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against AI  
Chess Boards  
by **Jamaal  
Abdul-Alim**

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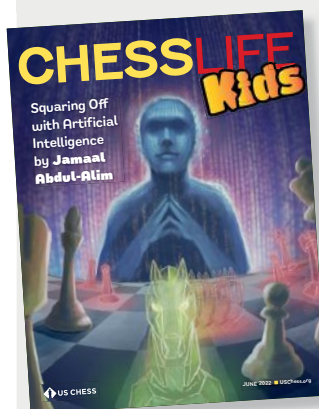
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## ON THE COVER

Imagine a chess game where the pieces are your opponent — and they mysteriously move on their own! Impossible, you say? Then check out this month's cover story, where Jamaal Abdul-Alim gives the scoop on his Artificial Intelligence (AI) chess board and tests its mettle against a grandmaster and a college chess team.

COVER ART: CHANDLER ELLISON



# Tempo and Tactics

Learning from Paul Morphy's games.

BY JOHN HARTMANN

**P**AUL MORPHY EMERGED from 19th century New Orleans to take the chess world by storm, and just as quickly disappeared from it. After defeating the likes of Louis Paulsen and Adolf Anderssen, Morphy “retired” from public play after Howard Staunton refused to face him, leaving him no new mountains to conquer. Just a few hundred of his games have come down through history.

Beginners are often told to study Morphy's games, and with good reason. He was a great tactician, but Morphy was also one of the first players to understand the importance of time and piece activity in the opening and middlegame. His best games are models of attacking chess that are rooted in sound positional play.

You may have seen some of Morphy's games before, including his famous Opera Game. Here is my favorite. It is brilliant in its own right, but what makes it even more fascinating is that Morphy played it blindfolded!

## KING'S GAMBIT DECLINED, FALKBEER COUNTER GAMBIT (C32)

John William Schulten

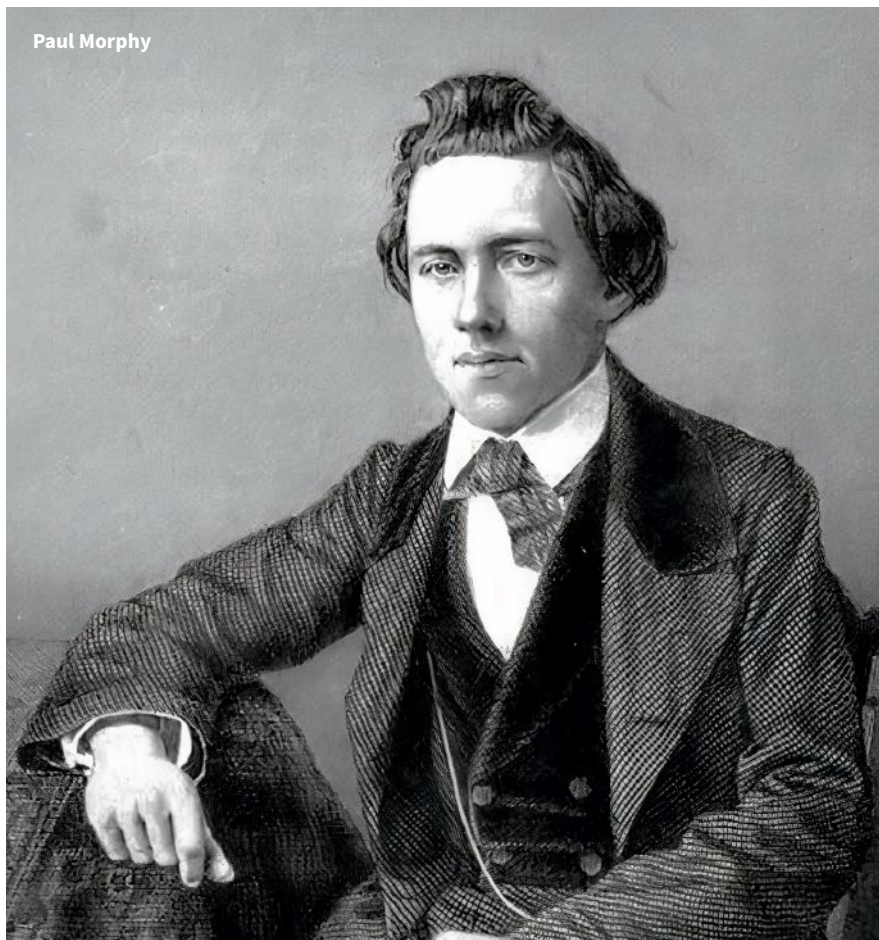
Paul Morphy

New York (blindfold), 1857

### 1. e4 e5 2. f4

The King's Gambit. White offers his f-pawn to Black, hoping that he will be able to grab the center, develop quickly and win!

### 2. ... d5



Paul Morphy

Black offers White a gambit of his own!

Instead 2. ... exf4 is the King's Gambit Accepted. There are a lot of ways to play this position, but we see White's strategy in its purest form after the following moves: 3. Nf3 g5 4. Bc4 g4 5. 0-0 gxf3 6. Qxf3. Here White has given up a piece — three points! — but in return has a big lead in development and plenty of targets to attack.

### 3. exd5

This is almost forced. Note that 3. fxe5?? loses on the spot to 3. ... Qh4+ 4. g3 Qxe4+.

### 3. ... e4

For his pawn, Black restricts White's development (particularly the g1-knight, which wants to go to f3), has good squares for all his pieces, and can play against the weak white pawns on f4 and d5.

### 4. Nc3

Attacking the e4-pawn.

### 4. ... Nf6

Defending and developing!

### 5. d3

Again attacking the e4-pawn; now White has a **TWO-FOLD ATTACK** (two attackers threatening to capture something that is only defended once).

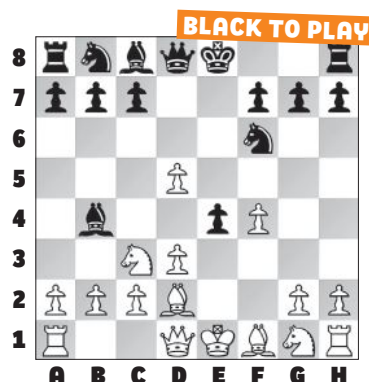
### 5. ... Bb4

Developing the bishop to a good square and **PINNING** the knight. In a sense this move defends the e4-pawn because now the c3-knight can't move to take it!

Here taking the pawn with 5. ... exd3?! 6. Bxd3 is a mistake because it allows White to easily develop his pieces. Don't capture just because you can!

### 6. Bd2

Breaking the pin.



### 6. ... e3!

Morphy sacrifices his pawn to begin to attack White's position. The move depends upon the pin of the c3-knight, a pin that is absolute since the knight is pinned to the king.

### 7. Bxe3 0-0

Getting the king to safety and clearing the e-file for the rook.

### 8. Bd2

White returns his bishop to d2, breaking the pin once more.

### 8. ... Bxc3 9. bxc3 Re8+

Check! Of course 9. ... Nxd5 was also possible, but Morphy preferred to speed up his attack.

### 10. Be2 Bg4

Another pin.

### 11. c4

White, being up two pawns but under some pressure, decides to solidify his pawns in the center.

### 11. ... c6!

Nearly all of Morphy's pieces are active or potentially active, except for his b8-knight and a8-rook. With this move he tries to break up White's pawns in the center and also get his knight to a good square (if White captures on c6).

