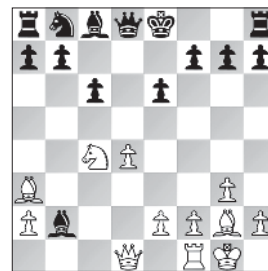
(c1) Black is better after 10. Rb1 Qxd4! 11. Qxd4 Bxd4 12. Nxc4 Bc5.

(c2) If 10. Ba3 Qxd4 11. Qxd4 (not 11. Nxc4? Qxc4 12. Qd6 Bf6! and Black is winning) 11. ... Bxd4 12. Nxc4 Bxa1 13. Rxa1 (after 13. Nd6+ Ke7! 14. Rxa1 Kf6 Black can be happy with all the material advantage, but must escape White's immediate threats) 13. ... f6 14. Nd6+

Kd7 15. Rd1 Kc7 16. Nf7 Re8 17. Bd6+ Kb6 Black escapes and is fine.

(c3) Critical is 10. Nxc4!. Here again the path diverges:

(c3a) If Black is up for an adventure, 10. ... Bxa1!? is an option that I have played myself. The engines tell us White is better, but I find the material imbalance interesting. After 11. Ba3 Bb2!:



POSITION AFTER 11. ... Bb2

(c3a1) 12. Bxb2?! b5! leaves Black better.

(c3a2) More challenging is 12. Nxb2!? b5 (forced) 13. Qb3 (alternatives: 13. Bc5?! Bb7; 13. Nd3 a5 14. Bc5 Bb7) 13. ... a5 14. Bc5 Na6! 15. Bxc6+ Bd7 16. Bxa8 Qxa8 17. Nd3 f6! and with ... Ke8-f7 next, Black should be more or less fine.

(c3a3) 12. Nd6+ Kd7 and now:

(c3a3a) 13. Nxf7 Bxa3 14. Nxd8 Rxd8 15. Qd3 Bf8 16. Qxh7 (not 16. e4?! Kc7 17. d5? cxd5 18. exd5 Nc6 with advantage to Black) 16. ... Kc7 17. Qe4! (17. e4? Rxd4) White is better according to engines, if he finds this move. However, I still find the position terribly unclear with practical chances for both sides, and I tested it in Delchev – Thybo (Niksik Mix, 2021), when the game was eventually drawn.

(c3a3b) If instead 13. Bc5!? Qf6! 14. Ne4 (14. Qb3 b6 15. Ne4 Qg6 is equal) 14. ... Qg6 is unclear, despite Black being a

rook up. Next is ... b7-b6.
 (c3b) The untested 10. ... b5!? is best and safest, leading to positions where Black often gives back their pawn advantage. After 11. Bb2! Bxb2 12. Nxb2 0-0 Black will continue with 13. ... a5 and an equal position.

7. ... Be7



This position is one of the reasons that I like this line. Black prepares to sacrifice an Exchange if allowed, leading to dynamic play.

Here 7. ... Qxd4? is premature. White will get too much compensation after 8. Bxb4 Qxe5 9. Na3 b5 10. Bd6 Qxb2 11. 0-0.

8. e3

Other moves:

(a) 8. Na3?! Bxa3 9. bxa3 Qxd4 10. Ba5 Qxd1+ 11. Rxd1 b6 12. Nxc6 Nd5! leaves Black ahead.

(b) Against 8. Be3?! (and 8. Bf4) Black can play 8. ... Nd5 and simply take the bishop.

(c) On 8. Bf4 Nd5 9. Nxc4 Nxf4 10. gxf4 0-0 Black is okay after with ... Nb8-d7 next.

(d) I would be happy to face 8. Bc3, as Black gets a lot of compensation after 8. ... b5 9. Nxc6 Nxc6 10. Bxc6+ Bd7 11. Bxa8 Qxa8.



POSITION AFTER 11. ... Qxa8

White has two reasonable moves.

(d1) 12. f3 h5! and now:

(d1a) 13. Qd2 a5! is very unpleasant for White in practical terms. If 14. Bxa5 (14. a3 h4 15. g4 0-0 gives Black the initiative) 14. ... Nd5! 15. e4 b4! 16. exd5 Qxa5 17. dxe6 Bxe6 Black dominates the board.

(d1b) 13. 0-0 transposes to 12. 0-0.

(d1c) 13. h4 Qb8 is slightly better for Black.

(d1d) 13. a3 h4 14. g4 (14. Rg1 a5!) 14. ...

Nxg4 15. Rg1 (15. Bb4 Bf6 16. Qd2 Rh5! is wild and fascinating; you may want to do a bit of work here!) 15. ... Nf6 16. Qd2 (Black grabs the initiative after both 16. Rxc7 Qb8! and 16. d5 Bc5 17. Rxc7 Nxd5 18. Bd4 Ne3! 19. Bxc3 Bxc3 20. Qd6 Qc6) 16. ... Qb8 17. e4 Nh5 with a very interesting position. The black knight is heading for the superb d3-square.

(d2) 12. 0-0 h5! 13. f3 (If 13. d5? exd5! with a good edge, and 13. h4 0-0! is better for Black) 13. ... h4 14. Be1?! (14. g4 b4 15. Bd2 [or 15. Be1 Nd5 with initiative] 15. ... Qd5 is unclear) 14. ... hxg3 15. Bxg3 Nh5! Black's attack is dangerous, with the sneaky threat of ... Nh5xg3 followed by ... e6-e5, sacrificing a pawn to get the queen to c6! For example, 16. Nc3 Nxg3 17. hxg3 e5 with ... Qa8-c6 next.

8. ... b5

(see diagram top of next column)

9. Nxc6

You will not be surprised to learn that White has plenty of options here.

(a) 9. a4 forces Black to move forward with 9. ... b4 10. Nxc4 (here 10. Nxc6? Nxc6



11. Bxc6+ Bd7 12. Bxa8 Qxa8 is already close to winning for Black) 10. ... Nbd7!? when Black can sacrifice the c6-pawn for compensation. Play continues 11. Bxc6 (11. b3 Ba6!) 11. ... Ba6! when Black gets good compensation in all lines:

(a1) 12. Bxa8?? Qxa8 and Black is winning.

(a2) 12. Bb5 Bb7 13. 0-0 a6 14. Bxd7+ Nxd7 and the strong b7-bishop ensures a good game.

(a3) 12. Qb3 0-0 13. Bb5 Bb7 14. 0-0 is unclear.

(a4) 12. b3 Rc8 13. Bf3 (13. Bb5 Bb7 is unclear) 13. ... 0-0 with a fine game.

(b) Gelfand played 9. b3 in 2019. We continue 9. ... cxb3 10. axb3 Bb7 11. Ba5 Qc8 12. 0-0 (12. Qf3 is a fancy move from Erigaisi; after 12. ... a6!?, with the idea of ... Ra8-a7 and ... c6-c5, Black should be doing okay) 12. ... c5!, giving back the pawn to relieve the pressure. It's equal after 13. Bxb7 Qxb7 14. dxc5 Ne4 with ... Be7-f6 next.



- (c) 9. 0-0 0-0! and now:
 (c1) 10. b3 cxb3 11. axb3 (after 11. Qxb3 a5! it's more fun to play Black) 11. ... b4! is an important move. After 12. Bxc6 (12. Nxc6?! Nxc6 13. Bxc6 Rb8 leaves Black ahead) 12. ... Nxc6 13. Nxc6 Qd7! 14. Bxb4 (Black grabs the initiative after 14. Nxe7+ Qxe7 15. Ra4 Rb8 16. Qe1 a5! 17. Rxa5 e5!) 14. ... Bxb4 15. Nxb4 Qb5! is an only move. Black has compensation after 16. Ra4 (16. Nd3?! Ba6!; 16. Na2 e5!) 16. ... Bd7.
 (c2) 10. a4 b4! (this position can also arise from 9. a4 b4 10. 0-0 0-0) 11. Qc2! (11. Nxc4 Ba6!) and now:
 (c2a) 11. ... a5 is Leela's idea, with play continuing 12. Rd1 (12. Rc1 Ra7 13. Nxc4) 12. ... Bb7 (12. ... Ra7) 13. Nxc4 Nbd7 with equality.
 (c2b) 11. ... Bb7 12. Rc1 (12. Nxc4 Nbd7) 12. ... Qc7 13. Qxc4 a5 is equal, with ideas of ... c6-c5.

9. ... Nxc6 10. Bxc6+ Bd7 11. Bxa8 Qxa8



Black has sacrificed a full Exchange, but has clear compensation in better development, the bishop pair, and the weak light squares.

12. f3

Alternatively, White can try 12. 0-0 e5! 13. f3 (13. dxe5? Bh3 14. f3 Ng4! is a tiny bit better for Black) 13. ... e4 14. Nc3 0-0 15. fxe4 Nxe4 16. Nxe4 Qxe4 17. Qf3 (17. Rf4 Qg6 is equal) 17. ... Qc2!



POSITION AFTER 17. ... Qc2

Black is fine here, but play is still very sharp indeed! The idea is to keep the queens on

and play against the white king. We proceed: 18. Bc3 (18. Qb7 Bh3! 19. Rf2 Qxb2 is unclear) 18. ... b4 19. Rf2 (19. Rac1 Qa4 and the a2-pawn is loose as well) 19. ... Qd3 20. Be1 (alternatives: 20. Rd1? Qg6 with the idea of ... Bd7-g4!, and 20. Bxb4 Bxb4 21. Qb7 a5! 22. Qxd7 Qxe3 when White has no good reply to ... Bb4-e1) 20. ... Be6 is unclear.

12. ... e5! 13. dxe5

Here 13. 0-0 e4 transposes to 12. 0-0.

13. ... Ng4 14. 0-0 Nxe5 15. Bc3! Nd3!



White has quite a few tries in this exciting position, and we will look at most of them. Generally speaking, castling is next for Black.

16. Qe2

Other options:

- (a) 16. b3? 0-0 is slightly better for Black.
- (b) 16. Bxg7?! is rather greedy. Black will start a huge attack with 16. ... Rg8 17. Bd4 h5 and have the initiative in this unclear position.
- (c) 16. Nd2 0-0 17. Qe2 transposes to 16. Qe2.
- (d) 16. Bd4 0-0 17. a4 bxa4 18. Rxa4 Bxa4 19. Qxa4 Rc8 is equal, as is (e) 16. a4 0-0! 17. axb5 Bc5!.

16. ... 0-0 17. Bd4!

The position is unclear after 17. Nd2 Bc5! 18. Nb3 (forced) 18. ... Bd6 19. Nc1 (19. Nd4? b4! damages White's coordination) 19. ... Ne5!.

17. ... Qc6!

The d4-bishop is too strong, so Black should exchange it to get at White's weaknesses.

18. Nd2

After 18. Nc3 Bf6! 19. Bxf6 Qxf6 Black's strong d3-knight and the weak white king ensures sufficient compensation.

18. ... Bf6! 19. Bxf6 Qxf6 20. b3

The position is equal after 20. a4 Qxb2 21. axb5 Ne5!.

20. ... Qb2

This double-edged position is equal.

6. 0-0

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

Bg2 c6 6. 0-0 b5 7. a4

White can try 7. b3 cxb3 8. Qxb3 (8. axb3 Nbd7 is equal), but after 8. ... a5! 9. Ne5 (9. a4 b4) 9. ... Ra6 Black can keep the pawn for now with a fancy rook move.

7. ... Bb7 8. Ne5!

The most critical continuation. After 8. b3 b4! 9. bxc4 c5 10. Bb2 (10. a5 a6 is equal) 10. ... Be7 Black is for choice.

8. ... a6 9. b3 cxb3 10. Qxb3 Be7!



Black has faced some problems recently after 10. ... Qxd4 11. Bb2, so I recommend a simpler move.

11. axb5 axb5 12. Rxa8 Bxa8 13. Qa2

Attacking the bishop.

13. ... Bb7 14. Qa7 Qc8! 15. Nc3

If 15. Nd2 Nfd7! alleviates most of the pressure.

15. ... 0-0 16. Nxb5 Nd5!

