

Spring 2025

RANK & FILE

Magazine of the Southern California Chess Federation



Photo courtesy of ICEA Chess

2025 SuperStates winners (from left to right: NM Esther Jou, FM Isaac Wang, FM Benjamin Tang, GM Melikset Khachiyan)

Article continues on page 9

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHESS FEDERATION

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Rank & File Magazine

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3. Be as brief and clear as possible to avoid heavy edits
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4. No PDF formatted articles.
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7. The Editor reserves the right to trim, rewrite, or
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clarity and accuracy.
8. We do not accept political content or ads.
Attach photos to your email in a high-resolution
jpg or png format. This includes games and
notations.

DEADLINE FOR THE Summer 2025 ISSUE IS:
August 31, 2025.

UPCOMING SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EVENTS

Jul. 4-6

Pacific Southwest Open

Irvine, California

Aug. 8-10

30th Annual Pacific Coast Open

Irvine, California

Aug. 29-Sept. 1

Southern California Open

Glendale, California

Oct. 24-26

San Diego Open

San Diego, California

CONTENTS:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Cover Story: 2025 SuperStates (cont. on p.9) | (13) 2025 Senior State Championship |
| (4) Letter from the Board | (15) Scholastic Spotlight:
NM Esther Jou & FM Sihan Tao |
| (5) 2025 SCCF Inter Club Championship | (19) 2025 SCCF Board Elections |
| (7) FM Julian Colville wins 32nd Annual
Western Class | (22) 2025 Pacific Southwest Open |
| (9) 2025 SuperStates Championship | (23) 2025 Southern California Open |

LETTER FROM THE BOARD

The SCCF board had a very busy spring season. Three state championships were organized. First, was the San Diego chess club hosting and winning the 2025 SCCF Inter Club State championship. Ten teams from seven clubs participated. Next, was the SuperStates at the end of March at the historic Biltmore hotel in downtown LA. ICEA organized the event and did a fabulous job. Attendance exceeded last year's event by over 300 participants. The Scholastic and Senior State Championships were contested at SuperStates. Congratulations to Farrokh Hamedani (65+) and GM Melik Khachiyani (50+) on their titles and to scholastic

champions NM Esther Jou (nominated for Haring National Tournament of Girls State Champions), FM Isaac Wang (Denker K-12), FM Benjamin Tang (Barber K-8), and Jacob Wang (Rockefeller K-5). The SuperStates winners will represent SCCF in the 2025 National Tournament of State Champions in Wisconsin starting July 28th.

As this issue went to print, SCCF concluded its invitational State Championship, the strongest in its history. It was won by GM Vladimir Akopian, the highest rated player in SoCal. Six GMs, an IM and an FM participated. Look for detailed

reports with annotated games from the players in the Summer issue of Rank & File.

Lastly, the board encourages SCCF members to participate actively in the upcoming board elections to be conducted in August through eVoting. Eleven candidates have submitted their statements and are included in this issue. These eleven candidates vie for six open seats, chose wisely!

Sincerely,
The SCCF Board



Rank & File Updates

We are pleased to announce a new addition to the Rank & File magazine: the SoCal Connections.

The SoCal Connections aims to recognize the feats of our chess players. The article will act similarly to a written interview, where one answers prompts such as "What is your best chess accomplishment?" From young to old, novice to master, tactical to strategic, all kinds of players may participate in SoCal Connections.

Two players will be featured in each issue. To be included on SoCal Connections one may fill out an online form found on the Rank & File website: scchess.com/randf.html

Additionally, the Rank & File will solidify the Tactical Slugfest as a permanent feature of the magazine. The Rank & File will also continue the tradition of using solely the games of SoCal chess players for the Tactical Slugfest.

Any SCCF member may contribute to the Tactical Slugfest by emailing their game to:

rankandfileeditor@scchess.com or through the R&F website.

These two articles will serve to engage the community and will be implemented starting with the Summer 2025 Issue.

Sincerely,
WFM Angela Liu
Rank & File Editor-in-Chief

2025 SCCF Inter Club State Championship

By Multiple Contributors

The San Diego chess club hosted and won the 2025 SCCF Inter Club State Championship on Sunday, February 16th. Ten teams from seven clubs participated: La Palma, North County, San Diego, San Gabriel Valley, ICEA, Tustin Brewing Company, and San Carlos School District.

The competition consisted of 4 rounds Swiss System on 4 boards, with G45/d5 time control. Three players had perfect scores: NM Vedant Maheshwari of SDCC team A, NM Felix Guo of ICEA, and NM Alaa-addin Moussa of North County chess club. They share selected games below.

Derek Li (1944)

NM Vedant Maheshwari (2207)

2025 SCCF SoCal Inter Club State Championship (2), 0-1

Annotated by NM Maheshwari

This game was a positional tough grind from an equal position. We were both in time trouble starting on move 24, but in the end I slowly brought my queen to f5 (from a8) where I could attack from all directions. Eventually, my protected c4 passed pawn and tactical ideas against his king won the game.

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. cxd5 cxd5 4. Bf4 Nf6 5. Nc3 Nc6 6. e3 a6 7. Bd3 Bg4 8. Nge2 e6 9. a3 Bd6 10. Bxd6 Qxd6 11. Rcl O-O 12. O-O Rac8 13. h3 Bh5 14. Qd2 Na5 15. Qc2 Bxe2 16. Bxe2 b5 17. b4?! Nc4 18. Qa2 Rc6 19. Rc2 Rfc8 20. Rfc1 Nb6?! 21. Qb3 g6 22. Bd3 Kg7 Prophylaxis. 23. Nd1 Nc4 24. Bxc4 bxc4 25. Qb2 Ne4 26. Nc3 Nxc3 27. Qxc3 Rb6 28. Rb2 Rcb8?! 29. Rcb1 Qc6 30. Qc2 a5 31. bxa5 Rxb2! 32. Rxb2 Rxb2 33. Qxb2 Qa4! 34. Qb8! Qxa5 35. Qe5+! Kf8 36. Qb8+?! Ke7 37. Kf1? Qxa3 38. Qc7+ Kf8 39. Qb8+ Kg7 40. Qe5+ Kg8 41. Qb8+ Qf8 42. Qc7 h6 43. Ke2 0-1

#	Name	Rating	Rd 1	Rd 2	Rd 3	Rd 4	Total
1	SAN DIEGO CHESS CLUB - TEAM A	2170	W7 (w)	W2 (b)	W3 (w)	W5 (b)	4
2	SAN GABRIEL VALLEY CHESS CLUB - TEAM B	1914	W4 (w)	L1 (w)	D8 (b)	W9 (b)	2.5
3	SAN DIEGO CHESS CLUB - TEAM B	2030	W9 (b)	D5 (w)	L1 (b)	W8 (w)	2.5
4	ICEA CHESS	2099	L2 (b)	W8 (w)	D5 (b)	W6 (w)	2.5
5	SAN GABRIEL VALLEY CHESS CLUB - TEAM A	2057	W6 (w)	D3 (b)	D4 (w)	L1 (w)	2
6	LA PALMA CHESS CLUB	1906	L5 (b)	W10 (w)	W7 (w)	L4 (b)	2
7	TUSTIN BREWING COMPANY CHESS CLUB	1946	L1 (b)	W9 (w)	L6 (b)	W10 (w)	2
8	NORTH COUNTY CHESS CLUB - TEAM A	2020	W10 (w)	L4 (b)	D2 (w)	L3 (b)	1.5
9	NORTH COUNTY CHESS CLUB - TEAM B	1788	L3 (w)	L7 (b)	W10 (b)	L2 (w)	1
10	SAN CARLOS DISTRICT CHESS CLUB	870	L8 (b)	L6 (b)	L9 (w)	L7 (b)	0



Photo courtesy of Irina Nizmutdinova

2025 SCCF Inter Club State Championship

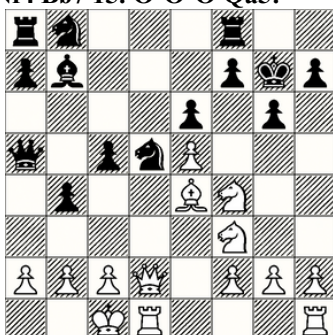
NM Vedant Maheshwari (2207)

NM Christian Silvestre (2190)

2025 SCCF SoCal Inter Club State Championship (3), 1-0

Annotated by NM Maheshwari

1. d4 d6 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nc3 g6 4. e4 Bg7 5. Bf4 O-O 6. Qd2 c6?! 7. Bh6 b5 8. Bd3 b4? 9. Ne2 c5? 10. Bxg7 Kxg7 11. e5! dxe5 12. dxe5 Nd5 13. Be4?! e6 14. Nf4 Bb7 15. O-O-O Qa5?



16. Nh5+!! My opponent sat in disbelief for some time before resigning. 1-0

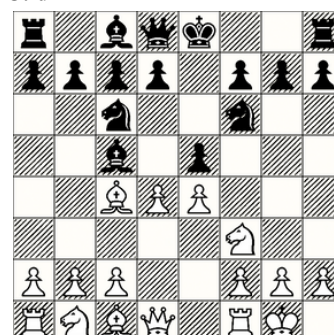
NM Felix Guo (2208)

George Huang (1925)

2025 SCCF SoCal Inter Club State Championship (3), 1-0

Annotated by NM Guo

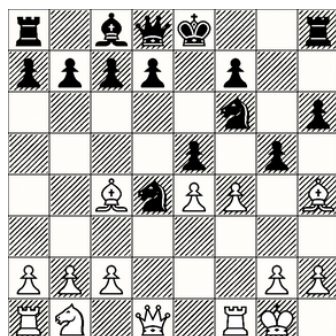
1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. O-O Nf6 5. d4



A very interesting gambit that is hard to refute. 5...Bxd4 6. Nxd4 Nxd4 7. Bg5 h6 8. Bh4 g5?

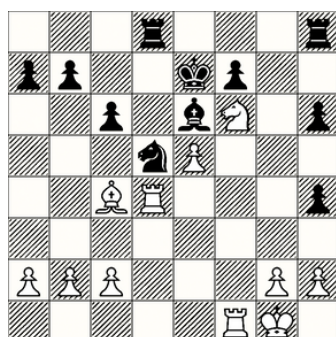
This move looks natural, but it is actually a mistake.

9. f4!!



