

Fall 2025

RANK & FILE

Magazine of the Southern California Chess Federation



Photo courtesy of City of Glendale

Organizer Armen Ambartsoumian, winner Viktor Matviishen, and former Mayor of Glendale Elen Asatryan

2025 SoCal Open

By JJ Lang

The 2025 Southern California Open boasted a robust prize fund of over \$30,000 across all sections (and over \$10,000 in the Open section alone). This tournament has developed a reputation for being

particularly well-run (and providing chess sets for all boards!), thanks to experienced organizer Armen Ambartsoumian, who is also the President of American Chess Academy.

IM Tatev Abrahamyan (it feels very nice to write the "IM" part) reached out to tell me about the hard work Ambartsoumian has put into this tournament, and, particularly, into working with the city of Glendale to

continued on page 9

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DEADLINE FOR THE Winter 2026 ISSUE IS:

March 31, 2026.

UPCOMING SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EVENTS

Jan. 17 - Jan. 19, 2026

Dreaming King Open

See description on p.25

Feb. 22, 2026

SoCal Inter Club Chess Championship

See description on p.26

Mar. 20-22, 2026

Southern California Superstates

See description on p.27

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Correspondence Chess Champion

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Youth Chess Championship

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Championship

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Championship

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LETTER FROM THE BOARD

Southern California chess ended 2025 with several events to celebrate. Noteworthy is the emergence of new organizers who have stepped up to put together great tournaments. The American Chess Academy, with IM Armen Ambartsoumian at its helm, organized the SoCal Open for the first time. It offered a prize fund of \$50,000, a substantial increase from years past, and was sponsored by the City of Glendale. The open attracted the University of Texas (UTD) chess team. Guided by their coach, GM Alexander Onischuk, members of the team grabbed the top 3 places, with GM Victor Matviishen in sole first place. Smaller events were organized for the first time. Chess for Cure and Chess4Smiles were two notable ones. SCCF expects new organizers to step up in 2026.

Traditions were also celebrated. The American Open held its 60th anniversary at the end of November. GM Arman Mikaelyan defended home court advantage by winning the championship section in the presence

of another UTD team onslaught. David Gasparyan tied GM Jianchao Zhou for first place at the 20th Los Angeles Open held in Irvine the first week of November.

The SCCF Board also celebrated the achievements of the SoCal youth. Fresh from winning the U16 North American championship in August in Canada, FM Julian Colville won the U20 North American championship in December in Mexico. He joins Bryan Xie and Isaac Wang, both awarded the IM title by FIDE in 2025. FM Colville earned the IM title and a GM norm. SoCal players also participated in the World Cadets and Junior chess championships held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and Durres, Albania, respectively. GM Melikset Khachiyani headed the USA delegation in Almaty. The Board appreciates all the players who contributed their games from these competitions to this issue.

Finally, the Board would like to wish SCCF members a happy and successful 2026.

Sincerely,
The SCCF Board



In Memory of Tibor Weinberger

By IM Jack Peters

FM Tibor Weinberger passed away on August 28, 2025 at the age of 92. He had been the oldest master in the US, and was long regarded as a dominant figure in Southern California chess.

He was SoCal Champion (1959), California State Open winner (1959, 1963), Pacific Southwest Open winner in multiple years (1964, 1966, 1967), West Coast Open winner (1968), and 1974 California Open Champion, among many more achievements throughout his chess career.

Weinberger first found his love for chess while studying to become a mechanical engineer in Hungary. He competed in five Hungarian Championships.

In 1956, Weinberger immigrated to the US to escape the Hungarian Revolution. Shortly after, he earned his FIDE Master title and achieved a peak rating over 2400 in the 1970s. He played against several leading figures of his era, including future world champion Bobby Fischer.

