

CHESS LIFE

February 2021 | USChess.org

Kids

HIDDEN CHECK

The mysterious relationship between chess and espionage

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
Infinity Endgames,
the Finale:
Rook versus Bishop

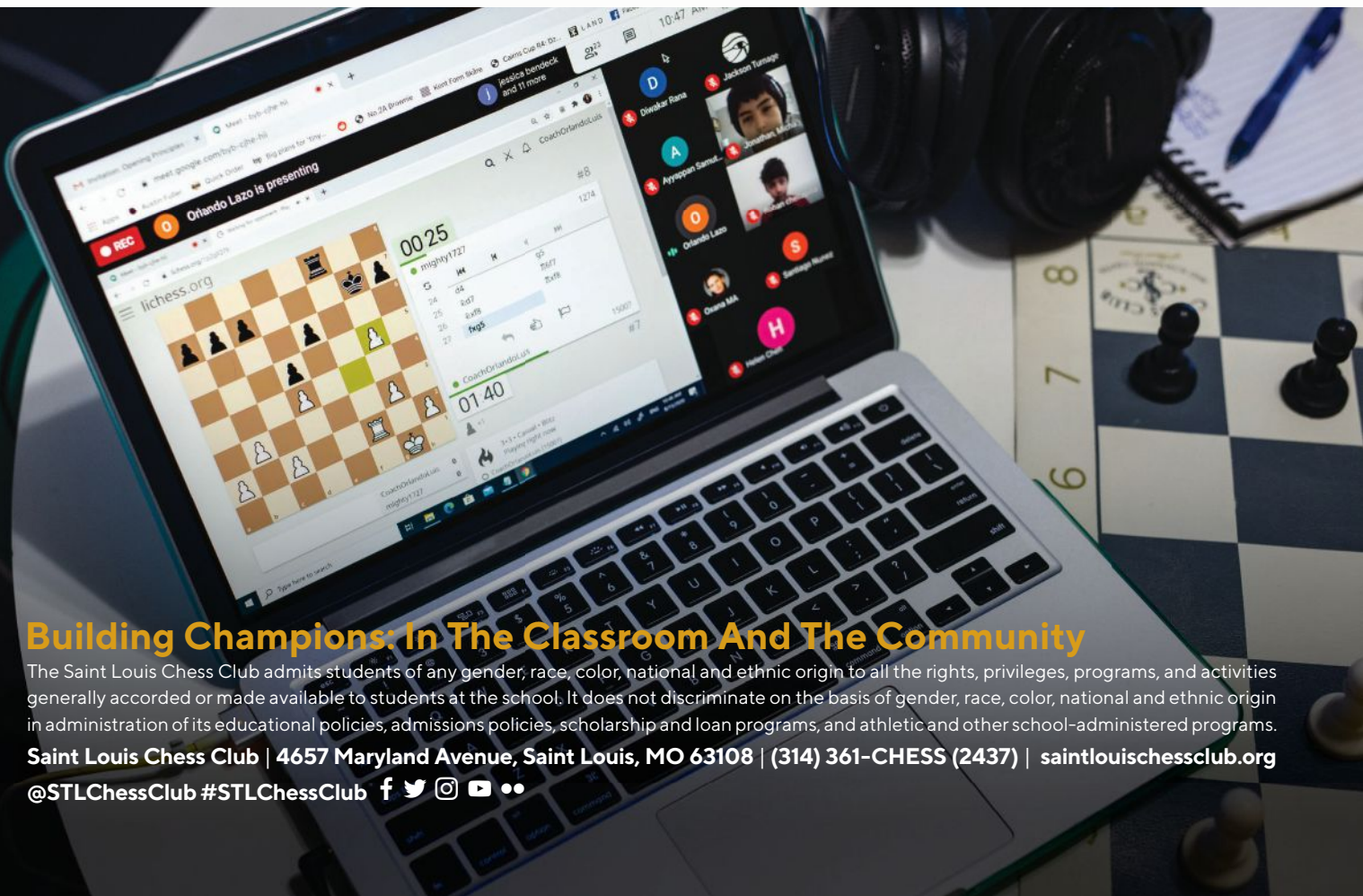
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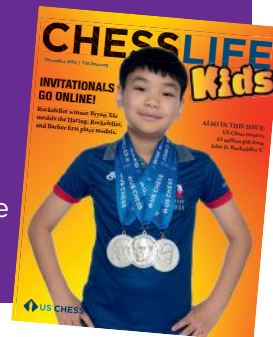
Menachem Wecker takes you inside the International Spy Museum in Washington, D.C., where he explores the mysterious connection between chess and espionage (spoiler alert: it's not what you see in the movies!). GM Alexander Ipatov adds rook versus bishop endgames to your arsenal in the third and final installment of his endgame series. And meet our 2020 U.S. Women's champion, GM Irina Krush, in this month's My First Move and Chess Adventures.

This month's cover features a dramatic game of "cat versus mouse," played out on a giant chess board. Cover art by Chandler Ellison.



OUR APOLOGIES

In our December article, “Invitations Go Online,” we mislabeled the tournament affectionately known as the “Barber.” The correct full title of the tournament is the “Dewain Barber National Tournament of Middle School State Champions.” Our apologies to our readers and to Mr. Barber, whose continued support has been invaluable to scholastic chess.

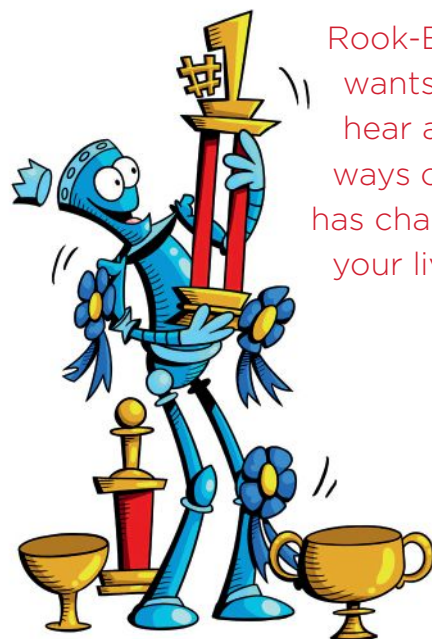
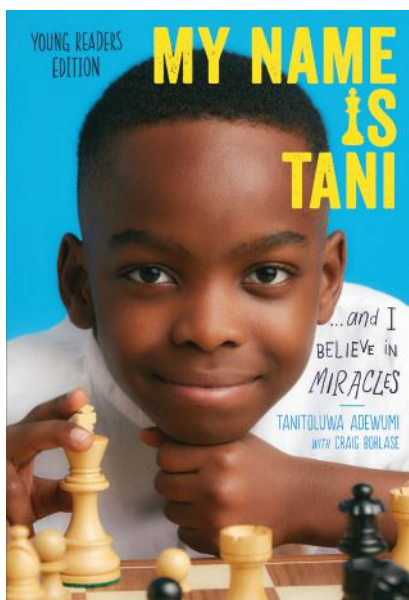


WHAT’S YOUR CHESS STORY?

Tanitoluwa Adewumi — known as Tani, for short — rocketed to fame when he won the K-3 division of the New York State scholastic championships in 2019 while living in a homeless shelter. His inspirational story has been recounted on many chess platforms, including on the pages of *Chess Life* (July 2019) and *Chess Life Kids* (August 2019). He’s been covered in influential mainstream sources like *The New York Times* and NPR, and he’s even co-written several books about his incredible journey.

Tani’s story is an exceptional example of how chess has the power to change lives. But we know there are many more stories out there — maybe yours? Tell us in 100 words or less how chess has made a positive impact on your life. The top ten submissions will receive a copy of either *My Name is Tani* or *Tani’s New Home*, courtesy of Tani’s publisher, HarperCollins.

We want to hear from you! Email your story, your name, age, and your parent’s name to mmatthews@uschess.org. Put “CLK Chess Story” in the subject line. Deadline for submission is March 5, 2021.



Rook-E wants to hear all the ways chess has changed your lives!



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CHESS KIDS

ACROSS THE

BOARD



BY AL LAWRENCE

Celebrating *Chess Life Kids*
from across the country.

Oliver Boydell

New York City, New York

Oliver's Got Moves!

Youngest chess author ever!