This cool move solves Black's problems.

17. Bxd5 exd5!

Black is fine here.

6. a4

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

Bg2 c6 6. a4 c5!?

If you compare this to the position that can happen after 4. ... dxc4 5. Bg2 c5, here White has the extra move a2-a4. But this inclusion gives Black much better access to the b4-square.

It's important not to play 6. ... b5? when White grabs a big advantage with 7. Ne5.

7. 0-0 Nc6



8. dxc5

Here 8. Na3 is a typical move in the Catalan, but Black is doing fine after 8. ... cxd4 9. Nxc4 Bc5.

Another idea is 8. Ne5!? Nxd4 when 9. e3 (after 9. Nd2 Be7 10. Ndx4 0-0 11. e3 Nc6 Black gives back the pawn with an equal position) is the critical try. After 9. ... Nb3 10. Qxd8+ Kxd8 11. Ra3 Ke7! Black defends the f7-pawn and remains a pawn up, but must play precisely. Black is doing OK after 12. Nxc4 Nxc1 13. Rxc1 g6! 14. Na5 (14. Rb3 Bg7 is equal) 14. ... Bg7 or 14. ... Nd5.

8. ... Bxc5

Andreikin is one of the heroes of this line.

9. Qxd8+ Kxd8 10. Nbd2

10. Na3 Nd5 transposes.

10. ... Nd5! 11. Nxc4

Black is fine after 11. a5 Ke7!.

11. ... f6!



Black takes control of the e5-square.

12. Ne1!?

With the idea of hitting the black bishop with Ne1-d3. If instead (a) 12. Nfd2 b6! 13. Nb3 Ba6 14. Nxc5 bxc5 Black is completely fine due to the weak b4-square and their active pieces. Also equal is (b) 12. Bd2 Ke7 13. Rfc1 b6.

12. ... Nd4

Quite a concrete solution, but it is a good

one! Simpler, while still close to equal, is 12. ... Ndb4!?

13. Nd3!

Now 13. Be3 Nxe3 14. fxe3 Nb3 15. Nd3!? (15. Rd1+ Ke7 16. Rd3 Nc1 17. Rd1 Nb3 is a fun repetition!) is fairly complicated for both sides. After 15. ... Nxa1 16. Nxc5 Nc2 17. Rd1+ Ke7 18. Bxb7 Rb8! 19. Bxc8 Rhxc8 20. Rd7+ Kf8 21. Na6 Rxc4 22. Nxb8 Rxa4 we end up in an equal endgame.

13. ... b6!

The bishop is coming to a6 in many lines.

White has the initiative after 13. ... Nxe2+?! 14. Kh1.

14. Ne3

Other options: after (a) 14. Rd1 Ba6 Black is fine in the upcoming complications. (b) 14. a5 Nxe2+ 15. Kh1 Nxc1 16. Rfxc1 Rb8! is equal. (c) 14. Be3 Nxe2+! 15. Kh1 Ba6! is fine for Black.

14. ... Ba6

The game remains complex, but Black is not worse here.

5. Qa4+

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. g3 dxc4 5. Qa4+

This move is sometimes played to avoid the reams of theory we just saw, while regaining the c4-pawn without delay.

5. ... Nbd7 6. Bg2

Here 6. Nc3 a6 transposes to 7. Nc3, while 6. Qxc4 a6 (6. ... b6!? with the idea of ... Bc8-b7 is a good way to surprise your opponent) and now (a) 7. Bg2 b5 also transposes, while (b) 7. a4?! b5! 8. Qc6 (8. axb5?? axb5 drops the a1-rook) 8. ... Rb8 gives Black a great game with ... Bc8-b7 coming.

6. ... a6 7. Qxc4

White can also try 7. Nc3 Rb8 8. Qxc4 b5 9. Qd3 (9. Qb3 Bb7 with ... c7-c5 next) 9. ... Bb7 10. 0-0 (10. Bf4 Rc8 followed by ... c7-c5) 10. ... c5 with equality.

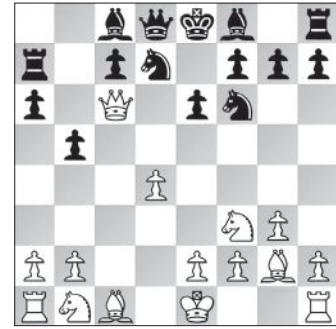
7. ... b5 8. Qc6!

After the lesser 8. Qc2 Bb7 Black will soon push ... c7-c5 and is already slightly better.

8. ... Ra7!?

(see diagram top of next column)

With ... Bc8-b7 next. Here 8. ... Rb8 is the main move, but after 9. Bf4 a bit of care is required.



9. Qc2

Alternatives include:

(a) 9. Be3 Bb4+ and however White blocks the check, Black plays ... Bc8-b7.

(b) 9. Bf4 Bb7 10. Qc2 Bb4+ 11. Nbd2 c5 is equal.

(c) 9. a4 Bb7 10. Qc2 bxa4!? 11. Nc3 c5 is also equal. White can probably try 12. Be3 cxd4 13. Bxd4 Bc5 when Black castles next with a fine game.

(d) 9. 0-0 Bb7 10. Qc2 Be7 transposes to the main line.

9. ... Bb7 10. 0-0

If 10. a4 bxa4 and Black continues with ... Bf8-e7, ... 0-0, and ... c7-c5.

10. ... Be7 11. a4

Now 11. Nc3 is met with 11. ... c5 (11. ... Qa8!?) 12. dxc5 Bxc5 with equality.

11. ... bxa4!?

This move is usually seen as anti-positional, but it works here. Black will continue with ... 0-0, ... Qd8-a8, and then ... c7-c5 at some point. The position is equal.

I think 11. ... b4 is fine as well, although I find 12. Be3 slightly annoying.

12. Be3

White finds no advantage with 12. Nc3 0-0 or 12. Qxa4 0-0.

12. ... Nd5 13. Bd2 c5

Black will castle next and is totally fine.

5. ... c6 6. Nc3

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

Bg2 c6 6. Nc3

This position can also arise from the g3 Slav.

6. ... b5

Of course 6. ... Nbd7 is also good, but it leads to different kind of play after 7. a4.

7. Ne5

After 7. 0-0 Bb7 White's best path is to transpose with 8. Ne5.

7. ... a6! 8. 0-0

Grabbing the pawn with (a) 8. Nxc6 is met with 8. ... Qb6! 9. Ne5 (9. Nxb8 Rxb8 10. e4 Bb7 11. 0-0 Bb4 is fine for Black) 9. ... Bb7 10. e4 Bb4! 11. 0-0 0-0! (11. ... Bxc3? 12. bxc3 Bxe4? grabs a poisoned pawn, i.e., 13. Bxe4 Nxe4 14. Qf3 with a winning advantage) when the position is equal but very complicated — for example, 12. a4 (or 12. d5 Nbd7) 12. ... Nbd7 13. Be3 Rfd8.

If (b) 8. a4 Bb7 9. 0-0 Be7 10. axb5 axb5 11. Rxa8 Bxa8 12. Nxb5 cxb5 13. Bxa8 0-0 and now

(b1) 14. Bg2 Bd6!? and here Black can consider taking the e5-knight in some lines:

(b1a) 15. e4?! Bxe5! 16. dxe5 Qxd1 17. Rxd1 Nfd7 with the initiative.

(b1b) 15. Nf3 Nc6 is equal, as is...

(b1c) 15. Bg5?! h6 16. Bxf6 Qxf6.

(b1d) 15. f4 Nd5 is unclear and complicated.

(b2) 14. Bf3 h6!? (14. ... Bd6!?) White has the bishops, but Black has the very nice c4-pawn. Call it equal.

8. ... Bb7



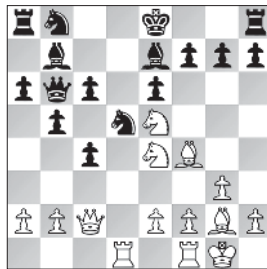
9. b3

This is clearly the most critical line. White allows the passed pawn on c3 in exchange for squares and development.

The sneaky 9. Qc2 has been tried by Gukesh and Sokolov in recent months. It seems that the best Black can do is to accept the pawn, although it is useful to come armed with a few more moves. If White is well prepared, Black will not find it too easy. I analyze 9. ... Qxd4 10. Bf4 Be7 11. Ne4 (11. Rad1 Qb6 transposes) 11. ... Nd5 12. Rad1 Qb6!

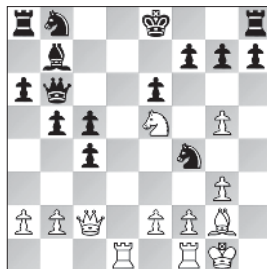
(see diagram top of next column)

Here it is very important to put the queen on b6 and not a7. After 13. h4 c5! (13. ... f6? 14. Ng6! looks very dangerous!) opens the diagonal for the b7-bishop. White must continue with active play, as otherwise he is just two pawns down. Play continues 14. Ng5 Bxg5



POSITION AFTER 12. ... Qb6

(eliminating the strong g5-knight) 15. hxg5 (15. Bxg5? f6 wins a piece) 15. ... Nxf4.



POSITION AFTER 15. ... Nxf4

Two options now for White:

(a) With 16. gxf4 Bxg2 17. Kxg2 f6! 18. gxf6 (Black is fine after 18. Rh1 fxe5 19. Rxh7 Rxh7 20. Qg6+ Kf8 21. Qxh7 Qb7+ 22. f3 Nc6) 18. ... gxf6 and now there is a fairly forcing line that leads to a draw: 19. Kh2! fxe5! 20. Qe4! Qc6! 21. Qxe5 Rg8 22. Rg1 Rxg1 23. Qh8+ (23. Rxg1 Nd7 24. Rg8+ Ke7 25. Rg7+ Kd8 is also a repetition) 23. ... Ke7 24. Qxh7+ and Sokolov – Motylev (Zagreb, 2023) was soon drawn by repetition.

(b) If instead 16. Bxb7 Qxb7 17. gxf4 0-0 18. Kh2 f6! — it is essential to kick away this strong knight on e5 in many lines. After 19. gxf6 gxf6 20. Rg1+ Kh8 21. Qe4 Ra7 22. Qe3 Qc7 23. Ng4 Nc6 Black should be doing fine in a complicated position.

9. ... b4 10. Na4

Here 10. bxc4?! is an interesting piece sacrifice! Black has to accept, gaining a slight edge after 10. ... bxc3 11. Rb1 Ra7! 12. Be3 (or 12. d5 Bd6) 12. ... Bd6 13. d5 c5 as in Li – Ankit, Graz 2014.

If alternatively 10. Ne4 Nxe4 (not 10. ... c3?? 11. Ng5) 11. Bxe4 c3 12. a3 a5 13. axb4 Bxb4! Black captures with the bishop and develops! After 14. Qd3 f5! Black castles next with a fine game.

10. ... c3 11. Nc4

The most interesting move.

Other ideas: (a) 11. a3 a5 transposes to the main line, while (b) 11. Qc2 Nbd7 12. Rd1 a5 13. a3 Nxe5 14. dxe5 Nd7 15. Be3 Qc7 and

Black is fine here. One game went 16. Rxd7 Qxd7 17. Nb6 Qc7 18. Nxa8 Bxa8 19. axb4 Bxb4 20. Bd4 c5! and Khalifman – Vallejo Pons (Moscow, 2015) was soon drawn.

11. ... a5

This is a very important move for Black, supporting the b4-pawn

12. a3

Slightly weaker is 12. Bf4 Nd5 13. Be5 Nd7! (not 13. ... f6? 14. e4 when Black is in a world of hurt!) and now White has three options: (a) 14. e4 N5b6 is equal, while Black is a smidge better after.

(b) 14. Bxg7 Bxg7 15. Nd6+ Ke7 16. Nxb7 Qc7.

(c) If 14. Nd6+ Bxd6 15. Bxd6 N7b6 16. Bc5 Nd7 (or 16. ... Nxa4!?), chasing the bishop!

12. ... Ba6 13. axb4

Dubov has tried 13. Bf4 but Black is fine after 13. ... Bb5!.