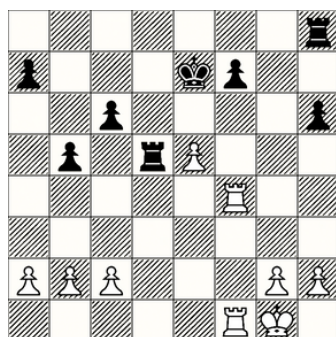
9...d5 (9...gxh4 10. fxe5 the rook is opened with many threats to come.) (9...gxf4 10. Rxh4!! exf4 11. Qxd4 the knight on f6 will fall and Black's position is collapsing)

10. exd5 Nxd5 11. fxe5 gxh4 12. Qxd4 Be6 13. Nd2!! c6? (13...Nb6! Black is holding on.) 14. Ne4 Qb6 15. Rad1 Qxd4+ 16. Rxd4 Ke7 17. Nf6 Rad8 Here I thought for a while deciding whether I should take on d5 with my knight or bishop or play Rd1.

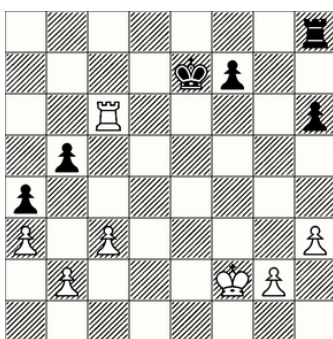


18. Bxd5 I rejected 18. Nxd5+ because after 18...cxd5 19. Bb3, Black has potential counterplay with 19...h3, and it's hard for me to find something since Black can follow up with ...Rd7, ...Rd8 with a solid defense.

18...Bxd5 19. Rxh4 b5 20. Nxd5+ Rxd5 21. Rhf4



Important move. Sometimes, the best defense is offense. 21...Rh7 22. Rf6 Again, not defending the e5 pawn. I am more than happy to trade my weak e5 pawn for another. To avoid the trade, Black must force their strong rook on d5 to a more passive position. 22...Rc5 23. c3 a5 24. a3 a4 25. h3 Rc4 26. Rd1 Re4 27. Rd2 I could take on c6, but I was trying to limit all counterplay for Black. The easiest way to win is blocking your opponent's counterplay and taking your time. 27...Rxe5 28. Rxc6 Rh8 29. Kf1 Rf5+ 30. Rf2 Rxf2+ 31. Kxf2



I don't mind a rook trade because

I get rid of my bad rook for his good rook. Now I have a good rook vs bad rook. 31...Rd8 32. Ke3 Rd6 33. Rxd6 Kxd6 Material imbalances in pawn endgames are usually a win, and this is no exception. 34. Kd4 h5 35. g3 f6 36. g4 hxg4 37. hxg4 Ke6 38. Kc5 Ke5 39. Kxb5 Kf4 40. c4 Kxg4 41. c5 f5 42. c6 f4 43. c7 f3 44. c8=Q+ Kg3 45. Qc1 Kg2 46. Qg5+ Kf1 47. Kxa4 f2 48. b4 Ke2 49. Qb5+ Ke1 50. Qe5+ 1-0



Photo courtesy of Irina Nizmutdinova
2025 SCCF Inter Club State Championship



Photo courtesy of Christ Roberts
San Diego Chess Club Team A wins 2025 SCCF Inter Club State Championship. (from left to right: CM Gattani, NM Kryazhev, CM Rosenstock, and NM Maheshwari)

FM Julian Colville Wins 32nd Western Class Open

By FM Julian Colville

Editor's note: The 32nd Annual Western Class was held on March 7-9, 2025. The tournament was split into seven sections, that being Master, Expert, and Class A-E. FM Julian Colville came in clear first place in the Master Section, even above GMs Mikaelyan and Tsegmed. Colville shares his games here.

Before the tournament, I was coming off of a successful Southwest Class Championship, in which I drew a GM for the first time and gained ~30 FIDE rating points. I achieved National Master a few months ago after being stuck at the 2100s for over a year.

In both of the first two games, I collected a pawn fairly early and won relatively smoothly from there.

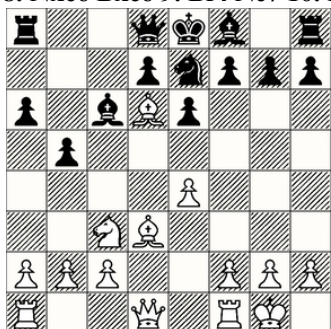
In round 3 I was paired against FM Tommy Wen. We were among many players with 2/2 going into the round.

FM Julian Colville (2307)

FM Tommy Wen (2368)

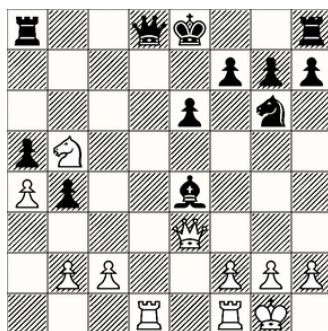
Western Class Championship (3), 1-0
Annotated by FM Colville

1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 e6 3. Nge2 a6 4. d4 cxd4 5. Nxd4 By inducing e6 before playing d4, Black can no longer play the Najdorf. 5...b5 6. Bd3 Bb7 7. O-O Nc6 8. Nxc6 Bxc6 9. Bf4 Ne7 10. Bd6



Attempting to trade dark-squared bishops as most of Black's pawns are placed on light squares.

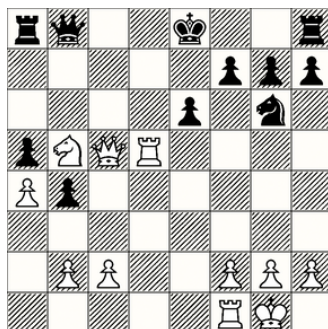
10...Ng6 11. Bxf8 Nxf8 Preserving the right to castle 12. a4 b4 13. Ne2 Ng6 14. Qd2 a5 Defending the b4 pawn while preventing a5 from White, fixing the a6 pawn on a light square. 15. Nd4 Bb7 16. Nb5 d5?! While this does stop Nd6+, it has tactical problems. 17. Qe3 Threatening e5 to entomb Black's bishop. 17... dxe4? 18. Bxe4 Bxe4 19. Rad1



He must have overlooked this in-between move. If Black simply moves the queen, then Nd6+ prevents castling, and the bishop will be captured next.

19...Bd5 20. Rxd5! This is the point. The e-pawn is pinned, and 20...Qxd5 is impossible due to 21. Nc7+, forking the queen and king. 20...Qb8?? The wrong square for the queen. (20...Qe7 kept the game within reach.)

21. Qc5!! Preventing castling, but at the cost of a rook.



21...exd5 22. Re1+ Kd7 (22... Ne5 23. Nc7+ Kd8 24. Rxe5 Qxc7 25. Qxd5+ Kc8 26. Qxa8+ Kd7 27. Qe4 The Black king is far too exposed, and Black is completely lost.)

23. Qxd5+ Kc8 24. Rd1 Threatening Qd7# and Qc6+. 24...Ra7 25. Qf5+ Kb7 26. Rd7+ Kb6 27. Rd6+ (27. Rxa7 Qe5 Gives Black decent chances to hold) 27...Qxd6 (27...Kb7 28. Qe4+ Kc8 29. Qg4+ Kb7 30. Rd7+ Kb6 31. Qd4+ And Black is mated.) Black is still completely lost as his king is unsafe and his pawns are weak.

28. Nxd6 Re7 29. Nc4+ Kc6 30. Nxa5+ Kd6 31. Nc4+ Kc6 32. Qb5+ Kc7 33. Qa5+ Kd7 34. Nb6+ Kc6 35. Qb5+ Kd6. 36. Qxb4+ Kc6 37. Qb5+ Kd6 38. Nc4+ Kc7 39. h3 Eliminating all of White's back rank problems. 39...Rb8 40. Qa5+ Kc6 41. Qa6+ Kc7 42. Qd6+ Kc8 43. Nb6+ Kb7 44. Nd5 Re6 45. Qd7+ 1-0

I thought I played quite well in this game. I didn't make any major mistakes, while capitalizing on his.

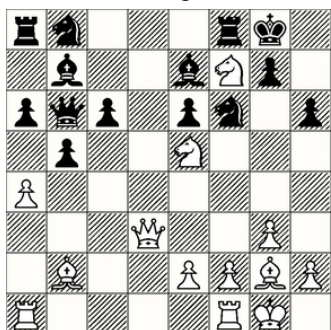
GM Arman Mikaelyan (2574)

FM Julian Colville (2307)

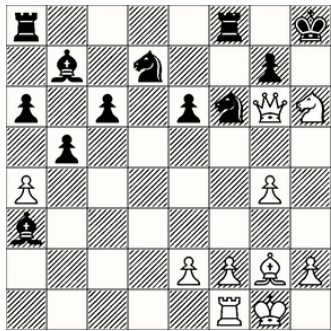
Western Class Championship (4), 0-1
Annotated by FM Colville

1. Nf3 Going into this round, we were the only people with 3/3. I had expected this move, figuring that he would play d4 with a different move order to try to get me out of book. 1... d5 2. d4 e6 3. c4 c6 4. g3 Nf6 5. Bg2 dxc4 The most challenging way to play. Black grabs a pawn and tries to hold on to it for as long as possible. 6. O-O b5 7. Ne5 Bb7 8. a4 a6 9. b3 cxb3 10. Qxb3 Qxd4 I did not see a concrete reason why I couldn't take the d4 pawn. Both the knight on e5 and the rook on a1 are hanging, so the next move is forced.

11. Bb2 Qb4 12. Qc2 Qc5 13. Qd3 It was important for White to avoid a queen trade, being down two pawns. 13...Be7 14. Nd2 O-O 15. Ne4 Qb6 16. Ng5! The only move to maintain equality for White. Ng4 is now threatened by White, undermining the defense of the h7 pawn. 16...h6 17. Ngxf7! Once again the only good move. For the cost of a piece, White has severely weakened the light squares around Black's king, although the position is still equal.



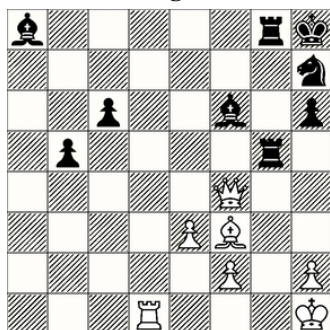
17...Rxf7 18. Qg6 Rf8 19. Ng4 Threatening 20. Bxf6 Bxf6 21. Be4, and Black is mated. 19...Qc5? (19. c5 was better, stopping Be4 forever) 20. Nxh6+ Kh8 21. Nf7+ Kg8 22. Nh6+ Kh8 23. g4 Stopping ...Qh5 which would have forced a queen trade. 23...Nbd7 24. Nf7+ Kg8 25. Nh6+ Kh8 26. Ra3? (26. g5 Ne5 27. Bxe5 Qxe5 28. Nf7+ Rxf7 29. Qxf7 Nd5 30. e4 Rf8 31. Qh5+ Kg8 32. exd5 and White is better.) 26...Qxa3 The only move to stop 27. Rh3, where Black has no way to stop mate. 27. Bxa3 Bxa3



28. Nf7+ Kg8 29. Nh6+ Kh8 30. Qd3?? White had to continue repeating and force the draw, as the queen as Black's

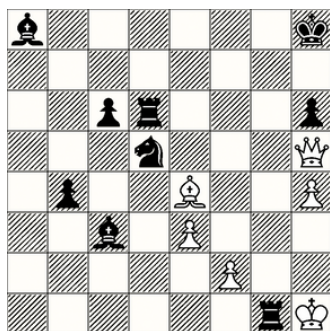
rook and two pieces are clearly superior to the queen.