Oliver Boydell is only 11. Despite his age, his new book on chess, *He's Got Moves*, is being sold in bookstores all over the USA. His book is not just for kids. Publisher Metabook is recommending it to adult readers to help grownups get better at chess too!

The subtitle of Oliver's book sums it up: "25 Legendary Chess Games, As Analyzed by a Smart Kid."

Before Oliver wrote his book, Daniel Naroditsky of North Carolina held the record as youngest chess book writer. Daniel was 14 when he published his first book. Daniel later became a grandmaster. Oliver would like to follow in his footsteps.

When Oliver was just five years old, he used his iPad to teach himself to play chess. "There wasn't even a chess set in the house," his mom Tiffany said. Oliver developed his own teaching methods. He would take a losing position against his classmates and ask them to try to win. When they couldn't, he would take the winning side and show them how. His teacher asked him to teach a regular chess class.



Oliver improved at “warp speed.” Not long after learning the moves, he won the kindergarten champion title at the National K-12 Grades Championship. Two months later, Oliver began working with famous chess teacher and *Chess Life Kids* columnist Bruce Pandolfini. Bruce served as chess adviser for the popular Netflix series, “The Queen’s Gambit.”

“After just a few minutes of meeting him and playing a game,” Bruce said, “I knew Oliver Boydell was special. Not only did he avoid my trap — he countered with one of his own.” The next year, Oliver captured the title of New York City’s First Grade Champ.

The young author also trains twice a week with eight-time U.S. Women’s Champ GM Irina Krush (*see pg. 20 for*

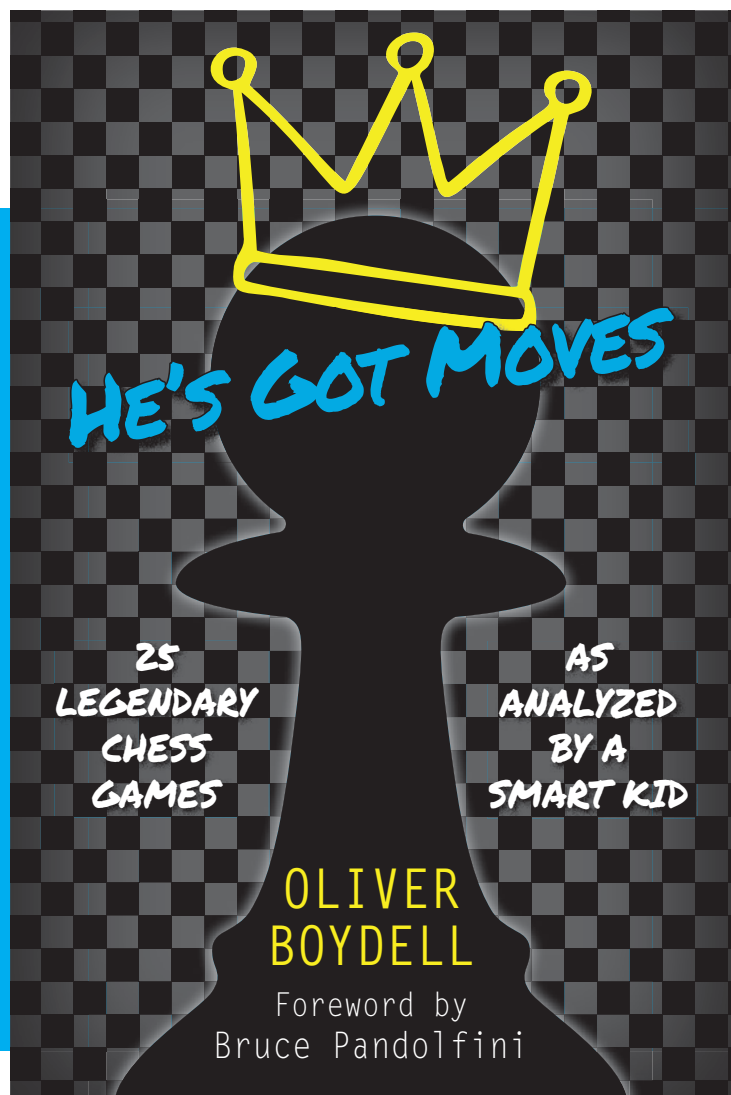
more on Krush). Before the coronavirus closed schools and put a stop to many activities, Oliver studied piano and participated in skiing, tennis, and soccer.

After the lockdown, Oliver had lots of time on his hands. He picked out the 25 chess games he decided were the most important of all time. As he wrote, Oliver explained the moves of each game. Mom Tiffany helped with the typing.

Oliver asks the reader questions — and provides the answers at the end of the book. After each game, he gives his favorite move and a list of “Lessons Learned.” Oliver also provides a glossary of important chess terms.

U.S. Chess Hall-of-Famer GM Maurice Ashley and popular *Chess.com* teacher FM “FunMaster” Mike Klein are excited about the book. “Oliver has taken the classics and put his personal spin on them for chess lovers everywhere to understand,” Ashley wrote.

Oliver’s book is available in hardback and digital editions online at Amazon and *barnesandnoble.com*, as well as in bookstores — and be sure to check with US Chess Federation Sales at *uscfsales.com*.



Photos: facing page, Oliver at the legendary Marshall Chess Club; this page, above, Oliver holding an advance copy of his book on November 7, 2020 — the first time he saw a printed version of his book; right, the cover of Oliver’s book. Bruce Pandolfini, who wrote the book’s foreword, praises the collection: “Oliver has assembled some of the world’s best chess games into a superbly integrated volume. Young or old, new to the game or experienced, readers will find Oliver Boydell’s first book to be a touchstone for challenge and inspiration.”



“After just a few minutes of meeting him and playing a game,” Bruce said, “I knew Oliver Boydell was special. Not only did he avoid my trap — he countered with one of his own.”

Back in 2016, Oliver went to see the World Championship held near his home. There, Grandmaster Judit Polgar, one of the best chess players

ever, autographed the iPad Oliver had used to teach himself chess. Do you think Oliver should autograph his new book and send it to GM Polgar?



Photos, clockwise from top left: Oliver’s prized chess boards include one signed by Garry Kasparov and another autographed by Fabiano Caruana; Oliver jumps for joy in Cape Cod as his book nears completion; skiing in Colorado before the pandemic hit; with GMs Irina Krush and Maurice Ashley in 2018 at the Charity Chess Championship (a fundraising event) in New York City; with Bruce Pandolfini (l) and FM Mike Klein (r) between rounds at the 2019 National Elementary (K-6) Championship.



CAN DO IT!

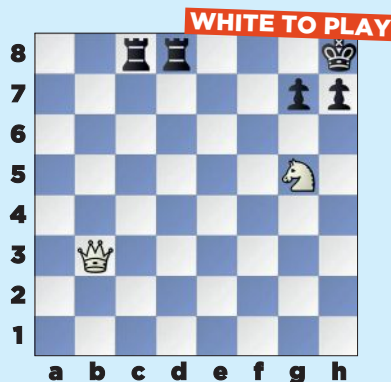
BY SIM JON EDWARDS
10TH U.S. CORRESPONDENCE CHESS CHAMPION

Queen sacrifices on g8 are common as part of a well-known combination that ends with a smothered checkmate. Here's the basic mating theme:

(see diagram on right)

1. Nf7+ Kg8
2. Nh6+ Kh8
3. Qg8+ Rxf8
4. Nf7 mate.

In this quiz, all six solutions involve such a queen sacrifice on g8. Some of these are quite challenging, but I know that You Can Do It!



Solutions on page 19.

QUIZ 3

WHITE TO PLAY



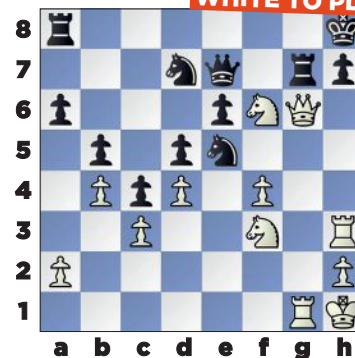
QUIZ 4

WHITE TO PLAY



QUIZ 5

WHITE TO PLAY



QUIZ 1

WHITE TO PLAY



QUIZ 2

WHITE TO PLAY



QUIZ 6

WHITE TO PLAY





AVOID THE by Bruce Pandolfini TRAP!

THE BISHOP AND KNIGHT MATE (IN THE OPENING!)

