

Fall 2024

RANK & FILE

Magazine of the Southern California Chess Federation



WFM Angela Liu (left), CM Ala'a-Addin Moussa (center), and Glenn Zhang (right) at the 2024 National Invitational Tournaments of State Champions

Juniors & Seniors at National Tournaments of State Champions

By WFM Angela Liu

The National Invitational Tournaments of State Champions run annually alongside the US Open. Each US state (NorCal and SoCal are split) selects one representative for each section:

- The **Rockefeller** National Tournament of Elementary School State Champions
- The **Barber** National Tournament of Middle School State Champions

- The **Haring** National Tournament of Girls State Champions
- The **Denker** National Tournament of High School State Champions
- The **Irwin** National Tournament of Senior State Champions

Winners of the scholastic sections receive up to \$5,000 in scholarships. Those who win the Haring, the Denker, or the Irwin also are invited to next year's U.S. Juniors

and Seniors in St. Louis. This year, the tournaments were held in Norfolk, Virginia. The 2024 SoCal representatives were NM Alex Wang, myself, FM Bryan Xie, Glenn Zhang, and CM Ala'a-Addin Moussa.

Glenn and I finished 3rd place with 4.5/6 in our respective sections, winning a \$2,000 scholarship each.

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Publisher:
SCCF

Editor-in-Chief:

WFM Angela Liu

Contributors:

CM Ala'a Addin Moussa
Chuck Ensey
GM Melikset Khachiyan
IM John Bryant
IM Ming Lu
Glenn Zhang

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notations.

DEADLINE FOR THE SPRING 2025 ISSUE IS:

March 31, 2025.

UPCOMING SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EVENTS

November 26 - December 1, 2024

American Open

\$40,000 Prize Fund!

Hyatt Regency Orange County, 11999 Harbor Blv, Garden Grove, California 92840

Norms possible for Open Section

6-day (Open Section only): 40/90, SD/30; +30 sec increment

4-day: 40/90, SD/30; +30 sec increment

3-day: rds 1-4 G/60 d5

January 18 - 20, 2025

Dreaming King Open

\$20,000 GUARANTEED Prize Fund

See page 19 for details

March 28 - 30, 2025

2025 SuperStates

Scholastic & Senior (50+) State Chess Championship

Biltmore Hotel in Downtown Los Angeles

More details to come on scchess.com

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LETTER FROM THE BOARD

The SCCF Board first celebrates the numerous accomplishments of SoCal players that occurred during the summer months.

At the Senior level, GM Akopian won the US Senior Championship in July in St. Louis, and GM Khachiyan won a Gold medal playing for the USA team that captured the FIDE 50+ World Senior Team Championship in Krakow, Poland early July. Both events are covered in the October issue of Chess Life.

At the Junior level, WFM Angela Liu and Glenn Zhang each placed 3rd at the National Tournament of Girls State Champions and Elementary School State Championships respectively, propelling the SCCF team to a 5th-place finish

among 53 state teams participating. IM Ming Lu won the 2024 North American Junior Chess Championship in Calgary, Canada in August, and FM Rose Atwell placed 2nd at the US Girl's Junior Championship in July in St. Louis.

In conjunction with the State Open won by FM Rostomyan, a new arrival to Southern California, the SCCF completed its board elections for 6 board seats. The board welcomes GM Khachiyan, WFM Angela Liu, and Linus Eisenberg as new members and looks forward to their valuable contributions. Angela already assumed the role of Rank & File editor and brought you this Fall issue which we hope you will like.

As we look forward to the new year, Dreaming King Open in January and SuperStates in March, the board would like to draw attention to the introduction of a Senior State Championship (50+ and 65+ titles) alongside the scholastic junior titles. The winner will represent SCCF in the 2025 national tournament of senior state champions alongside the junior champions.

Sincerely,
The SCCF Board



45th Annual SoCal Open

By Chuck Ensey and IM John Bryant

The 45th Southern California Open was held this Labor Day weekend at the Courtyard Marriott Liberty Station hotel in San Diego with a \$20,000 guaranteed prize fund in 7 sections and 6 rounds.

We had 270 players, not including “house players” but including 5 re-entries from the 3-day to the 2-day schedule. Two years ago we had 277 players and last year we had 255, so this is the 2nd most we have ever had at this event. It seems room rates and ballroom rental rates have skyrocketed since the end of the pandemic. We had not played at this hotel for several years due to those high rates, but finally broke down and splurged because we love the location, plus the great ballroom is just the right size for us.

Here are the prize winners:

Open Section (54 players) - 1st Place: Mikayel Rostomyan (5), \$2,200

2nd/3rd/4th/BU2300 pooled prize split between 4 players all scoring 4.5 points for \$950 each: GM Cemil Marandi, IM John Bryant, IM Alexander Costello and Patrick Liu
5th/6th/2nd U2200 pooled prize between 5 players with 4 points for \$200 each: Eduard Hokobyan, Roger Shi, Joshua Xia, Julio Herrera and Ephraim Rosenstock.

U2200 Section (29 players) - 1st Place: Feliks Tokhyan (5), \$1,400
2nd/3rd Place:

Emmanuel Dentchouck (4.5) and Serena Yuan (4.5), \$600 each
4th Place: Carlos Yu (4), Eric Phares and Avinaya Subedi, \$66 each.

U2000 Section (43 players) - 1st/2nd Place: Andy Zhong (5) and Tanish Vora (5), \$1,000 each
3rd/4th Place: Elkaei Rivera (4.5) and Glenn Buyo (4.5), \$300 each.

U1800 Section (42 players) - 1st Place: Fernandez Figuero (5.5), \$650

(50% reduced due to provisional rating)
2nd/3rd Place: William Wang (5) and Sergey Hakobyan (5), \$767 each

4th Place: an 8-way tie between players with 4 points for \$52 each: Nicholas Welch, Benjamin Yu, Harry Wu, Selina Chen, Rey Zamudio, Vihaan Gupta, Max Chan and Jonathan Frye.

U1600 Section (29 players) - 1st Place: Isaac Lien (5.5), \$1,200

2nd/3rd Place: Pascal Bisailon (5) and Toby Chen (5), \$450 each

4th Place: a 6-way tie between players with 4 points for \$36 each: Siddharth Kaushik, Joell Sun, Sai Krishna, Samuel Agdamag, Achuth Vinay and Cristobal Estrada (only \$16 due to provisional rating of only 13 games).

U1400 Section (19 players) - 1st Place: Andrew You (6), \$800

2nd/3rd Place: Martin Valkanov (4) and Zachary Bader (4), \$300 each

4th Place: a 4-way tie between players with 3 1/2 points for \$25 each: Mason Chairunas, Lakshmi Mittapalli, Aditya Shah and Blake Zhang.

U1200 Section (53 players) - 1st Place: Daniel Zhen (6), \$600

2nd/3rd/4th Place: Ethan Long (5), \$400

Boris Lyan (5) and Eyal Shahar (5), \$100 each, reduced 50% due to provisional ratings.

Directed by Randall Hough (FIDE Arbiter), the top two sections were FIDE rated

Assistant Directors: Jim Harrell and Irina Nizmutdinova.

Organizer: Chuck Ensey. Sonsea Agonoy also helped out in a big way, keeping an eye on the lower rated sections which were in Salon C. The 2-day players also played in Salon C on Sunday and we really had to pack them in there, with over 90 players opting for that schedule or re-entering from the 3-day. See photos of this

event on our SDCC website! We look forward to returning to this event next year at the same time and location.