30...Be7 31. g5 gxh6 32. gxf6 Nxf6 33. Qg6 Nh7 34. Qxe6 Bf6 35. Qd7 Rb8 36. Kh1 Rg8 37. Qc7 Ba8 38. Qf4 Rbe8 39. e3 The e2 pawn is much more important to White than the h6 pawn. 39...Rg5 40. axb5 axb5! Keeping the light squared bishops on the board is essential. If Black can force the White bishop off of the h1-a8 diagonal, White's king will be weak forever. 41. Rd1 Reg8 42. Bf3



The only square for the White bishop. 42. Be4 fails to 42...Rg4 43. Qf5 Rxe4 44. Qxe4 c5 45. Rd5 Ng5 46. Qf5 Bxd5+ 47. Qxd5 Nh3 White has no way to stop Rg1# and has to give up the queen.

42...Be5 43. Qh4 R5g6 44. Qe7 Bd6 (If 45. Rxd6 Rg1#) 45. Qd7 Bb8 46. h4 Nf6 47. Qf7 Be5 48. Qe7 Bc3 49. Rc1 Nd5 50. Qa7 (50. Bxd5? exd5 51. Rxc3 d4+ 52. Kh2 dxc3, and Black has two rooks and a bishop for the queen.) 50...b4 51. Qd7 Be5 52. Qf5 Bb2 53. Rb1 Rf6 54. Qh5 Bc3 55. Be4 Rd6 56. Rg1 Rxg1+? This loses almost all of Black's advantage as the Black king is now forced to run out into the open.



(56...Bg7 was better, keeping rooks on the board.) 57. Kxg1 Nf6 58. Qxh6+ Kg8 59. Qg6+? (Bh7+ forced the Black king farther out into the open.) 59...Kf8 60. Qh6+ Ke7 61. Qg7+ Ke6 62. Bc2 c5 63. h5? (Qc7 was better, targeting the Black passed pawns.) 63...c4 64. Qc7 Bc6? (This allows 65. Bf5+ Ke5 66. Qe7+ Kd5 67. e4 Kc5 68. e5, where Black is forced to give back a piece. The position should be equal. 64...Bd5 was better, defending the c4 pawn.) 65. Qc8+?? Missing White's last hope to secure a half point. 65...Ke7 66. Qc7+ Nd7 67. Qa5 Rd5 68. Qa6 Rg5+ 69. Kf1 Bf3! Black now threatens ...Rxxh5 followed by ...Rh1#. 70. Bg6 Rd5 0-1 (71. Bc2 Rxxh5 and checkmate is unstoppable.)

I was very pleased with my play. I defended his attack well, although not perfectly, and applied pressure when up material without over-pressing. Despite being a player who often plays too quickly, I managed my time well, leaving enough to convert after stabilizing, for my first win against a Grandmaster. In round 5, I was a point ahead of 2nd place Siddharth Singh who I was playing that round. Despite just needing a draw to win the tournament, I was winning out of the opening. Unfortunately, I missed a stunning queen sacrifice a few moves down the line, where I was forced to bail out into a pawn down knight endgame. Despite my anxious start, I ended up drawing the endgame and winning the tournament.



GM Mikaelian (left) vs. FM Colville (right) Round 4

2025 SuperStates Championship: A Record-Breaking Celebration of Chess Excellence

By NM Felix Guo

The 2025 Southern California SuperStates Championship was held by ICEA Chess for the first time at the historic Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, offering a grand and elegant setting befitting the largest SoCal state chess event of the year. The tournament drew a record-breaking 1,010 players, with more than 100 schools/clubs competing across all sections. This significant increase in participation compared to previous years demonstrates the growing enthusiasm for scholastic and senior chess in the region.

Scholastic State Championships

A total of 220 scholastic players competed in the Championship Section, which was divided into five grade-based categories: K-12, K-8, K-5, K-3, and K-1. These top players faced off in six intense rounds over two days, vying not only for state titles but also for the honor of representing Southern California at the National Invitational Tournaments this summer in Wisconsin.

(Note: The K-1 and K-3 sections were not part of the national qualifier selection.)

The winners of the following sections earned invitations to prestigious national events:

K-12 Champion → Denker Tournament of High School Champions

K-8 Champion → Barber Tournament of Middle School Champions

K-5 Champion → Rockefeller Tournament of Elementary School Champions

Top Girl in K-12 → Haring National Girls Invitational Tournament



Photo courtesy of ICEA Chess

K-12 Top 5 (from left to right: FM Tommy Wen, Yanfeng Guo, NM David Gasparyan, FM Sihan Tao, FM Isaac Wang, and Jay Stallings)

SoCal Representatives for National Invitionals

Tournament	SoCal Representative	Alternative
Denker High School State Champions	FM ISAAC WANG	FM SIHAN TAO
Haring Girls State Champions	NM ESTHER JOU	WCM AVERY YU
Barber Middle School State Champions	FM BENJAMIN BEN TANG	GLENN ZHANG
Rockefeller Elementary School State Champions	JACOB S WANG	BENJAMIN YU
Irwin Senior State Champions	GM MELIKSET KHACHIYAN	NM REYNALD DEL PILAR

Junior Varsity Sections

In addition to the Championship Sections, SuperStates also featured Junior Varsity Sections to expand chess opportunities for more students and encourage broader participation in this annual chess festival. The Junior Varsity Section welcomed 427 players and was divided into five sections based on grade level and rating. These sections were designed to provide a more accessible and supportive environment for developing players. Each JV section played five double-round games over the course of two days, fostering both competition and growth for emerging chess talent.

One-Day Events

The tournament also included two One-Day Scholastic Events held on Saturday and Sunday. Each day featured both rated and unrated sections, attracting 182 players on Saturday and 150 players on Sunday. These one-day events offered a fun, low-pressure environment for new players to gain tournament experience and enjoy the spirit of competitive chess.

ICEA Scholarship

To support these champions for Nationals, as the organizer, ICEA is proud to offer a scholarship of up to \$1,000 per representative to help cover travel expenses. This initiative aims to remove financial barriers and ensure our top players have the opportunity to compete on the national stage.

Selected Games

We're excited to share a selection of games played by our champions, showcasing their outstanding performance and strategic brilliance throughout the tournament.



Photo courtesy of ICEA Chess

2025 SuperStates K-8 Top 5 and Coach Jay Stallings

FM Benjamin Tang (2244)

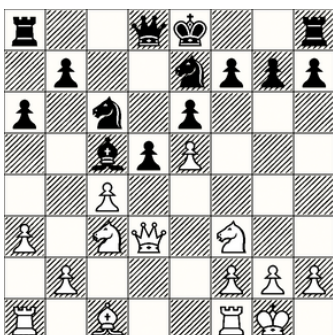
Arya Borumand (1622)

2025 SuperStates K-8 Scholastic Championship (1), 1-0

Annotated by FM Tang

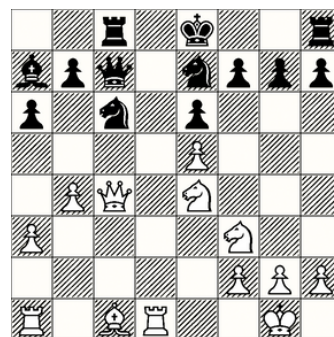
In the first round of the Superstates, I thought that the game would be a clean and easy win. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth.

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 Bd7 4. Nf3 a6!? My opponent first surprises me with this offbeat opening, aiming to go ...Bb5 and trade his bad light squared bishop with my good one. **5. Bd3 Bb5 6. O-O Bxd3 7. Qxd3 c5 8. dxc5 Bxc5 9. c4** Standard idea to provoke 9...d4 or 9...dxc4, in order for my knight to go to e4. **9...Ne7 10. Nc3 Nbc6 11. a3?!**



(Here, I missed the brilliant 11...Bd4!, "sacrificing" the piece. After I take his bishop, he can take my pawn on c4 and regain the piece, thus fully equalizing. Luckily, my opponent didn't see it.)

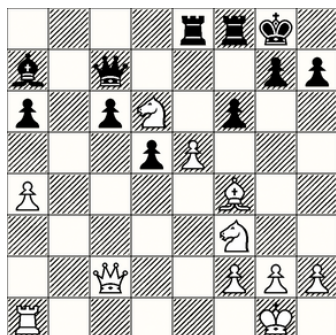
11...Ba7?! 12. Rd1 dxc4 13. Qxc4 Qc7 14. b4!? An interesting plan, although the engine doesn't like it. My idea was to go b4-b5, then Nxb5 to control d6 with a tempo. **14...Rc8?! 15. Ne4!**



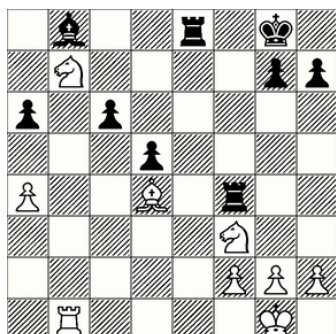
15...O-O 16. Nd6 Rcd8 17. Bf4?! (17. Bb2 was better as 17...Nd5 no longer comes with a tempo.) **17...Nc8? 18. a4!** Now, I have a clear advantage. **18...Nb6 19. Qc2?**

(Surprisingly, 19...Nd5 is the only reason that Black is not losing, as after 20.Rxd5 b5, Black can follow up with ...f6 and ...fxe5. This was the reason the engine prefers 19. Qe4 over 19. Qc2, as with 19. Qe4, White can attack the king with Ng5.)