Editor's note: (more photos and content at sccchess.com/obits.html)

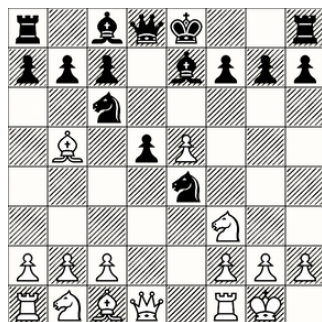
Here is one of his games, from the 1995 American Open in Los Angeles:

Dan Lee (2250)

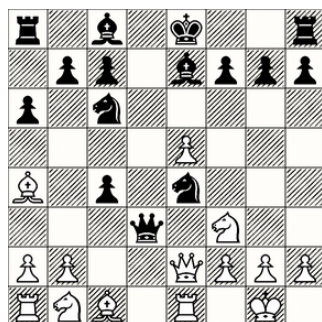
Tibor Weinberger (2225)

1995 American Open (8), 0-1

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nf6
4. O-O Nxe4 5. d4 Be7 6. dxe5 d5



7. c4 a6 8. Ba4 dxc4 9. Qe2 Qd3!
10. Re1?



10...Nc5 11. Bxc6+ bxc6 12. Be3 Be6
13. Nc3 Qxe2 14. Rxe2 Nd3 15. Rd1
O-O 16. Nd4 Bd5?



Photo courtesy of US Chess
FM Tibor Weinberger

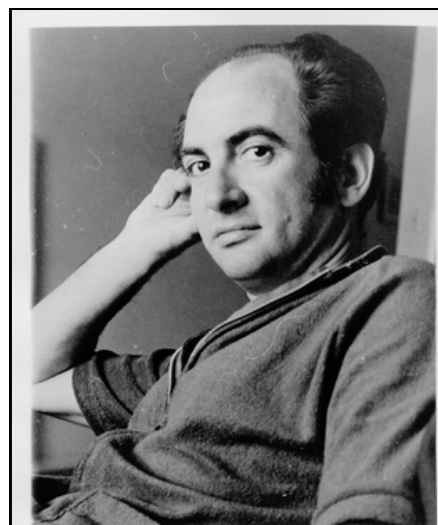
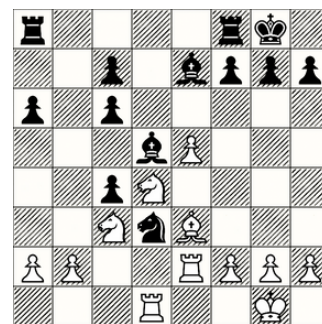
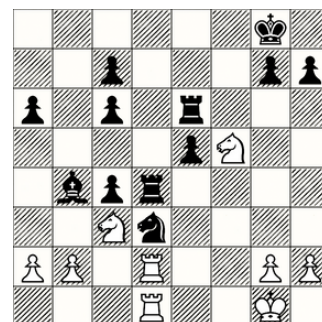


Photo courtesy of Richard Rison
FM Tibor Weinberger



17. Nf5 Rfe8 18. Red2? Bb4! 19. f4 f6
20. Bd4? Be6 21. Ne3 Rad8 22. f5
Rxd4 23. fxe6 fxe5 24. Nf5 Rxe6!



25. Nxd4 exd4 26. Re2 dxc3 27.
Rxe6 cxb2 28. Rb1 c3 29. Re2 Bc5+
30. Kf1 Bd4 31. a3 c5 32. Rc2 Kf7
33. Ke2 Ne5 0-1

FM Julian Colville: North American Youth Chess Championship

By FM Julian Colville

The 2025 North American Youth Chess Championship took place in Kingston, Ontario, Canada from August 17-23. The 9-round classical tournament was held in Queen's University, and there were 12 sections: U8, U10, U12, U14, U16, U18 (with respective sections for girls). The battle for first place was fierce in the U16 section, with FM Julian Colville, FM Stephen Willy, and Jonathan Wu each tied with 6.5/8 before the last round. Ultimately, Julian won his last round, and with the best tiebreakers, FM Colville became North American Youth U16 Champion.

He shares two of his games here:

Ethan Liu (2136)

FM Julian Colville (2287)

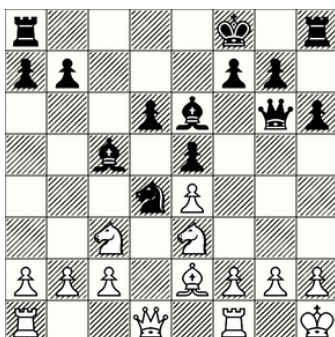
2025 North American Youth U16 Championship (6), 0-1