Here are the excellent games of the SoCal Open Champion, FM Mikayel Rostomyan:

FM Mikayel Rostomyan (2343)

CM Hanchi Yao (2103)

2024 SoCal Open (4) 2024.09.01, 1-0

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. c4 b6 4. a3 Bb7 5. Nc3 Be7 6. d5 d6 7. e4 c5 8. Bd3 Nbd7 9. h3 exd5 10. exd5 O-O 11. Qc2 Re8 12. Be3 Bf8 13. O-O-O g6 14. g4 a6 15. Rhg1 b5 16. g5 bxc4 17. Bxc4 Nh5 18. Nh2 Ng7 19. Ng4 Nf5 20. Ne4 Bg7 21. Bf4 Kh8 22. Nxd6 Nxd6 23. Bxd6 Qxg5+ 24. f4 Qh4 25. Qb3 Bc8 26. Qg3 Qxg3 27. Rxg3 Nb6 28. Ba2 Bxg4 29. hxg4 Na4 30. Rg2 Rad8 31. Bc7 Rd7 32. d6 Re4 33. Bd5 Rxf4 34. Bc6 Nxb2 35. Rxb2 Bxb2+ 36. Kxb2 1-0

IM Alexander Costello (2351)

FM Mikayel Rostomyan (2343)

2024 SoCal Open (6), 2024.09.02, 0-1

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 e5 6. Ndb5 d6 7. Nd5 Nxd5 8. exd5 Nb8 9. a4 Be7 10. Be2 O-O 11. O-O f5 12. f4 Nd7 13. Kh1 a6 14. Na3 exf4 15. Bxf4 g5 16. Be3 f4 17. Bd4 Bf6 18. Nc4 Qe7 19. Bg4 Ne5 20. Bxe5 Bxe5 21. Re1 Qf6 22. a5 Bxg4 23. Qxg4 Rae8 24. h4 h6 25. Re4 Re7 26. Rae1 Rfe8 27. Qh5 Kg7 28. Nxe5 Rxe5 29. Qxe8 Rxe8 30. Rxe8 Qxb2 31. Rd8 Kg6 32. Rxd6+ Kh5 33. hxg5 hxg5 34. c4 Kg4 35. Rh6 Qc3 36. Rg1 Qxc4 37. d6 Qd3 38. Ra1 f3 39. Ra4+ Kf5 40. g4+ Ke5 41. Ra1 Qe2 42. Rh2 f2 0-1

IM Bryant also shares his last round, an upset against GM Marandi:

IM John D. Bryant (2404)

GM Cemil Can Ali Marandi (2517)

2024 SoCal Open (6), 2024.09.02, 1-0

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. O-O b5 6. Bb3 Be7 7. Re1 O-O 8. c3 d6 9. d4!? It's a bit risky to allow Bg4, but since I wouldn't win a prize with a draw, I was prepared to take a lot of risk this game. h3 is the normal move to prepare d4 by preventing Bg4. 9...Bg4 10. Be3 Bh5 11. a4 exd4 12. cxd4 Na5 13. Bc2 (13. Nc3! +/- I regretted not considering this move, and thought I played Bc2 too hastily. My opponent was skeptical of 13.Nc3 after the game, but Stockfish says it's best. I have good center control & pressure on black's queenside pawns in exchange for my damaged pawn structure on the kingside.)

13... d5? (13... Nc4! Now when he plays d5-Ne4, I can't play Nbd2 so easily.) 14. e5 Ne4 15. Nbd2+/- I didn't know I was +1 here, but I understood that my pawn structure in the center & queenside was favorable in return for the damage on my kingside. 15...Nxd2 16. Bxd2 Nc4 17. Bc1 Bb4 18. Re2 Bxf3 19.gxf3 While my kingside structure is damaged, he lost a valuable bishop, opened the g-file, and made possible the advance of f4-f5 perhaps in the future. 19...Qh4 20. Qd3 g6 21. Kg2 Rad8 22. axb5 axb5 23. b3 Nb6 24. Be3? 24...c6? (24...f6! He had a chance to counter on the kingside here since I blocked my queen last move. If I'm allowed to stabilize, I will be better due to my better structure on the queenside and center.)

25. Rg1 f5! 26. Kh1 Be7 He was trying to lure me into playing f4, so that his knight would play favorably in the closed structure and my dark bishop would become worse. Ne6 would be his aim.



Photo courtesy of James Woodward

FM Mikayel Rostomyan at 2024 SoCal Open

(26... f4! I think neither of us liked f4, because the pawn is vulnerable there and it opens the diagonal for my queen and bishop. Stockfish says this equalizes though.)

27. Reel Qh5 (27... f4? 28. Rg4 Qh3 29. Bxf4 f4 doesn't work anymore since Qf1++ is guarded.

(27... Na8!+/- Amusingly, Stockfish says Na8 is best, attempting to get the knight to e6 ASAP.)

28. Bd1 Ra8 29. Qc2 Rac8 30. Be2

(30. f4!+/-) **30... Nd7 (30... f4!+/-)**

31. f4!+/- I was finally ready to do this now. Since my rook infiltrates on the a-file, I felt his plan to play against my pawns Ne6 or c5 was too slow. With my rook on a7 or a6, it's a one-sided game. **31...Qh6 32. Bf3 Kh8 33. Ra1 Rfe8 34. Ra7 Nf8 35. Ra6 c5 36. Qxf5!** A nice little winning tactic due to the 6th rank being opened last move. **36...gxf5 37. Rxh6 Red8 38. Bh5!** My bishop and e-pawn deliver the coup de grace. **38...cxd4 39. Bxd4 Bc5 40. Bxc5 Rxc5 41. Bf7 Nd7 42. e6 Rc6 43. e7 1-0**



Photo courtesy of James Woodward

IM John D. Bryant at 2024 SoCal Open

World Senior Team Championships

By GM Melikset Khachiyan

The 2024 FIDE World Senior Team Championships were held in Krakow, Poland from July 2-11. Made up of GMs Jaan Ehvest, Alexander Shabalov, Melikset Khachiyan, Igor Novikov, and Alex Yermolinsky, Team USA won the 50+ Championship with 8/9.

GM Khachiyan shares his games here:

GM Melikset Khachiyan (2414)

GM Glenn C Flear (2390)

World Senior Team Championships
(USA - England), 2024.07.06, 1-0

This was an important game. We were coming from painful loss to Italy, and now we faced England and its 8-time British champion Michael Adams.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 Bc5 5. O-O d6 6. c3 a6 7. Bb3

I obviously knew about the possibility of playing the setup with 7. a4, but I don't feel that comfortable playing those positions.

7...h6 (7... O-O 8. Nbd2 Ba7 9. Re1 Ng4 10. Re2 Kh8 11. h3 Nh6 12. Nf1 f5)

8. Nbd2 O-O 9. h3 (9. Re1 Na5 (9... Ng4 10. Re2 Na5 11. Bc2 Bxf2+ 12. Rxf2 Ne3 13. Qe2 Nxc2 14. Rb1) 10. Bc2 Ng4 11. Re2 Bxf2+ 12. Rxf2 Ne3) 9... Be6! (9... Ba7) 10. Re1 Re8 11. Nf1 d5 12. Qe2 dxe4?!



(12...d4 Clearly the more principled move was d4, but I also had to consider how my teammates stood.

Our first board was about to make a draw; Shaba had nothing but dead equality; and Igor, with black pieces, had a comfortable, but equal, position. Realistically, the only board where we could win was mine. 13. Bxe6 (13. Ng3) 13...Rxe6 14. c4 b5)

13. dxe4 Bxb3 14. axb3 Qe7 15. b4 Bb6 16. Be3 Bxe3 17. Nxe3 Qe6 18. Qc4 It was the whole idea going to this endgame--trying to use some pressure.

18...Qxc4 (18... Nd7) 19. Nxc4 Rad8 20. Na5



20...Nxa5 21. Rxa5 Rd6 I didn't expect that. Most of my calculations have been spent on Nd7.

(21...Nd7 22. Rd5 (22. Rd1 Nb6 23. Rxd8 Rxd8 24. Rxe5 Rd1+ 25. Kh2 Kf8) 22...Nb6 23. Rxd8 Rxd8 24. Nxe5 Rd2 25. Rb1 f6 26. Nf3 Re2 27. e5 fxe5 28. Kf1 Rc2 29. Nxe5 Na4 30. Nd3 Rd2 31. Nc5



This is the line that I calculated during the game. I thought I had some chances, but apparently it is dead equal.)

22. Rxe5 Rxe5 23. Nxe5 Rd2?! This was the losing move.

(23...Re6 was the only move. 24. f4 g5 25. Ng4 Nxe4 26. f5 Rb6!! A brilliant move that we both missed.

(26...Rd6 27. hxe4 Rd2 28. e5 (28. Kf1 Rxb2 29. Rd1 Rc2 30. Rd8+ Kg7 31. e5 Rxc3 32. f6+ Kh7 33. e6)

28...Rxb2 29. e6 fxe6 (29...Kf8 30. e7+ (30. exf7 Kxf7 31. Rd1 Ke7) 30...Ke8 31. f6 Rd2 32. b5 Rd6)

30. Rxe6 Rc2 31. Rxh6 Rxc3 32. Rg6+ Kf7 33. Rxe5 Rc4)

27. hxe4 c5 28. Kf2 (28. bxc5 Rxb2 29. Rd1 a5) 28... cxb4 29. c4)

24. Nc4 Rc2 25. e5 Nd5 26. Rd1 c6 (26... Nxb4 27. Ne3)

27. Rd2 Nxb4 28. Rd8+ (28. Rxc2 Nxc2 29. Na5 Ne1 30. Nxb7 Nd3 31. b4 Nxe5 32. Ne5)

28...Kh7 29. Rd7 b5 30. Ne3 Rc1+ 31. Kh2 Nd5 32. Rxf7 Just to win safely.