19...Nd5! 20. Rxd5 exd5 21. b5 f6! White barely retains an advantage **22. bxc6 bxc6??** (My opponent misses 22...fxe5, with the idea of regaining the piece after 23. Bxe5 Rxd6) **23. Nf5 Rde8 24. Nd6?**

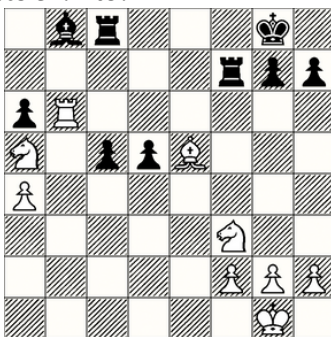


A careless move after I thought that I had already screwed up and wanted to go back to my original position, but Black can play 24...Re6 and its very tricky for White. (In reality, I should have gone 24. Re1! to solidify my kingside.) 24...Rd8? Now, I have plenty of ways to win here, including reverting back to Nf5, or going Rb1 to infiltrate the b-file. However, what I did was just completely incorrect. 25. Qf5?? Qe7!= 26. Rb1 fxe5 27. Qxe5 Qxe5?! 28. Bxe5 Bb8?! 29. Nb7 Rde8 30. Bd4 Rf4



After a sequence of mistakes from my opponent, it looks like I am completely winning again. For example, I can go h3 to remove my back rank weakness, and proceed with moves like a5, Kf1, and Rc1, taking it slow. However, I proceeded too fast and thought to gain the pawn with Na5. Sadly, this does not work as Black can counter with the simple c5! 31. Na5?? Rc8? (31...c5!) My opponent misses it. (Yet I still don't take advantage of his error by going 32.Nxc6 and simply taking a pawn. Instead, I miscalculated 32. Rb7, believing 32...Rf7 33. Rxf7 Kxf7 34. Nxc6 wins a pawn. However, 34...Rxc6 35. Ne5+ Bxe5 was what I missed.)

32.Rb7?? Rf7 33. Rb6 Now equal. 33...c5 34. Be5?



34...Bxe5? (34...Rxf3, and Black is even better.) 35. Nxe5 Re7 36. f4 g5?! 37.Nac6! Re6?? We are already low on time, and my opponent finally makes a detrimental error that I managed to convert. 38. f5! comes with a tempo and easily wins the game. Ree8 39. f6 Re6 40. Ne7+ 1-0

Overall, my first game to the Superstates was very unclear, as it could have easily been turned around if my opponent saw Rxf3, and I missed many wins. Luckily, my opponent failed to capitalize on my mistakes. Overall, my opponent played well, especially with his rating of 1600, and I played poorly, making several errors, and failing to convert positions.

FM Isaac Wang (2428)

IM Ming Lu (2339)

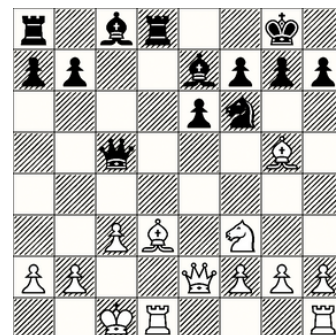
2025 SuperStates K-12 Scholastic Championship (4), 1-0

Annotated by FM Wang

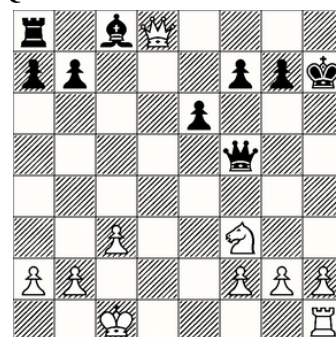
1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bg5 dxe4 5. Nxe4 Nbd7 6. Nxf6+ Nxf6 7. Nf3 Be7 8. Bd3



8...O-O?! (8...c5 9. dxc5 Qa5+ 10. c3 Qxc5 11. Qe2 Bd7 12. O-O-O Rd8) 9. Qe2 c5 10. dxc5 Qa5+ 11. c3 Qxc5 12. O-O-O Rd8?!



(12...Qc7 13. Ne5 b6 14. h4 Bb7 15. Kb1 Rad8) 13. Bxf6 Bxf6 14. Bxh7+! Kxh7 15. Rxd8 Bxd8 16. Qd3+ Qf5 17. Qxd8

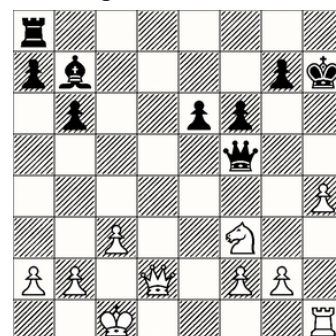


17...b6?

(17...f6 18. Rd1 e5 19. b3!? b6 (19...e4? 20. Rd4! Qc5 21. Kb2! b6 22. Nd2+-) 20. c4 Bb7)

18. h4? (18. Ng5+ Kg6 19. h4 Qf4+ 20. Kb1 Bb7 21. Qe7! Bxg2 22. h5+ Kh6 23. Nxf7+ Kh7 24. Ng5+ Kh6 25. Qxe6+ Qf6 26. Rg1+-)

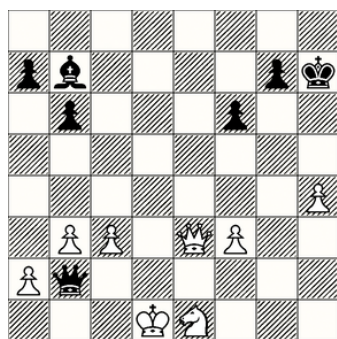
18...f6! 19. Qd2 Bb7



20. Qe3?! (20. Re1 e5 21. Qc2 Qxc2+ 22. Kxc2 Kg6 23. Nd2)

20...e5 21. Ne1 Rd8 22. f3 e4 23. Rf1 Qb5 24. Rf2 Qa4 25. b3 Qa3+ 26. Rb2

26...exf3 27. gxf3 Rd1+ 28. Kxd1
Qxb2 29. Qd2



29...Qxd2+?! (29...Qa1+ 30. Ke2 Bc6
31. Kf2 Be8=)
30. Kxd2 Kg6 31. Ke3 Kh5 32. Ng2
Bc6 33. Kf4 Bb7 34. c4 Bc6 35. a3
a5?? (35...g5+ 36. hgx5 fxg5+ 37. Ke3
Kg6 38. Ne1 Kf5 39. Nd3 a6 40. b4
Ba4=) 36. b4 axb4 37. axb4 Bd7
38. Ne3 Be6 39. Kg3 g5 40. hgx5 fxg5
41. b5 1-0

NM Alex Wang (2327)

NM Esther Jou (2168)

2025 SuperStates K-12 Scholastic
Championship (6), 0-1

Annotated by NM Jou

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. g3 dxc4
5. Bg2 Nbd7 6. Qa4 a6 7. Qxc4 b5
8. Qc6 Rb8 (8...Ra7) 9. Bf4 Bb7
(9...Nd5 10. Bg5 Be7 11. Bxe7 Qxe7)
10. Qxc7 Qxc7 11. Bxc7 Bb4+
12. Nbd2 Rc8 13. Bf4 Rc2

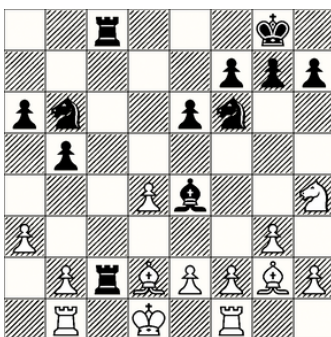


14. Rb1

(14. a3 Bxd2+ 15. Bxd2 Rxb2)
14...Be4? (14...Bxd2+ 15. Bxd2 O-O
16. Nh4 Ne4)
15. a3? (15. O-O Bxf3 16. Nxf3

Rxe2)

15...Bxd2+ 16. Bxd2 O-O 17. Nh4
Rfc8 18. Kd1? Nb6 19. Rf1?



19...Rxd2+ 20. Kxd2 Nc4+ 21. Kc3
(21. Ke1 Bxb1) 21...Nxa3+ 22. Kb4
Nxb1 23. Bxe4 Nd2 24. Bb7 Rc4+ 0-1

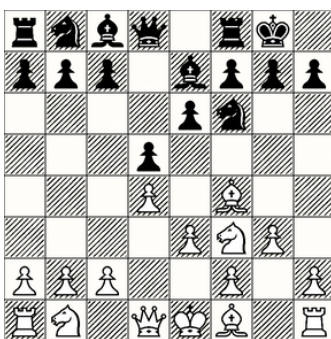
Arnav Thoppai (1531)

Jacob Wang (2041)

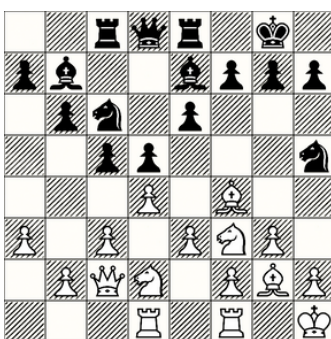
2025 SuperStates K-5 Scholastic
Championship (5), 0-1

Annotated by Wang

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Bf4 e6 4. e3 Be7
5. g3?!



5...O-O 6. Bg2 c5 7. O-O Nc6 8. Nbd2
b6 9. c3 Bb7 10. Qc2?! Rc8 11. a3
Re8?! 12. Rad1 Nh5 13. Kh1?



13...g5 14. g4 Nxf4! 15. exf4 cxd4 16.
f5? e5 17. Qb1 dxc3 18. bxc3 Qc7

19. Rfe1 e4 20. Nd4 Ne5 21. h3 Nd3
22. Rf1 Qxc3 23. f6 Qxd4 24. fxe7
Nxf2+ 25. Rxf2 Qxf2 26. Nxe4 dxe4
27. Qb5 Qc5 28. Qf1 Qxe7 29. Qf5 e3
30. Rd7 Bxg2+ 31. Kxg2 Qe4+ 32.
Qxe4 Rxe4 33. Rd1 e2 34. Re1 Rc1 35.
Rxc1 e1=Q 36. Rxe1 Rxe1 37. Kf2
Ra1 38. Kg2 Rxa3 39. Kh2?! b5 40.
Kg2 b4 41. h4 b3 42. hgx5 b2 43. g6
b1=R 44. gxf7+ Kf8 45. g5 Rb2+ 46.
Kf1 Ra1# 0-1

Thank You & See You Next Year

The 2025 SuperStates marked a
milestone for Southern California chess
—setting new records in participation
and elevating the standard of
excellence in competition, venue, and
organization. The event brought
together incredible talent and passion
from players of all ages and experience
levels, making it a true celebration of
the chess community.

A heartfelt thank you to all the players,
parents, coaches, volunteers, sponsors,
and tournament staff whose dedication
and support made this event possible.

We look forward to welcoming you
back for an even more exciting
SuperStates in 2026!