### 12. dxc6?

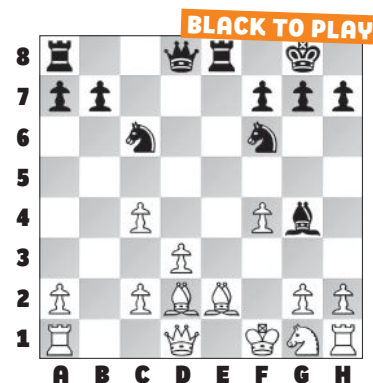
Schulten is too nice! After capturing on c6, the knight will look to head to d4 where it can attack many important squares in White's position.

Better was 12. h3!, which forces Black to make a decision about the pinning bishop. After 12. ... Bxe2 (12. ... Bd7 just allows White to castle quickly after 13. Nf3) 13. Nxe2 cxd5 14. cxd5 Qxd5 15. 0-0 White is doing fine.

### 12. ... Nxc6

Black threatens to play ... Nc6-d4 where it piles up on the pinned e2-bishop!

### 13. Kf1



Getting out of the pin, but it has a flaw that involves another pin!

### 13. ... Rxe2!

The star move of the game.

### 14. Nxe2

Now the knight is pinned, but this time it's pinned to the queen!

### 14. ... Nd4!

Black has a two-fold attack on the e2-knight and threatens to make a **PROFITABLE EXCHANGE** on e2, giving up the knight and bishop (six points) for a knight and queen (12 points)!

### 15. Qb1



It's hard to come up with a much better move for White, even though this just loses a piece.

## 15. ... Bxe2+ 16. Kf2

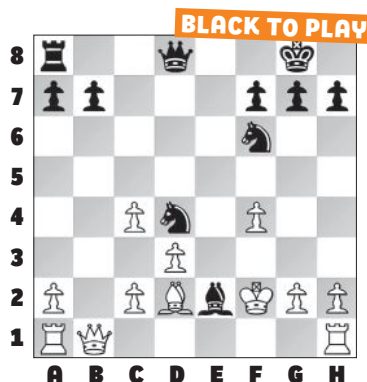
Other moves: (a) 16. Kg1 is met with 16. ... Nxc2!. The idea is to clear the d4-square; after 17. Qxc2? Qd4+ 18. Be3 Qxe3 is mate; (b) 16. Ke1 walks into the dangerous 16. ... Qe7! threatening discovered check!

Let's stop here and talk about checkmate. Chances are, if you're reading this, you know what checkmate is, and you've probably had more than a few in your games! Simple mates are easy enough to practice and understand, but what about situations like these, where the king is under attack, but it's hard to calculate all the way to mate?

I find it useful (following the *Chess Steps* books) to think about three roles for pieces in the

checkmate process, and how they can cooperate to trap the king. First, there is the **CHASER**, or the piece that "chases" the king and gives check. Second, there is the **HELPER**, which defends the chaser. Finally, there is the **GUARD**, which controls escape squares that the king might otherwise run to.

Each of these terms is fluid: sometimes a guard is also a helper, and as the checkmate unfolds, the same piece can play two or three different roles in the process. Let's see how this all works in this position.



## 16. ... Ng4+

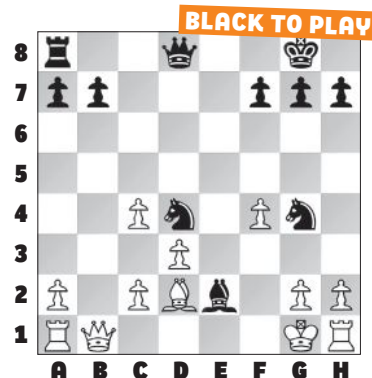
Bringing in the chaser. Note that g4-knight also works as a guard, preventing the king from escaping to e3.

## 17. Kg1

Instead 17. Ke1 is mate in four. Black should play 17. ... Qh4+! which looks like a wasted tempo after 18. g3 but we see the idea after the correct 18. ... Qe7. Now the f3-square is undefended and available to Black's pieces! If it was Black to move, 19. ... Nd4-f3 mate would end the game, so White has to find a way to deal with this threat. 19. Rf1 Bf3+ (19. ... Nf3+ is a slower mate)

20. Be3 Qxe3 mate. It's worth studying the way that all of Black's pieces worked together to trap and then mate the king.

Here 17. Kg3 loses more quickly. It's mate after 17. ... Nf5+ (note that the e2-bishop defends the g4-knight) 18. Kh3 Qh4 mate.



## 17. ... Nf3+!

Well calculated. White must take the knight, but in doing so, he gives Black the needed tempo to bring the queen into the attack.

## 18. gxf3 Qd4+ 19. Kg2

White could try to block the check with 19. Be3, but the result is never in doubt: 19. ... Qxe3+ 20. Kg2 Qxf3+ 21. Kg1 Qf2 mate.

## 19. ... Qf2+

The queen, with the helper on g4, leaves the king with only one escape square.

## 20. Kh3 Qxf3+

Check! Again, there's only one move.

## 21. Kh4 Nh6, White resigned.

It's mate in three after 21. ... Nh6 (or 21. ... Ne3) — the key idea is ... Nh6(e3)-f5+, forcing the king to g5, where it will be checkmate in one, i.e., 22. Rg1 Nf5+ 23. Kg5 Qh5 mate. Interestingly, the queen, while delivering the final check, also defends the knight — it helps out its own helper!



Paul Morphy in "The Chess Champion," a 1859 wood engraving by Winslow Homer

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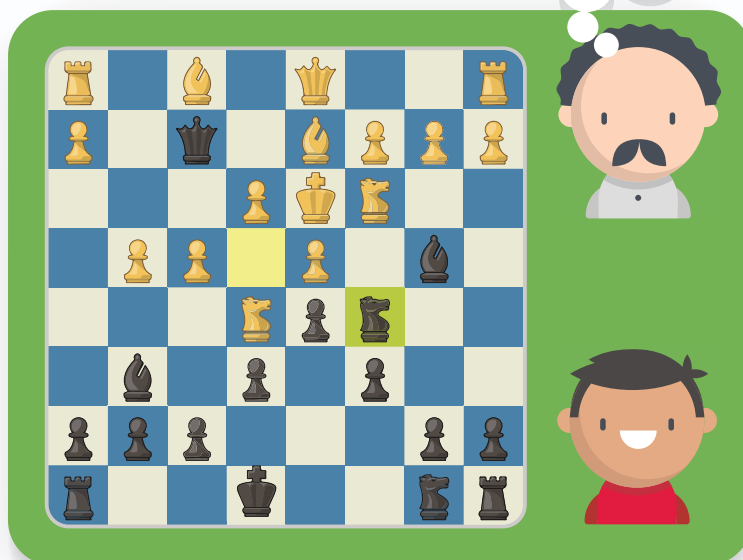


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# Can You Play Like the Best?

BY AL LAWRENCE

**A**MERICA'S TOP CHESS

kids play amazing moves! Sometimes, their tournament opponents must nearly fall out of their chairs. Check out the diagrams below. Would you have played like the best?

We took our number one players and their ratings from the January US Chess Top 100 lists (see April

2022 *Chess Life Kids* for ages 8 and 7&U). Many have improved their numbers since then. Last year, at only 12, Abhi Mishra became the youngest grandmaster ever! Now he leads the 13-year-old overall list with a chart-topping rating of 2607. Alice Lee is already a women's international master, accomplishing one of her goals: "Win the next chess game, and the

one after that!" Besides continuing to top the girls age 12 list, she's the number two 12 year old overall, now with a rating of 2344!

All eight of our stars share some info about themselves. There are thousands and thousands of quotes about the game of chess. But two of our stars chose the same favorite! What's the best one you've heard or read?