(32. Nxd5 cxd5 33. Rxf7 Re1 34. f4)

32...Nxe3?! Inaccuracy. Kg8 was best. (32... Kg8 33. e6 Re1 34. Nf5 Rxe6 35. Rxe7+ Kh8 36. g4 Re2 37. Kg3 Rxb2 38. Ra7)

33. fxe3 Re1 34. Rf3 Rd1 35. Kg3 Rd8 36. Kf4 Kg6 37. Ke4 Re8 38. b4 Re7

39. Rf8 Very clean and technical win. 1-0



Photo courtesy of Mark Livshitz
GM Melikset Khachiyan (right) at the 2024 World Senior Team Championship

GM Jon Arnason (2421)

GM Melikset Khachiyani (2414)

World Senior Team Championships
(Iceland - USA), 2024.07.09, 0-1

1. e4 c6 (1...e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nd2 c5 (3...a6 4. Ngf3 c5 5. exd5) 4. Ngf3 (4. exd5 Qxd5 5. Ngf3 Nf6 6. Bc4 Qd6 7. O-O cxd4 8. Nb3 a6 9. Nbx4 Nc6 10. Bb3 Bd7))

2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Bf5

(4...Nf6 5. Ng5 h6

(5...c5



6. Nxf7 (6. Bc4 e6 7. Ne2 Nc6 8. Nf3 a6 9. a4 cxd4 10. Nexd4) 6...Kxf7 7. Nf3 e6) 6. Nxf7 Kxf7 7. Nf3 e6 8. Bd3 c5 9. Ne5+ Kg8 10. Ng6 Nc6) (4...Nd7 5. Ng5 Ngf6 6. N1f3 e6 7. Bd3 Bd6 8. Qe2 h6 9. Ne4 Nxe4 10. Qxe4 Nf6 11. Qe2)

5. Ng3 Bg6 6. h4 h6 7. Nf3 Nd7 8. h5 Bh7 9. Bd3 Bxd3 10. Qxd3 e6 11. Bd2 Ngf6 12. O-O-O Be7 13. Kb1

(13. Ne4 Nxe4 14. Qxe4 Nf6 15. Qd3 Qd5 16. c4 Qe4 17. Qxe4 Nxe4 18. Be3 f5)

13...Qb6

When preparing for this important game against Icelandic GM Arnason, I noticed that he always played Nc3 against the Caro-Kann. These days, the Nc3 line is not particularly popular. There are a few reasons, including the line I played in the game. I have faced the Qb6 line many times in blitz, so I felt quite comfortable playing this.

(13... O-O 14. Ne4 Nxe4 15. Qxe4 Nf6 16. Qd3)

14.c4 (14. Ne4 Rd8) 14...Rd8?! 0-0 was

best. (14...O-O 15. Bc3 Rfd8 16. Qe2 Bb4 17. c5 Qa5 18. Bxb4 Qxb4 19. Rd3 Qc4 20. Rb3)

15. Qe2?! Inaccuracy. Nh4 was best.

(15. Nh4 was perhaps the only continuation that gave white some chances. 15...c5 16. d5 O-O 17. dxe6 Ne5 18. Qc2 fxe6 19. f4 Nc6 20. Ng6 Rfe8)

(15. Rhe1 O-O 16. Nf5)

15...O-O 16. Bc1 Rfe8!? (16... c5 17. d5 exd5 18. Qxe7 (18. Nf5 Rfe8! I missed this move in my calculation of the c5 line. 19. Nxe7+ Rxe7 20. Qxe7 Re8 21. Qxe8+ Nxe8 22. Rxd5 Ndf6) 18...Rfe8)

17. Ne5 c5 18. Be3 Nb8!



Very important move! I needed to challenge for the d4 square.

19. dxc5 Bxc5 20. Bxc5 Qxc5 21. f4 Nc6 22. Ne4 Nxe4 23. Qxe4 f5!

24.Qe2 Nxe5 25. fxe5 a5 26. a3?!

This move was played with draw proposal. At this point, our team was in great shape in the match, but since my position had no risk and I had decent time advantage, I played for the win. (26. a4 Qb4 27. Qc2 Rf8 28. Rhf1 Rc8 29. b3 Rcd8 30. Ka2 Qc5 31. Qb2 Rxd1)

26...a4 27. Rhf1 Rxd1+ 28. Rxd1 Rc8 29. Rd6?

Mistake. Rc1 was best. Wrong decision under time pressure. (29. Rc1 Qd4 30. Qc2 Qxe5 31. Qxa4 Qe4+ 32. Qc2 Qg4 33. c5 Qxh5 34. b4 Kh7)

29...b5 30. Rxe6?? 30.Qd3 was best.

30...bxc4 31. Ra6 c3 32. bxc3 Qxc3

33. Qa2+ Kh8 (33... Kh7 34. Rxh6+ Kxh6 35. Qe6+ Kxh5 (35... Kh7))

0-1



Photo courtesy of Mark Livshitz

GM Khachiyani (center) and Team USA win 2024 World Senior (50+ section)

Pacific Southwest Open

By Chuck Ensey and IM John D. Bryant

The Pacific Southwest Open was held over 3 days from July 5 through the 7th, with 8 rounds, three on Friday (G/60, d10), three on Saturday (G/90, d10) and two on Sunday (G120/d10). There was no 2-day schedule but players were allowed 3 byes. This was a bit of an unusual format, but we try to have a little variety at this event compared to other events. At least players could enjoy the 4th of July with no chess, and then have a nice 3-day event (if they could get Friday off).

There were 211 players in total in 5 sections with 8 rounds. Prizes were increased from the guaranteed \$13,000 to \$16,300 due to a great turnout and \$1,200 in "play up" fees (many players opted to pay \$100 each to play in a much higher section than their rating indicated). The player counts below for each section do not include house players or cross-section pairings.

Open Section (42 players) - 1st Place: IM John D. Bryant (6.5), \$1,700; 2nd Place: FM Sihan Tao (6), \$1,300; 3rd/4th Place: IM Jack Peters (5.5) and GM Tsegmed Batchuluun (5.5), \$550 each; 1st/2nd U2300: FM Teddie Wen (5.5) and Benjamin Tang (5.5), \$550 each; 5th/6th Place: a 6-way tie between players with 5 points for \$83 each: WIM Zoey Tang, Yanfeng Guo, FM Mikayel Rostomyan, Kritin Gopalakrishnan, Esther Jou and Vedant Maheshwari.

U2200 Section (34 players) - 1st Place: Shyam Ghandi (6.5), \$900; BU2000: Jacob Wang (6), \$900; 2nd Place U2000: Ryan Sweezey (5.5) and Charlie Sun (5.5), \$500 each; 3rd/4th Place U2000: a 4-way tie between players with 5 points for \$250 each: Frank Fan, Eric Feng, Howard Wang

and Ritam Chakraborty.

U1800 Section (66 players) - 1st Place: Grady Wang (7), \$900; BU1600: Owen Durby (6.5), \$900; 2nd Place: Benjamin Yu (6.5): \$500; 3rd/4th Place: Chris Noriega (6) and Steven Merrit (6), \$250 each; 2nd/3rd U1600: Derrick Peng (5.5) and Pranav Nair (5.5), \$400 each; 4th U1600: Stanley Wei (5) and Ksenia Labazniknova (5), \$100 each.

U1400 Section (45 players) - 1st Place: Sai Krishna (6.5), \$500; 2nd/3rd Place: Logan Benevente (6), Ethan Wang (6), Blake Zhang (6), \$167 each; BU1200: Ronit Khanna (6), \$500; 2nd U1200: Ju-Hoon Lee (5.5), \$150 (reduced 50% due to a provisional rating); 3rd U1200: a 4-way tie between players with 5 points for \$87 each: Sri Diya Kalavakuru, Pengpeng Zhang, Kye Hong and Rikitha Selvam.

U1000 Section (23 players) - 1st Place: Xingchen Lin (6.5), \$250 (50% due to provisional rating); 2nd/3rd Place: Robert Younger (5.5) and Roberto Argueta (5.5), \$313 each, and also Ming-Hsiao Huang (5.5), \$125 (provisional).

This event was at the Hilton Irvine near the John Wayne Airport, this hotel has a nice sized ballroom that was perfect for this event and many players commented to me that they really enjoyed the venue. We will be back there again next year.

IM John D. Bryant (2507)

FM Zoey Tang (2342)

Pacific Southwest Open (5) 2024.07.12 1-0

1.e4 Zoey was leading the tournament with 4/4 at this point. I had 3.5/4.

1...c5 2. c3 Nf6 3. e5 Nd5 4. Bc4 Nb6 5. Bb3 d6 6. exd6 Nc6!? It was my first

time seeing this move. **7. dxe7 Bxe7?** (7... Qxe7+! equalizes.)