This column teaches you openings by helping you learn to avoid opening traps. Set up your board and pieces and play through the game below. Have paper and pen by your side. When you reach a question, write down your answer. After you are done with all 10 questions, check your answers at the end of this column. Total your points and see how you did against the scoring scale at the end!

The most difficult basic mate of all is the bishop and knight mate. It can take thirty moves or more to bring about. In trying to set it up, players could easily lose their way and exceed the fifty-move rule, allowing a draw. The mate tends to come about so seldom that many students wonder why they should bother with it. Perhaps the main reason is that studying it helps students appreciate how these two minor pieces can work together to control blocks of squares. But such knowledge is not just helpful in the endgame. It can be very useful in the opening as well. To be sure, some opening tactics involving these two pieces can lead to quick victory, especially when key squares are guarded by friendly forces or blocked by enemy ones. Consider this month's example.

1. e4

Nothing new here. This is the most common beginning move.

1. ... e5

Black plays for an equal share of the center.

2. Nf3

White continues with a solid move that keeps the initiative. Black's e-pawn is attacked.

Q1) Would 2. d4 be a better way to pressure the e5-pawn? (10 points)

2. ... Nc6

The e5-pawn is now guarded.

Q2) Did Black have to defend the e5-pawn directly? (10 points)

3. Nc3

So far, we have a Three Knights Game.

Q3) After 3. Nc3, what is Black's most often seen reply? (10 points)

3. ... g6

Black's move is fine, but it does create some potential weaknesses.

Q4) Which squares are potentially weakened by 3. ... g6? (10 points)

4. d4

White directly attacks e5.

4. ... exd4

Black ends the threat by exchanging pawns.

Q5) If instead 4. ... d6, how should White continue? (10 points)

5. Nd5

White doesn't take back.

Q6) How should White answer 5. ... Nge7? (10 points)

5. ... Bg7

Black completes the fianchetto, protecting the d4-pawn.

6. Bg5

This move increases the dark square pressure.

Q7) How should White answer 6. ... f6? (10 points)

6. ... Nge7

The e7-knight is now pinned and Black's dark squares are weakened.

7. Nxd4

On the surface, this may look as if it loses material.

Q8) If now 7. ... Nxd4, how does White continue? (10 points)

7. ... Bxd4

Black c6-knight is guarding two key points, d4 and e7.

Q9) What is White's best move here? (10 points)



(After 7. ... Bxd4)

8. Qxd4!

Black's dark squares will now be defenseless.

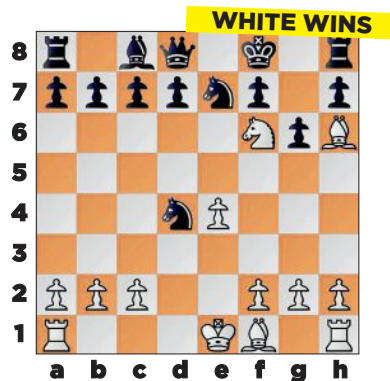
8. ... Nxd4

9. Nf6+

Black has but one legal move.

9. ... Kf8

10. Bh6 mate! (1-0)



(After 10. Bh6 mate)

Q10) What was the last move Black could have avoided the trap? (10 points)

ILLUSTRATIVE GAME: ENGLISH OPENING (A37)

Coolen, Olivier
Vivian, J
Provence, France 1995

1. c4 c5 2. g3 Nc6 3. Bg2 g6 4. Nc3 Bg7 5. Nf3 e6 6. Ne4 d6 7. d3 Nge7 8. Bg5 Bxb2 9. Nf6+ Kf8 10. Bh6 mate.

(see diagram next column)

ANSWERS

A1) Though popular, it's not best. Black could answer by 2. ... exd4.

A2) No. Instead, Black could have counterattacked with 2. ... Nf6.



FINAL POSITION IN THE ILLUSTRATIVE GAME

A3) The most usual response is 3. ... Nf6, creating a Four Knights Game.

A4) The dark squares f6 and h6.

A5) The simple 5. dxe5 leads to a bad queen trade for Black after 5. ... dxe5 or 5. ... Nxe5 6. Nxe5 dxe5.

A6) Without falling off the chair, White should play 6. Nf6 mate.

A7) White's best would be 7. Bh4, with a strong initiative.

A8) White wins Black's queen with 8. Bxe7.

A9) White has the crushing 8. Qxd4!

A10) Move seven. A stronger defense was 7. ... h6. Black still loses at least a piece after 8. Nxc6 (best chance was 7. ... f6.)



Check your answers! Did you avoid the trap?

How Did You Score?

The score is based on the US Chess rating system and is intended only as a fun way to monitor your progress each issue as you Avoid The Trap!

100: 1800+

90: 1600

80: 1400

70: 1200

60 or lower: 1000



I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE ...

By Menachem Wecker

Unlike most games, chess leaves everything in the open.
It still has a mysterious history.

Pretend you are a spy, and you have to smuggle a top-secret document to a fellow secret agent. Where would you arrange to meet? How would you hand the hush-hush papers over to the other person without being caught?

If this were a movie or a television show, the scene would probably take place in an empty park at midnight. It would probably be raining, and the spies would wear hats and have the collars of their long overcoats pulled up to mask their faces. They might keep looking nervously over their shoulders to make sure no one was watching. An owl might hoot, making the characters — and us watching! — startle in fright.

This makes for good Hollywood drama, but real life is not usually so vivid. It might come as a surprise to you to learn that spies often make

information “drops” and even try to recruit other spies, out in the open at chess tournaments. As in a game of chess, sometimes the best way to win is to hide in plain sight.

More than 60 years ago, a Russian spy named Valentin Ivanov, who wore thick glasses and a bushy moustache, defeated all of his early opponents easily in a chess tournament at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Ivanov worked at the Soviet embassy, which made a good cover for his spying, and he was good enough at chess that he also cruised through the first two games of the final, writes historian Steven T. Usdin in his recent book *Bureau of Spies: The Secret Connections Between Espionage and Journalism in Washington*.

Mysteriously, Ivanov lost the last three games. Usdin thinks he would





Photos: above, a subversive Russian Army chess set; right, the International Spy Museum in Washington, D.C.

have won first prize without much difficulty if his bosses in Moscow had not told him to lose the last games on purpose. A spy is not supposed to call too much attention to himself so he does not get caught, the Russian officials probably reminded Ivanov.

If you have played the board game Stratego before, you know that there is a piece called the spy, which can capture the opponent's most powerful token, the one piece — provided it attacks first. Among bishops, rooks, pawns, and other chess pieces, there are no spies, of course. But as the story of the Russian spy at the Washington chess tournament shows, spying and chess overlap a lot. Experts say there are good reasons for that, because being a spy and playing chess require similar skills, like planning ahead and looking for patterns.



Let's begin with several examples, so it is clear that Ivanov was not the only example of the overlap between chess and spying.

In 1870, the British chess player Joseph Henry Blackburne, whose nickname was "Black Death" because of his big bushy (black) beard, was playing at a tournament in Baden-Baden, Germany. He would go on to tie for third place in the event, which,

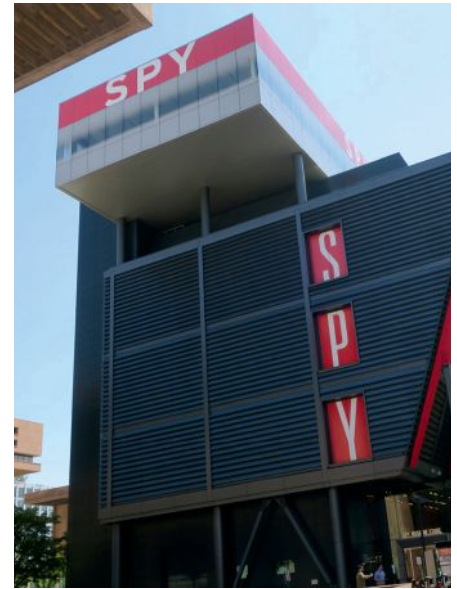
apparently on his suggestion, was the first to use chess clocks. The tournament was also unusual insofar as the Franco-Prussian War broke out between France and Prussia amid the event, and fighting was so close that chess players could hear explosions.

One highly-regarded player had to leave the tournament to fight in the German army (on the Prussian side), and German authorities arrested Blackburne during the tournament and jailed him, releasing him the next day, for being a French spy. The chess player's carriage driver, and not the "Black Death" himself, turned out to be the French secret agent.