## SAM LUGER

TOP OVERALL AGE 9

RATING: 2072

Rochester, New York

Favorite quote: "Without the element of enjoyment, it is not worth trying to excel at anything."  
~Magnus Carlsen

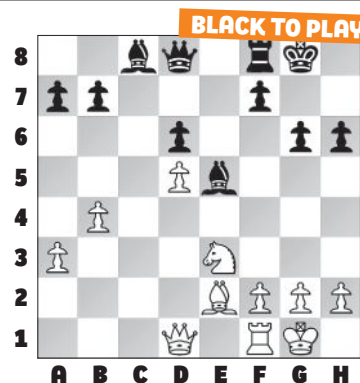
Goals: Become a top-10 grandmaster in the world. I don't have a specific goal for my life yet, but I will work hard.

Favorite player: [World Champion] Magnus Carlsen

Other hobbies: I also enjoy soccer and playing the violin.

## SAM'S FAVORITE GAME MOVE

Rochester Chess Center's  
Saturday Weekend Tournament, Feb.  
12th, 2022, move 21



21. ... Qh4





## MEGAN PARAGUA

Top Girl Age 9 | Rating: 2015  
Elmhurst, New York

## MEGAN PARAGUA

Top Girl Age 9  
Rating: 2015  
Elmhurst, New York

Favorite quote: "Talent is not enough to be one of the best unless you work hard, too!"

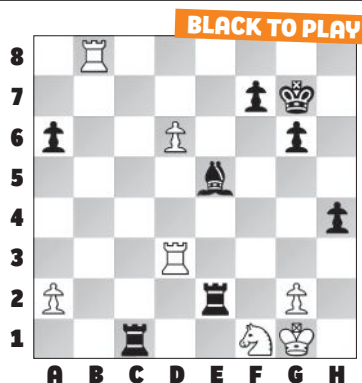
Goals: To be the youngest female chess grandmaster and to be a doctor when I grow up

Favorite player: [Former World Cham-

pion] Mikhail Tal. I like how aggressive he was. And to think — there were no computers in his time!  
Other hobbies: Art, painting, swimming, and playing the guitar

## MEGAN'S FAVORITE GAME MOVE

2022 U.S. Amateur Team East,  
February 2022, move 42



42. ... h3



17. ... d4

## OLIVIA LAIDO

Top Girl Age 10 | Rating: 1758  
Holmdel, New Jersey

Favorite quote: "Nobody ever won a chess game by resigning."

Goals: To work harder on everything and to become a grandmaster

Favorite player: Magnus Carlsen

Other hobbies: Drawing, soccer, tennis, swimming, piano, skiing, and hiking.

## RYAN SUN

Top Overall Age 10  
Rating: 2083  
Westford, Massachusetts

Favorite quote: "The winner of the game is the player who makes the next-to-last mistake." ~Savielly Tartakower

Goals: Challenge myself and improve in chess — and become a scientist when I grow up

Favorite player: Ding Liren [the highest rated Chinese chess player in history]

Other hobbies: Ping pong

## RYAN'S FAVORITE GAME MOVE

Boylston Chess Club February  
Quads, February 5, 2022, move 17



## RYAN SUN

Top Overall 10 | Rating: 2083  
Westford, Massachusetts



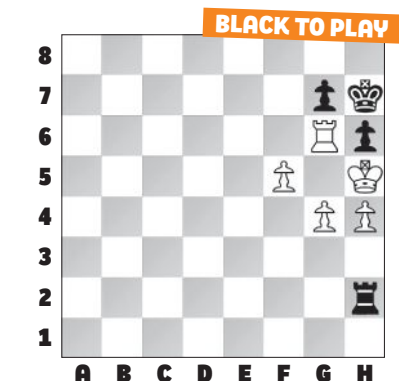
## OLIVIA LAIDO

Top Girl Age 10 | Rating: 1758  
Holmdel, New Jersey

I love math. Whenever I can, I attend math competition.

## OLIVIA'S FAVORITE GAME MOVE

27th Space Coast Open, April 24, 2022, Move 81

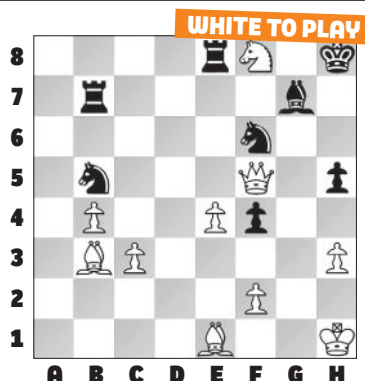


81. ... Rf2

Goals: Become World Champion  
Favorite player: [Former World Champion] Garry Kasparov  
Other hobbies: Reading history books, swimming

## RYO'S FAVORITE GAME MOVE

Dallas Chess Club FIDE Open VIII, July 27-28, 2019, Move 48



48. Qh7+  
"I sacrificed my queen for smothered mate!"

## FM RYO WENYU CHEN

Top Overall Age 11 | Rating: 2373  
Sugar Land, Texas



## FM RYO WENYU CHEN

Top Overall Age 11 | Rating: 2373  
Sugar Land, Texas

## OMYA VIDARTHI

Top Girl Age 11 | Rating: 2041  
Campbell, California

Favorite quote: "Never give up."  
"No one ever won a game by resigning." ~Savielly Tartakower  
"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." ~Wayne Gretzky  
Goals: Become a WGM/IM before the end of high school. Go to Stanford University. Get a doctorate degree.  
Favorite player: IM Vyom Vidyarthi — aka my brother!  
Other hobbies: Basketball, tennis, badminton, swimming, dance, soccer; I love playing sports — especially with my brother.

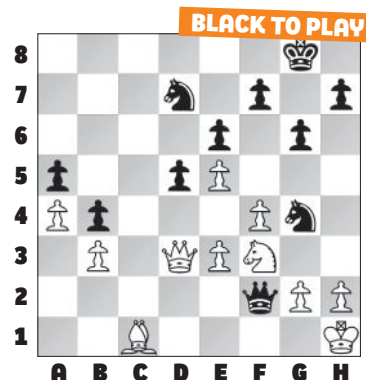


## OMYA VIDARTHI

Top Girl Age 11 | Rating: 2041  
Campbell, California

## OMYA'S FAVORITE GAME MOVE

North American Junior Chess Championships, 2021, move 25



25. ... Qxf3

## GM ABHI MISHRA

Top Overall Age 12 | Rating: 2576  
Englishtown, New Jersey

Favorite quote: "Nothing is impossible."  
Goals: Become World Champion  
Favorite player: [World Champion] Magnus Carlsen  
Other hobbies: I love to play video games.

**CHESS LIFE Kids**



**GM ABHI MISHRA**  
Top Overall Age 12 | Rating: 2576  
Englishtown, New Jersey

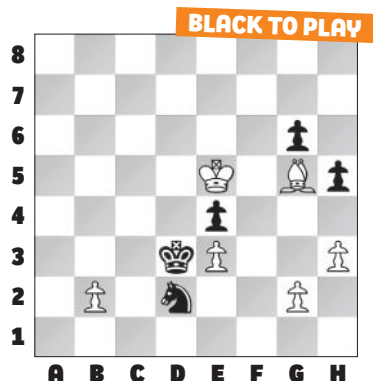
**Favorite quote:** "Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently." ~Henry Ford  
**Goals:** Win the next chess game, and the one after that! And make the world a better place.