8. Nf3 Bg4 9. d4? (9. h3! Bh5 10. O-O O-O 11. Re1 Re8 12. d4 cxd4 13. g4 Bg6 14. cxd4 +/-)

9...cxd4 10. cxd4 O-O 11. O-O Bxf3 12. Qxf3 Nxd4 13. Qxb7 Ne2+? (13... Nd7! This keeps the balance.)

14. Kh1 Bf6 15. Nc3 Nxc3 16. bxc3 Bxc3 17. Rb1 With 2 bishops in an open position, white is simply much better. It might even be winning already. The knight on b6 is bad, and the pawn on a7 is weak. **17...Qf6 18. Ba3 Rfe8 19. Rbd1 Rab8 20. Qa6**

(20. Qxa7 Amusingly, this was possible in view of: Ra8 21. Qb7 Rxa3 22. Rd6! +/-)

20...Be5 21. Rd3 Qf4 22. Rh3 Bc7 23. Bc1 Qd6 24. Qxa7 Nd7 25. Ba3 Qe5 26. Qa4 Nf6 Surprisingly, this was a blunder, although the position was losing anyway.

27. Qc4! f7 cannot be defended. **27...Ne4 28. Qxf7+ Kh8 29. Bb2!** What a beautiful pair of bishops

29...Qg5 30. Rh5 Re7 31. Qf3 Qg6 32. Bc2! Ree8 33. Bxe4 Rxe4 34. Bxg7+! Pawn number 3

34...Kxg7 35. Qc3+ Kg8 36. Qxc7 Rbe8 37. Rc5 Up 3 pawns, all I have to do is prevent back rank mate. **37...Re2 38. Qf4 h6 39. a4 R2e4 40. Qf3 Qa6 41. Qb3+ Kh8 42. Qb2+ Kg8 43. Qa2+ R8e6** (43... Kh8 44. Qa1+ followed a5 was my intention)

44. Rfc1 Qxa4 45. Qd5 She may have won my pawn, but her king is so weak that she'll lose more material to prevent being mated. Of course I could have traded queens into a winning endgame, but it seemed unnecessary.

45...Qd4 46. Rc8+ Kg7 47. R1c7+ Kg6 48. Rg8+ Kf6 49. Rf8+ 1-0 Black resigned in view of ...Kg5 Qf5++

GM Tsegmed Batchuluun (2561)**IM John D. Bryant (2507)**

Pacific Southwest Open (6) 2024.07.06
1/2-1/2

1. d4 I had 4.5/5 going in to this game and he had 4/5. Moreover, I was black against my chief rival in this tournament, so I was happy with a draw this game. **1...Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. g3 d5!** He told me after the game, that this was a surprise because I didn't have any games in the database with this. I usually play d6, and I played c6-d5 once again GM Cristhian Cruz. I suppose he played this move in order to prevent c6-d5.

5. cxd5 Nxd5 6. Bg2 Nxc3 7. bxc3 c5 8. e3?!

(8. Nf3 cxd4 9. Nxd4 (9. cxd4=) 9...Qa5 He has to awkwardly defend c3 here. Since white is not afforded the usual minimal pressure he gets from Nxd4, 4...d5 is particularly good against early Nc3.)

8...Qa5 9. Bd2 O-O 10. Ne2 Nc6 11. O-O Qa6 Moving out of the discovered attack and controlling the c4 square. The key for black is to not allow d5-c4 easily.

12. Re1 Bd7 (12... e5! Perhaps this is the best way if black wants to play for a win. The knight can land on d6 with Na5-Nc4-Nd6, then black can play on both wings with b5 and f5.)

13. a4 Rad8! Other rook moves run into trouble after Nf4-Nd5. **14. Nc1 b6 15. Nb3 Qc8! 16. Qe2 Be6** (16... Bh3! =/+ I suppose Bh3 here or on the next move allows black to play for a win since white's kingside light squares are weak, black's dark-squared bishop is better than white's, and I think black has better potential pawn breaks.)

17. Rab1 Bg4 18. Qb5 Bd7 19. Qe2 Bg4 20. Qb5 Bd7 21. Qe2 Bg4 1/2-1/2

I could have made this draw with the rook on a1 as well. It makes no difference Unfortunately, I wasn't aware I was better in the preceding position!

IM Jack Peters (2356)**IM John D. Bryant (2507)**

Pacific Southwest Open (7) 2024.07.06
0-1

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nf6 4. d3 Last time, we played a Berlin draw after 4. 0-0 Nxe4 5. d4 etc. He previously scored his only victory against me with 4. d3 in a state championship game many years ago.

4...d6 5. c3 Bd7 6. O-O g6 7. a4 Bg7 8. a5 O-O 9. Nbd2 Kh8 Preparing f5 and Ng8. **10. Re1 Qe8** This opens up the possibilities of Nh5 and Nd4 since the queen hits b5 and h5.

11. Nf1 Nd4 I thought the combination of a6, d4, and Ne3-Nd5 looked scary, so it made sense to trade some pieces to neutralize the pressure. Somehow, it seems like this early a5 makes it difficult for me to pursue f5.

12. Nxd4 Bxb5 13. Nxb5 Qxb5 14. Ne3 Qd7 15. Qb3 c6 16. Ra4? Too optimistic

16...Qc7! 17. Bd2 Nd7 This shows that

Ra4 was bad.

18. Raa1? (18. d4! Apparently, this was the only way to keep a balance. 18...f5 19. exf5 gxf5 20. Qc2 e4 21. f4 This still seems preferable for black, but Stockfish claims equality.)

18...Nc5 19. Qc4?? Now this is way too optimistic. He should have accepted that he made a mistake like he had on his previous move. (19. Qc2 =/+ I actually thought this was just about equal. After the game, he correctly pointed out that black should be slightly better due to having the luxury of both f5 and d5. Unfortunately, his correct assessment of this position and his rejection of those circumstances lead to his blunder.)

19...b5! Black wins at least a pawn by force. **20. axb6 axb6 21. d4 Nxe4 22. Rxa8 Rxa8 23. Bc1 b5 24. Qd3 f5 25. d5 Nc5 26. Qe2 e4 27. Rd1 Nd3** The coup de grace **28. Rxd3 exd3 29. Qxd3 Ra1 30. Qd1 Bh6 31. g3 Bxe3 32. fxe3 cxd5 33. Kf2 Qc4 0-1**



Photo courtesy of James Woodward

IM John D. Bryant pondering his next move

My Comeback Story: From Burnout to Victory at the 2024 North American Junior Championship

By IM Ming Lu

I achieved my International Master title at the beginning of summer in 2022, a little less than a year after I began pursuing it. I was playing the best chess of my life, and my FIDE rating was at an all-time high of 2390+ (I had already crossed 2400 live). I thought I'd soon be on my way to chasing the Grandmaster title, but I was wrong. The following month, I had some of the worst tournament performances in my life. I played three major tournaments, cumulatively losing over a whopping 150 rating points. Objectively, I was still playing high-quality games, but many of those games simply didn't go my way. I understood that it was normal to have ups and downs, but nonetheless, these performances came as a massive shock. I realized that I was suffering from burnout, and as I was entering my sophomore year of high school, I decided to take a few weeks off from chess and divert my attention to academics and other extracurriculars. A few weeks soon became a month, a month soon became several months, and not before long, a year had passed since I last played competitively. I was no longer training daily and often went days and weeks without seeing a chessboard. I played some tournaments here and there in 2023, but I achieved mediocre results due to the lack of training and preparation. I finally decided to start taking chess seriously again at the beginning of last summer. My results were quite good, especially for someone who hadn't played seriously in 2 years, and my rating steadily began to climb. As August rolled around, I realized the 2024 North American Junior U20 Championship, in Calgary, Canada, was encroaching upon me. I had zero

expectations coming into the tournament as not only was I the 10th seed, but I was also very rusty and nowhere near my former level two years ago. My only goal was to play my best and achieve a somewhat respectable score as one of the three IMs in the tournament.

The first three games went by relatively smoothly, except for the second game where I somehow swindled a win in a dead lost position. The first game we'll look at is from round 4, where I faced the 7th seed, FM Aaron Reeve Mendes, one of Canada's most talented juniors. While preparing, I was shocked to see that he was only 12 years old and already rated well over 2300 FIDE. Since I had the white pieces, my strategy going into the game was just to achieve a comfortable position out of the opening and then go from there.