Another chess player, Joseph Eljas, from the northeastern European country Estonia, went to Leningrad, in the then-Soviet Union, in 1927 for a chess tournament. He disappeared, and friends learned later that the Soviet secret police, the Cheka, had arrested him and claimed that he was carrying secret codes. The notebooks the police claimed were codes were filled with chess problems.

A very similar thing had happened in 1918, when one Lorenz Hansen was accused of spying when his chess correspondence games by postcard were discovered, as the *American Chess Bulletin* reported that year.

And in 1952-53, Pal Benko spent almost a year-and-a-half in Hungarian imprisonment after he was caught trying to escape from East Berlin to the West, and police found his postal chess games, which they took to be secret code.



But the authorities who claimed that chess players, or those posing as such, were spies were not always wrong.



At Washington's International Spy Museum, there are several real-life chess-related spy objects and stories, and I talked about all of them with Alexis Albion, the museum's curator of special exhibits.

One of the most interesting stories relates to a place in England called Bletchley Park, where British intelligence officers hired chess players, among others, to break German codes during World War II. England didn't yet have a code-breaking department, so it had to build this team up from the ground, and it needed to do so fast to crack a German code called ENIGMA.

An "enigma" is a mysterious thing that is tough to understand, and this code was named well. It is complicated to explain, but essentially the Germans used devices where they would type out a short message and the machine would spit out a code that would look like gibberish to everyone who did not have a similar machine and know how to set

it that day. They changed the settings each day, and there were so many possible ways to swap letters — many, many millions — that you could not just sit with a pen and paper and guess.

What would you do if you had to find the best people to break a code that seemed impossible to overcome? If you answered that you would hire people who are good at chess and other kinds of puzzles, that is exactly what England did.

“It’s people whose brains work in that way,” Albion said. “They’re thinking several steps ahead. They’re thinking strategically. They’re playing around with ideas. I think chess fits in really well with that kind of skill set. That is really important in the intelligence world.”

One of Albion’s favorite parts about Bletchley Park was a crossword puzzle that officials published widely. “They said, ‘You know. Have a go at this. If you can do this, you might be somebody we’re interested in,’” Albion said. The Spy Museum owns one of those crossword puzzles that British intelligence sent out to recruit code-breakers.

The mathematician Alan Turing — who in 1948, decades before Deep Blue, co-created with David Champernowne the first chess computer program called Turochamp — was one of the people at Bletchley Park who helped crack the German code.

He was known to take walks with a hot drink around the neighborhood to relax. When he finished drinking, Turing, who was a character, would throw his mug into a nearby pond. A friend told Albion that if one drained the body of water, one could find many of those mugs. “I started thinking, ‘We should do that. We can get one of those for the museum,’” she said.



One of the coolest chess objects at the Spy Museum is a set that the British intelligence agency MI9 used to hide money, maps, and a compass to send to its spies who were captured during World War II. If the sets had the name of the company Jaques of London, founded in 1795 and still operating today, the captured spies knew to break open the back of the set to find the secret items.

The chess set at the Spy Museum, which hid a compass (to help direct spies), money, and maps, comes from the collection of Phil Froom, an author, collector, and former British military intelligence officer. He came across the “loaded” chess set when he met with someone to research his book, and the person had been unsure why his dad, who had been part of MI9, kept a chess set when he was not a chess player.

Froom got the idea that the set might have things hidden inside it, and he took it to a veterinarian practice near his home in the United Kingdom to get it x-rayed. It turned out that it was what Froom thought it was, and he had to pay the other person a lot of money to buy it.

For visitors who see that set at the Spy Museum in Washington, Froom hopes that they will be excited by the “cat versus mouse” efforts of the British Escape Agency to smuggle its captured agents out to freedom.

“More likely, their comparison will be more 007 James Bond than MI9 World War II,” Froom said. But he added that there is very good evidence that the kinds of gadgets in James Bond films — maybe a pen that is a gun, or the like — were based on real things that MI9 made. Ian Fleming, who wrote the James Bond books, was the head of British naval intelligence during World War II and was an MI9 “customer,” Froom said. “He certainly knew about the gadgets.”

“Later, when the Bond movies came along, Dennis Llewelyn — the [actor] who played ‘Q’ in many Bond movies, himself a World War II prisoner of

war held at the infamous Colditz Castle — met with one of the MI9 quartermasters,” Froom said. “They discussed the gadgets, and gradually more and more appeared in the Bond movies.”



When Albion, the curator at the Spy Museum, thinks about how chess and spying overlap, she says that chess is such a big deal in Russia. Russia and the United States spied on one another for so many years during the Cold War, so chess and spying are likely to intersect.

“The Russians pride themselves on chess. My sister-in-law is Russian, and as soon as my nephew could hold a pencil, he had to take chess lessons. It is part of your education,” she said. “It is part of your analytical, logical thinking of being an educated person.”

But as mentioned above, being a real-life spy, or as is more often the case these days, an analyst, is different from the way it is portrayed in Hollywood. “It is not like in the movies. We hear stories about having to do surveillance for hours on end,” Albion said. It is really not all car chases and that kind of thing.” Playing chess, which is a mental sport, can help one overcome boredom, and perhaps even see patterns in the monotony (repetition).

A key, Albion said, is focusing on the details. “If you mess something up, you do not just lose a game. You actually might be missing something incredibly important,” she said. Intelligence analysts train themselves to avoid falling into mental traps, as chess players might do as well. “You need to really understand the way your brain works and not let yourself be fooled by it,” Albion said.

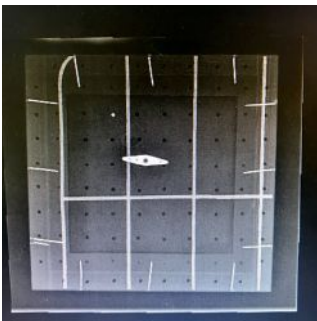
CRACKING THE CODE

A secret branch of the British government, the M19, helped soldiers escape if they were captured. Chess played a surprising role in this delicate and dangerous mission.



STEP 1:

Author, collector, and former British intelligence officer Phil Froom discovered this special M19 Jaques of London chess set while doing research for his book. But here's another mystery: Something is amiss in this photo. Can you figure out what's wrong? Hint: Our spies were clearly misoriented.



STEP 2:

With permission from the owner, Froom took the unusual set to a nearby veterinarian to have it x-rayed. The x-ray revealed a small propeller-shaped object that Froom recognized as a "swinger" compass used to aid prisoners in escaping.



STEP 4:

Success! The chess set contained three rare mulberry paper M19 escape maps, emergency money (Third Reich 50 and 20 Reichsmark banknotes), and the swinger compass.



STEP 3:

The next step was to break into the chess set without damaging it. A nervous craftsman from the still-operating Jaques of London spent almost an hour carefully peeling off the green cloth backing to uncover the hidden compartment.

THE FINALE

By GM Alexander Ipatov

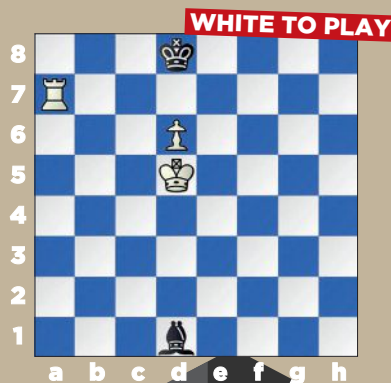
Welcome to the final article in my three-part endgame series. In the first two articles we studied basic rook endings and pawn endings (see August and October 2020 issues of *Chess Life Kids*). In this article, we will learn more about rook versus bishop endings. While they aren't as popular as rook or pawn endings, these endings are still important to know. Understanding them may increase your chances of winning a drawish position or, in contrast, boost your confidence in defending and potentially saving a seemingly losing position. Here I will introduce several positions that I believe should be in everyone's arsenal. Let's begin!

WIN OR DRAW?

GM Evgeny Tomashevsky (2745)
GM Sergei Movsesian (2665)
10th World Team Chess
Championship, Tsaghkadzor,
Armenia (7.3), 04.26.2015

(see diagram next column)

Let's start with a top-level game played in the World Team Chess Championship several years ago. The position is objectively winning for White. Although I will not delve



into the more complex details, basically White's plan is the following: dominate the black bishop with the rook and play d6–d7 under the right circumstances. However, a very experienced Russian grandmaster played this move right away:

102. d7??

and suddenly the position became drawish after

102. ... Ke7 103. Kc6 Bg4!