About the Author

Felix Guo, a National Master at 13, is
the founder of ICEA Chess. Since 2021,
Felix, alongside his family, has
organized over 60 tournaments across
multiple cities in SoCal, including the
prestigious SuperStates, creating val-
uable opportunities for young players to
compete and hone their skills. Through
ICEA Chess, Felix is committed to
inspiring the next generation of chess
players and making a lasting impact on
the chess community.

GM Melikset Khachiyan Wins SoCal Senior State Championship

By CM Ala'a-Addin Moussa

GM Melikset Khachiyan topped a field of 31 players to win the Southern California 50+ Senior State Championship that was organized by ICEA alongside the Scholastic State Championships (AKA SuperStates) at the Biltmore hotel in downtown LA. With a score of 5½ points in a six round Swiss contested the weekend of March 29th and 30th, GM Khachiyan earned the right to represent Southern California at the Irwin National Tournament of State Champions to be held in Middleton, Wisconsin end of July alongside the US Open.

This is the first time since the introduction of the Irwin in 2018 that the SCCF organized a Senior State Championship to select its representative rather than selecting the highest rated player that accepts the nomination. GM Enrico Sevillano represented Southern California five times between 2018 and 2023, while I did in 2021 and 2024. The winner of

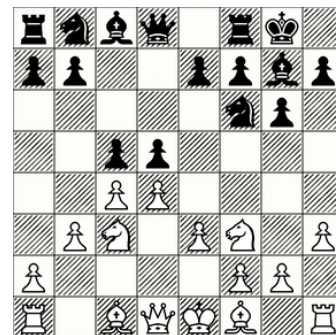
the Irwin is seeded into the following year US Senior Championship which GM Khachiyan won in 2023 and GM Akopian won last year.

Three players tied for best result in the 65+ age group with 3½ points. Farrokh Hamedani landed the title of 65+ Senior State Champion ahead of Thomas Armbruster and Stewart Katz by tiebreak.

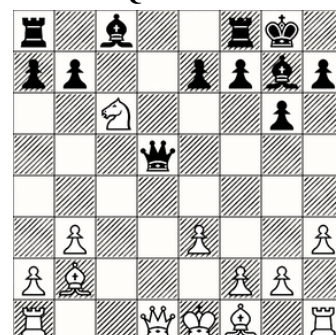
Below is my game vs. GM Khachiyan from round 4 which ended in a draw. GM Khachiyan also annotates his last round win over Ruben Ondangan who tied for 2nd place with Reynaldo Del Pilar and Santy Villanueva with 4.5 points.

CM Ala'a Addin Moussa (2238)
GM Melikset Khachiyan (2479)
2025 SoCal Senior State
Championship (4), ½-½

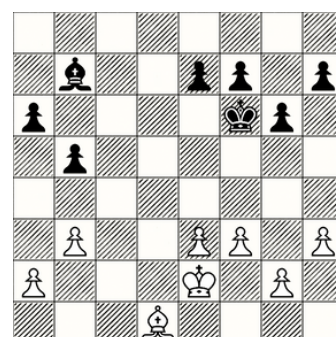
1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. e3 Nf6 4. Nc3 g6 5. h3 Bg7 6. Nf3 O-O 7. b3 c5



8. cxd5 cxd4 9. Nxd4 Nxd5 10. Bb2 Nc6 11. Nxd5 Qxd5 12. Nxc6



Qxc6 13. Bxg7 Kxg7 14. Rc1 Qb6 15. Qd2 Rd8 16. Qc3+ Qf6 17. Qxf6+ Kxf6 18. Bc4 a6 19. Ke2 b5 20. Bd3 Bb7 21. f3 Rd7 22. Rhd1 Rad8 23. Bc2 Rxd1 24. Rxd1 Rxd1 25. Bxd1



e5 26. b4 Bd5 27. a4 Bc4+ 28. Kf2 e4 29. axb5 axb5 30. Bc2 exf3 31. gxf3 Ke5 32. Be4 f5 33. Bc6 f4 34. h4 Bd3 35. Bb7 h6 36. Bc6 Bc4 37. Be4 g5 38. h5 g5 39. Bg6 Kd6 40. Be8 Bd3 41. Bf7 Ke7 42. Bd5 Kf6 43. Bb7 Ke5 44. Bc6 Bc4 45. Be8 Kd6 46. Bg6 1/2-1/2



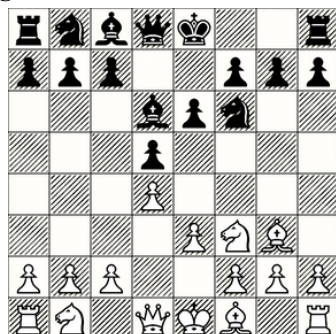
Photo courtesy of ICEA Chess
CM Ala'a-Addin Moussa at 2025 SoCal Senior State Championship

NM Ruben Ondangan (2158)
GM Melikset Khachiyan (2479)

2025 SoCal Senior State
Championship (6), 0-1

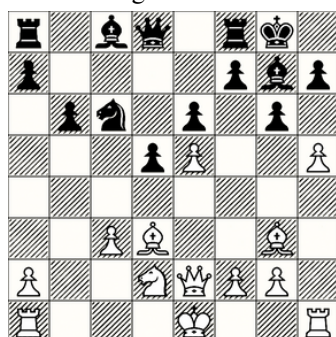
Annotated by GM Khachiyan

1. d4 d5 2. Bf4 Nf6 3. Nf3 e6 4. e3 Bd6
5. Bg3



I actually believe this is not a principal line in this version of London System. It would have been better to play 5. Nbd2 and leave the bishop on f4. 5...O-O 6. Bd3 c5 7. c3 Nc6 8. Nbd2 b6 9. Ne5?! Oldest but not the best move. The new trend is to play e4 right away.

(9. e4 Be7 10. e5 Nh5 11. Ng5 Bxg5 12. Qxh5 g6 13. Qe2 f5 safer compared to principled cxd4. (13...cxd4 14. h4 Bh6 (14...Be7) 15. h5 dxc3 16. bxc3 Bg7



I planned to play this position.)

14. f4 Be7 15. Nf3 cxd4 16. Nxd4 Nxd4 17. cxd4 b5 18. O-O Qb6 19. Bf2 b4 20. Rfcl a5 21. Qc2 Ba6 22. Bxa6 Qxa6 23. Qc6 Rfc8 24. Qxa6 Rxc1+ 25. Rxc1 Rxa6 26. Rc8+ Kf7 27. Be1 Rb6 28. b3 Ra6 29. Kf1 a4 30. Rc7 Ke8 31. Rb7 axb3 32. axb3 Ral 33. Ke2 Ra2+ 34. Kf1 ½-½ Hambleton, A (2497) - Khachiyan, M (2525) Calgary 11th 2018)

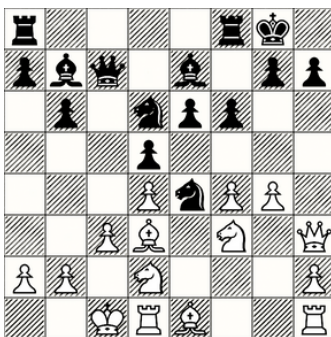
9...Bb7 10. f4



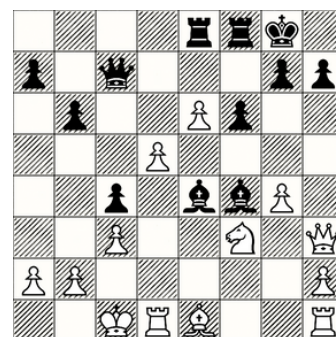
Here my opponent had offered me a draw, quite strange to be honest. 10...Ne7 11. Qf3 Nf5 12. Bf2 Be7 13. Qh3



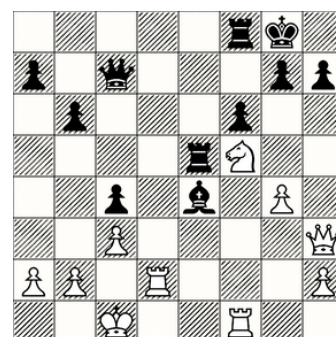
(13. g4 is a bit better, but it is still a dubious position for White since their attack is going nowhere.) 13...Ne4 14. g4 Nfd6 15. O-O-O? My play is on the queenside anyways. (15. g5 Rc8 with comfortable counterplay) 15...cxd4 16. exd4 f6 17. Nef3 Qc7 18. Be1



(18. Rhe1 f5 19. Bg1 Nxc3 20. bxc3 Qxc3+ 21. Bc2 Rac8. One example of how dangerous is White's position on QS.) 18...Nc4 19. Nxc4 dxc4 20. Bc2 Bd6! (20...Qxf4+ 21. Bd2 White has compensation for the pawn.) 21. f5 Rae8 22. fxe6 Bd5! (22...Rxe6?! 23. d5) 23. Bxe4 Bxe4 24. d5 Bf4+



25. Bd2 Bxd5 26. Rhf1 Rxe6 27. Nd4 Bxd2+ 28. Rxd2 Re5 29. Nf5 Be4



30. Rd4 Bd3 31. Rf2 Re1+ 32. Kd2 Rb1 33. b3 Rb2+ 34. Ke1 Re8+ 35. Ne3 cxb3 36. Rxd3 bxa2 37. Rxb2 a1=Q+ 0-1



Photo courtesy of ICEA Chess
Farrokh Hamedani (left) and
GM Melikset Khachiyan (right)

Scholastic Spotlight: NM Esther Jou & FM Sihan Tao

By WFM Angela Liu

Esther Jou is no new name in the Southern Californian chess world. Esther Jou achieved her National Master title after winning the 2024 National Open U2300 in Las Vegas with an almost perfect score of 6½/7. She is also the two-time SoCal Girls Chess Champion and Southern California Representative at the 2023 Haring National Tournament.