IM Ming Lu (2248)

FM Aaron Reeve Mendes (2314)

2024 North American Junior Chess Championship (4), 2024.08.15, 1-0

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e3 e6 5. Nf3 Nbd7 6. Bd3 dxc4 7. Bxc4 b5 8. Bd3 Bb7 9. e4 a6? I was shocked to see this move as it's known to be a serious inaccuracy for Black that leads to an almost unplayable position. My opponent told me after the game that he mixed up 9. 0-0 with 9. e4.

(9... b4 is theory.)

10. e5 Nd5 11. Nxd5 cxd5 12. O-O The simple truth of this position is that Black is just positionally lost. Black has no space, while White has very active pieces with the potential to play on both the queenside and kingside. Furthermore, Black's light-squared bishop is essentially useless.

Stockfish supports this theory as it evaluates White's advantage as over +1.5. (12. h4! This is a very interesting idea that I considered during the game. It's a shame I chose the calmer option instead as these positions can be very exciting. 12...Be7 13. Rh3 +/- White is dominating as Black struggles to find a safe place for the king, while White will continue advancing the h-pawn and creating weaknesses on the kingside.)

12...Be7 13. Bd2 O-O 14. Qb1 h6 15. Qe1 The way I played is objectively not the best, but I believe it's very practical since Black is forced to sacrifice a pawn in order to stay in the game. **15...Rc8** (15... a5! 16. Bxb5 Nb8 +/- Only way for Black to keep White's advantage at a minimum. The idea behind sacrificing the pawn is to open up some files and give Black's pieces some breathing room. Black will follow up with Qb6 and Nc6.)

16. Ba5 Qe8 17. Qd2 Nb8 18. Rac1 Nc6 19. Bb6 Bd8 20. Bc5 Be7 21. Bb6 Bd8 22. Bc5 Be7



In general, I believe it's always a good idea to repeat moves, gaining some time as well as potentially confusing the opponent. **23. Bb1!** White has a very simple yet effective plan of Qd3 followed by h4 and h5 when Black struggles to defend their kingside. **23...Bxc5 24. Rxc5 Qe7 25. Rfcl Rc7**

26. h4 The move order, as in whether I play Qc2 or h4 first, doesn't really matter. **26...h5** (The best way for Black to proceed is to allow White's queen to infiltrate into h7. 26...Rfc8 27. Qc2 Kf8! 28. Qh7 f5 29. exf6 Qxf6 30. Ne5 +- Black is still lost nonetheless.)

27. b4 Rcc8



28. R1c3 I spent a while on this move as I wasn't fully sure on how to continue. I eventually realized that I'd rather have my queen behind the two rooks, forming Alekhine's Gun. Initially, Stockfish doesn't like this idea as it drops the b4-pawn, but the long line I calculated during the game changed its mind.

(28. Qc2 g6 29. Qd2 Kg7 30. Ng5 +- The computer also suggests a potentially simpler idea of repositioning the rook on g3 to prepare a potential sacrifice on f7.)

28...Na7?? (28... Nxb4 29. Rxc8 Rxc8 30. Rxc8+ Bxc8 31. a3 Nc6 32. Qc2 Qc7 33. Qh7+ Kf8 34. Qh8+ Ke7 35. Qxg7 Nd8 36. Qg5+ Kd7 37. Qd2 Up till this point, all the moves were pretty much forced. Black has a few options here, but I was happy to discover a brilliant idea that wins for White. 37...Qc4



38. g4!! I was very proud of myself for finding this idea. Sadly, my opponent did not play into it. 38...hxc4 39. Ng5 +- And White's passed h-pawn runs down the board.)

29. Rc7!! He missed that I could simply switch the move order and play Rc7 first. (29. Qc2 g6 30. Rc7 Qxb4 My opponent only calculated this line, when White has to find 31. Ng5! +- in order to maintain a crushing position.)

29...Rxc7 (29... Qxb4 30. Bh7+ Kxh7 (30... Kh8 31. Rxc8 +- White wins heavy material.) 31. Ng5+ Kh8 32. Qc2 g6 33. Nxf7+ Rxf7 34. Rxf7 Qxc3 35. Qxg6 +- with forced mate.)

30. Qc2 g6 31. Rxc7 Qxb4 32. Rxb7 (32. Ng5!! Much cleaner.) **32...Rc8 33. Qd3 Nc6** At this point, I'm in severe time trouble with 1 minute to 20 minutes. Unfortunately, I immediately blunder, spoiling a beautiful game.

34. Ng5?? Sigh, time trouble again. I have 1 minute vs 20 minutes. (34. Kh2 I don't know what I was thinking here because Kh2 is an easy move that simply improves the positioning of the king.)

34...Nxd4 35. Rxf7 Nf5 36. Bc2 Qe1+ 37. Kh2 Qxe5+ 38. g3 I understood that I had likely lost most, if not all, of my advantage. However, I also believed that I still had a chance to win this game with my extra piece. Luckily, my opponent immediately blunders. **39...Rc3??**



(38... Qe1!= was the only move to maintain a dead equal position.)

39. Nf3! I was relieved to have spotted this two move sequence that results in a winning position. (39.Qd2 Nxc3 40.Kg2+- is completely winning accor-

-ding to Stockfish, but it's honestly a little bit difficult to confidently evaluate with only a few seconds on the clock.))

39...Qh8 40. Qe2 Kxf7 41. Ng5+



41...Kg7?? Thankfully, my opponent makes my life easier by blundering again into a forced win for White. (41... Kf8! 42. Qxe6 Qg7 43.Bxf5 gxf5 44. Qxa6+- The game is still very complicated, but White clearly has the upperhand as the queen will pick off all of Black's pawns.)

42. Qe5+ Kg8 43. Qxe6+ Kg7 44. Qe5+ Kg8 45. Qxd5+ Kg7 46. Qd7+ Kf6 47. Ne4+ Ke5 48. f4# 1-0 Aside from my poor time management, I'm very proud of the way I played as a whole. I found very interesting ideas and managed to stay in the game even after squandering my advantage.

Rounds 5 and 6 were intense, but I managed to outplay my lower-rated opponents and maintain a perfect 6/6 score. Going into round 7, I was leading the tournament by a full point, with five other players on 5/6. I was paired against IM Jason Liang, one of America's most talented juniors with a peak FIDE rating over 2500. Honestly, I was a little scared of him because he's an extremely strong player who has a solid playstyle that is difficult to beat. I had played him on two separate occasions in 2021 and 2022, losing both times. However, I noticed that he seemed to be in bad form as he suffered a loss against a lower-rated player in a previous round. My strategy for this game was to avoid

taking risks and play as solid as possible. If the game is a draw, then so be it, but no need to force anything as the tournament leader.

IM Jason Liang (2398)

IM Ming Lu (2248)

2024 North American Junior Chess Championship (7), 2024.08.17, 0-1

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 Jason chose to surprise me in the opening with a line he rarely plays. (3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5 I spent hours the night before preparing the classical variation, which is what we played two years prior in 2022.)

3...c5 4. c3 Nc6 5. Nf3 Bd7 6. Be2 Nge7 7. Na3 cxd4 8. cxd4 Nf5 9. Nc2

I hadn't reviewed this line in months (maybe years!), but I was aware that Black can easily fall into a significantly inferior position with inaccurate play. As a result, I wanted to force him out of prep as soon as possible.

9...a5?! An interesting idea that I came up with over the board. The point is to take space and expand on the queenside. Objectively, it is a little inaccurate. (9... Be7 I knew this was the main move.)

10. O-O a4 11. Bd3 Qb6 12. Bxf5?! I was ecstatic to see this move on the board. Even though Jason surprised me in the opening, it seemed that he didn't understand these positions as well as I did, especially since I've been playing the French for my entire life. Trading on f5 with the bishop for the knight is often inaccurate as Black achieves a solid pawn structure with a strong kingside expansion plan. (12. Kh1! is a very nice move, preventing Black from taking on d4. 12...Nfxd4?? 13. Ncxd4 Nxd4 14. Be3 Now, the idea behind Kh1 is shown. Black can no longer take on f3 with check. 14...Be5 15. Rc1! +/- Black is lost.)

12...exf5



Black has equalized. The plan is to expand on the kingside with h6 and g5, which is difficult for White to prevent.

13. Bf4 h6 14. h4 Be7 From this point onward, Jason begins to make a series of inaccurate moves that ultimately results in a decisive advantage for Black. I think he regretted his earlier decision of trading on f5 as the position is difficult for White to play.

15. Ne3?! This move is slightly inaccurate since it doesn't seem to accomplish anything, but it helps Black achieve the setup that they want. (15. h5=+/+ was necessary for White to maintain a slightly worse position.)

15...Be6 16. Qd2?!



White needs to find some kind of way to exert some pressure on Black. This move doesn't seem to have a purpose, allowing Black to continue their kingside expansion plan without any resistance. (16. Qd3! =/+ was necessary, when White pressures the f5-pawn.)