White can neither play Kc6–c7 due to ... Bg4xd7, nor move his rook from the seventh rank for the same reason. It is a positional draw where Black just waits with the bishop on the h3–c8 diagonal.

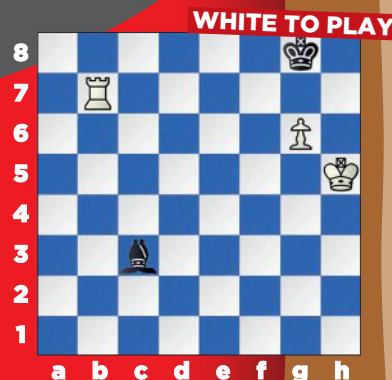
104. Rb7 Bf5 105. Rc7 Bg4 106. Ra7 Bf5 107. Rb7 Bg4 108. Rc7 Bf5 109. Ra7 Bg4 110. Kd5

Ultimately, White decided to give up the pawn, accepting the drawish outcome.

110. ... Bxd7 111. Ke5 Ke8 112. Kd6 Bf5, Draw agreed.

For those who don't know, in most of the cases, rook versus bishop without pawns on the board is a draw. The defending side must move the king to the corner that is the opposite color from the bishop. In this case, those would be a1– and h8–squares. So, as you see, rook versus bishop endings can be very tricky even for the world's best players!

ROOK AND B/G PAWN ON THE SIXTH RANK



Now, let's take a look at a similar position discovered by Horwitz

and Kling back in 1851. Objectively, the position is winning for White. However, it may be problematic to find the winning plan over the board — we cannot just play Kh6/Kf6 because Black will check with the bishop and throw our king away. The win would be trivial if the pawn were on g5 instead of g6, as in that case we could play Kh5–g6 and Black wouldn't have a check. So what is our winning plan here? Similar to the previous example, we want to sacrifice our pawn under the right circumstances. Here it is a bit simpler because the black king is closer to the wrong corner (the h8–square has the same color as the bishop).

1. g7! Kh7

If Black captures the pawn, then he loses right away after 1. ... Bxg7 2. Kg6 Be5 3. Re7 Bd6 4. Re8+ Bf8 5. Ra8 and Black is in *zugzwang* as he must play ... Kg8–h8, which results in a mate in one.

2. Rf7!

By playing this move, we fix the black king in the wrong corner. The king can no longer run away to the center after we sacrifice our pawn.

The move 2. g8=Q+? would be premature. 2. ... Kxg8 3. Kg6 Kf8 and the black king escapes to the safe side of the board.

2. ... Bd4 3. g8=Q+ Kxg8 4. Kg6

As we see now, Black no longer has ... Kg8–f8. Our winning plan is to dominate the bishop with the rook and deliver a checkmate on the back rank. Let's learn the technique!

4. ... Bg1

The only square where White cannot attack the bishop and threaten the checkmate.

All of the following lose immediately: 4. ... Bc3 5. Rc7; 4. ... Bb2 5. Rb7; 4. ... Ba1 5. Ra7; 4. ... Be5 5. Re7.

5. Rf1 Bh2 6. Rf2 Bg3

No better is 6. ... Bd6 7. Rd2 Be7 8. Ra2. since Black doesn't have ... Kg8–f8–e7 since the e7–square is occupied by the bishop or 6. ... Bc7 7. Rc2.

7. Rg2

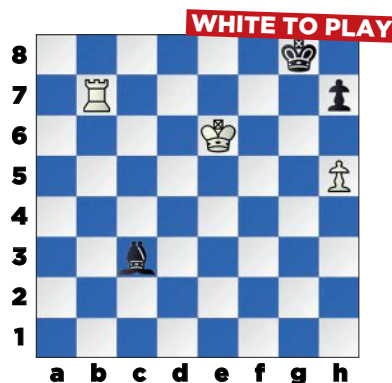
This is the position that we want. The bishop can no longer hide on the g- or h- files.

7. ... Bd6

The alternatives fare no better: 7. ... Bh4 8. Kh5+ mate; 7. ... Be5 8. Re2 mate; 7. ... Bf4 8. Kf5+ mate.

8. Rd2 Be7 9. Ra2 and White wins.

ROOK AND A/H PAWN VERSUS BISHOP AND A/H PAWN



Now, we will study a few examples where both sides have pawns on the same side and the bishop controls the big diagonal (a1–h8 or h1–a8), preventing an immediate penetration of the better side's king. Sometimes these positions are objectively drawish, sometimes they are not. The current position is winning (analysis by Enevoldsen in 1949). White's plan is to force the ... h7–h6 move and then drive the black king as far as possible from the pawn, ultimately sacrificing the rook for the h6–pawn and the bishop.

1. ... h6

The other alternative to prevent White's h5–h6 would be 1. ... Bd2. In this case, White wins by forcing Black into *zugzwang* after 2. Kf5 Be3 3. Rc7 (as Black cannot prevent both h5–h6 and Kf5–f6. He is forced to play ... h7–h6, which transposes into the main line.) 3. ... Bd4 (Also fatal is 3. ... Bb6 4. Rc6 followed by h5–h6 on the next move; 3. ... Bh6 4. Kf6 followed by Rc7–c8+) 4. h6.

2. Kf5 Bd2 3. Kg6 Kf8 4. Rf7+

As mentioned earlier, White's current goal is to force the black king as far as possible from the h6–pawn in order to capture it. Capturing immediately may result in a drawish pawn endgame.

4. ... Ke8

If the king remains in the corner, then White again wins thanks to *zugzwang*; i.e., 4. ... Kg8 5. Rf3 Bg5 6. Rf2 (and the black bishop has no good square to go, whereas the king's move would lose to Rf2–f8 mate). 6. ... Bc1 7. Rc2 Ba3 8. Rc8+ Bf8 9. Ra8.

5. Rf2 Bg5 6. Kg7 Ke7 7. Re2+

First we cut off the black king along the e-file and then try to do the same on the d-file.

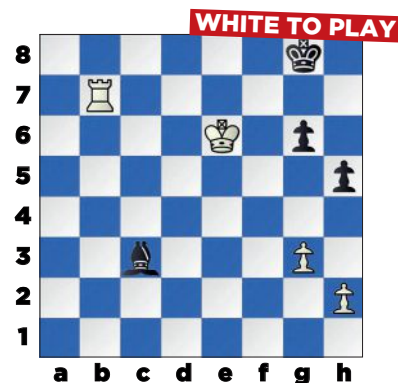
7. ... Kd7 8. Kf7 Kd6 9. Re4 Bc1 10. Re6+ Kd5 11. Kf6 Bd2 12. Kf5 Bg5 13. Rg6 Bd2 14. Rg2 Be3 15. Rg3 Bc1 16. Rd3+ Kc4 17. Rd7

Mission accomplished — the black king is far away and we can finally take the h6–pawn.

17. ... Bg5 18. Kg6 Kc5 19. Rh7 Kd6 20. Rxh6, Black resigned.

Although the rook versus bishop domination phase might have been challenging to grasp, I hope the big picture idea was clear!

ROOK AND TWO CORNER PAWNS VERSUS BISHOP AND TWO CORNER PAWNS



Unlike the previous position, this one is a theoretical draw. The major difference is that White doesn't have the h5–h6 idea. Moreover, similar to

the previous position, White cannot approach the g6-pawn with his king because the f6- and g5- squares can be covered by the black bishop. In the next example we will see how a minor difference in pawn structure (e.g. the black pawn on h7 rather than on h5) may lead to a different evaluation!

1. h4

After 1. Kd5 Bf6 2. Ke4 Bc3 3. Kf4 Bf6 and Black controls all squares of invasion.

1. ... Ba1

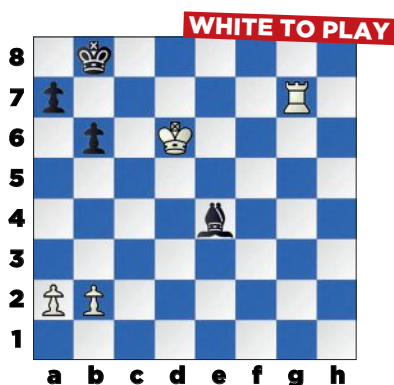
The try 1. ... Bd4? allows White to execute the same idea as in the game with a tempo. 2. Rb4 followed by g3-g4.