NM Jou shares a brilliant double-piece sacrifice game of hers from the 2023 Haring Tournament here

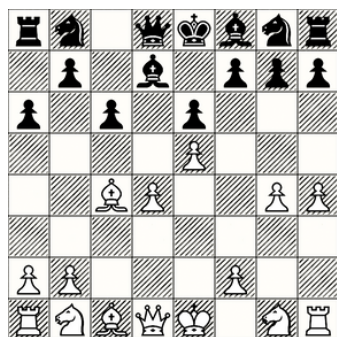
Esther Jou (2123)

WFM Nastassja Matus (2091)

2023 Haring Tournament of Girls State Champions (5), 1-0

Annotated by NM Jou

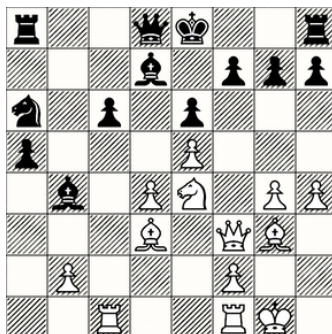
1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 Bf5 4. h4 a6 (4...h6) 5. g4 Bd7 6. c4 dxc4 (6...e6 Black wants to keep the tension here. ...c6-c5 is coming soon and the center will blast open. 7. Be3 c5 8. dxc5 Bc6) 7. Bxc4± e6



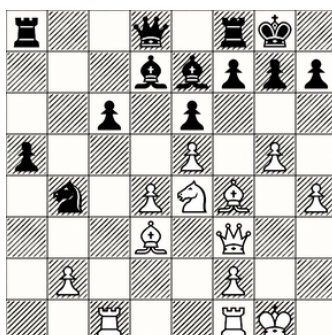
8. Nc3 Qc7 9. Bf4 Ne7 10. Bg3 Nd5 11. Nge2 Be7 12. Rc1 Qd8 13. a3 Nxc3 14. Nxc3± b5 (14...c5! was Black's best attempt, freeing the b8-knight and d7-bishop. 15. d5 exd5 16. Nxd5 O-O) 15. Bd3 b4 16. axb4 Bxb4 17. O-O a5



18. Ne4 Na6 19. Qf3+-

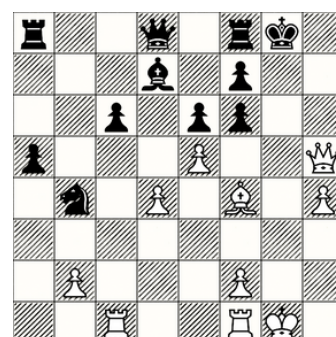


The overwhelming advantage in the center and kingside, combined with Black's pieces all being on the queenside, spells doom for the second player. 19...Be7 20. Bf4 O-O 21. g5 Nb4?



22. Nf6+!! The beginning of a double piece sacrifice. 22...Bxf6 (22...gxf6

23. Bxh7+ Kxh7 24. Qh5+ Kg8 25. g6 fxg6 26. Qxg6+ Kh8 27. Qh5+ with Kh2 and Rg1 next) 23. Bxh7+! Kxh7 24. Qh5+ Kg8 25. gxf6 gxf6



26. Kh1 A good finishing touch: a quiet move to bring the rook in with decisive effect. 26...Re8 27. Rg1+ Kf8 28. Qh6+ Ke7 29. exf6# 1-0



Photo courtesy of Dedian Guo
Esther Jou (left) at 2024 SuperStates Championship

Sihan Tao is a 15 year old FIDE Master residing in Irvine, California. He won the 2023 Pan-American Youth (U14), an international tournament with players from over 20 countries. Sihan is also the 2023 SuperStates K-8 Champion and the runner-up for this year's SuperStates K-12 Championship.

FM Tao shares his 120 move Pan-Am game in 2023 and his SuperStates 2025 game here.

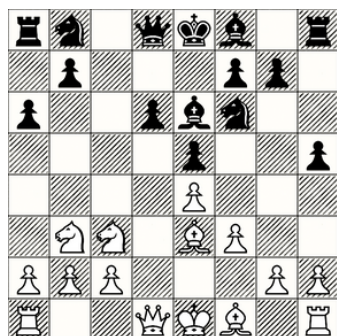
Sihan Tao (2182)

FM Isaac Wang (2401)

2023 Pan American Youth U-14 (5), 1-0

Annotated by FM Tao

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 This came as no surprise as Isaac played the Najdorf almost exclusively at this point. I played the English attack, one of the most common and reliable weapons against the Najdorf. **6. f3 e5 7. Nb3 Be6 8. Be3 h5**

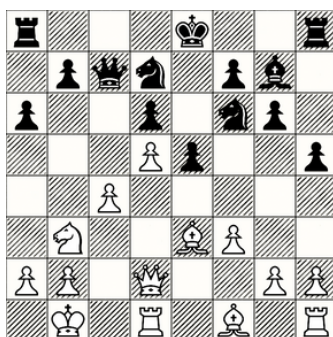


This concept of ...h5 in the English attack became very popular sometime in the 2010s. Black does so to prevent g4 for the time being, but weakens the g5 square and gives White other ideas to play for. **9. Nd5 Bxd5 10. exd5** This structure becomes more appealing for White after Black committed to ...h5. Typically, White seeks to expand on the queenside with c4 and b4, while Black aims to prevent this with ...b6 or ...a5 and expand in the center.



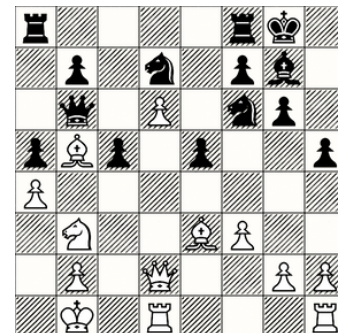
Photo courtesy Deshaun Adams
Renaissance Knights
FM Sihan Tao at 2023 Pan-Am

10...Nbd7 11. Qd2 g6 12. O-O-O Bg7 (12...Nb6 is the main line, and extremely theoretical after both Kb1 and Qa5. Compared to this, 12...Bg7 allows more play for both sides.) **13. Kb1 Qc7 14. c4?!**

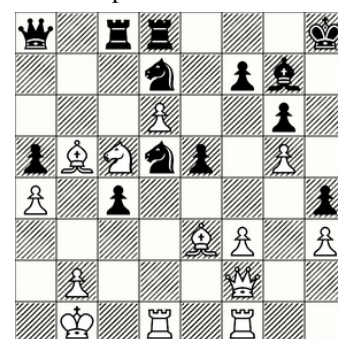


This move actually isn't so precise, as it allows Black to set up a blockade. However, it works out beautifully for me, as you're about to see. **14...a5?** hilariously, just a month or two prior, I played a game which reached this exact position. In that game, I saw the punishment but hesitated and played something else. This time however, I knew the move. (14...b6 Black should play this blockading move to prevent ideas of c5.) **15. c5!** This surprising move is almost crushing. White sacrifices a pawn to establish a bishop on b5. Black has weakened his light squares too much with a5. **15...dxc5 16. Bb5 O-O 17. d6 Qb6 18. a4** in all likelihood, my position is completely

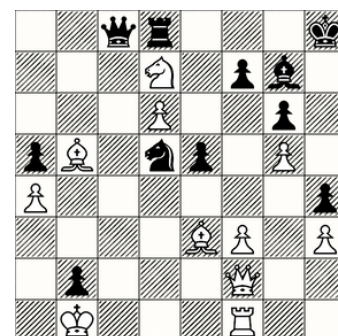
winning at this point. Black is completely paralyzed, and I can play for an eventual g4.



18...Qa7 19. h3 b6 20. g4 Rac8 21. Bc4 Qa8 22. Rhf1 h4 23. Qc2 Kh8 24. Qf2 b5!? This break is clear desperation, as it's nearly impossible to find ideas for Black at this point. I should finish this game very easily here, but that was far from the case. **25. Bxb5 c4 26. Nc5 Rfd8 27. g5** removing the defender of d7, this wins a piece for me **27...Nd5**



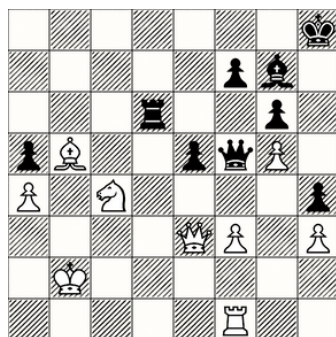
28. Nxd7 (28. Bxd7 winning a tempo on the c8 rook was probably more accurate, even though Nxd7 also wins) **28...c3 29. Rc1?! cxb2 30. Rxc8 Qxc8**



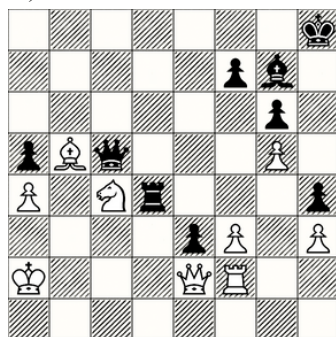
31. Nb6??

At this point, we reached mutual time pressure, and I had already complicated this game significantly

with a series of inaccuracies. However, with this move. I officially lose my winning advantage (31. Nf6! of course, being a piece up, White needs to trade pieces, even at the cost of a pawn.) **31...Qf5+ 32. Kxb2 Nxe3 33. Qxe3 Rxd6 34. Nc4**

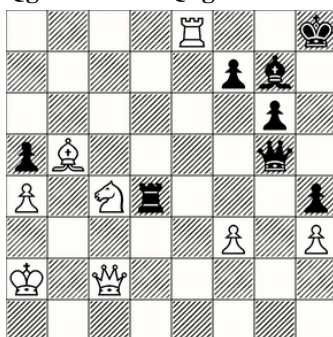


The dust has kind of settled at this point, and despite the extra piece, my king is terrifyingly weak. I think Black is practically better, especially under mutual time pressure. **34...Rd4 35. Rf2 e4** (35...Qxh3 Isaac had many chances to grab my h3 pawn, which I think he should have done. Black's passed h-pawn is just another problem for me to worry about in my limited time.) **36. Ka2 Qc5 37. Qe2** (37. Rc2 This defensive move isn't that hard to spot, to be frank. White's coordination here is much better than in the game, where my rook is trapped to the right of my queen.) **37...e3**

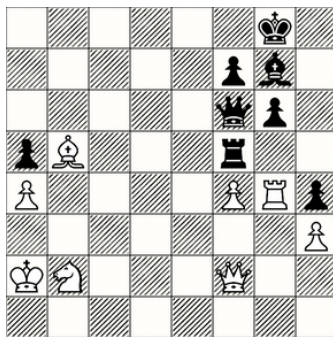


38. Rg2?? (38. Qxe3 Rxc4 39. Qxc5 Rxc5 At this point, I already had to acquiesce to holding this unpleasant position to a draw. I basically refused to accept this result, considering being half a point behind Isaac and

completely winning earlier.) **38...Qb4??** (38...Rd2+ I spotted this basically when I pressed my clock. Things like this happen so much and I don't know why. This just wins on the spot, and I let out a huge sigh of relief when he missed this. 39. Nxd2 Qc2+ 40. Ka3 Qb2#) **39. Qc2** now, I'm starting to coordinate. **39...Qe1 40. Re2 Qg3 41. Rxe3 Qxg5 42. Re8+**