16...Qd8 I played the best move according to Stockfish. The idea is simple: prepare g5. **17. h5 g5 18. hxcg6 fxcg6 19. Qd3** It felt like Jason was a little bit lost as it seemed he was

moving around aimlessly without a clear goal. His last few moves clearly prove my point. **19...g5 20. Bh2 Qd7 21. Nd1 O-O 22. Nc3 Kg7 23. Nb5 g4 24. Ne1 f4**



White's bishop is shedding tears on h2. My plan was to push the h-pawn to h4, threatening g3 to put the bishop out of its misery. Furthermore, any endgame is unfavorable for White as they're essentially playing down a piece.

25. Qd1? Nb4?!

(25... Nxe5! 26. dxe5 Qxb5 27. Nc2 Bc5 28. Nd4 Not sure about this position. 28...Qb6 29. Nxe6+ Qxe6-+ I calculated this position, and I knew Black was clearly better (apparently Black is completely winning), but I felt that it was a little risky since my position was very loose. It seems the plan is just h5, h4, and then g3, which is very difficult for White to prevent.)

26. Nd6 Bxd6 27. exd6 Qxd6 28. Nd3 Nxd3 29. Qxd3 Bf5 30. Qa3??

(30. Qb5 was necessary to keep the game going, although after 30...Rac8+, Black is completely winning with the looming threat of g3.)

30...Qxa3 31. bxa3



At this point, I was down on the clock 10 minutes to 30 minutes. I genuinely

considered offering a draw because I knew he'd 100% accept it. However, I noticed the bishop was permanently trapped and used up all of my remaining time to create a winning plan.

31...Bg6 White is dead lost due to the unstoppable threat of h5, h4 and then g3. **32. Rfe1 h5 33. Re7+ Kh6 34.Rc1** (34. g3 f3 35. Rxb7 Rfe8+ Black is essentially up a piece.)

34...h4 35. Kf1 g3 36. Bg1



Now, all that's needed to finish up the game is to take control of the e- and c-files. **36...Rfe8! 37. Re5** (37. Rxe8 Rxe8 38. Rd1 Bf5+ None of White's pieces can move. Black has an unstoppable threat of h3 to end the game.) **37... Rac8 38. Rxc8 Rxc8 39. fxc3 hxc3**



The game is over as White can no longer hold on to their bishop. **40. Ke2 Rc1 41. Be3 fxe3 42. Rxe3 Rc2+ 43. Kf3 Be4+ 44. Kxg3 Rxc2+ 45. Kf4 Rxa2** My opponent questionably plays on for a few moves, but it's understandable as this game meant a lot to him.

46. Rg3 Rb2 47. Rg8 Rb3 48. Rb8 Kg6 49. Ke5 Kg5 50. Rg8+ Kh4 51. Rg7 b6 52. Rb7 Kh3 53. Kd6 Kg3 54. Kc6 Kf3 55. Ra7 Rxa3 56. Kxb6 Rb3+ 57. Kc5

57...a3 58. Ra5 Ke3 0-1 I'm very satisfied with the way I played in this game. I didn't make any major mistakes and was able to outplay my opponent due to his unfamiliarity with the middlegame ideas.

After round 7, I increased my lead to 7/7 with 7 other players on 5.5/7. I only needed a draw in my next game to secure guaranteed first place. However, rarely does anything ever go so smoothly. I lost in round 8 to FM Narayanan, allowing him to narrow the gap between us to only 0.5. I was extremely frustrated with this game because I was careless. He outprepped me in the opening, but I outplayed him and even reached a better position. I was overconfident and made a series of crude inaccuracies, resulting in a devastating loss. It was a humbling moment for me. I needed to lock in for the final round. I was paired against a lower-rated opponent who I had beaten multiple times in the past, but I knew he was capable of playing excellent chess. I was in a must-win situation for clear first as I had the inkling suspicion that

Narayanan would be able to win his game. My theory was proven true as his opponent quickly blundered out of the opening and was dead lost. Meanwhile, I achieved equality out of the opening, but my opponent outplayed me and soon reached a strategically winning position. In the critical moment, my opponent misses the winning idea and drops a pawn. Although I was in severe time trouble. I successfully converted the ensuing pawn-up ending to secure a first place finish with 8/9.

My victory in this tournament was a massive confidence boost for me. One of the biggest regrets in my life was stepping away from chess two years ago when things got tough. I never thought I'd be able to compete at this level again, let alone win such a prestigious tournament. Now, my passion for chess burns brighter than ever, and I look forward to all my future games and tournaments.

Editor's note: IM Ming Lu earned his first GM Norm at this tournament. Congratulations!



IM Ming Lu wins 2024 North American Junior with a score of 8/9!

The National Tournaments of State Champions

By WFM Angela Liu and Glenn Zhang

...Continued from Cover

Glenn shares one of his games here:

Glenn Zhang (2050)

Advik Prasanna (1948)

Rockefeller Invitational 2024 (5),
2024.07.29, 1-0

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 I like playing the Ruy Lopez among other openings, and I have good preparation for it. **4. Ba4 Nf6 5. O-O b5 6. Bb3 Bc5** I don't face this line often. I was a bit worried because in a previous round someone also played this against me and I got a bad position, but my opponent blundered, leading to a draw. **7. Re1 O-O 8. c3** This was the main move from the line I prepared for. I thought it should also work in this line because it targets the dark-squared bishop. **8...d6 9. d3** I didn't play d4 immediately because I thought I bring my knight to g3 first. After I make some more improving moves, then I will play d4. **9...h6 10. Nbd2 Bg4 11. h3 Be6** If he had gone Bh5, then I would play Nf1 and then Ng3, targeting the bishop. And in the future, I will play Nh4, threatening Nhf5. **12. Nf1 Bxb3 13. axb3** I didn't like Qxb3 because I would lose my chance to play d4. **13...d5 14. Qc2 dxe4 15. dxe4** After this exchange, I thought I had a good chance of controlling the d-file because my queen was already out of it's home square. **15...Nh5 16. Be3 Bxe3 17. Nxe3 Nf4 18. Rad1** My coach taught me something called 1,2,3. The 1 stands developing all the minor pieces, the 2 stands for castling, and the 3 stands for controlling an open file with a rook.

He said that if I have completed all 3 steps and my opponent hasn't, I have at least a slight advantage. In this position, I have already completed all 3 steps and my opponent only completed 2 steps so I knew I was slightly better. **18...Qf6 19. Nd5** In this position, I thought about Nxb3+ but after approximately 1 minute, I figured out that I could go Kh2 and he loses his knight. This is why I decided to play Nd5 on the previous move. **19...Qg6 20. Nxf4 exf4 21. Qd2** Now, he has a weak and doubled pawn on f4 so I knew I should try to attack it. **21...Qf6 22. e5 Qf5 23. Qd5 Qe6 24. Qe4 Rad8 25. b4** Now, I am threatening to take the f4 pawn for free. **25...Rxd1 26. Rxd1 g5 27. Re1** This move's purpose is to free up my queen and knight to attack. For example, I could play Nh2 and then Ng4. **27...Re8 28. Re2 f5 29. Qc2 Rd8 30. Rd2 30...Rxd2 31. Qxd2 Nxe5** This move allows my queen to penetrate through the 8th rank. **32. Qd8+ Kg7 33. Nd4 Qd7 34. Qxc7** This move allows me to win a pawn after the trade of queens. **34...Qxc7 35. Ne6+ Kf6 36. Nxc7 Nc4 37. Nxa6 Nxb2 38. Nc7 g4 39. Nxb5** Now I am up a pawn in a knight endgame. Based on what I learned from my coach, knight endgames are hard to win. But in this case, I have two connected passed pawns, which give me an advantage. **39...Nc4 40. Nd4 Ke5 41. Kh2 h5 42. Nc6+ Ke4 43. Na5 Nb6 44. c4 h4 45. c5 Nd5 46. b5 g3+** In this position, if I don't play carefully, I might make it very hard for myself to win the game because he might have promoting chances. For example if I had

played fxg3, then he would reply with hxg3+ followed by f3 and I would have to play very accurately in order to win. **47. Kg1 f3** This move makes the pawn structure very complicated. Luckily, I had enough time to think about how to defend myself. It turned out that there was no immediate win for him so I just pushed my own pawns. **48. b6 Nf4 49. Nb3 Kd3 50. gxf3 Ke2 51. fxg3 hxg3** The g pawn looks scary, but it gives me no threat because I could sacrifice my knight to take it. After that, he can't stop my connected passed pawns from promoting. **52. Nd4+ Ke3 53. Nxf5+ Kxf3 54. Nxg3** I simply sacrifice my knight and he cannot stop me from promoting. **54...Kxg3 55. b7 1-0**



Photo courtesy of Caroline King
Glenn Zhang ponders his next move

My Turbulent National Tournament of Girls State Champions

From July 27th to 30th 2024 I played in the National Tournament of Girls State Champions (also known as the Haring) in Norfolk, Virginia. It is an invitational only scholastic championship between Girls State Champions, each of whom qualified through the procedures determined by their state federations. For instance, I competed in the 2024 SoCal Scholastic State Championship (SuperStates) and finished 1st among all girls (3rd place overall) in the competitive K-12 section, winning a \$4000 scholarship and the ticket to the Haring. For more details of 2024 SuperStates, you can read Coach Jay's article featured in the 2024 Rank & File Spring issue.