**Favorite player:** GMs Judit Polgar, Hou Yifan, Irina Krush, and many others who inspired me to keep fighting.

**Other hobbies:** I recently got interested in contest math. This year, in seventh grade, I took the American Mathematical Competition 10 for the first time and qualified for the American Invitational Mathematics Exam. Chess and math occupy much of my time, but I enjoy many other activities, like reading fiction, history, and current events. I also run a mile every day as a habit.

## ABHI'S FAVORITE GAME MOVE

Vezerkepzo GM Mix 2021, Budapest HUN, 06.30.2021, move 48



48. ... Nf3+

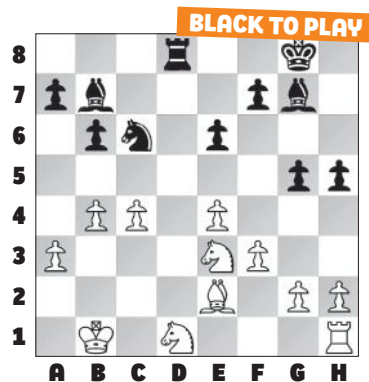
"I sacrificed my knight and won a game against GM Leon Luke Mendonca to become the youngest-ever GM in chess history."

## WIM ALICE LEE

Top Girl Age 12 | Rating: 2270  
North Oaks, Minnesota

## ALICE'S FAVORITE GAME MOVE

OBT G60+30, Castle Chess MN, 06.03.2017, move 25



25. ... Rd2

## DID YOU KNOW?

You can search for any US Chess player to find out their rating by going online to [www.uschess.org/players/search](http://www.uschess.org/players/search). Look up your friends. Are they keeping up with you?

**CHESS LIFE Kids**



**WIM ALICE LEE**  
Top Girl Age 12 | Rating: 2270  
North Oaks, Minnesota







BY **JAMAAL ABDUL-ALIM**

**W**Henever I bring out my new Artificial Intelligence (AI) chess board that moves the pieces all by itself, my chess buddies always ask me to set the app that goes with the board to the highest level.

That would be level 20, which plays with an insanely high Elo rating of 3380. To put that figure into perspective, consider the fact that 3380 is more than 500 points higher than the rating of world champion Magnus Carlsen — the highest-rated player on the planet — who had a rating of 2864 as of April 2022.

Even though the top level for the AI board is stratospherically higher than the world's best player, my friends still want to play at that level. They believe

the heightened competition will sharpen their game.

"To be the best one must play the best," my friend Chino says in explaining why he wants to play my AI chess board at nothing less than the highest level.

"One must actively learn from their mistakes," Chino continues. "I know I'm getting stronger because although I may be losing, I can predict the way the computer is going to win."

Indeed, Chino did in fact predict how my AI chess board would beat him when I brought the board to a private chess function in Washington, D.C., where we both reside, in early 2022.

Some of my friends want to play the board at the highest level so they can brag about how they defeated the machine if they win.

"I want to play at the highest level so I can beat it," says my good friend Johnny Blaze, who played against the board at one of D.C.'s most popular chess hot spots — the McDonald's across the street from Howard University — shortly after I got the board a few days before Christmas 2021. "To play at that level is definitely gonna be a great experience."

But is playing against a chess board connected to AI actually a good way to improve your chess?

A lot of people might be quick to say "yes." But sometimes, the best answer isn't always the most popular one. Which is why I decided to take my new AI chess board to have it play against one of the wisest men in the world of computer chess.

His name is GM Larry Kaufman.

## A computer chess champion

Why do I think GM Kaufman is supremely qualified to speak about whether my new AI chessboard is an effective training tool? Well, for starters, Kaufman is the guy who co-developed a chess engine called Komodo.

In case you haven't heard, Komodo just happens to be the 2019 World Computer Chess Champion. I figure if this guy can design a championship-winning chess engine, he ought to have some pretty deep insights into my new AI chess board, officially known as the "Grand Kingdom Set" and manufactured under the brand name SquareOff.

So earlier this year, I put the board in a cargo bag and took it out to play against Kaufman at his home in Bethesda, Maryland.

Kaufman already had a board that was kinda like my new AI board. It's called a Revelation II, and it uses DGT — that stands for digital game technology — and inlaid lights that show you where to move the pieces being played by the computer program to which it is connected.

The difference with Revelation II, which uses Komodo's technology, is that you have to manually move the pieces to the squares suggested by the board. But with the SquareOff board, the pieces move by themselves.

"It's in a different category," Kaufman says when I ask him where my new AI board stands within the history of all the computerized chess boards that he's seen over the years.

"I very much like the concept," Kaufman continues. "It is novel to have it move its own pieces rather than look to see where the light

## GM Larry Kaufman



is on and have to make the move for it. That's valuable to the extent that you find it annoying that you have to make the move for [the computer]. It's nice to not have to do that."

Kaufman was eager to play against the AI board. Unlike my chess buddies who always want me to crank it up to the highest level, Kaufman had me set the app to level 16, which plays at an Elo rating of 2205. Kaufman is currently rated at 2280.

It was interesting and sometimes funny to see Kaufman talk at the board as he got drawn deeper and deeper into the game against my SquareOff board.

"Really? That's a brave move," Kaufman said at the board during the first game, which unfolded as follows. Kaufman had the white pieces.

**1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nd2 Ne7 4. Ngf3 Ng6 5. g3 h6 6. Bg2 b6 7. exd5 exd5 8. O-O Nc6 9. c4 Bd6 10. cxd5 Nce7**

**11. Nc4 b5 12. Nce5 Bf5 13. Qe2**

"Computers are materialistic. I'm guessing if I go here, it's going to defend the b-pawn."

**13. ... Qb8 14. Nc6 Qc8 15. Qxb5 Nxc6 16. dxc6 O-O 17. d5 Re8**

"I think I should bother his bishop. Yeah, that's a good move. Oh, I'm not so sure."

**18. Nd4 Be4**

"OK, you wanna trade bishops? I don't think I object. Do I object to that?"

**19. Bxe4 Rxe4**

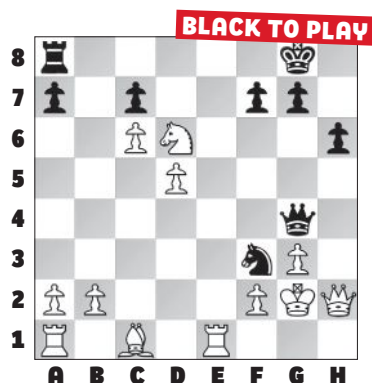
"I think I should try to attack the rook. Or I could attack the bishop."

**20. Qd3 Re5 21. Nb5 Qh3 22. Qf3 Nh4 23. Qh1 Rh5**

"Oh, he's trying to be ... uh oh. I better be careful. He's threatening something very nasty here."

**24. Re1 Qg4 25. Nxd6 Nf3+ 26. Kg2 Rxh2+ 27. Qxh2**





27. ... Nxe1+

"I'm gonna lose my queen. This is not good."

28. Kf1 Nc2 29. Nb7 Qd1+ 30. Kg2 Ne1+ 31. Kh1 Nf3+ 32. Kg2 Ne1+

"Oh, looks like he wants a draw. Ok, I'll be happy."

33. Kh1 Nf3+ 34. Kg2 Nxh2

"Oh, he did take the queen. He was just toying, only *pretending* he wanted a draw."

35. Kxh2 Qf1 36. f4

"f4. I don't see anything terrible happening. Oh, yes I do. Game is lost. Oh, no."

36. ... Re8, White resigned.

Kaufman said the SquareOff board, which relies on the Stockfish 11 chess engine, is sneaky because it plays weak at first — and might even blunder — to make you think

you have a chance to win, but then it starts to play really strong as the game continues.