13. ... axb4 14. Nc5 Bxc5 15. dxc5 0-0

16. Bf4 Nd5 17. Bd6

Or 17. Qd4 Nd7 18. Bd6 Re8.

17. ... Nd7! 18. Re1

Other possibilities:

(a) 18. e4?! Nc7! and

(b) 18. Bxf8?! Qxf8 give the advantage to Black.

(c) 18. Qd4 Re8 is equal.

18. ... Re8



The position is still very complicated, but Black is not worse — the queenside pawns can prove very useful. More analysis could be added, but here's a sketch of what might happen.

19. e4 Bxc4!

As White has played e2-e4, this is possible.

20. bxc4 Ne7 21. Qb3 Rxa1 22. Rxa1 Nc8!

23. Qxb4 Nxd6 24. cxd6 Qb8

The position is equal. ♠

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The Great Berkeley Chess Raid

Public chess tables, private property, crackdowns, and protesters

BY MICHAEL FITZGERALD

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY America's best chess club, but there's a leading contender for the country's most turbulent: the Telegraph Corner Chess Club of Berkeley, California.

The club has been raided by police, possibly marking a first in the annals of chess clubs. Its manager has been arrested, its chess sets confiscated. And, Berkeley being Berkeley, protesters have staged chess sit-ins, packing City Council chambers and playing chess during meetings at which the club's fate was debated.

"It's an effort to criminalize the chess club," said the club's battle-scarred director, Jesse Sheehan.

It's an effort to oust the club, that's for sure. Everything else is as complicated as a Mikhail Tal middlegame.

For starters, the club isn't a club at all in the usual sense. It's an arrangement of tables and chess sets on a small street-corner plaza on Telegraph Avenue, several blocks south of the University of California, Berkeley (UC) campus. Passersby strolling the vibrant street can play for free, especially since the tip jar was confiscated.

For another thing, both the UC and Telegraph Avenue were launchpads for the '60s counterculture, and that power-to-the-people ethos still reigns. City politics are robustly progressive, with radical elements that have earned the city the nickname Besekeley.

Many activists have come out in support of the chess club. In part, because the very

idea of raiding a chess club is preposterous. In part, because one of Berkeley's defining traits is the perennial conflict between people who prize "organic" community over big business and property rights.

And in part, because the club traces its provenance to People's Park. A 2.8-acre plot of land a half-block away from the Telegraph corner, People's Park is, to many Berkeley residents, hallowed ground. In the '60s it was the one of the birthplaces of historic counterculture revolution. Though it is owned by the UC, radicals long ago declared it a public space, a memorial to the anti-war protests, riots, and even a fatal police shooting that occurred there.

"It all goes back to what's happening in People's Park," said Sheehan, who first set up his chess tables there and moved only when homeless encampments, drugs, and crime made the park inhospitable.

But he brought with him the Berkeleyite belief that certain things by the people, and for the people, are good for the people, and good for a city — or, at least, better than whatever profit-driven corporations do.

Sheehan said people from all walks of life come to play at his club. "You see social barriers just falling away in magic ways."

In fact, this unifying effect is exactly what chess's international governing body, FIDE, claims the game, with its global appeal, has going for it. Its motto, "Gens Una Sumus," translates to "We are one family."

Telegraph chess players agree. "It's a good thing because it's a community gathering place," said Cliff Coleman, playing at one

of the tables. "You get [all] sexes, all ages, all ethnicities."

"You can meet all walks of life," said De-Shawn Wentz, his opponent. "No judgment here."

"It feels like a community really came together," said Conor Green, a chess buff and UC undergraduate. "It's just an interesting mix of people which I think represents the best of what Berkeley is: community from the ground up, not the top down."

That may be so. Still, Sheehan is basically a chess squatter. He doesn't own the property, which is the site of a vacant business called Mad Monk Center for Anachronistic Media.

Ken Sarachan does. In addition to the Mad Monk property, Sarachan owns Rasputin Records across the street.

Sarachan — a prosperous businessman, but an utterly hapless pawn in this game — is caught between a chess club that refuses to leave and the City of Berkeley, which demanded he oust the club.

The city's opposition was kindled by a complaint from a neighboring business. Perhaps it was the music. Sheehan blasts reggae (though when I visited, his stereo was playing Anita Ward's "Ring My Bell").

Code inspectors found sidewalk obstructions and violation of the property's use permit. They did not, however, cite Sheehan. They went after Sarachan. They slapped him with daily fines that would accrue until he booted the chess club.

The beleaguered Sarachan wrote to his councilman to protest that Sheehan and the

chess players had roosted on his property out of the blue.

“He never contacted us or spoke to us about it, he simply did it,” Sarachan wrote. “The Chess Club is not ‘ours.’ We have no relationship whatsoever with them. They pay no rent, and have never even suggested to us that they might do so. If we wanted them as tenants we would have a lease and benefit from them in some way. But we do not. We have no lease with them or any other agreement.”

Sarachan added that he feared ordering his employees to evict the chess club could put them at risk. But when he called police he says he was told the city did not want to be involved.

Instead, police “decided to tell us to, essentially, arrest the furniture,” and clear out the chess tables, wrote Sarachan. Dutifully hiring a junk removal company, Sarachan had them haul off the chess tables, sets, and a chess library Sheehan stored at night in a strong box on the premises.

“We were assured directly and unequivocally that if we hauled the stuff away, then the BPD would surely cite and arrest the people who trespassed,” Sarachan wrote. “So early in the morning we hauled all the

Chess Club stuff away. As soon as Jesse and the Chess Club arrived later in the morning, we called for the enforcement action.”

Alas, “Once again, BPD refused to do so.” Police stood by to keep the peace but made no arrests.

“For reasons they seem unwilling to provide, they will not cite and arrest Jesse for trespassing,” Sarachan plaintively wrote. “What are we supposed to do?”

Sheehan perceives police, and their code-enforcement counterparts, as the culprits. Following the Berkeley playbook, he tacked up strident flyers around the UC campus and Telegraph Avenue. They read:

Save Chess Club!
No More UC Gentrification!

On Sept. 29th, the city of Berkeley raided the community chess tables and seized everything ... The raid on the chess club is yet another attempt by the City of Berkeley to destroy public infrastructure built by members of the Berkeley community.

The flyer exhorted people to attend the next Berkeley City Council meeting: “Come

join us for sitting in, playing chess, and giving public comment in support of Chess Club.”

The call to arms worked. The chess raid garnered a surprising amount of press. The UC Berkeley Chess Club, as well as other students and club regulars, quickly donated replacement chess sets and tables. Within 48 hours the Telegraph Corner Chess Club was back up and running. And poor Sarachan continued to be fined.

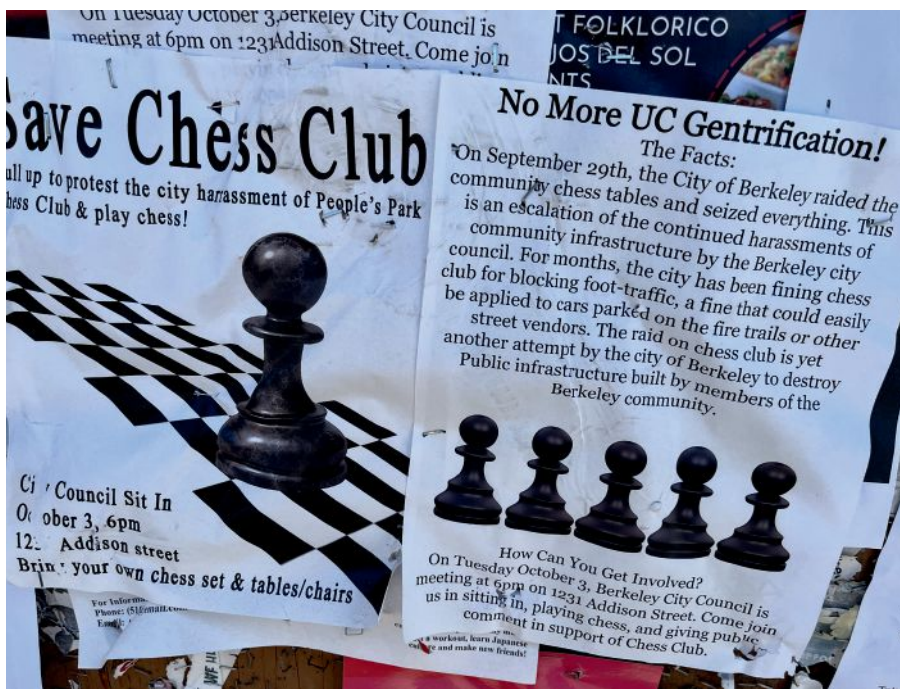
Protesters — concerned about the chess club, as well as presumptuous property owners who act as if they own their property — packed the council meeting. People sat on the floor, playing chess on numerous boards, and spoke in support of Sheehan. One protester dressed as a giant pawn. He held a sign: “Don’t *pawn* off our freedom of assembly.”

A former Berkeley mayoral candidate, Aidan Hill, a chess club regular, told council members that the chess club represented the “very essence” of community initiatives, while its closure is reeked of “profit-driven business divestment.”

Council member Kate Harrison, evidently recalling the heady days of hippie protests and tear gas, waxed nostalgic at the restive



PHOTO: MICHAEL FITZGERALD



crowd. “This is how I remember city council when I was a student,” she glowed.

Except, presumably, for the guy dressed as a pawn.

Sheehan wasn’t there to see it. The day before he had been arrested. A bystander’s video posted on an online site called Berkeley Copwatch shows three police hoisting Sheehan like a battering ram, carrying him out of the plaza, and stuffing him head-first into a patrol car.

“Less than 72 hours after BPD shut down the Chess Club (a community mainstay on Telegraph Ave), the organizer Jessie Sheehan was brutally arrested,” Copwatch grimly reported. “For hours, he was disappeared into the system, *tortured* (italics mine), abandoned at a hospital in Pleasanton, and then cited for spitting at a police officer and released.”

Sheehan claims police were so rough with him they took him to a hospital just in case. He was not subsequently jailed. The Alameda County District Attorney’s Office has not pursued charges, a DA spokesperson said.

Nothing inflames Berkeley protesters like alleged police brutality. At the next council meeting, chess protesters were joined by Copwatch followers. Cue more Bay Area TV and ink.

Social media had a field day. On Reddit, to cite one platform, people expressed disbelief.

“Shame on anyone who participated in the raid to shut down this uplifting and positive corner,” posted one Redditor. “Support chess for all!”

Police should focus on criminals, not chess nerds, huffed another: “This is like

going pawn grabbing when your queen is left hanging.”

Another kibitzer lamented, “People sitting playing chess is a menace to California. How can people feel safe? What will decent ordinary residents just trying to score some drugs, rob the local store or panhandle think of these dangerous rulebreakers?”

After two packed council meetings, Berkeley’s council “resigned,” acknowledging the public demand for open space along Telegraph Avenue, as well as a home for the chess club.

The council voted to appropriate \$25,000 to gussy up a nearby site, a Telegraph Avenue median called the Dwight Triangle, and offer it to Sheehan for his club.

But in the tradition of the late Grandmaster David Janowski, whom then-world champion Emanuel Lasker said loved won positions so much he could not bear to bring them to a victorious conclusion, Sheehan rejected the site.

“Exhaust fumes, traffic, you’re completely surrounded by traffic,” he said. “Not really an adequate spot.”

Sheehan held out for a variance to the city code that would allow him sidewalk space. He believed on principle that the benefits of the Telegraph Corner Chess Club outweigh the epic hassles he’d endured. Benefits such as grass-roots community, a sanctuary where diverse people tune in to the same wavelength, and, of course, good chess.

Amazingly, the Berkeley council agreed. In recent years city planners realized that Telegraph Avenue was an Old-School street designed more for cars than for people or placemaking. Consequently, the city drafted a long-range plan to improve the street’s

urbanism. The chess club fit the vision.