There were multiple very strong players in this year's Haring, including Zoey Tang and Megan Paragua, who played in the 2024 US Junior Girls Invitationals in St. Louis. The pressure was high as I wanted to represent Southern California well. At the same time, I kept reminding myself that I was here to enjoy the experience and make new friends.

I started off by winning the first three rounds against Girls State Champions from Ohio, Missouri and Pennsylvania. Every round was hard-fought; I could really feel the shared passion for chess in each of my games, and that inspired me to put in my all. In the third round, I played against WFM Chloe Wang, the girls champion of the 2023 North American Youth. The winning streak led me to play against Megan Paragua from New York, the second seed and niece of GM Mark Paragua, in the fourth round. Megan is certainly a rising star and she has been traveling around the world to compete. She collected two shining trophies recently as both the 2024 World Cadet Rapid & Blitz Champion. I was winning with a great advantage after the opening, but after I made several



Photo courtesy of Caroline King
The Haring Representatives taking a photo outside the tournament hall (WFM Angela Liu center left)

mistakes, Megan turned the tide and we drew. It was disappointing, but I couldn't dwell on it too much.

In the fifth round, I played against the young and talented Irene Fei from Iowa, who won 1st place in both the FIDE World School Championship and North American Youth Chess Championship. Knowing that she was a fierce, attacking player, I chose to play a solid, boring opening and build a small positional advantage.

WCM Irene Jiao Fei (2013)

WFM Angela Liu (2089)

Haring Invitational 2024 (5), 2024.07.29, 0-1

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. Bf4 c5 4. c3 Nc6 5. e3 Bg4 6. Nbd2 e6 7. Bd3 c4 8. Be2 Be7 9. h3 Bh5 10. O-O h6 11. Ne5 Nxe5 12. Bxe5 Bxe2 13. Qxe2 O-O 14. e4 b5 15. exd5 exd5 16. a3 Nd7 17. Bf4 Nb6 18. Nf3 Re8 19. Rfe1 Bf6 20. Qd2 Qd7 I got the type of position I love: a simple, unexciting game with slight weaknesses.
21. Rxe8+ Rxe8 22. Re1 Rxe1+ 23. Qxe1 Na4 24. Qc1 Qe6 25. Be3 Qe4 26. Ne1 a5 27. Kf1 Kf8 28. Bf4 Ke8 29. Bc7 Bg5 30. Qc2? Bd8? (30... Qxc2! 31. Nxc2 Bc1 I missed that I would win all the queenside pawns here)
31. Bxd8 Kxd8 32. Qc1 g5 33. f3 Qf5 34. Kf2 h5 35. Kf1 h4 36. Kf2

36...f6 Slowly but surely... **37. Kf1 Kd7 38. Kf2 Kd6 39. Ke2 39...Ke7 40. Kf2 Kf7 41. Ke2 Kg7 42. Qe3 Qd7 43. Qd2 Qe7+ 44. Kf2 f5 45. Qc2 Qe6 46. Qc1 Kf6 47. Kf1 Qd6 48. Kf2 b4**

As she was under tremendous time pressure, I decided to change the structure. **49. axb4 axb4 50. Qa1 50...Nb6 51. Qa5 b3!** Locking the poor knight permanently out of the game. **52. Qa7 Nd7 53. Qa8 Nf8 54. Qe8 Ng6 55. Qa8 Kf7 56. Qb7+ Ne7 57. Qa8 Qe6 58. Qa1 f4**

Now the rest is a matter of technique: **59. Qe1 Nf5 60. Qd2 Ng3 61. Kg1 Qe2 62. Qxe2 Nxe2+ 63. Kf2 Nxc3 64. bxc3 b2 0-1**

Now, I stood at the summit with 4.5/5 and tied with FM Zoey Tang. Zoey is very experienced and has played almost three times as many tournaments as I have. Known for keeping her composure no matter what position she is in, Zoey is a tough opponent. In the last round, I was supposed to play white, but I was paired to play black against Zoey. The pairing was not favorable for me as I played 2 whites and 4 blacks, but on the other hand, it meant I that I would have the highest tiebreaks. All I needed was a draw. Just a draw to win the \$5,000 scholarship.

FM Zoey Tang (2313)

WFM Angela Liu (2089)

Haring Invitational 2024 (6), 2024.07.30,
1-0

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. Nc3 h6 5. Bf4 Bd6 6. Bxd6 Qxd6 7. e3 O-O 8. Rc1 Qe7 9. h3 Nbd7 10. cxd5 exd5 11. Bd3 c6 12. Nd2 Ne8 13. O-O Nd6 14. b4 Nf6 15. b5 cxb5 16. Nxb5 Nxb5 17. Bxb5 Bf5 18. Qb3 Rfc8 19. Bd3 Bxd3 20. Qxd3 Rc7 21. Rxc7 Qxc7 22. Nb3 Rc8 23. Rc1 Qd7?! I'm not so sure what I

wanted from provoking Nc5 24. Nc5 Qe8?! trying to prevent Qf5 issues (24... Qe7 25. Qf5 Rc7=)

25. Qa3 b6 26. Nd3 Rxc1+ 27. Qxc1 Qd7 28. Ne5 Qb7 29. Qc3 Ne4 30. Qc6 Qxc6 31. Nxc6 my opponent will win a pawn, but things are not over yet
31...Nc3 32. Nxa7 Nxa2 (32... Kf8! 33. Nc8 (33. a3 Ke7 34. Nc6+ Kd6 35. Nb4 Nb1 36. Nc2 Kc6=) 33...b5 34. a3 Ke8 35. Nd6+ Ke7 36. Nf5+ Kf6=)

33. Nc8 b5 34. Ne7+ Kf8 35. Nxd5 b4 36. Nb6 Nc3 37. Nc4 b3 38. Nb2 Ke7 39. Kf1 Kd6 40. Ke1 Kd5 41. Kd2 Ne4+ 42. Ke2 f5 43. f3 Ng3+ 44. Kd3 g5 45. Nd1 h5 46. Nc3+ Ke6 47. e4 g4 48. Na4 Kd6 49. e5+ Ke6? a simple mis-slip: I wanted to go Kd5, but my hand played Ke6

50. Nc5+ Kd5 51. Nxb3 gxh3 52. gxh3 f4 53. Nc1 Nh1 54. Ne2 Nf2+ 55. Kd2 Nxh3 56. Ke1 Ng5 57. Kf2 Ne6 58. Kg2 Kc4 59. Kh3 Ng5+ 60. Kg2 Ne6 61. Kf2 Now it's a draw. All I need to do is keep my composure
61...Kd5 62. Ke1 Kc4 63. Kd2 h4? Not a literal mistake, but complicating matters way too much. I simply forgot that I could play 63...Ng5=

64. Ke1 h3 65. Kf2 Kd5 66. Kg1 Ng5 67. Kf2 Ne6 68. Kf1 Ng5 69. Kf2 Ne6 70. Kg1 Ng5 71. Kh1 Ne6?? 72. Kh2 Ng5 73. Nxf4+ Kxd4 74. e6 Nxe6 75. Nxe6+ Ke3 76. Nd4! Kxd4 77. Kxh3 Ke5 78. Kg4 Kf6 79. Kf4 Kg6 80. Ke5 Kf7 81. Kf5 Kg7 82. Ke6 Kf8 83. Kf6 Kg8

84. f4 Kf8 85. f5 Kg8 86. Ke7 Kh8 87. f6 Kg8 88. f7+ Kh7 89. f8=Q Kg6 90. Qf6+ Kh7 91. Qg5 Kh8 92. Kf7 Kh7 93. Qh5# 1-0

I ended up getting 3rd place. It's not too bad as my first attempt in the National Tournament of Girls State Champions. More importantly, I befriended many of the girls champions from other states and had inspiring games. The grand open-

-ning and closing ceremonies organized by U.S. Chess were eye-opening; I realized there are so many people working behind the scenes and donating money to make the National Tournaments of State Champions possible. I'm deeply grateful for this amazing experience. Below is a photo of me with the very generous Mr. Dewain Barber.