"The game itself felt somewhat like playing the computer in the sense that it was obvious it was playing at a low level in the early stages and it made some moves that no human with that rating would make, but later started playing above its level," Kaufman observed after he played the board. "It felt like playing a human who doesn't know a lot about chess because he's very good at attacking your king."

Kaufman's analysis was largely confirmed when I uploaded the PGN for an analysis by one of the avatar "coaches" on *Chess.com*. Indeed, "David," the *Chess.com* avatar coach, concluded that one player was winning but then gave away the game. The

a simulation of a human. That's actually the reason that we don't do that approach in Komodo, because we don't think that's a good way to go — to have it play weak positionally and strong tactically. But that's the way Stockfish does it."

Even though Kaufman lost to my board, the competition wasn't over. Kaufman still wanted my AI board to play against his



championship-winning Komodo. We set up a time for later that week to let Komodo get a crack at the SquareOff board. We agreed to play the game by calling out the moves over the phone.

## "Phenomenal" play

My chess buddies didn't seem to be upset by Kaufman's conclusion that my AI board actually plays weak and then strong to throw off opponents.

Johnny Blaze, for instance, said, "That's great, that's phenomenal," when I shared Kaufman's observation about how the board plays weak to lull opponents into thinking they can win but then starts to make super-strong moves toward the end.

"I think that's something we do as humans, too," Johnny Blaze



coach also concluded that 13. ... Qb8 from the above game was a blunder because it overlooked an opportunity to develop a piece.

Kaufman played against my AI board again — this time as Black — but lost the second game as well.

"I gotta say, it's strange play," Kaufman said afterwards. "It appears that it plays positionally way below that level, but tactically way above that level, which is not





Photos, both pages: Members of the Howard University chess club test their skills against SquareOff. Some of the words used to describe the experience were “fascinating” and “cool.”

says. “We start out — a lot of us — to see where our opponent is and then in the middle game we turn on the heat.”

My friend Chino said the fact that the chessboard plays weak first and then strong actually makes the game more interesting.

“Chess becomes interesting as soon as strong players leave the book or what’s most common,” Chino says.

## Competition on the horizon

SquareOff isn’t the only game in town when it comes to AI chess boards and chess boards that move the pieces by themselves. A company called Wonder Substance plans to release a similar AI chessboard called Phantom.

The creators of the Phantom board sound like they are in direct competition with SquareOff.

Here’s a blurb about the Phantom board. “*To make the best autonomous chess set in the world, we created a sophisticated sensor array that detects the precise location of every piece, and a fast, silent mechanism that moves the pieces smoothly across the board, like magic, for the most amazing chess experience you will ever have.*”

The part about the “silent

mechanism” sounds like they’re throwing a little shade at SquareOff, because gadgetry inside the SquareOff board makes some noise when it’s getting ready to make a move.

## A history of chess automation

In some ways, chess boards that move pieces by themselves are nothing new. One of the most famous examples is the Chess Automaton, also known as the Turk, which first appeared in the court of Maria Theresa, the empress of Austria-Hungary, in 1769.

According to an article on [history.com](https://www.history.com):

“In a bid to impress the empress, an inventor and royal advisor named Wolfgang von Kempelen had vowed to build an automaton whose illusion and spectacle would surpass anything she had seen before. Intrigued, Maria Theresa granted him a leave of absence to work on his mystery project. Kempelen resurfaced just six months later with the machine that would become known as the Turk.”

The Turk was designed to make it seem like a mechanical player was taking on challengers. But in reality, the machine had a secret compartment where a chess

master would operate the Turk from inside to make killer moves.

Doubtful spectators had been guessing all along that the Turk was too good to be true. Its secret got exposed in 1827 when two young boys from Baltimore were said to have climbed a roof to watch the Chess Automaton in action and found William Schlumberger — its operator and a master chess player — coming out of the back of it.

More recently, GM Kaufman points out, a board called Fidelity Phantom — which also made moves on its own — appeared in the 1980s, but its play wasn’t very strong.

When GM Kaufman found out I paid about \$400 for my SquareOff board, he remarked: “That’s not too bad. That was about what the Fidelity Phantom was more than 30 years ago. That’s kind of funny because \$400 now is a lot cheaper than \$400 thirty years ago.”

## A college experience

The day after my SquareOff board defeated GM Kaufman, I took it to the “Little Chapel” inside Carnegie Hall on the campus of Howard University, where members of the campus chess club had assembled for a “Chess & Chill” event.

A dozen or so boards had been set up throughout the room, but the SquareOff board soon became the center of attention as I invited students to play against the board.

The first student to step up was a student named Goodness Atanda, a sophomore at Howard, where he is majoring in computer engineering.

“It was fascinating. It was cool,” Atanda says of his experience playing against SquareOff. “When I was playing the game, I was like, ‘This is everything I am: Chess. Computer engineering.’ This is the work of a computer engineer.”

## Game against Komodo

GM Kaufman has a theory on why SquareOff uses Stockfish: It’s free and open source. Linking the SquareOff board to Komodo, on the other hand, would have required a paid agreement between the two.

Which makes a game between SquareOff and Komodo a good test of whether it’s true that you get what you pay for.

When I called GM Kaufman to have my SquareOff board play against Komodo, I was somehow optimistic that — since my board has a rating above 3300 — it had a good chance of winning.

However, SquareOff could not claim victory: Komodo won both games, as White and as Black.

## A worthy investment?

You might be wondering if I have an opinion on whether a SquareOff board is something you should ask your parents to buy.

I would totally understand if you succumbed to the desire to have something like this that is at the cutting edge of chess technology. But if your parents asked me if I would recommend buying this particular model for a kid, I

would hesitate because the board seems really delicate and has to be handled with a fair amount of care. A different, less expensive model — one built with travel in mind — might be more suitable.

Also, I would totally understand if you and your family decided to wait a bit and see what kind of AI boards come to market over the next year or so.

Technology is constantly evolving, so you can rest assured that an even better version — whether from one company or another — is on the way. But so far this version has proven to be pretty fun, too, and few things

are more enjoyable than having something new that attracts interest from others.

People ask me all the time if I play the SquareOff board at home. I really don’t play it by myself that much. I actually get more enjoyment from the board when I take it out in public and watch it play against different people.

No matter who my board plays — whether it be a senior like GM Kaufman or young college students like members of the Howard University Chess Club, or my good chess buddies Chino and Johnny Blaze — the experience always seems to teach me something new.

## PROS AND CONS OF THE GRAND KINGDOM SET

### Five things I like:

- The “wow” factor associated with the fact that the pieces move by themselves.
- The PGNs are automatically generated and available in the future for download or analysis.
- It’s fun to watch your friends play an “invisible” player.
- It gives you a way to play against a chess computer without having to sit at a computer.
- It inspires creativity.

### Five things I don’t like:

- It’s not easy to carry. I bought a special bag from SquareOff but I still hadn’t got it as of the writing of this article. In my opinion, they should just build the price of the bag into the set and make sure every AI chessboard comes with a carrying bag. I also wonder if I should have bought a different model

SquareOff that’s easier to transport. The Grand Kingdom Set seems like it should stay at home.

- Sometimes the magnetic pieces will drag other pieces with them as they come off the board.
- If something goes wrong in a game, you may not be able to complete the game simply because of your inability to figure out what went wrong. (However, you can reset the pieces to the position in question, so all is not really lost).
- The moves don’t always register on the first time.
- Sometimes the board malfunctions. For instance, one time it didn’t take a piece off the board before it moved to the square in question and I had to take the captured piece off myself. The company says to call tech support whenever stuff like that happens.