“The informal ‘chess club’ that has met on the block is a cherished community space that embodies Berkeley values of non-commercial, organic interactions between people of all ages and backgrounds...” wrote the district’s council member, Rigel Robinson, who also happens to be running for mayor. “In an increasingly commercialized and consumerist environment, free and communal activities such as gathering to play chess are a welcome and necessary use of public space.”

So the City of Berkeley allowed Sheehan to move the club onto the sidewalk. A guy who was down a queen against the powers that be actually notched the point.

“It’s kind of a representation of collective consciousness,” Sheehan said of his club. “Maybe I can get funding for researching humanity.”

Maybe he should get funding for Sarahan. As of this writing, he owes the City of Berkeley \$174,600. ♠

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PHOTO: MICHAEL FITZGERALD

MAKE → YOUR → MOVE

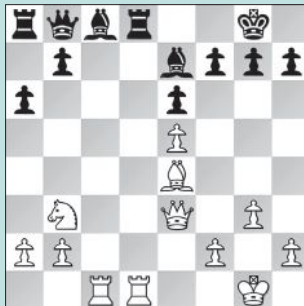
BY FM CARSTEN HANSEN

THIS MONTH'S PUZZLES ARE TAKEN FROM THIS 2023 FIDE Grand Swiss that took place in the Isle of Man in November.

The puzzles start from easy and gradually move toward being difficult. It is worth noting that "easy" is a relative term. If you are new to the game, the easy ones can also represent a challenge.

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 one or two 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. You will only cheat yourself out of improving your game. Solutions are on page 63. ♠

TACTIC 1.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 2.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 3.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 4.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 5.



BLACK TO MOVE

TACTIC 6.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 7.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 8.



WHITE TO MOVE

TACTIC 9.



BLACK TO MOVE

Position 1: SIMPLE GEOMETRY

Position 2: BATTERY BUILDING

Position 3: AWKWARD COORDINATION

Position 4: OPEN THE DOOR

Position 5: COMMITTED DEFENDERS

Position 6: COORDINATE FOR POWER

Position 7: ONLY PATH TO SURVIVE

Position 8: PREPARE, THEN ATTACK

Position 9: THE RIGHT COORDINATION

Tactic Tik Toks

When endgame principles aren't enough

BY GM JOEL BENJAMIN



BETWEEN WRITING *Liquidation on the Chessboard* and helming this column, I've become a little obsessed with conveying

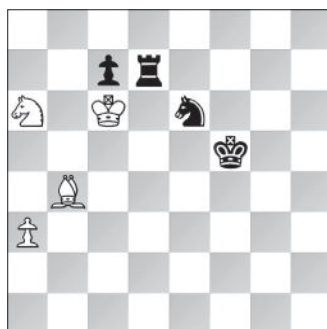
rules for good endgame play. But sometimes purely tactical battles arise even in endgames. *Van Perlo's Endgame Tactics* is a great classic of literature. Poring through it may not make you a great endgame player, but it will be lots of fun!

Likewise, this month we will see some endgames that should bring a bit of wonderment to the readers.

Sometimes you just can't stop a passed pawn — you can only hope to contain it. While perusing games from the Qatar Masters, I found this stunning finish:

THE LOWLY PAWN DOMINATES

GM Aleksandr Shimanov (2566)
GM Grigoriy Oparin (2681)
Qatar Masters (8), Doha, 2023



BLACK TO MOVE

White has no compensation for the Ex-

change, other than a legitimate hope that Black might run out of pawns. But White develops some unexpected counterplay.

50. ... Rd1?

The rook goes in the right direction, but to the wrong square. 50. ... Rd4! 51. a4 Rc4+ forces the white king to give ground.

51. a4 Rc1+ 52. Nc5!

It seems precarious to invite this pin, but Shimanov has it worked out.

52. ... Ke5

Here 52. ... Nd4+ 53. Kxc7 Rc4 is another promising try that meets a similar fate after 54. a5 Rxb4 55. a6. Black cannot do better than sacrifice his knight for the pawn when White will hold rook versus knight.

53. a5

This is the flashiest but also the straightest path to a draw. White might still hold with 53. Ba3, e.g. 53. ... Nd4+ 54. Kd7! (paradoxical, but see how it's followed up; note that 54. Kb7! also holds) 54. ... Rc3 55. Bb4 Rc4 56. Ba3 Nc2!? 57. Bb2+ Kd5 58. Ne6 c5 59. Nc7+ Ke4 60. Kd6! and Black's lack of coordination will cost him his precious c-pawn.

53. ... Kd4 54. a6

Here 54. Ba3 Rc2 55. Bb2+! (even 55. a6 Nxc5 56. a7 Na4+ 57. Kb7 Nb6 58. Bb4, despite a lost tempo, is good enough to draw) is simpler, though less entertaining!

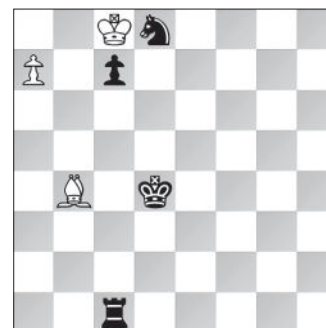
54. ... Nxc5 55. a7

Black is up a whole rook, can give discovered check, and has a rook and a knight near the pawn. Yet there is no win.

55. ... Ne6+

He might as well go for this, as 55. ... Na4+ 56. Kb7 Nb6 57. Ba5 doesn't work.

56. Kb7 Nd8+ 57. Kc8!



The king hides behind Black's pawns, though in fairness, without this pawn the white king could go to other squares for a draw.

57. ... Ra1 58. Kxc7!

This is particularly aesthetically pleasing. 58. Kxd8? Rxa7 preserves the pawn, so White has to save the knight for later.

58. ... Kc4 59. Be7 Ne6+

Oparin doesn't bother with 59. ... Rxa7+ 60. Kxd8 Kd5 61. Bb4 because rook versus bishop is an easy draw except for certain special circumstances — like the king being chased to a8.

60. Kb7 Rb1+ 61. Kc8 Ra1 62. Kb7 Nc7 63. Bd8

White could take the knight, but the text leads to a fun finish.

63. ... Na8 64. Kxa8 Rb1 65. Bb6 Rxb6, stalemate.

A queening pawn supported by the king is obviously formidable. But sometimes, a little dose of tactics can spring a lonely runner to paydirt. The next game is a great example that I omitted from *Chessboard Combat* only because I forgot about it!

EQUINE SHIELD

GM Aleksandra Goryachkina (2522)
GM Valentina Gunina (2506)
Women's Candidates (2), Kazan, 2019

(see diagram top of next column)

White takes a shot at advancing her one asset, the passed h-pawn.

68. h6 Rc3+ 69. Kg2 Kxg4??



WHITE TO MOVE

It looks safe enough to plunge forward, but Black misses a diabolical trick. Instead passive defense would have been sufficient: 69. ... Kg6 70. Ra8 Kh7 71. Rd8 Be3 72. Rd7+ Kh8 73. h7 Bg5 74. Ne7 Rc2+! and Black will eliminate public enemy number one.

70. h7 Rc2+ 71. Kf1 Rh2

Tempting is 71. ... Rf2+ because the natural 72. Ke1 Rh2 produces a significant difference from the game, while the “risky” 72. Kg1!! walks into a discovered check but preserves the h-pawn’s lust to expand. Now 72. ... Rxf5+ 73. Rxc5 Rxc5 74. h8=Q does not offer Black a fortress, but cagier is 72. ... Bb6!.

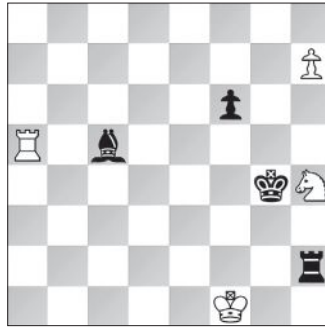


POSITION AFTER 72. ... Bb6

Now 73. h8=Q? Rxf5+ 74. Kg2 Rf2+ snags perpetual check, though admittedly, White wouldn’t win after 74. ... Bxa5 either. White also gets nowhere with 73. Nh6+ Kg3 74. Rb5 (74. Ra3+? Rf3+ 75. Kh1 Rxa3 76. Nf5+ Kf2 77. h8=Q Ra1+ 78. Kh2 Bc7+ 79. Kh3 Rh1+ wins for Black) 74. ... Rh2+ 75. Rxb6 Rxh6, or 73. Nd4 Bxd4 74. Ra4 Kg3! 75. Rxd4 Rg2+ 76. Kf1 Rh2 when the h-pawn drops again.

The only winning move is 73. Ra4+!. Now 73. ... Rf4+ 74. Kg2! (74. Nd4 Rxd4 75. h8=Q Rxa4+ is equal, while 74. Rd4? Rxd4 actually wins for Black) 74. ... Rxa4 75. Nh6+! Kf4 76. h8=Q scores the point, and 73. ... Kxf5 74. h8=Q Rf4+ (74. ... Ra2+ 75. Kf1 Rxa4 76. Qh5+ is the same) 75. Kg2 Rxa4 76. Qh5+ lets White scoop up the rook with the next queen check.

72. Nh4!!



A beautiful interference motif. Note that if the king had been checked to e1, 73. ... Bb4+ 74. Kd1 Rxh4 would kill the combination.

72. ... Kg3

Here 72. ... Rxh4 73. Ra4+ forces a queen.

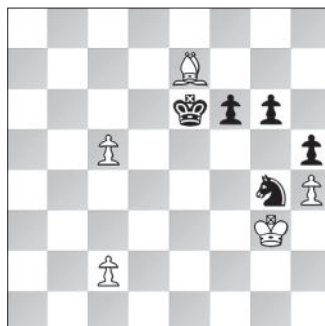
73. h8=Q Rf2+ 74. Ke1 Bb4+ 75. Kd1 Bxa5 76. Ng6

Black really has no practical chances here, as White totally dominates on the light squares. The remaining moves were:

- 76. ... Bd2 77. Qh4+ Kf3 78. Qxf6+ Kg2 79. Qc6+ Kg1 80. Nh4 Bf4 81. Qg6+ Kh2 82. Qg4 Bg3 83. Nf5 Rf1+ 84. Ke2 Rf2+ 85. Kd3 Rg2 86. Qh5+ Kg1 87. Ne3 Ra2 88. Qg6 Kh2 89. Qh7+ Kg1 90. Qg8 Ra3+ 91. Ke2 Kh2 92. Kf3, Black resigned.**

I ONLY NEED ONE

Michael Croyle (1506)
Thomas Holder (1630)
Eastern Chess Congress (5), 2023



WHITE TO MOVE

I don’t mean to focus on the understandable errors made by the two players in this complicated endgame. But there is an especially beautiful theme in play, hinted at in the first diagram. Here White had a cool drawing line with 39. Bd8 Kd5 40. Kf4 Kxc5 41. Bxf6 Nxf6 42. Kg5 Ne4+ 43. Kxg6 Ng3 44. Kg5 Kd5 45. Kf4 Ne4 46. c4+ Kd4 47. c5. Remember this variation, as we will see something similar later.

39. Bd6 Ne5

Better was 39. ... Ne3!.

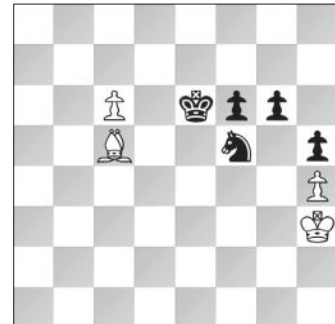
40. Kf4 Nc4 41. Bf8 Na3 42. Ke4 Nxc2 43. c6 Ne1 44. Kf4

It’s a good time to seek counterplay with 44. Bg7! f5+ 45. Kf4 or even 44. c7 Kd7 45. Bg7 Kxc7 46. Bxf6.

44. ... Ng2+ 45. Kg3 Ne3 46. Bc5

This is one of several times White could have played more actively with the king. I’d prefer 46. Kf4 Nf5 47. Ke4 Nxf4 48. c7 Kd7 49. Be7 Kxc7 (49. ... f5+ 50. Kf4 Ng2+ 51. Kf3 Ne1+ 52. Ke2 Nc2 53. Kd3 and the Black knight cannot escape!) 50. Bxf6 Nf5 51. Ke5 with a positional draw, despite Black’s two extra pawns.