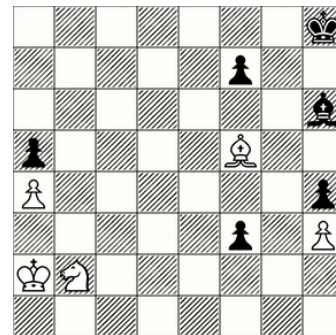


42...Kh7 43. Re4 I did a bunch of funny things like this in this phase of the game, pushing his king to h7 before playing Re4. There not too much to read into, I just did so to gain more time, as his king placement should be inconsequential. **43...Rd5 44. Rg4 Qf6 45. Nb2 Rf5 46. Qf2?! Kg8 47. f4**



47...g5?? This move forces some exchanges which should significantly benefit me, due to my weak king (47...Rc5 Black gets counterplay with Rc3 here. This was his only chance to stay in the game, and three results are still possible.) **48. Bd3 Rxf4 49. Rxf4 gxf4 50. Qc2 f3 51. Qc8+ Bf8 52. Qg4+** (52. Qf5 I could have played this immediately, but I gave some

random checks just to gain more time.) **52...Kh8 53. Qh5+ Bh6 54. Qf5 Qxf5 55. Bxf5**



Now I'm completely out of the woods, as the queens have been traded. This endgame was actually a lot easier to win than I initially realized, even though I didn't even play it too accurately **55...Kg7 56. Nd3 Be3 57. Be4 f2 58. Bg2 Kf6 59. Kb3 Kf5 60. Kc2 f1=Q** forced, as otherwise Black's king cannot enter **61. Bxf1 Ke4 62. Bg2+ Kd4 63. Bc6 Bg5 64. Ne1 Ke3 65. Nf3 Bd8 66. Kc3 f5 67. Ne1** I'm coordinating quite poorly here, and I lose h3 as a result. The position is still winning though, and it helps that the a pawn is of the right color for my bishop **67...Kf2 68. Kd2 Bg5+ 69. Kd1 Kg3 70. Ke2 Kxh3 71. Kf3 Kh2 72. Bd7 f4 73. Ng2** (73. Kf2 This would have been a funny way to end the game. I was too tired at this point to spot concrete ideas like this, but Ng2 still wins easily **73...Bf6 74. Nf3+ Kh1 75. Bh3 Bd4+ 76. Kf1 Bf2 77. Bg2#**) **73...Kg1 74. Nxf4 Kf1 75. Kg4 Be7 76. Ng6 Bd8 77. Bb5+ Kf2 78. Nxf4 Ke3 79. Nf3 Be7 80. Bc6 Kd3 81. Ne5+ Kd4 82. Nd7 Bd8 83. Kf5 Be7 84. Ke6 Bb4 85. Kf7 Bd6 86. Ke8 Kc4 87. Kd8 Kb4 88. Kc8 Be7 89. Bb5 Bd6 90. Kb7 Be7 91. Kc7 Bg5 92. Kb6 Bd8+ 93. Ka6 Bc7 94. Kb7 Bd8 95. Nb8 Kc5 96. Ka6 Kd6 97. Nc6 Bg5 98. Kxa5 Kc7 99. Ka6 Be3 100. Nb4 Kb8 101. Nd5 Bg1 102. Bc6 Bf2 103. Kb5 Bg1 104. Nb4 Bf2 105. Be4 Bg1 106. Nc6+ Kc7 107. a5 Bf2 108. a6 Bg1**

109. Nb4 (109. a7 It is worth noting this funny motif, similar to 73. Kf2. However, Isaac would have certainly taken on a7, and I was desperately trying to avoid having to win bishop and knight after over 4 hours of play. 109...Kb7 110. a8=Q+ Kxa8 111. Ka6 Bb6 112. Bf5 Ba7 113. Bc8 Bb6 114. Bb7#) **109...Kb8 110. Bb7 Kc7 111. Nd5+ Kb8 112. Kc6 Ba7 113. Kd7 Bc5 114. Ne7 Ka7 115. Nc6+ Kb6 116. Bc8 Kb5 117. Kc7 Kc4 118. Kb7 Kb5 119. Bh3 Kc4 120. Bf1+ Kd5 121. Na7 1-0** With Nc8-b6, followed by a7, Black is forced to resign. I won two more and drew two more games in the tournament, winning the 2023 Pan-American Youth Championship.

FM Sihan Tao (2290)

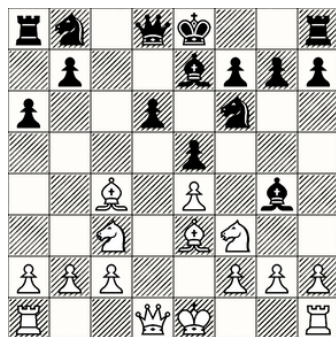
WCM Avery Yu (2082)

2025 SuperStates Championship (3), 1-0

Annotated by FM Tao

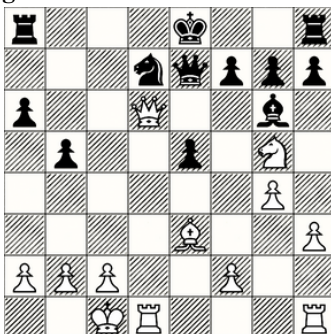
In round 3, I played Avery Yu, a Najdorf player who I have a fairly long history with.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Be3 e5 7. Nf3 Since I haven't worked on chess in a while, I chose this line, which is more positional and less demanding than Nb3. White puts his bishop on c4 and spends the remainder of the game establishing control of the d5 outpost. **7...Be7 8. Bc4 Bg4?**

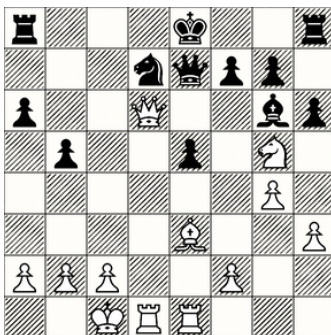


This move doesn't make much sense. This position revolves entirely around the d5 square, which Black needs to contest with an eventual Be6. **9. h3** Funnily enough, this is technically

inaccurate since it allows Black a chance to go back to e6. However no human would willingly play Bg4-e6, so I wanted Avery to commit the bishop into no-mans-land on h5. **9...Bh5 10. Qd2?** (10. g4 Bg6 11. Nh4 this is just crushing. I can't fully explain why I didn't play this, to be quite honest.) **10...b5** (10...Bg6 this was better than the game; I'm not sure what I would have played. Black is probably close to okay.) **11. Bd5 Nxd5 12. Nxd5 Nd7 13. O-O-O Bg6** somehow, the bishop ended up making some sense though, pressuring e4 which is difficult to defend **14. Nxe7 Qxe7 15. Qxd6 Bxe4 16. Ng5 Bf5** (16...Bg6 going back immediately might have been better. g4 seems quite useful, as shown later in the game.) **17. g4 Bg6?**

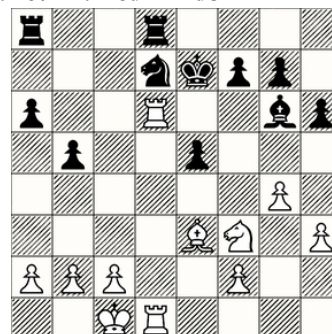


18. Rhe1? (18. Qc6 this move just wins, disallowing Black from trading queens and exploiting the uncastled king. I actually considered this, but missed some accurate moves later in the line 18...Rd8 19. f4! this is key, blowing the center open when Black is still uncastled. White is winning.) **18...h6**

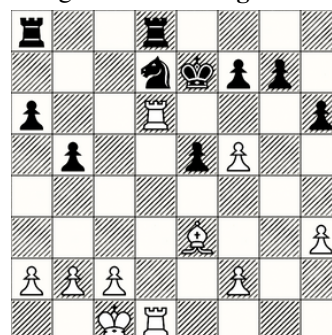


19. Nf3 (I can still play 19. Qc6. After

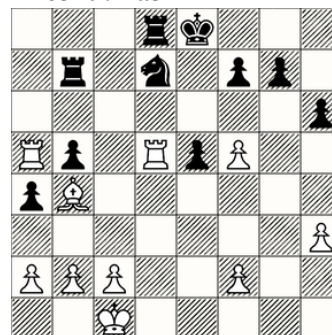
19...Rd8, there's 20. Bb6! Qxg5+ 21. Re3) **19...Qxd6 20. Rxd6** White maintains an advantage in this endgame due to more active pieces and Black's overextended queenside. **20...Ke7 21. Rd1 Rhd8**



22. Nh4 Bh7 23. Nf5+ White doubles the pawns, but the f5 pawn is quite restricting. **23...Bxf5 24. gxf5**



24...a5? (24...Nf6 was Black's last chance. The e5 pawn is lost, but there's drawing chances in the resulting endgame.) **25. R1d5+- 25...Rab8 26. Ra6 a4 27. Bd2 Rb7 28. Bb4+ Ke8 29. Ra5**



29...g6 (29...Rdb8 30. Bd6) **30. fxc6 fxc6 31. Raxb5 Rxb5 32. Rxb5 Rc8 33. Bc3 e4 34. Rb4 Nc5 35. Rc4 Kd7 36. Bd4 Kd6 37. Rxc5 Rxc5 38. Bxc5+ Kxc5 39. Kd2 g5 40. Ke3 Kd5 41. a3 h5 42. b3 h4 43. f3 1-0**

SCCF Elections

The SCCF Board is holding 2025 SCCF board of directors elections this summer. E-voting will open August 1 and close on August 30. Results will be tallied and announced at the SCCF general assembly during the State Open on September 1st. The top six vote-getters will be elected to two-year terms.

Here are the candidate statements.



Chuck Ensey (current SCCF Secretary), Incumbent

I have been organizing yearly events like the Dreaming King Open, the Pacific Southwest Open, the Southern California Open and also weekly events like the Gambito Open for many years now. I am glad to see our membership growing lately and I think the events I have been hosting have been helpful in restoring the levels back to where they should be after the pandemic lows. I am a strong supporter of keeping our Rank and File magazine in print, not just digital. We have a good board and I am happy to keep serving on it with your support.



Alaa-addin Moussa (current SCCF President), Incumbent

Since I was elected president of SCCF two years ago, the board has consistently published R&F with good content and comprehensive coverage of SoCal chess activities. SCCF has organized the strongest state championship in its history, the first senior state championship in the Irwin era, and an inter club state championship. SCCF introduced a Hall of Fame that was well received. SCCF membership increased by at least 30%.

I ask for your vote because there is more work to do. SCCF needs to grow membership back to the pre Covid years. It needs to support its representatives to national tournaments better. It also needs to organize Fide norm events so that young talent has in state options to vie for coveted titles.