# GAME ON.

Rancho Mirage, California

## 122nd U.S. OPEN

July 30 - August 7, 2022

FOR FULL INFORMATION including updates, schedules, meetings, and other special events and happenings please see [uschess.org/tournaments/2022/usopen/](https://uschess.org/tournaments/2022/usopen/)

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Family Plan 1*	\$87	N/A
Family Plan 2**	\$55	N/A

*Printed copies of Chess Life or Chess Life Kids will be available as an add-on to any Adult, Senior, Young Adult, Youth, or Family Plan membership. Membership entitles you to purchase one or both magazines at the member rate, set at no more than 105% of printing and mailing costs. For the fiscal year beginning June 1, 2021, the annual subscription cost for Chess Life is \$9.35/year (12 issues) and for Chess Life Kids, \$4.75/year (6 issues). Current premium members will continue to receive their print magazines; only when you renew your membership will you need to select the add-on option to continue receiving your print magazine. See [www.uschess.org](https://www.uschess.org) for other membership categories. Dues are not refundable and may be changed without notice.*

\*parents and children under age 19, may include college students up to age 24  
 \*\*all children under age 19 living in a household at the same address

## The Chess Master

A story about a little girl who became the greatest chess player of all time

written by USCF Master Robert W Richard and sold on Amazon and everywhere

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# TOURNAMENT LIFE ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Board authorizes a temporary change in the US Chess Grand Prix (GP) rules for the period March 4, 2020 through June 30, 2022 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. Please refer to the Tournament Life Announcement section in *Chess Life* for more information.

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

#### 2022 National Junior Chess Congress

JUNE 30-JULY 3, FLORIDA

**Event site:** Renaissance Orlando at Sea World Hotel  
**Address:** 6677 Sea Harbor Dr., Orlando, FL 32821  
**Overall prize fund:** n/a **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Hanley Chess Academy **Email:** [hanleychessacademy@gmail.com](mailto:hanleychessacademy@gmail.com) **Phone:** 714-925-3195 **Website:** <http://www.hanleychessacademy.com> **TLA ID:** 33738

### NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

#### U.S. Junior Open

JULY 22-24, ILLINOIS

**Event site:** Elmhurst University, Frick Center  
**Address:** 190 S Prospect Ave, Elmhurst, 60126 **Overall prize fund:** \$800 to \$1300 & plaques **GP Points:** n/a **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Kevin Bachler **Email:** [contact@cavemanchess.com](mailto:contact@cavemanchess.com) **Phone:** 224-985-5245 **Website:** <https://www.cavemanchess.com/> **TLA ID:** 33625

### NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • GRAND PRIX

#### U.S. Senior Open

JULY 22-24, ILLINOIS

**Event site:** Elmhurst University, Frick Center  
**Address:** 190 S Prospect Ave, Elmhurst, 60126 **Overall prize fund:** \$8,000 & plaques **GP Points:** 50 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Kevin Bachler **Email:** [contact@cavemanchess.com](mailto:contact@cavemanchess.com) **Phone:** 224-985-5245 **Website:** <https://www.cavemanchess.com/> **TLA ID:** 33626

### NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

#### 122nd Annual United States Open Chess Championship

JULY 30-AUGUST 7, CALIFORNIA

**Event site:** Westin Mission Hills Golf Resort & Spa  
**Address:** 71333 Dinah Shore Drive, Rancho Mirage, CA

**92270 Overall prize fund:** \$50,000 **GP Points:** 300 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Boyd Reed **Email:** [nationalevents@uschess.org](mailto:nationalevents@uschess.org) **Phone:** 931-787-1234 **Website:** <http://www.uschess.org/tournaments/2022/usopen> **TLA ID:** 33031

## Grand Prix

The Grand Prix continues in 2022. For information visit [new.uschess.org/us-chess-grand-prix-program](http://new.uschess.org/us-chess-grand-prix-program).

### GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

#### Midwest Chess Congress

JUNE 17-19, IOWA

**Event site:** Ramada Tropics Resort & Conference Center  
**Address:** 5000 Merle Hay Road (near I-80 & I-35), Des Moines IA 50322 **Overall prize fund:** \$10,000 **GP Points:** 80 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association **Email:** [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) **Phone:** 3472012269 leave message including email address **Website:** <http://www.chessevents.us> **TLA ID:** 32992

### GRAND PRIX

#### David Kernell Memorial

JUNE 18, TENNESSEE

**Event site:** Memphis Chess Club  
**Address:** 195 Madison Ave Suite 101, Memphis, TN 38103 **Overall prize fund:** \$2,000 **GP Points:** 6 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Memphis Chess Club **Email:** [info@memphischessclub.com](mailto:info@memphischessclub.com) **Phone:** 731-8685755 **Website:** <https://www.memphischessclub.com/> **TLA ID:** 32924

### AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

#### 16th annual Philadelphia Open

JUNE 24-26, PENNSYLVANIA

**Event site:** Philadelphia Sheraton Downtown  
**Address:** 201 North 17th St, Philadelphia, PA 19103 **Overall prize fund:** \$15,000 **GP Points:** 100 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association **Email:** [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) **Phone:** 3472012269 leave message including email address **Website:** <http://www.chessevents.us> **TLA ID:** 32123

### HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

#### 50th annual World Open

JUNE 29-JULY 4, PENNSYLVANIA

**Event site:** Philadelphia Sheraton Downtown  
**Address:** 201 North 17th St, Philadelphia, PA 19103 **Overall prize fund:** \$225,000 **GP Points:** 300 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association **Email:** [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) **Phone:** 3472012269 leave message including email address **Website:** <http://www.chessevents.us> **TLA ID:** 32104

### ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

#### 11th annual World Open Women's Championship

JUNE 29-30, PENNSYLVANIA

**Event site:** Philadelphia Sheraton Downtown  
**Address:** 201 North 17th St, Philadelphia, PA 19103 **Overall prize fund:** \$2,000 **GP Points:** 30 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association **Email:** [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) **Phone:** 3472012269 leave message including email address **Website:** <http://www.chessevents.us> **TLA ID:** 32615

### HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX

#### Pacific Southwest Open

JULY 2-4, CALIFORNIA, SOUTHERN

**Event site:** Hilton Irvine/Orange County Airport  
**Address:** 18880 MacArthur Blvd Irvine CA 92612 **Overall prize fund:** \$10,000 **GP Points:** 80 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Chuck Ensey **Email:** [chucnglo@aol.com](mailto:chucnglo@aol.com) **Phone:** 858-432-8006 **Website:** <http://www.schess.com> **TLA ID:** 32775

### HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX

#### 45th Annual Green Bay Open

JULY 2-3, WISCONSIN

**Event site:** Radisson Hotel & Conference Center  
**Address:** 2040 Airport Dr, Green Bay, WI 54313 **Overall prize fund:** \$2,500 **GP Points:** 15 **FIDE Rated:** N **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Luke A. Ludwig **Email:** [lukaaludwig@aol.com](mailto:lukaaludwig@aol.com) **Phone:** 920-4659859 **Website:** <http://www.dallaschess.com> **TLA ID:** 33175

### GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

#### 2022 DFW FIDE Premier 5

JULY 8-10, TEXAS

**Event site:** Doubletree by Hilton DFW Airport North  
**Address:** 4441 W. John Carpenter Fwy, Irving, TX 75063 **Overall prize fund:** \$1,000 **GP Points:** 30 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Luis Salinas **Email:** [info@dallaschess.com](mailto:info@dallaschess.com) **Phone:** 214-632-9000 **Website:** <http://www.dallaschess.com> **TLA ID:** 32575

### GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

#### 15th annual Chicago Class

JULY 15-17, ILLINOIS

**Event site:** Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel  
**Address:** 601 N Milwaukee Avenue, Wheeling IL 60090 **Overall prize fund:** \$30,000 **GP Points:** 150 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association **Email:** [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) **Phone:** 3472012269 leave message including email address **Website:** <http://www.chessevents.us> **TLA ID:** 32928

### HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

#### 26th annual Pacific Coast Open

JULY 15-17, CALIFORNIA, SOUTHERN

**Event site:** To be announced, visit [chessevents.us](http://chessevents.us)  
**Address:** n/a **Overall prize fund:** \$25,000 **GP Points:** 150 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association **Email:** [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) **Phone:** 3472012269 leave message including email address **Website:** <http://www.chessevents.us> **TLA ID:** 33003

### HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

#### 27th annual Bradley Open

JULY 15-17, CONNECTICUT

**Event site:** Sheraton Hartford Hotel at Bradley Airport  
**Address:** 1 Bradley Airport, Windsor Locks CT 06096 **Overall prize fund:** \$15,000 **GP Points:** 120 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association **Email:** [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) **Phone:** 3472012269 leave message including email address **Website:** <http://www.chessevents.us> **TLA ID:** 33517

### ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • GRAND PRIX

#### Caveman Medior Open

JULY 22-24, ILLINOIS

**Event site:** Elmhurst University, Frick Center  
**Address:** 190 S Prospect Ave, Elmhurst, 60126 **Overall prize fund:** \$5,000 **GP Points:** 20 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** N **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Kevin Bachler **Email:** [contact@cavemanchess.com](mailto:contact@cavemanchess.com) **Phone:** 224-985-5245 **Website:** <https://www.cavemanchess.com/> **TLA ID:** 33627

### HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

#### 30th annual Southern Open

JULY 22-24, FLORIDA

**Event site:** Wyndham Orlando Resort  
**Address:** 8001 International Drive, Orlando, FL 32819 **Overall prize fund:** \$20,000 **GP Points:** 150 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association **Email:** [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) **Phone:** 3472012269 leave message including email address **Website:** <http://www.chessevents.us> **TLA ID:** 32940

### GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

#### 23rd annual Pittsburgh Open

JULY 22-24, PENNSYLVANIA

**Event site:** Doubletree Green Tree  
**Address:** 500 Mansfield Ave (near I-376 Exit 67), Pittsburgh 152052 **Overall prize fund:** \$13,000 **GP Points:** 80 **FIDE Rated:** Y **Handicap accessible:** Y **Residency restriction:** N **Organizer:** Continental Chess Association **Email:** [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) **Phone:** 3472012269 leave message including email address **Website:** <http://www.chessevents.us> **TLA ID:** 33004

### HERITAGE EVENT • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

#### 52nd annual Continental Open

JULY 27-31, MASSACHUSETTS

**Event site:** Sturbridge Host Hotel  
**Address:** 366 Main St (Rt 20 West), Sturbridge MA 01566 (I-84 Exit 3, near I-90) **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](mailto:director@chess.us) **Phone:** 3472012269 leave message including email address **Website:** <http://www.chessevents.us> **TLA ID:** 32986

## PLEASE NOTE

### DEADLINE FOR PRINT TLA SUBMISSIONS

TLAs appearing in *Chess Life Kids* must be uploaded online on the 10th, two months prior to the issue cover date in which the ad is to appear. (For example, October TLAs must be uploaded no later than August 10th.) TLAs uploaded past this deadline cannot be published without special approval by US Chess.

**GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX**

**12th annual Central California Open**

**AUGUST 19-21, CALIFORNIA, NORTHERN**

Event site: Doubletree Hotel Address: 2233 Ventura St, Fresno CA 93710 Overall prize fund: \$10,000 GP Points: 100 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) Phone: 3472012269 leave message including email address Website: <http://www.chessevents.us> TLAID: 33310

**HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX**

**54th annual Atlantic Open**

**AUGUST 26-28, VIRGINIA**

Event site: Hyatt Regency Crystal City at Reagan National Airport Address: 2799 Richmond Highway, Arlington VA 22202 Overall prize fund: \$30,000 GP Points: 150 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) Phone: 3472012269 leave message including email address Website: <http://www.chessevents.us> TLAID: 33304

**HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT**

**144th annual New York State Championship**

**SEPTEMBER 2-5, NEW YORK**

Event site: Albany Marriott Address: 189 Wolf Road, Albany, NY 12205 Overall prize fund: \$18,000 GP Points: 150 FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) Phone: 3472012269 leave message including email address Website: <http://www.chessevents.us> TLAID: 33610

# Online

**10th annual World Open Action**

**JUNE 18, 2022**

Event site: Internet Chess Club Address: [playchess.com](http://playchess.com) Overall prize fund: \$5,000 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: [events@chessclub.com](mailto:events@chessclub.com) Phone: 4124365558 Website: <http://www.chessevents.us> TLAID: 33582

# Regional

**ALABAMA**

**DECEMBER 31, 2021-ONGOING ON SUNDAY, THURSDAY, AND SATURDAY**

**Weekly and Monthly Rated Chess at Memphis Chess Club (TN)**

See Tennessee.

**JUNE 18, 2022**

**David Kernell Memorial (TN)**

See Grand Prix.

**ARKANSAS**

**DECEMBER 31, 2021-ONGOING ON SUNDAY, THURSDAY, AND SATURDAY**

**Weekly and Monthly Rated Chess at Memphis Chess Club (TN)**

See Tennessee.

**JUNE 18, 2022**

**David Kernell Memorial (TN)**

See Grand Prix.

**CALIFORNIA**

**AUGUST 19-21, 2022**

**12th annual Central California Open(CA-N)**

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

**KENTUCKY**

**DECEMBER 31, 2021-ONGOING ON SUNDAY, THURSDAY, AND SATURDAY**

**Weekly and Monthly Rated Chess at Memphis Chess Club (TN)**

See Tennessee.

**JUNE 18, 2022**

**David Kernell Memorial (TN)**

See Grand Prix.

**MISSISSIPPI**

**DECEMBER 31, 2021-ONGOING ON SUNDAY, THURSDAY, AND SATURDAY**

**Weekly and Monthly Rated Chess at Memphis Chess Club (TN)**

See Tennessee.

**JUNE 18, 2022**

**David Kernell Memorial (TN)**

See Grand Prix.

**MISSOURI**

**DECEMBER 31, 2021-ONGOING ON SUNDAY, THURSDAY, AND SATURDAY**

**Weekly and Monthly Rated Chess at Memphis Chess Club (TN)**

See Tennessee.

**JUNE 18, 2022**

**David Kernell Memorial (TN)**

See Grand Prix.