46. ... Nf5+ 47. Kh3



Here Black erred with **47. ... Ne7? 48. c7 Nc8 49. Be3 Kd7 50. Bd4 f5** and now 51. Kg3 Kxc7 52. Kf4 Kd6 53. Kg5 Ne7 54. Kf6 would have held. After **51. Be5? Ne7 52. Kg3 Nd5 53. Bb2 Kxc7** Black was clearly winning and scored the point after several mutual errors.

From the previous diagram, Black needs to maneuver the knight more effectively. The right move is 47. ... Ng7! 48. Kg3 (48. Bb6 Kd6 49. Bd8 Ne8 50. c7 Kd7 51. Kg3 f5 52. c8=Q+ Kxc8 53. Ba5 Kd7 54. Kf4 Ke6 55. Kg5 Kf7 56. Kf4 leaves work but Black should win) 48. ... Ne8 49. Kf4 Kd5 50. Be7 Kxc6 51. Bxf6 Nxf6 52. Kg5 but now with no c-pawn there is a problem-like win after 52. ... Ne4+ 53. Kxg6 Ng3 54. Kg5 Kd5 55. Kf4 Ne4 56. Kf5 Kd4 57. Kf4 Kd3 58. Kf3 Nc5 (or any path to g7) 59. Kf4 Ne6+ 60. Kf5 Ng7+ 61. Kg6 Ke4 62. Kxg7 Kf5!.

If you’ve made it this far, note the principle in play – the black king shoulders its counterpart, meaning it won’t get back in time to stop the h-pawn. ♠

For more of Benjamin on the endgame, visit the *Chess Life* Digital Archives at new.uschess.org/chess-life-digital-archives.

Checking Rubinstein's King

A check from a child with a future

BY BRUCE PANDOLFINI



IT'S A STORY STRAIGHT OUT of chess lore. Then six-year-old enfant terrible, Samuel Reshevsky (1911-92), meets the incomparable Akiba Rubinstein (1881-1962) in their native Poland. Rubinstein (blindfolded) agrees to play the child prodigy, who goes after Rubinstein's king with an unjustified attack. Rubinstein, a cool defender, easily rebuffs Sammy's aggression and the wunderkind is forced to give up his queen. But rather than resign, Sammy extends the game for an extra move, just to announce check to Poland's luminous chess king. Whether the story is fully true or not, here are the moves of the historic encounter, with Reshevsky having White.

GIUOCO PIANO (C50)

Samuel Reshevsky
Akiba Rubinstein
Poland, 1917

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. 0-0 Nf6 5. Nc3 d6 6. h3



Now ensure that the position above is set up on your chessboard. As you play through the remaining moves in this game, use a piece of paper to cover the article, exposing *Black's* next move only after trying to guess it. If you guess correctly, give yourself the par score. Sometimes points are also awarded for second-best moves, and there may even be bonus points — or deductions — for other moves and variations. Note that ****** means that Black's move is on the next line. ******

6. **Par Score 5** **h6**

Black can bide his time. There's no need to castle yet, but you may accept **full credit** if you have.

7. **d3**

White solidifies his king-pawn while clearing the way for the c1-bishop's development. ******

7. **Par Score 6** **g5**

Having not yet consigned his king to the kingside, Rubinstein begins kingside operations. You may accept **full credit** for any of several moves: 7. ... Be6, 7. ... a6, 7. ... Bd7, or 7. ... 0-0.

8. **Nd5**

Reshevsky youthfully invades Black's territory. Certainly, 8. Be3 was a reasonable alternative. ******

8. **Par Score 6** **g4**

Rubinstein forges ahead. You may accept **full credit** for 8. ... Rg8.

9. **Ng5**

White continues even more aggressively and foolhardily, lured on by the possibility of 9. ... hxg5 10. Bxg5. ******

9. **Par Score 6** **Nxd5**

This simple in-between move was possibly not appreciated by the young Reshevsky.

10. **exd5**

White takes back to menace the c6-knight. Add **1 bonus point** if you decided 10. Nxf7 Kxf7 11. Bxd5+ Kg7 12. hxg4 Qh4 13. Qf3 Rf8 is better for Black. ******

10. **Par Score 5** **hgx5**

Blindfolded, and against a gifted phenom, Rubinstein doesn't fool around. He plays directly, concretely, and to the point.

11. **dx6** ******

11. **Par Score 5** **bx6**

Black merely takes back, but you may accept **full credit** for the tempo gainer 11. ... b5. After 12. Bxb5, Rubinstein crashes through with 12. ... gxh3.

12. **hxg4**

White has leveled the material, but the position is not good. The open h-file spells disaster for Sammy. ******

12. **Par Score 7** **d5**

Rubinstein establishes a classical pawn front, with a gain of time, though he does slightly weaken the e5-pawn. Accept **full credit** for 12. ... Rh4.

13. **Qe2**

Sammy goes right after Black's undefended king-pawn. Now on 13. ... dxc4?, there follows 14. Qxe5+. ******

13. **Par Score 4** **Qf6**

This defends the e5-pawn and prepares to shift the black queen to the h-file.

14. **Bb3**

With the e5-pawn no longer an immediate target, Reshevsky saves his light-squared bishop. ******

14. **Par Score 5** **Qh6**

Mate is now threatened on two squares, h2 and h1. Black has an overwhelming position.

15. **Qxe5+**

Reshevsky gets a pawn with check, but he still can't salvage the position. ******

15. **Par Score 5** **Be6**

ABCS OF CHESS

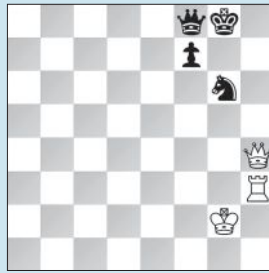
THESE PROBLEMS ARE ALL related to key positions in this month's game. In each case, White is to move. The answers can be found in Solutions on page 63.

FEBRUARY EXERCISE:

We make a list of candidate move, start analyzing, but don't really get anywhere. Suddenly, an idea appears out of the blue, and without much further ado, we plunge haphazardly ahead. But we've missed something that refutes our entire idea. If only we had asked "Lombardy's Question" (based on advice from GM Bill Lombardy): Is there a check or capture that might upset our plans? You would be amazed how often such a simple reminder can save the day.

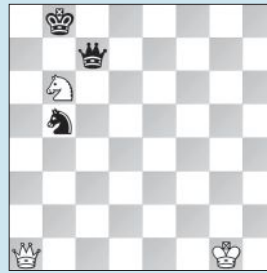
PROBLEM 1

Mating net



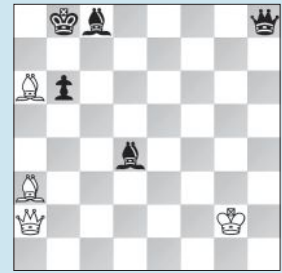
PROBLEM 2

Mating net



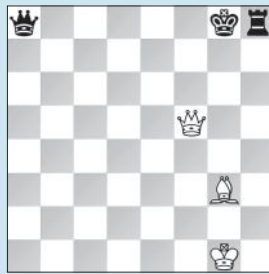
PROBLEM 3

Mating net



PROBLEM 4

Mating net



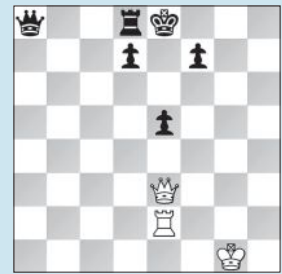
PROBLEM 5

Mating net



PROBLEM 6

Mating net



With White's f-pawn pinned, the only way to stop mate at h1 is to give up the queen.

16. Qxh8+

This stops the mate, but at staggering cost.**

16. Par Score 2

Qxh8

With a clearly won game, Rubinstein gets the job done with his usual efficiency.

17. Bxg5

White could resign, but as ingenious as the young Sammy was, he still was a six-year-old with aspirations.**

17. Par Score 6

Kd7

Rubinstein's king is quite safe here. The home rank is now clear for the a8-rook to get over to the kingside.

18. c3

Sammy saw that his b-pawn was hanging, though this also supports 19. d4, blocking out Black's dark-squared bishop.**

18. Par Score 5

Rg8

Black wastes no time deploying his final weapon. His pieces are optimally poised.

19. Be3

**

19. Par Score 6

Bxg4

You may accept 3 points part credit for 19. ...

Bxe3. After 19. ... Bxg4 20. Bxc5, Black has 20. ... Bf3, with mate to follow (1 bonus point).

20. Bd1

Reshevsky stops ... Bg4-f3, but Black has various ways to win quickly.**

20. Par Score 6

Bh3

This is one of them, and it's clearly winning.

21. g3

Sammy stops the capture on g2. But he can't stop everything.**

21. Par Score 6

Rxg3+

You may accept full credit for 21. ... Bxe3.

22. fxg3

**

22. Par Score 5

Bxe3+

23. Rf2

If 23. Kh2 Bxf1+ and mate next.**

23. Par Score 5

Qg7

Now if 24. Kh2, to defend g3, Rubinstein has 24. ... Bxf2. Here, even a six-year-old genius might resign, but Sammy has one final quest to fulfill.

24. Bg4+

Supposedly, Sammy announced check with gusto.**

24. Par Score 5

Qxg4

25. White resigned.

A memorable game, and an economical, no-frills victory by the great Akiba Rubinstein. ♠

TOTAL YOUR SCORE TO DETERMINE YOUR APPROXIMATE RATING BELOW:

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

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

Chess as Rom-Com?

Ali Hazelwood's *Check & Mate* made *The New York Times*' bestseller list this fall. Here's what you need to know.

BY KATE QUEALY-GAINER

IT'S BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE Mallory Greenleaf has picked up a chess piece, and she has neither the time nor inclination to ever do so again. The game is far too tangled with her complicated past with her father, and she's already got enough on her plate, working a 9-to-5 garage gig, caring for her sick mother, and acting as the *de facto* parent to her two sisters after her dad's death.

So, Mal has plenty of excuses to bow out of the charity tournament her best friend invites her to, but she convinces herself — fairly quickly — that she'd be playing for a good cause. Her attempt to keep her matches casual is handily beat by her competitive spirit, and she ends up taking down the annoyingly arrogant but undeniably handsome Nolan Sawyer, a grandmaster and the top player in the world. Even that victory, however, isn't enough to tempt her back to the chess world. But when she loses her job and is offered a paid fellowship at a popular chess club, she can't turn down the salary and the potential tournament prizes that would easily pay for her mom's medical bills and her sisters' school needs.

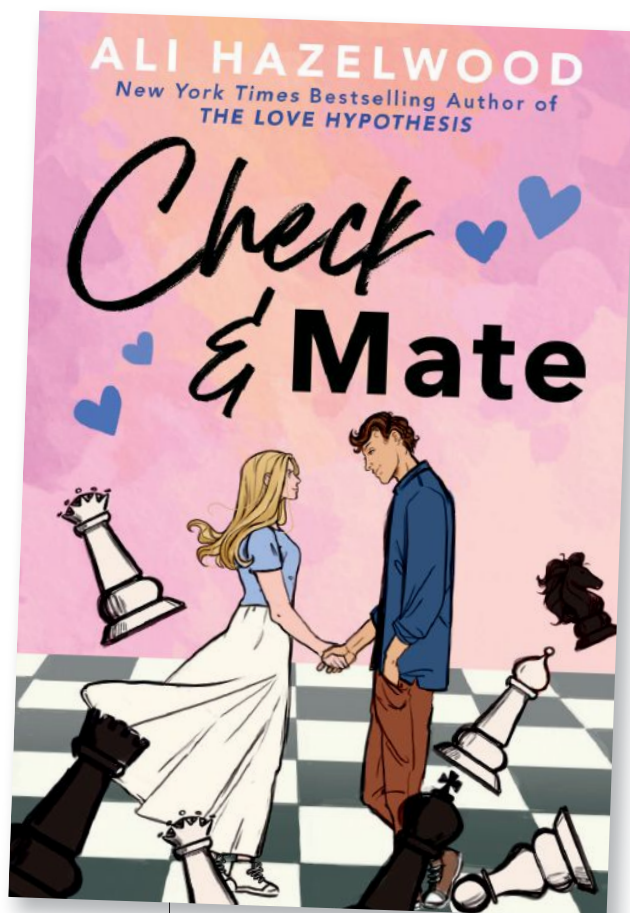
Of course, her new role means she'll be running into Nolan more often. Despite her worry about getting hurt again — both by the game and by someone she cares for — she can't help but be drawn to him, and Nolan's persistent charm offensive is wearing down her stubborn determination to keep things strictly professional.