Linus Eisenberg, Incumbent

I have served my first term on the board and have made valuable contributions regarding budget issues and ethics. I will try to increase the reach of scholastic chess in the LA and Ventura areas. I am a chess coach for children and am personally responsible for over 250 kids registering for USCF. It would be a great honor to be reelected.



Dedian Guo, Incumbent

Over the past year, I've had the privilege of serving alongside fellow board members to support and grow both scholastic and adult chess across Southern California. From organizing major events like SuperStates to developing new tools that improve player and club engagement, I've remained deeply committed to strengthening our chess community.

My journey—from a chess parent to a US Chess-certified Local Tournament Director and ICEA Chess events organizer—has given me a broad perspective on the needs of players and families. If re-elected, I will continue working to expand access to high-quality events, improve transparency and communication within SCCF, and leverage technology to better serve our members. Above all, I will remain a strong advocate for creating more opportunities for our youth chess players to learn, compete, and grow.



John Wright, Incumbent

I am the President of the San Gabriel Valley Chess Club (SGVCC), which currently meets on Monday nights in the city of San Marino. In my view local clubs are the foundation of a strong chess community. They provide a place where new players can learn about tournament chess and a convenient local venue for experienced players and their families. Recently, SGVCC has also started monthly Game 45 events on Saturdays in the city of San Gabriel. I have been playing chess in Southern California for nearly fifty years and earned the title of National Master in 1992. Since retiring as an attorney in 2016 I have shifted my efforts to that of a chess organizer/teacher. I am a Tournament Director, teach a class for adult beginners at Pasadena City College and have taught classes for kids for the city of Arcadia Parks and Recreation.

Since getting involved with SCCF this year I have been very pleased with the efforts its leadership has shown, especially the recent Inter-Club team event that gave local clubs the opportunity to compete against other clubs. SGVCC sponsored two teams at the San Diego event. Many of our younger members had never experienced the excitement of being on a chess team and we received positive feedback from all involved. I hope to see more such events and also help SCCF lead a resurgence of local chess clubs.

And so I ask for your support so that I can contribute to these and other SCCF efforts. I know first hand the work involved in keeping chess going. Our Club opened in March of 2020 in Sierra Madre, only to have to close a month later due to COVID. We reopened in October of 2021 in Altadena and then saw our meeting site burned to the ground by the recent Eaton fires. But only a month later we opened again at our new San Marino location thanks to the efforts of our members, now 180 strong. Thank you for your consideration.



GM Melikset Khachiyan (current SCCF Vice President), Incumbent

Most of you have known me for years as a very active player in SoCal and around the nation. I always try to promote chess in local communities to help people.

I have been a GM since 2005 and have always tried combining my professional chess career and coaching. Since 2010 I have been working for US Chess Federation initially as a coach, and from 2014, as team captain for the US Olympiad Women Team. I had also organized numerous trainer's seminars, teaching chess coaches, local and around the world to get better. I believe as a professional coach I can help our federation achieve even new heights!

After I won the US Seniors Championship in 2023, and the 2024 World Senior Team Championship, I wanted to mostly focus to develop more opportunities for our seniors. I believe I have many ideas to share with the board members and federation and hopefully together we will get it done.



Jose Jimenez

Hello SCCF members,

My name is Jose Jimenez, and I am the founder, Director and CEO of Downey Chess Club, LLC. For the last 20 years, I have been helping students become leaders through chess education. As a passionate advocate for the growth of the game, I have committed to enhance chess education and community engagement in Southern California schools, libraries and the City of STEM festival, the largest STEM festival in Southern California. If elected, I aim to foster interest, support tournaments, and create opportunity for players of all ages. Let's make chess thrive in our vibrant region!

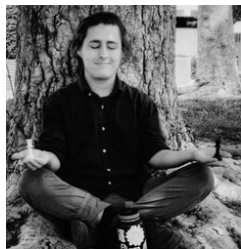
**Karl Grant**

Hey there SoCal chess pals!

While I'm not exactly famous for my chess record, I've spent nearly a decade working to grow and support the chess community here in Southern California. I founded and run the Los Angeles Chess Social—a community that's helped countless players reconnect with the game and meet new friends over the board. Beyond that, I've taught chess at several campuses for the South Pasadena School District, led summer chess programs for kids, served as VP of the UCR Chess Club during my college days, and am currently writing a clinical methodology, using chess as a vehicle to help children on the autism spectrum develop various social cognitions.

I've spent years studying the Southern California chess scene, and I truly believe that LA (and SoCal as a whole) can become a place that chess players seek out—not struggle through. The SCCF needs energetic, community-minded folks to help make that vision a reality.

Right now, there are more than 15 social/casual chess clubs in SoCal, with many of them drawing 60-80+ players a week!! These numbers are only growing. It's time for the SCCF to have a board member who understands and supports the casual, social, and community-driven side of chess—not just the competitive scene. I would love to bring that perspective, passion, and experience to the board!

**Jeremy Alexander**

I'm a chess educator for several organizations, including the Day & Knight Chess Club, Masterpiece Chess, SPEF, and Masterprep Academy. I'm also an adviser/TD/volunteer for many regional chess clubs including: Chess Club at UCR, Los Angeles Chess Social, Highland Park Chess, and the Rookie Chess League. I look forward to fostering more opportunities for scholastic, collegiate, and recreational chess community members - especially for those who reside in the Inland Empire and metropolitan LA area.

**FM Julian Colville**

I have been an active player in Southern California since I was six years old, and have been consistently impressed with the supportive chess community that has gotten me to where I am today. When I was 13, I started volunteering with Train of Thought, an organization that teaches chess to underprivileged children in Compton. More recently, I have been volunteering with ICEA to teach chess to kids and give back to the community. As we all know, a large portion of our players here in Southern California are kids and teenagers. If you choose to elect me, I will be the voice of scholastic chess on the board, without losing sight of the priorities of our longstanding adult members.

**Brenda Nardi**

I would be honored to serve on the SCCF Board to help to grow the ranks of chess players, to improve player conditions, and to perhaps increase chess donations for Southern California Chess.

As a senior woman still enjoying play in the SC swisses, I would try to bring in more women players, as well as to bring in more men. One of my goals is to start a chess club in Yorba Linda, where I live.

I currently serve on the board of a National History Organization (as registrar) and the skills needed to attract more membership could be useful in the chess world as well.



Pacific Southwest Open

July 4-6, 2025

\$18,000 PRIZE FUND (based on 180 players)

At Hilton Irvine/Orange County Airport

18800 MacArthur Blvd, Irvine CA 92612,

phone: 949-833-9999

9 Rd Swiss, 6 Sections

Rounds:

Fri 7/4 (3 games): 10:30 AM, 1 PM, 4 PM; G/45 d10

Sat 7/5 (4 games): 9 AM, 12 PM, 4 PM, 7 PM; G/60 d10

Sun 7/6 (2 games): 10 AM, 3 PM; G/120 d10

Entry Fees:

\$110 Early Bird Rate if received by 5/12/25

\$130 Regular Rate by 5/13/25

\$150 starting 5/15/25, jumps to \$170 on 7/1/25

\$200 at door on 7/4/25

\$100 if U1000 or unrated

GMs, WGMs, IMs and WIMs play for free, but with a \$100 prize deduction.

Re-entry fee after round 3 with 1½ points is \$75.

3 byes allowed, so it is possible to skip Fri. July 4th and just play on Sat. & Sun. if you want to. Byes must be requested at least 1 hour before the round. The time controls increase each day so that you have more time to think for the more important games. Not FIDE rated.

Registration:

8:30 AM to 10 AM Friday, or 8 to 8:45 AM on Saturday

Other Info:

\$15 service charge for refunds before play begins.

Last round byes must be requested before round 5 and are irrevocable!

July supplement will be used for section and pairing purposes. Provisional players (less than 26 rated games) can win only 50% of any prize, the balance goes to the remaining prize winners.

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 (\$25 adults, \$20 if under 18 years old)

Info: Chuck Ensey at (858) 432-8006, or see www.sandiegochessclub.org
\$25 forfeit fine, please call Chuck ASAP if you can't make a round.

Elite Section

1st: \$1,800

2nd-7th: \$1,400-\$900-\$400-\$300-\$200

BU2300: \$600-\$400

U2200 (1900 - 2199)

1st-4th: \$1,000-\$800-\$400-\$200

U2000 (1700 - 1999)

1st-4th: \$1,000-\$800-\$400-\$200

U1800 (1400-1799)

1st-4th: \$1,000-\$800-\$400-\$200

BU1600: \$600-\$400

U1400 (1000-1399)

1st-4th: \$1,000-\$800-\$400-\$200

BU1200: \$600-\$400

U1000 (unrated-999)

1st-3rd: \$700-\$400-\$200

Minimum rating for Elite section is 2000, no exceptions. For other sections you must be within the range shown above.

You can pay an \$100 extra fee to "play up" one section, but you are not allowed to play up 2 sections. For instance, someone rated 1390 could pay \$100 extra to play in the U1800 but they could not play in the U2000.

Unrated players can play in any section (except Elite) but they can only win a book prize (or a clock or a chess set).

Hotel: \$169, plus tax if booked by 5/30/2025, call 1-949-833-9999. Book early, the rooms often sell out before 6/01. Parking is \$20 per night.



2025 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA OPEN

AUGUST 29 – SEPTEMBER 1

\$50,000
TOTAL PRIZE FUND

7 SECTIONS: Open, U2300, U2100, U1900, U1700, U1500, U1300

TIME CONTROL: G/90 with a 30-second increment

USCF MEMBERSHIP REQUIRED

(SCCF membership also required for Southern California residents)

ENTRY FEES

- **Early Bird** until May 31st **\$195**

(Please use discount code **EarlyBird** for early bird price of \$195)

- **Regular Fee** until August 18 **\$228**

- **Late Fee** until August 28 **\$275**

(No on-site or online entries after August 28, 6:00pm)

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BLITZ **September 1**
(Monday evening)



\$2,000
GUARANTEED
PRIZES

across three sections

EMBASSY SUITES HOTEL

- **Two-room suites** with sleeper sofa
- **Full American breakfast** & evening reception included rate;

Reserve by August 8 for special group

**800 N. CENTRAL AVENUE,
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**Join us for an exciting
weekend of chess
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SCAN FOR MORE DETAILS

<https://onlineregistration.cc/ACA/SoCalOpen2025>

Contact: Armen Ambartsoumian

Phone: 818-640-5974

Email: americanchessacademy@gmail.com



Rank & File

Southern California Chess Federation

P.O. Box 120162
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know by emailing us at membership@scchess.com