2. Rb4 Kg7 3. g4 hxg4 4. Rxg4

In comparison to the 1. ... Bd4 line, here the black king is more active, and he is on time to eliminate White's last pawn after

4. ... Kh6! 5. Rg5 Bd4 6. Kf7 Bf2 7. Rxg6+ Kh5, Draw agreed.

ROOK AND TWO CORNER PAWNS VERSUS BISHOP AND TWO CORNER PAWNS



This position is similar to the previous one; it's just on the other side of the board. The major difference (and a very important one!) is that the black pawn is on a7 instead of a5, which is bad news for Black. Let's study the winning plan for White.

1. b4!

Preventing Black from playing ... a7-a5.

1. ... Bc2

Black wants to place his bishop on a4, controlling the a4-e8 diagonal.

If he achieves this, then it will be a theoretical draw. Since we cannot study all major rook versus bishop positions in this article, let's just mark this info as trustworthy and move forward!

The move 1. ... a5 loses the pawn as Black is not on time to protect it with the bishop. 2. bxa5 bxa5 3. Kc5 a4 4. Kb6 Kc8 5. Rg4. After 1. ... Bf3 White wins by transposing into a position that we studied earlier — the only difference is the earlier position was on the other side of the board. 2. a4 Be4 3. a5 bxa5 4. bxa5 and White wins by combining threats of a5-a6 and Kd6-c6. If Black plays ... a7-a6, then, as we remember, our plan is to drive the black king as far as possible from queenside and sacrifice the rook for the bishop and the a6-pawn.

2. b5!

Preventing Black's aforementioned idea. White's plan is the following: bring the king to b4 and support a2-a4-a5.

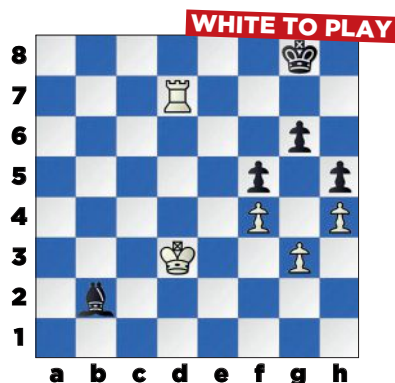
2. ... Be4 3. a4 Bd3 4. Kd5! Bf5 5. Kc4 Be6+ 6. Kb4 Bf5 7. a5 bxa5+

If Black doesn't take, then we can play a5-a6.

8. Kxa5, Black resigned.

The position is objectively winning, albeit White still needs to demonstrate the technique. For more details, I highly recommend referring to Dvoretzky's *Endgame Manual*, which provides a much more thorough coverage of rook versus bishop endings.

ROOK AND THREE CORNER PAWNS VERSUS ROOK AND THREE CORNER PAWNS



Here we have three versus three on one side. It appears to be a fortress because the white king cannot penetrate nor does there seem to be a pawn breakthrough. However, it is a technical win! While we will not analyze all of the major continuations, we will try to get a big picture idea. White's plan is to make a pawn breakthrough with g3-g4 under the right circumstances, when the black bishop is as passive as possible and is unable to attack White's remaining pawns. The first step is to improve the position of the king.

1. Kc4 Kf8 2. Kd5 Kg8 3. Ke6 Bc3 4. Rd3 Bb2 5. g4

White has no other plan for improvement other than try to blow up Black's pawn chain.

5. ... hxg4

The alternative 5. ... fxg4 provides more resistance, although it is also losing. 6. f5 gxf5 7. Kxf5 Kf7 8. Kg5 Be5 9. Kxh5 g3 10. Rd2 Kf6 11. Kg4 White's plan is to simultaneously combine the advancement of his pawn while trying to dominate the bishop with the rook. Again, I refer the curious readers to Dvoretzky's seminal book for more details!

6. h5 Kg7

In case of 6. ... gxh5 White wins black pawns after 7. Kxf5 Kg7 8. Rd7+ Kh6 9. Rd6+ Kh7 10. Kg5

7. hxg6 Kxg6 8. Rd5 Bc1

The aggressive counterplay is not sufficient: 8. ... Kh5 9. Kxf5 Kh4 (9. ... g3 10. Rd1 g2 11. Rg1) 10. Rd6! Kh3 11. Rh6+ Kg3 12. Rg6.

9. Rxf5 Bxf4

No better is 9. ... Kh6 10. Ke5 with the idea Rf5-g5xg4.

10. Rxf4 Kg5 11. Ke5 g3 12. Ke4 g2 13. Rf8 Kh4 14. Rg8 Kh3 15. Kf3, Black resigned.

I hope this helped you gain a bit more confidence in playing rook versus bishop endings. If you want to learn more, you already know which book to look for!

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 28, 2021 out of concern for the unforeseeable impacts the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) could have on participation in GP events. The change allows organizers with guaranteed prize funds to change the status of their prize fund without first seeking US Chess permission to make the change. More specifically, organizers who have announced "XXXX in Guaranteed prizes" (or similar words) for their GP events shall be allowed to re-state their prize funds in their publicity as "XXXX in Projected prizes based on ### players", where ### represents the number of players in last year's event rounded to the nearest five players. For new GP events lacking historical attendance data, the organizer shall specify a "based on" number of players as part of the Projected Prize Fund language in their publicity. This decision includes all GP tournaments that already have been advertised in Chess Life. For any GP events being publicly advertised (whether by TLA, another website, flyers, emails, social media, etc.), organizers shall take all necessary steps to ensure their revised pre-tournament announcements call attention to this change in prize fund status and provide the appropriate "Projected based on XXXX players" in the language of their updated publicity. US Chess asks that the chess community support this temporary change in the spirit that it is intended. The Executive Board shall revisit this matter as necessary.

Nationals

HERITAGE EVENT • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

World Amateur Team & 2021 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - East (Online Event)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2021-SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2021

50TH Anniversary, since 1971! 6SS, game 60 delay 10 seconds. Open to 4-player teams-no alternate. Team average (4 highest ratings—2021 January Rating list) must be under 2200. Teams rated over 2000 average no more than 1000 points between board 3 and 4. The higher of online or USCF will be used as of January 2021. Touchdown page at ICC for rules and info on allowed advance practice: <https://play.chessclub.com/usate>. EF: \$160 postmarked by 1/25/2021. After ALL-\$200 all teams. No Entries after 2/10/21. Check out official website www.njscf.org. Prizes: 1-5th Place teams, Engraved wooden anniversary chess set leather box; Top Team (Denis Barry Award) U2100, 2000, 1900, 1800, 1700, 1600, 1500, 1400, 1000 each 4 Engraved Wooden anniversary sets leather box; Top college team (same school) 4 Digital Clocks & 4 heavy weighted plastic Hastings chess sets in engraved leather bags. Top HS team (grades 9-12 same school), Top Middle School (grades 5-9 same school), Top Elementary School (grades K-6 same school), Top Scholastic team (Collins Award), Mixed Doubles (2 males, 2 females), Seniors (all players over age 50), each 4 Digital Clocks to top team; Company Team (same employer-non educational), Top Coaches (educational), Top team all female, Family (4 family members), each 4 heavy weighted plastic sets in engraved bags. State teams—CT, DE, MD, MA, NJ, NY (Benjamin Award), PA, VA, each plaque top team; Special Plaques: Top Future team, (all players under age 10), Top Military College, Top Parent/Child (2 pairs, one parent, one child), Best Player 1-4 All 6-0 scores each Digital clock. Entry fee refunded to team with Best "Chess related" name,

—Best "Chess Related costumes or gimmick"—entry refunded. Sat 2/13 Rds. 10-2-7, Sun 9-1-6. Surprises and special give-aways!! Two days only!! Grandmaster commentary. Same hysterical event with great chess!! Best pajama prize, Best masks award, team with best slippers. For help forming teams and more information contact: norencchess@gmail.com or esloyde@aol.com. Chks payable to NJSCF, mail by 1/25/21 to: NJSCF, 17 Stonehenge Road, Morristown, NJ 07960. (Include Team name, Captain, players full names, USCF Expiration, ID numbers and ratings in board order). No team can include more than two GMs. Include SASE for confirmation if wanted. No registered or certified mail accepted.