A successful author of adult romances, Hazelwood brings her skillful writing to

Check & Mate, her young adult debut, replacing her usual STEM-focused backgrounds with chess tournaments. Both worlds readily lend themselves to the familiar rom-com beats, from meet-cutes, to improbable run-ins, to the will they/won't they romance between competitors. Plenty of name drops (past champions and notable matches), strategic openings (the Caro-Kann or Ruy Lopez), and excellently crafted puns pepper the snappy dialogue.

Hazelwood takes care to immerse her readers fully in Mal's perspective, making clear the game is not just a cute background for Mal and Nolan's steamy meet-ups, but an integral part to who Mal is. Her progress as a player mirrors her progress in her personal life: as she finally gives into her love for the game, she's able to play bolder, riskier, better; as she finally allows herself to be vulnerable with the people in her life — not only Nolan — she's able to reshape and mend other relationships in her life. Extensive knowledge about the rules and moves isn't required to recognize the passion with which Mal plays and the significance the game has in Mal's life.

Mal herself is authentically messy, a sympathetic mix of tenderness and snark, and on the cusp of an adulthood that seems likely to be as chaotic and as her adolescence. It's easy, therefore, to root for her, even when her martyr complex gets a bit tiresome and when her decisions are almost laughably misguided. There's a fair amount of readerly belief to be suspended, but Mal is so endearingly genuine, the contrivances of



a few plot points are easily forgiven.

Unfortunately, her romance with Nolan is less believable, mainly because Nolan doesn't bring much to the emotional tension here and thus earns little investment from the reader. It's one thing for a romantic lead to be brooding and distant, but an entirely different one to be just plain boring. Readers know Mal to be plucky, irascible, angry, and complicated, but it's never quite clear if Nolan sees her as anything more than a brilliant competitor, making his interest in Mal more like obsession than affection. When he finally does engage emotionally, it's mostly to criticize her, so readers might not be terribly enthusiastic about their reunion when the inevitable conflict threatens their relationship. One certainly can't argue with cleverness of their verbal sparring, but there's little more to their connection than witty back and forth.

Nolan may not be especially intriguing, but fortunately much of the secondary cast is, and each character — even the purported villain — contributes to Mal's growth. Her precocious younger sister is a true delight, cleverly working behind the scenes to make sure Mal has a chance to compete and yapping it up with Nolan (whose few flashes of personality show while learning about *Riverdale* with her). Defne, the club's manager and herself a grandmaster, has a compelling backstory, having dealt with the chess world's notorious misogyny as she rose in the ranks; and grumpy but lovable Oz, one of the club's GMs, shows support with little fanfare but plenty of heart. Meanwhile, Malte Koch, the cheating bad guy (who borders on mustache-twirling villainy), pointedly serves as Mal's introduction to the rampant sexism she'll come up against in both the game and the press coverage of her play. Each character forces Mal outside of her comfort zone to be a better player, and ultimately a better person.

The important relationship here, though, isn't with one person, but in Mal's love for chess — that's the romance to truly cheer for. Indeed, the book is most successful when it acts as a sports story, with a weary, jaded heroine afraid to give in to her love of the game for fear of its personal ramifications. Mal is assuredly a prodigy, but she's not perfect, and her failures bring as much emotional satisfaction as her triumphs, as readers watch her transform from resentful and hesitant to accepting and confident, able to adapt but staying true to herself. Teens and adults looking for a richly drawn character arc, with the bonus of plenty of chess play, will find it in Mal's journey. ♠

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE CHESS?

BY JJ LANG



▶ **FROM DARK SQUARES ON THE RIGHT** corner, to kings touching each other mid-board, chess players are no stranger to the cringe-inducing gaffes that follow media representations of our game with the mechanical regularity of a Berlin draw.

Indeed, *Check & Mate* is not immune to such blunders, most egregiously when a pawn on c5 captures one on d3 in Grandmaster Nolan Sawyer's unintentionally nightmare-inducing "bedtime story." Author Ali Hazelwood acknowledges in an author's note that she chose to make some inaccuracies for the sake of the plot. These presumably include a scene where competitors talk to each other during a FIDE-rated game, made more jarring when one still complains to an arbiter that his opponent is breaking a (real!) FIDE rule by doodling on her scoresheet. Similarly, the protagonist's lack of participation in FIDE events keeps her criminally underrated for months, rather than risk speculation of being *over-rated* due to an excellent performance with a high K-factor in her debut events.

My favorite might be when Mallory's seconds print out "computer analysis" to help her prepare for an opponent. But overall, Hazelwood is right: these inconsistencies *do* tend to advance the plot, or, at least, not impede even the most chess-obsessive reader's enjoyment. Besides, she gets a lot of the chess details right, even if she makes a point of referring to the Najdorf Sicilian as a "positional opening" on two separate occasions.

Hazelwood does get important details of the *chess world* right in ways that show a deep, studied understanding of what it's like to be immersed in a space that can feel so isolating even as it becomes one's entire social ecosystem. Mallory's stubborn insistence that chess can just be her day job quickly turns to dreams of chess, and how can anybody be expected to pay attention to their siblings when



they are also trying to decipher Korchnoi's paradoxical 39. Ra1 from game 31 of his 1978 match with Karpov? Oh, and another thing: the 1978 match *did* take place in this universe, but *wasn't* the FIDE World Championship, apparently, as Nolan's grandfather competed in that match. Weird! Her pulse on the chess world is not limited to historical battles, either, as one of the more cartoonishly villainous characters responds to allegations of cheating by posting a series of increasingly unhinged videos on the internet.

Pedantic details of chess and chess history aside, the most significant contribution of this novel is the way Hazelwood interweaves her undergraduate psychology research on "stereotype threat" into Mallory's inner monologues as she tries to concentrate on a game of chess despite the constant, cloying reminder that she is a woman surrounded by men. Even in this relatively sanitized young adult world, where the most egregious things a man can do is make sneering comments about her gender, Hazelwood shines in providing a visceral, believable recounting of how this can affect one's focus and comfort. Importantly, we even learn that *everyone* loathes the most egregious of the sexist trolls, and that most of the men are nothing like him. But because none of them publicly say or do anything about him, Mallory still ends up feeling alone and trapped in her own head as she questions her outfit choices and blames herself for calling attention to her appearance while her clock ticks.

For men wishing to chalk sexism in chess up to a few "bad apples" and absolve themselves of blame, this is a scathing, albeit tacit, critique. And for young women who have never shared these experiences with other chess players, I hope these passages come as something of a revelation, or at least a comforting affirmation that they are not alone.

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 February 29, 2024 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 “\$XXX in Guaranteed prizes” (or similar words) for their GP events shall be allowed to re-state their prize funds in their publicity as “\$XXX in Projected prizes based on ### players,” where ### represents the number of players in last year’s event rounded to the nearest five players. For new GP events lacking historical attendance data, the organizer shall specify a “based on” number of players as part of the Projected Prize Fund language in their publicity. This decision includes all GP tournaments that already have been advertised in Chess Life. For any GP events being publicly advertised (whether by TLA, another website, flyers, emails, social media, etc.), organizers shall take all necessary steps to ensure their revised pre-tournament announcements call attention to this change in prize fund status and provide the appropriate “Projected based on XXX players” in the language of their updated publicity. US Chess asks that the chess community support this temporary change in the spirit that it is intended. The Executive Board shall revisit this matter as necessary.

NATIONAL EVENTS & BIDS NOW ON 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: new.uschess.org/national-events-calendar

For complete details on individual events, please visit [new.uschess.org/node/\[TLA ID\]](http://new.uschess.org/node/[TLA ID]). You will find the event’s unique five-digit TLA ID at the end of each TLA.

Nationals

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2024 US Amateur Team North FEBRUARY 16-18, 2024, ILLINOIS
Event site: Hyatt Regency Schaumburg Address: 1800 E. Golf Rd., Schaumburg, IL 60173 Overall prize fund: See TLA GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Chess Weekend Email: glenn@chessweekend.com Phone: n/a Website: <https://www.chessweekend.com/> TLA ID: 40220

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • HERITAGE EVENT

World Amateur Team & U.S. Team East FEBRUARY 17-19, 2024, NEW JERSEY
Event site: Parsippany Hilton Address: 1 Hilton Ct., Parsippany, NJ 07054 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: New Jersey Chess Federation Email: esdoyle@aol.com Phone: esdoyle@aol.com Website: <https://njsct.org/> TLA ID: 39739

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2024 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South FEBRUARY 23-24, 2024, FLORIDA
Event site: Laurel Manor Recreation Center Address: 1985 Laurel Manor Drive, The Villages, FL 32162 Overall prize fund: Commemorative awards, plaques, trophies GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: The Villages Chess Club Email: TheVillagesChessClub@outlook.com Phone: 1-407-497-2261 Website: <http://www.thevillageschessclub.org/> TLA ID: 40253

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2024 KCF All-Girls National Championships APRIL 12-14, 2024, ILLINOIS
Event site: Hyatt Regency McCormick Place Address: 2233 S MLK Dr., Chicago, IL 60616 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Kasparov Chess Foundation & Renaissance Knights Email: david.heiser@renaissanceknights.org Phone: n/a Website: <http://allgirls.rknights.org/> TLA ID: 40277

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

2024 National Open JUNE 5-9, 2024, NEVADA
Event site: Flamingo Las Vegas Hotel & Casino Address: 3555 Las Vegas Blvd S Las Vegas NV 89109 Overall prize fund: \$125,000 GP Points: 200 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Vegas Chess Festivals Email: vegaschess@gmail.com Phone: 702-930-9550 Website: <https://vegaschessfestival.com/> TLA ID: 41728

Grand Prix

The Grand Prix point totals reflect all rated event information as of December 31, 2022 for the 2022 Grand Prix.