WFM Angela Liu (left) and Mr. Dewain Barber (right)



Photo courtesy of Alex Wang

NM Alex Wang in the Denker



Photo courtesy of Caroline King

FM Bryan Xie playing in the Barber

The National Tournament of State Champions: Irwin

By CM Ala'a-Addin Moussa

The Irwin Tournament of Senior State Champions in Norfolk Virginia was my fifth appearance in its 7-year history. I represented Michigan in 2018 in its first edition then Colorado in 2019 and 2020. The latter was an online event due to Covid. In 2021 I represented SoCal having returned to California after 6 years spent between Michigan and Colorado for work. This year was special for two reasons. First, I completed 300 games at a master rating (over 2200) earning the USCF title of Original Life Master with a new rating floor of 2200. Second, I went undefeated with 5 draws and 1 win including draws against GM Federowicz and IM Khmeltsky.

CM Ala'a Addin Moussa (2205)

IM Igor Khmeltsky (2479)

Irwin Invitationals 2024 (3), 2024.7.28, 1/2-1/2

1. Nf3 Nf6 2. c4 c6 3. d4 d5 4. e3 Bf5 5. Nc3 e6 6. Nh4 Bg4 7. Qb3 Qb6 8. h3 Bh5 9. Bd2 Nbd7 10. g4 Bg6 11. Nxc3 hxc3 12. g5 Ng8 13. f4 13. e4 has been played before (Mikhalevski - Lenderman, World Open 2009) 13...Ne7 14. c5 Qc7 15. Qc2 Nf5 16. Bd3 Be7 17. O-O-O b6 18. b4? (18. Na4 is better) 18... a5! 19. cxb6 Qxb6 20. Na4 Qa7 21. bxa5 Ba3+? Giving white a chance to recover. (21...Rb8! 22. Rde1 c5! 23. Kd1 cxd4 24. Bxf5 gxf5 25. exd4 Qxd4 is winning) 22. Kb1 O-O 23. Bxf5 gxf5 24. Ka1 c5 25. dxc5 Bxc5 26. Nxc5 Rfc8 27. Rc1 Rxc5 28. Qd3 Rxa5? (A surprising decision. Better was 28... Rxc1+ 29. Rxc1 Nb6! 30. Rc5 Nc4 31. Bb4) 29. Bxa5 Qxa5 30. Rh2 Nb6 31. Qc3 Qa6 1/2-1/2 Here Igor offered a draw. I knew that my position is winning, but having lost to him on time in an equal position in the same event in

2021 which he won, I decided to accept rather than risk squandering a valuable half a point in time trouble.

GM John Federowicz (2424)

CM Ala'a Addin Moussa (2205)

Irwin Invitationals 2024 (4), 2024.07.29, 1/2-1/2

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 b6 4. a3 Bb7 5. Nc3 d5 6. cxd5 Nxd5 7. e3 Be7 8. Bb5+ c6 9. Bd3 Nd7 10. e4 Nxc3 11. bxc3 c5 12. O-O cxd4 13. cxd4 Rc8 14. Bb2 O-O 15. Qe2 Qc7 16. Qe3 h6 17. Rad1 Rfe8 18. Rfel a6 19. Rc1 Qb8 20. a4 Bb4 21. Red1 Rxc1 22. Rxc1 Rc8 23. Rd1 Qd6 24. Qe2 Qc6 25. Ra1 Rc7 26. h3 a5 27. d5 Qd6 28. Nd4 Rc8 29. Rd1 Nc5 30. Bc2 Qe5 31. Ba1 Qg5 32. dxe6 fxe6 33. Nf3 Ba6 34. Qxa6 Nxa6 35. Nxc5 hxc5 36. Bd3 Rd8 37. Be2 Rxd1+ 38. Bxd1 Bc5 39. Kf1 Nb4 40. Ke2 Nc6 41. Bc3 Kf7 42. Bd2 Kf6 43. f3 e5 44. Kd3 Nd4 45. Kc4 Ne6 46. Be2 Bf2 47. Bf1 Bg1 48. Kd5 Bd4 49. Kc6 Nc5 50. Bb5 Nb3 51. Be1 Na1 52. Bd3 Nb3 53. Bc2 Nc5 54. Kd5 Ne6 55. g3 Be3 56. Bd1 Nc5 57. Bc3 Nd3 58. Be2 Nb4+ 59. Kd6 Bc5+ 60. Kc7 Nc2 1/2-1/2

SoCal placed 5th out of the 53 state teams! (NorCal, SoCal, and Washington D.C. have their own teams).

1(CT)	IM Maximilian Lu (2479) 4.5 Jasmine Su (2241) 4.5 Lilianna Gao (1931) 4.5 Lacey Wang (1961) 4.5 Mikhail Koganov (2223) 3.0	21.0
2(TX)	IM Eric Chang Liu (2446) 5.0 FM Sharvesh Deviprasath (2540) 5.0 Ellery Zhang (1821) 4.0 Oscar Yihang Zhang (1997) 3.5 Scott Alan Elliott (2085) 3.5	21.0
3(IL)	Anjaneya Sripathy Rao (2205) 5.5 Avi Harrison Kaplan (2319) 5.0 Aiden Linyuan Li (2024) 4.0 Rebecca Cortez (1824) 3.5 Lawrence S Cohen (2000) 3.0	21.0
4(AZ)	IM Sandeep Sethuraman (2479) 5.0 Roshan Sethuraman (2223) 4.5 Aishwarya Lakshmi Ganapathy (1844) 4.0 Sharvesh Arul (1959) 4.0 FM Robby Adamson (2328) 3.5	21.0
5(CA-S)	WFM Angela Liu (2131) 4.5 Glenn Zhang (2058) 4.5 FM Bryan Xie (2337) 4.0 Alex Yuxuan Wang (2324) 4.0 CM Ala'a-Addin Moussa (2200) 3.5	20.5



Photo courtesy of Caroline King
CM Moussa (right) vs. IM Khmeltsky (left) in the Irwin



The Dreaming King Open

January 18-20, 2025

\$20,000 PRIZE FUND (100% Guaranteed)

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6 Rd Swiss, 7 Sections

3-day: G/100 +30 second increment

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OPEN section is FIDE rated (except for 2-day first 3 rounds)

Rounds:

3-day 10 AM & 4 PM Sat, 10 AM & 4:30 PM Sun, 10 AM & 4 PM Mon

2-day 9:30 AM & 11:30 AM & 1:30 PM Sun (merge 4th-6th rounds)

Entry Fees:

\$110 Early Bird Rate if received by 11/30/24

\$130 Regular Rate by 12/23/24

\$150 starting 12/24/24, jumps to \$160 on 1/08

\$170 at door on 1/18 (3-day 8:30-9:30 AM Saturday;

2-day 8:00-9:00 AM Sunday)

\$100 if U1300 or unrated

GMs, WGMs, IMs & WIMs play for free, but \$100 deducted from any prize.

Re-entry fee (3 day to 2 day): \$75; must be U2300

\$15 charge for withdrawals before event starts

Mail entries to: SDCC, PO Box 120162, San Diego CA 92112, or enter online at www.sccchess.com

SCCF Membership required for all So. Cal. residents (\$20 adults, \$15 if under 18 years old)

Two half point byes are OK if requested at least 1 hour before the round, but last round byes must be requested before round 3 and are irrevocable!

Info: Chuck Ensey at (858) 432-8006, or email chucnglo@aol.com

Hotel: Special rate of only \$149-179. Please book early to get the best rate!

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1st: \$2,400

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BU2300: \$1,000-\$600; must be 2000+

U2100

\$1,200-\$600-\$400-\$200; must be 1700+

U1900

\$1,200-\$600-\$400-\$200; must be 1500+

U1700

\$1,200-\$600-\$400-\$200; must be 1300+

U1500

\$1,000-\$600-\$400-\$200

U1300

\$600-\$300-\$200-\$100

U1100

\$600-\$300-\$200-\$100

We will go by the January USCF supplement to determine ratings. No "playing up" allowed for Elite Section. You can pay a \$100 extra fee to "play up" for sections 2, 3 and 4. No restrictions sections 5-7.

Unrated players are not eligible for cash prizes; there are book prizes for the best unrated player in each section.

Provisional players (less than 26 games) can win only 50% of any prize, the balance goes to the remaining prize winners.

Cell phones are not allowed for players in the Open Section, other must keep them turned off
\$25 for forfeits at TD discretion, \$5 cell phone fine if it rings during play.

RANK & FILE

Southern California Chess Federation

P.O. Box 120162
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