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2021 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - North (Online Event)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2021-SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2021

Online provider TBA. Open: 6SS, G/60-inc. 10. Open to 4 player teams, no alternates. Team average (Higher of regular rating and online regular rating from Jan 2021 Rating List used) must be under 2200. EF: \$160 per team if received USPS or online by 6pm Feb. 5, \$180 if received USPS or online by 6pm Feb. 12, \$200 online until 6pm Feb. 19. Individuals wishing to play send \$50 received by USPS or on-line by 6pm Feb. 15, \$60 by 6pm Feb. 18, and request to be put on a team. (Note: we guarantee you will play but can't guarantee which board you will play or the ratings of your team). See www.chessweekend.com for more info, team rules and categories, complete prize list, and online fair play rules. Prizes: Winning team qualifies for national play-offs. Awards to top 3 teams, top teams u2000, u1800, u1600, u1300, u1000, top college team, top HS team, top junior team (HS and under), top K-8 team, top mixed doubles team (2 men and 2 women), top female team, top senior team (all 50 & over), best team name, best costume or theme, best streamer, and top individual score each board. Prizes are online bookstore credit or Amazon gift cards. Rounds: Saturday 10:00am, 1:15pm, 4:30pm; Sunday 10:00am, 1:15pm, 4:30pm. Register after 12/15/20 at: www.chessweekend.com. Checks made payable and sent to: Chess Weekend, 21694 Doud Ct., Frankfort, IL 60423;

include team's name and roster (plus ID#), captain's email and phone number. Info: www.chessweekend.com, glenm@chessweekend.com.

JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2021 U.S. Amateur Team Championship - South (Online Event)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2021-SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2021

One Section, 6SS, G/60-inc. 10. Open to 4-player teams, No Alternates. Team average (All 4 Team Members – Jan 2021 Rating List) must be under 2200. US Chess rated. Higher of Regular US Chess rating or Online Regular US Chess rating used. EF: \$160 per team if received online by Feb. 12, \$180 if received online by Feb. 19, \$200 online after Feb. 19. No entries accepted after 12 noon (Central Time) Feb. 26. See <https://www.kingregstrat.com/tournaments> for more info, team rules, complete prize list, and online fair play rules. PRIZES: Winning team qualifies for national play-offs. Awards to Top 3 teams, Top teams U2000, U1800, U1600, U1300, U1000, Top College Team, Top K-12 Team, Top Mixed Doubles Team (2 male and 2 female), Top Senior Team (all 50 & over), Top All-Female Team, Top Military Team (active or retired Armed Forces members), and Top Individual Score each Board, 1 – 4. All members of team finishing in First Place overall get Champion's Plaque. Each member of top three teams gets commemorative clock. All members of winning teams of other categories get US Chess Sales Gift Certificate and commemorative medal. See tournament website for additional details. ROUNDS (Central Time): Saturday 10:00am, 1:15pm and 4:30pm; Sunday 10:00am, 1:15pm and 4:30pm. Register at <https://www.kingregstrat.com/tournaments> (Texas Chess Association). Mailed Entries: Entry fee determined by postmark and must be mailed (postmarked) NLT Feb. 20. Checks payable to Texas Chess Association. Include Team's name, team members and US Chess IDs, and Team Captain's name, email address and phone number. Mail to: Franc Guadalupe (TCA President), 305 Willow Pointe Drive, League City, TX 77573. For more information, please email figuadalupe@aol.com or renategarcia1@gmail.com.

250-140-90. Class A (1700-1999): \$500-250-140-90. Class B (1500-1799/Unr): \$500-250-140-90. Class C (1300-1599/Unr): \$500-250-140-90. Class D/E (Under 1400/Unr): \$400-200-120-80. Unrated prize limits: Class D/E \$100, Class C \$180, Class B \$260. Entry fee at chessaction.com: \$90 by 2/18, \$110 by 11:30 am CST 12/20, entry after 9 am CST 2/20 must take half point bye in rd 1. GMS \$90 from prize. Log into playcca.com 30 minutes before game, rounds begin CST 10 am, 1:30 pm & 5 pm each day. Regional EF discount: \$20 less to residents of Texas or adjacent states. Half point byes: available all rounds, limit 2 byes, must be claimed with registration & cannot be changed. Online Regular rated (will not affect OTB ratings). Online Regular ratings used for pairings & prizes (OTB Regular used if no Online Regular). \$15 service charge for refunds. WARNING: YOU MUST BE LOGGED IN WHEN PAIRINGS ARE ISSUED, OR YOU WILL NOT BE PAIRED.

2021 Virtual Scholastic Chess Exposition

MONDAY, MARCH 15, 2021-MONDAY, MARCH 22, 2021

7 or 5 Rd. G/60-10.SS. Online via Chess.com's platform. Four Sections: OPEN, U1000, U500 and UNRATED. EF: \$12 by 12/31; \$15 by 2/10; \$18 by 3/5 and \$25 thereafter. USCF membership required (except in Unrated). Prizes: Plaques for Top 25% (including ties) in each section. Medals to all who don't win plaques. ALL: Play one game each day; games must start between 4-8pm on weekdays and 12-3pm on weekends. Two 1/2 point byes are available. Sections may be merged if low turnout. For advance registration and more information: <https://www.eventbrite.com/event/2021-virtual-scholastic-chess-exposition-tickets-129962927615>.

Regionals

NEW JERSEY

King's Chess Club Quads

SATURDAY, MARCH 6, 2021

Morning quads and afternoon quads, G/30;u5, Kindergarten-undergraduate (scholastic, youth, and young adult memberships). Grace Church Bethlehem Campus, 758 Route 10, Randolph, NJ 07869. EF: None. Reg.: 9-9:20 am., 1st rd. 9:40. Arr. by 12:30 pm to reg. only for afternoon quads. Medal to each quad winner. Info: Email Bob McAdams at fambright@optonline.net or call at 973-694-3988. Note: It is expected that social distancing protocols will be in effect, so we recommend contacting us in advance to insure that there are no surprises.

US Chess Membership Rates: Premium (P) and Regular (R)

(U.S., CANADA, MEXICO)

Type	1 yr	2 yr
Adult P	\$49	\$95
Adult R	\$40	\$75
Senior (65+)	\$40	\$75
Young Adult P (25 & UND)*	\$35	\$65
Young Adult R (25 & UND)*	\$26	\$48
Youth P (16 & UND)*	\$30	\$55
Youth R (16 & UND)*	\$22	\$40
Scholastic P (13 & UND)*	\$25	\$45
Scholastic R (13 & UND)*	\$17	\$30

Premium membership provides a printed copy of Chess Life (monthly) or Chess Life Kids (bimonthly) plus all other benefits of regular membership. Regular membership provides online-only access to Chess Life and Chess Life Kids. Youth provides bimonthly Chess Life, Scholastic bimonthly Chess Life Kids, others listed above monthly Chess Life. See www.uschess.org for other membership categories. Dues are not refundable and may be changed without notice. *Ages at expiration rate of membership being purchased.

Online

12th Annual Southwest Class

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2021-SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2021

6-SS, G/75+10, at Internet Chess Club. \$6000 guaranteed prizes. Must be on Zoom (use real name) to be eligible for prizes (side/rear camera angle). In 6 sections. Master (2100/np): \$600-300-180-100, top Texas resident \$100 bonus. Expert (1900-2199): \$500-

ANSWERS

PAGE 9/YOU CAN DO IT!

Solution #1: 1. Nh6+ Kh8 (1. ... Kf8 2. Qf7# or 2. Qg8#) 2. Qg8+ Rxf7 3. Nf7 mate

Solution #2: 1. Nf7+ Kg8 (1. ... Rxf7 2. Qxe8+ Rf8 3. Qxf8#) 2. Nh6+ Kh8 3. Qg8+ Rxf7 4. Nf7 mate

Solution #3: 1. Nxf6+ Kh8 2. Qg8+ Nxf7 3. Nf7 mate

Solution #4: 1. Ne7+ Kh8 2. Qg8+ Rxf7 3. Nf7 mate

Solution #5: 1. Rxh7+ Rxh7 2. Qg8+ Rxf7 3. Rxf7 mate

Solution #6: 1. Nh6+ gxf6 2. Ne7+ Kh8 3. Qg8+ Bxf6 4. Rxf6 mate

MY FIRST MOVE



GM IRINA KRUSH

2020 U.S. WOMEN'S
CHAMPION

In this column, we feature advice from your chess heroes and explore what shaped their development when they were *Chess Life Kids* like you!