FINAL 2022 GRAND PRIX STANDINGS

Congratulations to the 2022 Grand Prix Champion

IM JASON LIANG

Name	State/Ctry	Pts
1. IM JASON LIANG	NY	222.68
2. GM BRANDON JACOBSON	NJ	177.20
3. IM JOHN BRYANT	CA	166.43
4. IM SEMEN KHANIN	RUS	152.35
5. GM FIDEL CORRALES JIMENEZ	MA	137.17
6. IM MYKOLA BORTNYK	UKR	127.25
7. FM DANILA POLIANNIKOV	MA	124.26
8. GM MARK PARAGUA	PHI	121.20
9. GM ALEXANDER FISHBEIN	TN	103.43
10. GM ANDREW TANG	MD	103.28

2022 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 continues in 2024. For information visit new.uschess.org/us-chess-grand-prix-program

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Land of the Earth

FEBRUARY 4, 2024, NORTH CAROLINA
Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall prize fund: \$810 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Center Email: jon@dragonknightchess.com Phone: 9194222535 Website: n/a TLA ID: 41073

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Annual Super Bowl Pre-game Chess

FEBRUARY 11, 2024, NEW JERSEY
Event site: South Jersey Innovation Center Address: 498 Kings Hwy, Suite 102, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034 Overall prize fund: \$3,700 GP Points: 30 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: South Jersey Innovation Center Email: dav@incntr.com Phone: 703-989-6867 Website: <https://form.join.com/233096747880165> TLA ID: 40956

GRAND PRIX

Dr David Ostfeld Memorial ICA Open Championship FEBRUARY 11, 2024, NEW JERSEY
Event site: Bergen County Academies Address: 200 Hackensack Ave., Hackensack, NJ 07601 Overall prize fund: \$1,100 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: International Chess Academy Email: chessdirector@icancnj.net Phone: 201-797-0330 Website: n/a TLA ID: 41033

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Bearcat DKC USCF Grand Prix February 11 FEBRUARY 11, 2024, NORTH CAROLINA
Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall prize fund: \$810 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Center Email: jon@dragonknightchess.com Phone: 9194222535 Website: n/a TLA ID: 41074

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

15th annual Southwest Class Championships FEBRUARY 15-19, 2024, TEXAS
Event site: Westin Dallas Fort Worth Airport Address: 4545 W John Carpenter Fwy, Irving TX 75063 Overall prize fund: \$35,000 GP Points: 200 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us Phone: director@chess.us Website: <http://www.chessevents.us> TLA ID: 39835

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Bearcat DKC Presidents’ Classic FEBRUARY 18, 2024, NORTH CAROLINA
Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall prize fund: \$810 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Center Email: jon@dragonknightchess.com Phone: 9194222535 Website: n/a TLA ID: 41601

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Southwest Class Blitz Championship FEBRUARY 18, 2024, TEXAS

Event site: Westin Dallas Fort Worth Airport Address: 4545 W John Carpenter Fwy, Irving TX 75063 Overall prize fund: \$500 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us Phone: director@chess.us Website: <http://www.chesstour.com/> TLA ID: 41455

GRAND PRIX

2nd Annual Music City Open FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024, TENNESSEE
Event site: Millennium Maxwell House Hotel Address: 2025 Rosa L Parks Blvd, Nashville, TN 37228 Overall prize fund: \$7,000 GP Points: 40 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Nashville Chess Center Email: director@nashvillechess.org Phone: (629) 254 - 4737 Website: <https://ncc.clubexpress.com/> TLA ID: 41336

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8th annual George Washington Open FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024, VIRGINIA
Event site: Washington Dulles Marriott Address: 45020 Aviation Dr, Dulles VA 20166 Overall prize fund: \$17,000 GP Points: 120 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: director@chess.us Website: <http://www.chessevents.us> TLA ID: 40252

GRAND PRIX

10th Queen City Tornado FEBRUARY 24, 2024, NEW HAMPSHIRE
Event site: DoubleTree Hotel Address: 700 Elm St. (Granite St. exit off I-293), Manchester, NH 03101 Overall prize fund: \$2,600 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Hal Terrie Email: halterrie@comcast.net Phone: n/a Website: <https://nhchess.org/> TLA ID: 41398

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Bearcat DKC Late February Classic FEBRUARY 25, 2024, NORTH CAROLINA
Event site: Dragon Knight Chess Center Address: 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 Overall prize fund: \$810 GP Points: 10 FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Dragon Knight Chess Center Email: jon@dragonknightchess.com Phone: 9194222535 Website: n/a TLA ID: 41602

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7-Player Round Robins

Victor Palciauskas Tournament (ICCF Server)

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as single round robin, groupings based on ratings. **ENTRY FEE:** \$5 per entry. **PRIZES:** 1st place receives a signed certificate.

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John W. Collins Memorial (Postal) | Walter Muir E-Quads (ICCF Server)

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as double round robin, groupings based on ratings. **ENTRY FEE:** \$10 per entry. **PRIZES:** 1st place receives \$25 correspondence chess gift certificate and signed certificate.

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Solutions

PAGE 13 CHESS TO ENJOY

PROBLEM 1. Fastest is 1. d7!, threatening d2. d8=Q as well as 2. Rd6! followed by Qc3-e3 or Qc3-d2. Black loses after 1. ... Bd5 2. Qd4 or 2. Qa5. **PROBLEM 2.** 1. Bg4! forced Black to resign. If 1. ... Nxg4 2. Qxf7+, while 1. ... Qe8 is met by 2. Qxd6! and Qd6-d8. **PROBLEM 3.** Don't take full credit for 1. Qg6+! unless you saw 1. ... Bg7 2. Rh8+! Kxh8 3. Qh7 mate or 1. ... Rg7 2. Qh5! and wins. **PROBLEM 4.** 1. ... exf3! — the idea is that 2. Qxf5+ Nf6! or 2. Ne7 Ne5! keeps the extra material. **PROBLEM 5.** 1. Rc7! Nxc7 2. Rxc7 threatens Rc7-g7+ and mate. Black resigned after 2. ... Qf6 3. Ng4! because of 3. ... Qxd4 4. Nh6+ Kh8 5. Rxh7 mate. Also 1. ... Nf6 2. Rg7+ and 3. Rcc7. **PROBLEM 6.** 1. Qxh6! f6 2. Qh4 fxe5 3. dxe5 and now 4. f6 or 4. g5/5. g6 wins.

PAGE 47 MAKE YOUR MOVE

TACTIC 1. 22. Rxd8+! White could reach a similar result with 22. Bxh7+ Kxh7 23. Rxd8 Bxd8 24. Qd3+ 22. ... Bxd8 23. Bxh7+ Kf8 Or 23. ... Kxh7 24. Qd3+ g6 25. Qxd8 Qxe5 26. Rc4, and White is winning. 24. Qd4 Or even stronger 24. Qf4 Be7 25. h4 and White is winning. 24. ... Be7 25. Be4 White has a winning position. 25. ... a5 26. a4 g5 27. Nd2 Ra6 28. Rc3 Bb4 29. Qd8+ and Black resigned in Hoang Thanh Trang – Medina, FIDE Women's Grand Swiss, 2023. **TACTIC 2.** 17. Qc3! h5 Black tries to stop Ne5-g4 from happening, but it doesn't end Black's troubles. The alternatives also do not help, for instance, 17. ... Ne8 18. Rd1 (this is better than 18. Nc6 Qf6 19. Qd2 Qe6 when White is winning but Black is still fighting) 18. ... f6 19. Rxd5 fxe5 20. Rxe5 and White is winning. Also, 17. ... Be7 18. Ng4 or 17. ... Bxe5 18. Qxe5 Kg7 19. Nh5+! gxh5 20. Qg5+ Kh8 21. Bxf6+ is game over. 18. Nd7 and Black resigned in Bluebaum – Sanal FIDE Grand Swiss (Douglas) 2023. **TACTIC 3.** 17. ... g5! 18. Qh3 White cannot capture the pawn, e.g., 18. Qxg5 loses the queen to 18. ... Nxf3+, and 18. Bxg5 loses the bishop to 18. ... Ng6. 18. ... Ng6 White has avoided losing material, but the queen is completely out of play. 19. Bxg7 Or 19. Ne2 Re5 20. Bxg7 Kxg7 21. Bf1 h5 and Black is much better. 19. ... Kxg7 20. Bf1 h5 Threatening ... Ng6-f4 followed by ... h5-h4. 21. Bd3 Makes room for the queen for f1. 21. ... Nf4 22. Qf1 hxg4 23. fxg4 Nxb4 Black is obviously winning. 24. Nd5 Rh8 25. Bf5 Nxb2 and White resigned in Danielian – Medina, FIDE Women's Grand Swiss, 2023. **TACTIC 4.** 24. Rxd8! Rxd8 25. hxd6! hxd6 26. Bf1! Winning a tempo and clearing the h-file. 26. ... Rd4 Or 26. ... Nd6 27. Rh8+ Ke7 28. Rh7+ Ke8 29. Rxc7 and White has a decisive advantage. 27. Rh7 Nd2 The knight is a long way from home and White is easily winning. 28. Be2 Nf3 29. Rxc7 Bd5 30. Bxf3 exf3 31. Rd7 Rxf4 32. Nxd5 Rg4 33. Kd2 Rxd5 34. Ke3 Rg1 35. Kxf3 and Black resigned in Fatiyeva – Nassr, FIDE Women's Grand Swiss, 2023. **TACTIC 5.** 25. ... Qa1!! Black cannot protect both the rook and knight, but instead has this strike that stops White from capturing either of the pieces. 26. Qd2 The queen is also untouchable: 26. Rxa1 Rxa1+ 27. Bf1 e5, clearing the path for the bishop to go to h3; Black is winning.

26. ... Qa3 27. Rbb1 Kg7 Black is a piece up and easily winning. White could have resigned here but carried on a bit longer. 28. g4 Rac8 29. g5 Ng8 30. Qd4+ Kf8 31. gxh6 Nxb6 32. Ra1 Qxb3 33. Qh8+ Ng8 34. Rd3 Rc3 and White resigned in Lazavik – Wojtaszek, FIDE Grand Swiss, 2023. **TACTIC 6.** 21. Qf3! Kf8 22. Rd5 The game continuation went 22. Rxb5 Rxb5 23. Qxb5 Kg7? (Black should have played 23. ... Ke8 24. Qh8+ Kd7 25. Rd1+ Bd6 26. Qh3+ when White has the better chances but Black is still alive) 24. Re3 Bd6 25. Qg4+ Kf8 26. Rh3 Ke7 27. Qe4+ Kd7 (or 27. ... Be5 28. f4 Qd4 29. Qb7+ Ke6 30. fxe5 Qg1+ 31. Kd2 Qf2+ 32. Kd3 Rb8+ 33. Kc3 Qc5+ 34. Kb3 and White is winning) 28. Qb7+ Ke8 (or 28. ... Ke6 29. Re3+ and wins) 29. Rh8+ Bf8 30. Rh7 Be7 31. Qc6+ and Black resigned in Mishra – Ivanchuk, FIDE Grand Swiss, 2023. 22. ... Qe8 23. Rxh5 Rxh5 24. Qxh5 Kg7 25. Re3 and White is winning. **TACTIC 7.** 23. Nc5!! dxc5? A better defensive try was 23. ... Rxe1+ 24. Qxe1 Qe8 25. Qxe8+ Rxe8 26. Nxb7 Kxb7 27. Nxa6 and White has an extra pawn and is clearly better. 24. Qxd7 Rxd7 25. Rxd7 Bxg5 26. c4 White has given up two minor pieces for a rook, but the a6-bishop is hopelessly out of play and Black will have a hard time getting the pieces coordinated. 26. ... Rb8 Or 26. ... f4 27. a4 f3 28. gxf3 Bf6 29. a5 g5 30. Rc7 and Black is completely tied up and has no way of meeting Re1-e6. 27. f4 Bh4 Or 27. ... Bf6 28. Re6 Bd4+ 29. Kf1 and White is winning. 28. Re6 Bb7 29. Kh2 and Black resigned in Sanal – Greenfeld, FIDE Grand Swiss, 2023. **TACTIC 8.** 22. Ra7! This simple threat completely destroys Black's defense. 22. ... Rc8 Surprisingly, nothing seems to work for Black. If 22. ... Rd8 23. Rxc7 (this is even stronger than 23. e4 Nf4 24. Bxf4 Bxf4 25. Ba4, even though this is also winning for White) 23. ... Nxc7 24. Qb7 Nd5 25. Ba5 Rb8 26. Qc6 and White wins. Or 22. ... Bb8 23. Rb7 Rc8 24. Ba5 and White is winning. 23. Ba5 Qg8 Black cannot capture the bishop: 23. ... Bxa5 24. Ne5 Qg5 25. Rxd7+ Ke8 26. Rxd5 exd5 27. Qxd5 Qe7 28. Nc6 and White wins. 24. Bxc7 Rxc7 25. Rxc7 Nxc7 26. Qc6 The rooks have come off the board, but Black's problems have not ended. 26. ... Kd8 Or 26. ... Ne8 27. Ba4 Nef6 28. Qd6+ Kd8 29. Na5 and Black will not survive. 27. Ba4 Qe8 28. Qb7 Nd5 29. Nd6 and Black resigned in P. Cramling – A. Lee, FIDE Women's Grand Swiss, 2023. **TACTIC 9.** 14. ... c5! 15. Bxc5 Or 15. Bxf6 Qxf6 16. Bc4 Bf5 and now 17. Rhe1?? runs into 17. ... Qxc3+!! 18. Qxc3 Bh6+ and it is curtains for White. 15. ... Qa5 16. Bd6 Rb7! The game continued less accurately: 16. ... Bf5 17. g4?? (White should have played 17. Bxb8 Rxb8 18. Bc4 Qb4 19. Bb3 Rc8 20. Bc2 Rb8 and Black is just slightly better) 17. ... Rb8c (or 17. ... Nxg4 18. Bxb8 Rc8 19. Bd3 Bxc3 20. bxc3 Rxb8 21. Bxf5 Qa3+ 22. Kc2 Rb2+ 23. Kd3 Qa6+ and Black is winning) 18. gxf5 Nxd5 19. fxg6 hxg6 20. Bh3 Nxc3 21. Bxc8 Rxc8 22. Qd3 Qxa2 23. Bc7 Nxd1 and White resigned in Sevian – Sindarov, FIDE Grand Swiss, 2023. 17. Bc4 Bf5 The threat is ... Re8-c8. 18. Rhe1 Rc8 19. Bd3 Or 19. Bb3 Rxb3! 19. ... Bxd3 20. Qxd3 Nxd5 and White can resign.