**NEVADA**

**AUGUST 19-21, 2022**

**12th annual Central California Open(CA-N)**

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

**NEW JERSEY**

**JANUARY 8, 2022-ONGOING ON SATURDAY**

**ICA Super Saturday IN-PERSON Quads**

Event site: Community Church of Glen Rock Address: 354 Rock Road, Education Building, Glen Rock, NJ 07452 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a

FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: International Chess Academy Email: [chessdirector@icaj.net](mailto:chessdirector@icaj.net) Phone: 2018198280 Website: <https://www.icalidsonline.com> TLAID: 32450

**JUNE 18, 2022**

**King's Chess Club Quads**

Event site: Grace Church Bethlehem Campus Address: 758 Route 10, Randolph, NJ 07869 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Bob McAdams Email: [fambright@optonline.net](mailto:fambright@optonline.net) Phone: 9736943988 Website: n/a TLAID: 33557

**PENNSYLVANIA**

**North Penn Chess Club**

Main & Richardson - St. John's UCC, 500 West Main St., Lansdale, PA 19446. See [www.northpennchessclub.org](http://www.northpennchessclub.org) for schedules & info or 215-699-8418

**JUNE 23-24, 2022**

**14th annual World Open Under 13**

Event site: Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown Address: 201 North 17th St, Philadelphia, PA 19103 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) Phone: 3472012269 leave message including email address Website: <http://www.chessevents.us> TLAID: 32608

**JUNE 27-29, 2022**

**World Open Amateur**

Event site: Philadelphia Sheraton Downtown Address: 201 North 17th St, Philadelphia, PA 19103 Overall prize fund: \$5,000 GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: Y Handicap accessible: Y Residency restriction: N Organizer: Continental Chess Association Email: [director@chess.us](mailto:director@chess.us) Phone: 3472012269 leave message including email address Website: <http://www.chessevents.us> TLAID: 32170

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Event site: Douglas Community Center Address: 195 Madison Ave Suite 101, Memphis, TN 3810 Overall prize fund: n/a GP Points: n/a FIDE Rated: N Handicap accessible: N Residency restriction: N Organizer: Memphis Chess Club Email: [info@memphischessclub.com](mailto:info@memphischessclub.com) Phone: 7318685755 Website: <https://www.memphischessclub.com> TLAID: 32334

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Name	State	Count
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2. MAHATI B. KASHYAP	NJ	11,716
3. MICHAEL DENG	MD	10,631
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5. CHLOE GAW	NY	10,391

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# Smothering the Queen

BY **BRUCE PANDOLFINI**

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. Try to score at least 80 points!

**K** **NIGHTS OR BISHOPS?** Which to prefer? Both pieces are worth about three pawns. But values are relative. They're based on the situation. Bishops are line pieces. They shine when the field is clear and play can take place across the board. Plus they can attack and defend from far away. Yet they can move just on squares of one color. They can only influence the other color indirectly. Knights can jump over obstacles and guard both light and dark squares. But they must be close to be effective, nor can they move and continue to guard the same squares. So, they can't gain a tempo the way bishops can, by shifting along a line a bishop already occupies. But knights can do something else bishops can't do. Knights can give smothered mates. It doesn't stop there. They can smother other pieces, too, like the opposing queen. Enough claustrophobic talk. Let's unstifle the atmosphere with a concrete example.

## 1. e4

White occupies one central square (e4) and attacks another (d5).

## 1. ... e5

A double king-pawn defense. By playing a symmetrical first move here, Black is aiming for balance and equality.

**Q1) What's the most common asymmetrical response to 1. e4? (10 points)**

## 2. Nf3

White attacks Black's e5-pawn. The e5-pawn can be defended directly by 2. ... Nc6, 2. ... d6, 2. ... f6, 2. ... Qe7, 2. ... Qf6, or 2. ... Bd6.

**Q2) From Black's six protective moves, which is the worst? (10 points)**

**Q3) What is the most symmetrical reply to 2. Nf3? (10 points)**

## 2. ... Nc6

This is the most solid and typical Black answer here.

## 3. Bb5

The Ruy Lopez. The b5-bishop attacks the c6-knight directly.

**Q4) What does the b5-bishop attack indirectly? (10 points)**

## 3. ... Nf6

The Berlin Defense. Instead of directly supporting the e5-pawn, Black develops with counterattack.

**Q5) Can White win a pawn by 4. Bxc6? (10 points)**

## 4. 0-0

On the surface, White seems to ignore the threat to the e4-pawn.

## 4. ... Nxe4

Black takes the pawn, which opens the e-file. White now has several ways to regain the pawn.

## 5. d4

White plays to open the center.



**Q6) Can White regain the pawn instead by 5. Re1? (10 points)**

**Q7) Besides developing, why does White play 5. d4? (10 points)**

**5. ... exd4**

The e-file is now open.

**6. Re1**

White pins the knight.

**Q8) Could White have reasonably played 6. Qe2 instead? (10 points)**

**6. ... f5**

Black must defend the pinned knight. But the advance does spawn weaknesses.

**7. Nd4**

White attacks Black's supportive f5-pawn.

**Q9) Could Black satisfactorily defend with 7. ... g6? (10 points)**



**7. ... Ne7**

This closes the e-file and ostensibly guards the f5-pawn. But...

**8. Ne6! and Black resigns.**

The Black queen is smothered!



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

Be sure to check your score!



**Bruce Pandolfini** is a long-time columnist for both **Chess Life** and **Chess Life Kids**. Learn more about him on the next page!

## ILLUSTRATIVE GAME:

Levens vs. Thomas  
England 1963

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Bc5 4. c3 f5 5. d4 exd4 6. cxd4 Bb4+ 7. Nc3 fxe4 8. Ng5 Nf6 9. d5 Ne7 10. Ne6



**A1) The Sicilian Defense, 1. ... c5. A2) Two are good, three are inferior, but f6 is probably the worst. A3) The only truly symmetrical reply is 2. ... Nf6, Petroff's Defense. A4) It attacks e5 indirectly, which is guarded by the c6-knight. A5) No. After 4. ... dxc6 5. Nxe5 Qd4, Black regains the pawn. A6) Yes. White will shortly regain the e5-pawn. A7) White aims to open the center by luring away Black's e5-pawn. A8) Yes. Unless there's a good reason, use the less valuable piece. A9) The advance 7. ... g6 is full of problems. Black has much better. A10) Move seven. The simplest answer was 7. ... Nxd4.**

## ANSWERS:

## 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

# CHESS ADVENTURES


WITH BRUCE PANDOLFINI



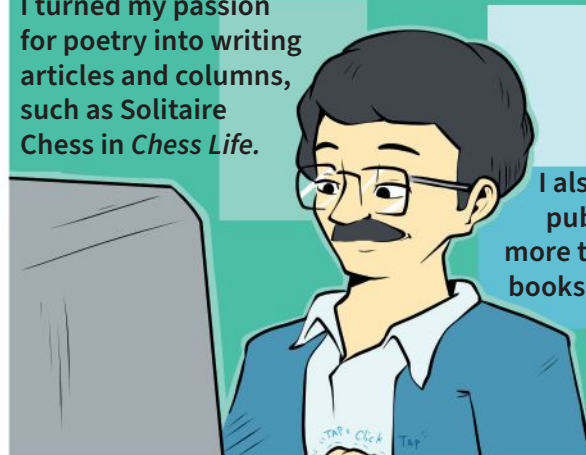
When I was 13, I discovered chess in the Brooklyn Public Library, not far from where Bobby Fischer lived. I began playing all over New York, eventually joining the Marshall Chess Club and becoming a national master.



My teaching career began in 1972 after I covered the Fischer-Spassky World Championship match for PBS, an event that got worldwide attention.




Since then, I have given all kinds of lessons, creating programs such as Chess in the Schools, while teaching thousands of wonderful students, from Josh Waitzkin to Fabiano Caruana.



I turned my passion for poetry into writing articles and columns, such as Solitaire Chess in *Chess Life*.

I also have published more than 30 books on the game.



Over the years, I've been the chess consultant for exciting projects such as *Searching for Bobby Fischer* and "The Queen's Gambit."

I started with a love for chess, and it loved me back.

Art by Nicolas Barrios





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