CHESS BEGINNINGS

My dad taught me to play chess when I was about five years old, on our way to America from the Soviet Union. I played my first tournament at the Manhattan Chess Club when I was six; it was a quad with adults and I won \$20. Afterwards, we went to a famous toy store, FAO Schwarz, to celebrate.

DEFINING MOMENT

I've identified myself as a chess player for as long as I can remember. There was definitely no getting off the chess path after I won my first U.S. Women's Championship at age 14 in 1998. (*Krush has won the title eight times total. ~ed.*)

WINNING THE 2020 U.S. WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

The year 2020 was a pretty difficult year for me, so winning the [U.S. Women's] championship was both unexpected and a beautiful silver lining to this year. It showed that bad positions can be overcome.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SAINT LOUIS CHESS CLUB.



CHESS FOR FUN

One of my favorite “fun” activities is watching top player events online, like the Speedchess Championship on *Chess.com* or the Banter Blitz championship on chess24. If you ask me whose Banter Blitz I’d choose to watch, it would definitely be [GM Magnus] Carlsen. Carlsen’s are always the first matches I watch because of the breadth of his chess knowledge, resourcefulness, and ability to play well even with very little time.

FAVORITE OPENING

I’ve played the Sicilian Defense since I was a kid and still play it today. It’s hard to switch to another opening when you start with something as fun as the Sicilian.

PROUDEST CHESS MOMENT

Making my final grandmaster norm in 2013 is definitely a proud



moment. Winning this U.S. Women’s Championship is a fresher memory, though.

CHESS GOALS

My goal is to pass on my love of chess to the kids I work with, so chess will also be a positive part of their lives and a tool for becoming better and stronger people. For myself, I want to be competitive in the tournaments I’m playing, whether they be national or world championships, Olympiads, etc.

BEYOND CHESS

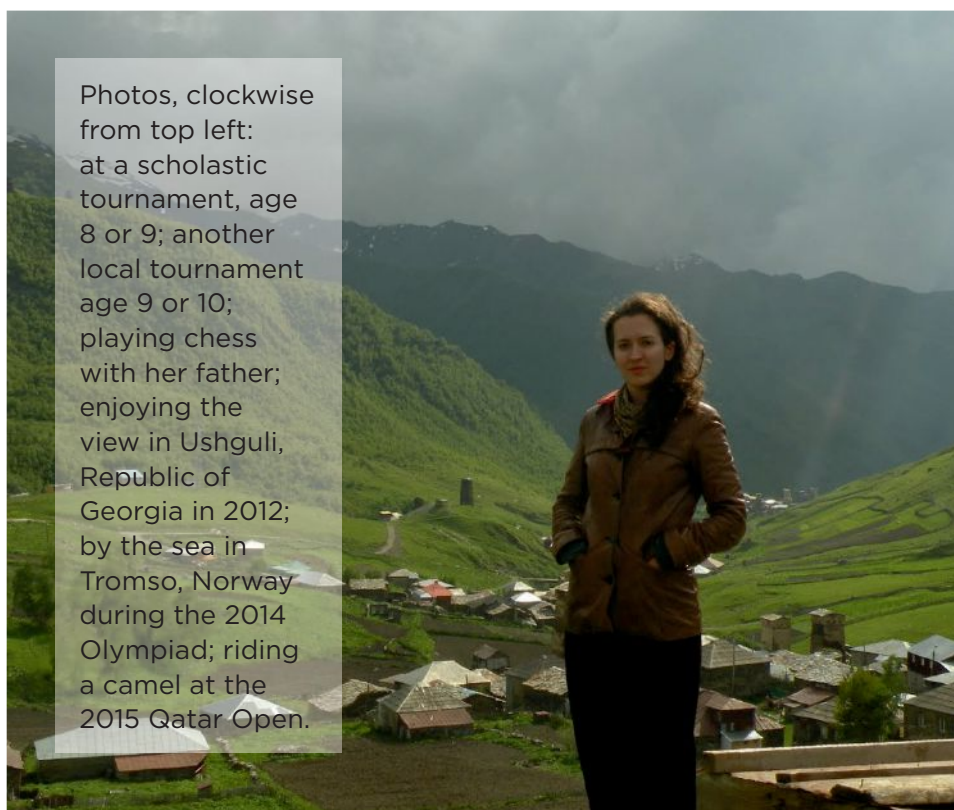
Since I was 14 years old, I’ve traveled a lot for chess tournaments, and worked in many exotic trips into my travels. I’ve visited wolves in



the Arctic Circle, taken a flight and ferry to the remote Lofoten Islands in Norway, explored Yunnan, a province in southwest China, and gone up to the mountains of Georgia and Azerbaijan, to places whose accessibility depends on good weather and a bridge not being swept away in a storm. All of these trips have been “add-ons” to whatever tournament I was in that country for. I’m really glad that I not only “went” to so many places, but really made an effort to “discover” them.

MY BEST ADVICE

Enjoy the game, learn about it as much as you can, and always strive to improve yourself.



Photos, clockwise from top left: at a scholastic tournament, age 8 or 9; another local tournament age 9 or 10; playing chess with her father; enjoying the view in Ushguli, Republic of Georgia in 2012; by the sea in Tromso, Norway during the 2014 Olympiad; riding a camel at the 2015 Qatar Open.

CHESS ADVENTURES

with GM Irina Krush



I grew up in Brooklyn, New York. Several times a week my dad and I would cross the Brooklyn Bridge

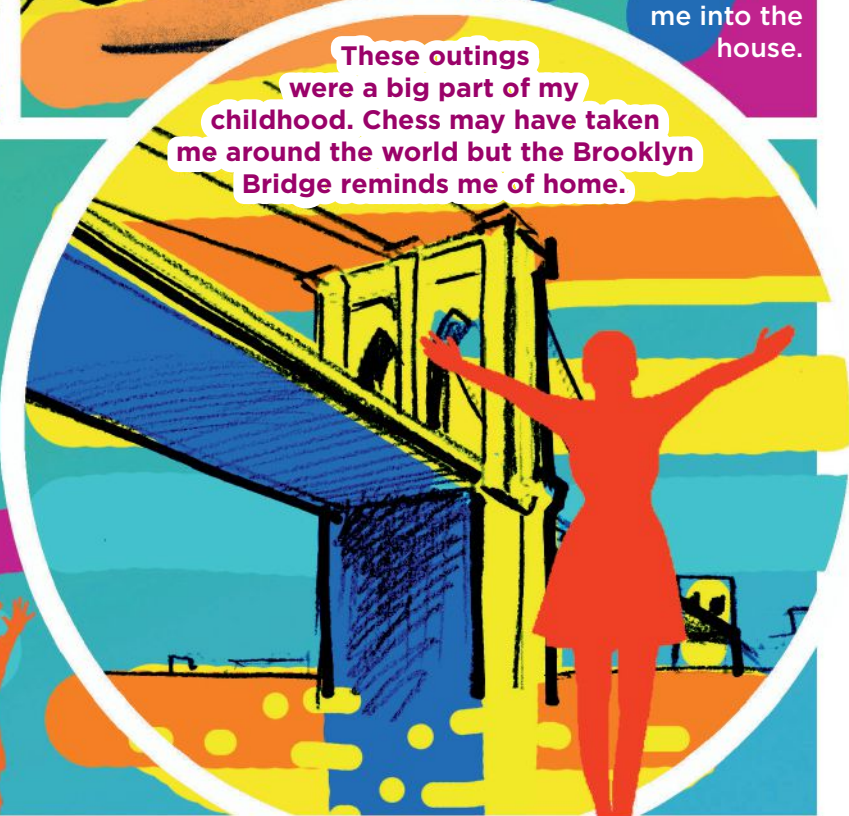


so I could play at the Manhattan or Marshall chess clubs.



Sometimes we'd arrive home so late the clock near the bridge would read almost midnight. I'd fall asleep and my dad would carry me into the house.

These outings were a big part of my childhood. Chess may have taken me around the world but the Brooklyn Bridge reminds me of home.



Eventually I began playing in tournaments outside of New York.



ART BY VAL BOCHKOV



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