PAGE 51 ABCS OF CHESS

PROBLEM 1. Mating net: White mates on the move:

1. Qh7 mate. **PROBLEM 2. Mating net:** White mates in one: 1. Qa8 mate. **PROBLEM 3. Mating net:** White mates in two: 1. Bd6+ Ka7 (or 1. ... Ka8) 2. Bxc8 mate. **PROBLEM 4. Mating net:** White wins in two moves: 1. Qg6+ Kf8 2. Bd6 mate. **PROBLEM 5. Mating net:** Black is mated in two: 1. Qxb7+ Kxb7 2. Rfb1 mate. **PROBLEM 6. Mating net:** White triumphs in two: 1. Qxe5+ Kf8 2. Qh8 mate.

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MY BEST MOVE

DOUGLAS GRIFFIN TRANSLATOR AND HISTORIAN

B

ORN IN 1967, I GREW UP NEAR Glasgow in Scotland's populous Central Belt. I learned to play chess at around nine years old,

but did not play competitively until the age of 12. During the period 1980-1989 I represented Scotland at every level from U14 to senior international. At age 17 I drew with World Champion Anatoly Karpov in a 23-board simultaneous display in Glasgow. My highest FIDE rating was 2295 (in 1989).

In 1993 my professional career took me northeast of the country, far from the chess centers, and gradually I stopped playing. However, I retained an interest in the game and for the last decade I have been active in translating Soviet-era Russian language works into English. These have been published by *Chess Life*, Chess Informant, and Quality Chess, and also on my blog, *dgriff-finchess.wordpress.com*.

The following game was played in the final round of a Junior (U20) international tournament in Sweden, and already my interest in chess literature and theory were of practical value. Unusual for me, it was a sharp tactical battle.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, SCHEVENINGEN VARIATION (B82)

Per Thorén
Douglas Griffin
Hallsberg, 1984/85

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 d6

Influenced by Craig Pritchett's 1977 book *The Sicilian Scheveningen*, this was my main weapon versus 1. e4.

6. f4 Nc6 7. Be3 Be7 8. Qf3

A fashionable line during the 1970s and '80s.

8. ... e5!?

Also possible is 8. ... 0-0 9. 0-0-0 Qc7 10. g4 Nxd4 11. Bxd4 e5 12. fxe5 dxe5 13. Qg3 Nxe4!?, etc., which I had played against Douglas Bryson a year previously.

9. Nxc6 bxc6 10. f5

Here 10. fxe5 dxe5 11. Bc4 0-0 12. h3 (12. 0-0 Ng4! 13. Rad1 Nxe3!) 12. ... Be6! was a topical line in the '70s.

10. ... Qa5 11. 0-0-0 Rb8 12. Bc4 h5!?

Polugaevsky's idea. Unfortunately for my opponent, I was fairly familiar with this line. In the summer of 1984 it had featured in Psakhis – Pritchett, played in a small international tournament in Scotland. I was operating the demonstration board in that game! The sharp 12. ... d5!? and 12. ... 0-0 are the alternatives.

13. Bb3 Ba6 14. g3

A new move, then and now. 14. Kb1 (Lukianov – Polugaevsky, 1983) is too slow. 14. h3! (Psakhis – Pritchett) is the critical line. Black replies 14. ... h4 15. g4 hxg3 e.p. 16. Qxg3 Rh7 17. h4 c5, etc. With the move in the text White tries to keep a mobile pawn front, but this takes time...

14. ... c5 15. h3 c4 16. Ba4+ Kf8 17. g4

A critical moment. White threatens to roll Black over with g4-g5. I managed to find a counter, which hinges on Black's 19th move.

17. ... Qb4 18. g5 Qxb2+ 19. Kd2



Now 20. gxf6 is threatened, as is 20. Rb1. But now I uncornc **MY BEST MOVE**.

19. ... Bd8! 20. gxf6 Qxc3+!

So that if 21. Kxc3 Ba5 mate.

21. Ke2 Bxf6 22. Rxd6 Qa5!

Defending and attacking at the same time.

23. Bc6 Rb2 24. Rhd1?

The losing move. The passive 24. Rc1 had to be played.

24. ... Rxc2+ 25. Kf1 c3+ 26. Kg1 Be2 27. Rb1!

White also sacrifices his queen. Now



“

... for the last decade I have been active in translating Soviet-era Russian language works into English.”

28. Rb8+, mating, is threatened. But Black has seen one move further.

27. ... Rb2!

Decisive.

28. Qxe2 Rxb1+!

Of course, not 28. ... Rxe2? 29. Rb8+ Ke7?? (29. ... Bd8 or 29. ... Qd8 draw) 30. Rd7 mate.

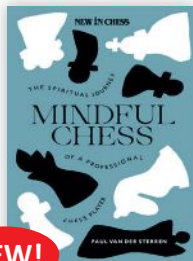
29. Rd1 Rxd1+ 30. Qxd1 Qc7, White resigned. ♠

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Mindful Chess

Paul van der Sterren

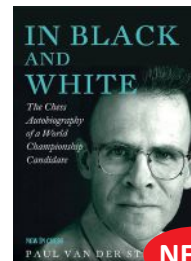
Dutch GM Paul van der Sterren was a professional chess player for more than twenty years. He met with both victory and defeat, joy and suffering. When, later in life, he discovered vipassana meditation, he approached meditation with the same devotion as his chess. The reader follows his two journeys, asking the same questions: What is chess? What is meditation? Who am I? What is I? What can we know?

NEW!

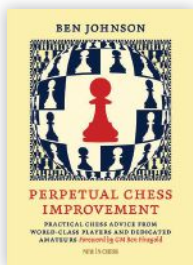
In Black and White

Paul van der Sterren

The very honest autobiography describing Van der Sterren's rise to the chess elite and his struggle to get better, with all the uncertainties and difficulties on his path. From his very first moves to his match against Gata Kamsky, everything is described in great detail and with the greatest frankness by the Dutch GM. The final part describes his decline and his shift to meditation and mindfulness.



NEW!



The Best practical advice

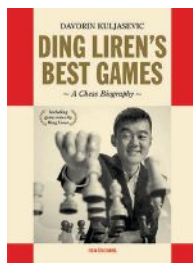
Ben Johnson

Ben Johnson hosts the Perpetual Chess Podcast, in which he is talking chess with many of the world's top players, trainers and passionate improvers. In this book, Ben looks for common ground and shared principles in all chess advice on the podcast. You will familiarize yourself with the collected wisdom of guests such as Anand, Nakamura, Ramesh, Hendriks, Aagaard, Christopher Chabris and Neal Bruce.

A Rich and Dynamic Opening Repertoire for White

Christof Sielecki

Coach Christof Sielecki has thoroughly revised and updated his 2018 chess opening manual, one of New In Chess' all-time bestselling opening books. This new 632-page hardcover edition contains everything you need to know to play 1.e4 with confidence. The repertoire is suited for players of all levels and the variations are easy to remember and require little or no maintenance.



The Best Games of the World Champion

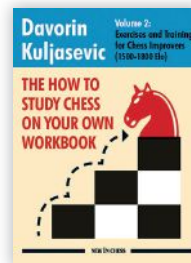
Davorin Kuljasevic

In April this year, Ding Liren sensationally defeated Ian Nepomniachtchi, to become the 17th World Champion, winning the hearts of chess fans with his incredible fighting spirit. He said the match 'reflected the deepest of his soul'. In this biography, best-selling author Kuljasevic follows and explores his rise, from his first chess steps in provincial China to the top of the chess world.

Excercises and Training for Improvers, Volume 2

Davorin Kuljasevic

This second workbook in Davorin Kuljasevic's *How to Study Chess on Your Own* series is optimized for chess players with an Elo rating between 1500 and 1800 but is helpful for anyone between 1200 and 2000. The astounding success of his series made clear that thousands of chess players want to improve their game and like to work on their training at least partially by themselves.



Magnus Carlsen & David Howell Explain the Grind

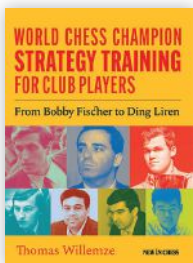
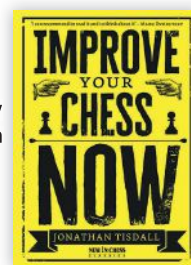
Magnus Carlsen and David Howell show how to win a seemingly equal chess position. Their first book tells you how to keep a game alive, keep posing problems, recognize the first small mistakes, and grind your opponent down until he cracks.

The book is converted from a popular Chessable course. The lively conversations of the two friends translate very well into a highly instructive chess manual.

Improve Your Chess Now

Jonathan Tisdall

A modern classic, originally published in 1997. Adult improvers often name this book as one of their primary sources in Ben Johnson's *Perpetual Chess Podcast*. With infectious enthusiasm, Tisdall covers a wide range of topics, including visualization and calculation, pattern recognition, the psychological aspects of chess, the art of defence and the wisdom of blindfold chess – all still relevant more than 25 years later.



100 Strategy Lessons from the World Champions

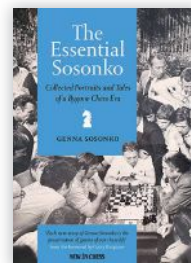
Thomas Willemze

This book offers you 100 strategic exercises from the games of the best of the best, the World Champions from Bobby Fischer to Ding Liren. IM Thomas Willemze, one of the best chess improvement authors around, will show you foundational techniques such as improving your worst-placed. Solving these exercises will help every ambitious club player better understand how to make and execute plans.

Tales of a Bygone Chess Era

Genna Sosonko

'Each new story of Genna Sosonko is the preservation of grains of our chess life', says Garry Kasparov. No writer can tell you more about legends such as Tal, Korchnoi or Bronstein and personalities such as Chepukaitis or Nikolaev. This 840-page hardcover edition is a collection of the portraits Sosonko wrote for New In Chess, plus 100 pages of stories published elsewhere. A must-have for every chess aficionado.



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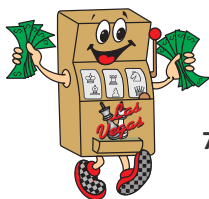
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THURSDAY 3:00 P.M.

OPEN TO AGE 14 & UNDER

SATURDAY 7:00 P.M.

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FOR ALL AGES & Strengths THURSDAY 10 A.M. – 6:00 P.M.

Blitz & Action Tournaments

ACTION QUADS

THURSDAY 2:00 P.M.

YOUTH BLITZ (AGE 14 & UNDER)

FRIDAY 6:30 P.M.

8 PLAYER BLITZ SECTIONALS

FRIDAY 11:30 P.M.

8 PLAYER BLITZ SECTIONALS

SUNDAY 9:00 P.M.

Free Lectures & Analysis

THURSDAY – SUNDAY

Youth Side Events (age 14 & under)

TROPHY TOURNAMENT

FRIDAY 10:00 A.M.

YOUTH BLITZ

FRIDAY 6:30 P.M.

PUZZLE SOLVING COMPETITION

SATURDAY 6:00 P.M.

YOUTH SIMUL

SATURDAY 7:00 P.M.

Streamer Meet & Greet

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Poker Tournament

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