Annotated by FM Julian Colville

Going into round 6, I knew this was a must win game. As I was already an FM, the only prize that could help me was the IM norm that came with first place. After winning my first three games convincingly, I lost to Jonathan Wu, who I now trailed by a point. I had bounced back with a quick win in round 5, and needed to continue applying pressure to the leader. **1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nc6 5. Nc3 Nf6 6. Ndb5 Bc5 7. Nd6+ Ke7!**

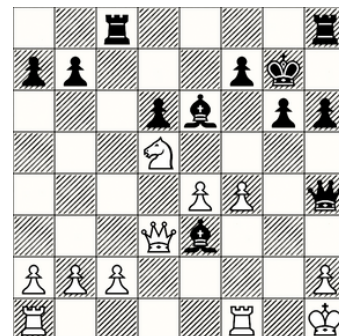


Taking on d6 was not an option because it gives White total control of Black's dark squares. While this might seem strange to give up the right to castle so early, this line is actually fairly solid. In return, Black gains good control of the d4 square, and neutralizes White's lead in development. The king will be fairly safe when it eventually falls back to f8. **8. Bf4 e5 9. Nf5+ Kf8 10. Bg5 d6 11. Ne3 Be6 12. Be2 h6 13. Bxf6 Qxf6 14. O-O Qg6 15. Kh1 Nd4?**

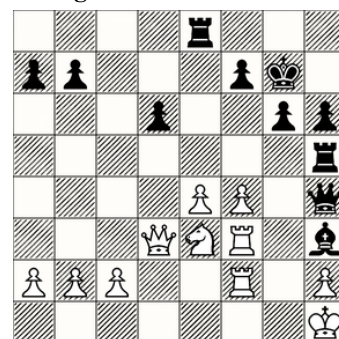


Despite looking pretty on d4, the knight has no real purpose on this square. **16. Bh5?!** Better was Bd3 to protect the e4 pawn, followed by Ncd5 and c3 to kick the black knight. **16...Qg5 17. Ncd5 g6 18. Be2 Nxe2 19. Qxe2 Kg7 20. g3 Rac8 21. f4?!** Not the most accurate. While the

position looks scary for Black, the weakness of the e4 pawn will offset and hinder any White attack on the black king. **21...exf4 22. gxf4 Qh4 23. Qd3 Bxe3!**

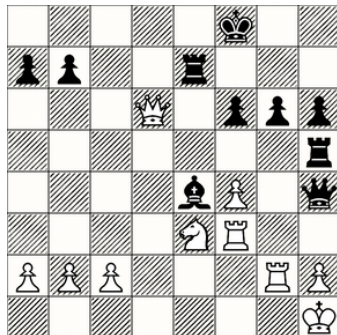


While I was reluctant to give up the bishop pair, Qc3+ had to be stopped. **24. Nxe3 Rhe8 25. Rf3 Rc5!** A multipurpose move. The rook defends along the fifth rank, and has the auxiliary idea of swinging to h5, creating a battery aimed at the white king. The pawn on d6 can never be taken, as Rh5 would simply be too dangerous for White. **26. Rg1?!** (Better was 26. f5! gxf5 27. exf5 Bd7 28. Rg1+ Kh8 29. Rg4! The only move. 29...Qe1+ 30. Rg1 Qh4 31. Rg4 with repetition. **26...Rh5 27. Rg2 Bh3 28. Rgf2**

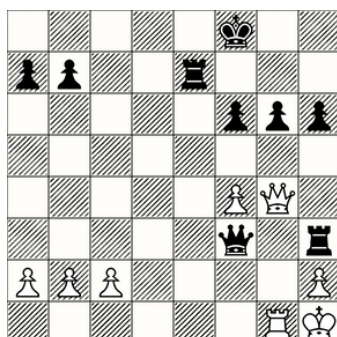


28...Bd7?! (28...Bg4 was better, trading off the knight, one of White's

key defenders.) **29. Qd4+ f6 30. Rg2??**
 White had to start clogging the h1-a8
 diagonal with c4 or Nd5. **30...Bc6+**
31. Qxd6 (31. Nf5+ Rxf5! 32. exf5
 Re1+ 33. Rg1 Bxf3#) **31...Bxe4 32.**
Qd7+ Kf8 33. Qd6+ Re7



And White will run out of checks
 shortly. **34. Qd1 Bxf3 35. Qxf3 Qe1+**
36. Nf1 Rh3! 37. Qg4 (37. Qxh3
 Qxf1+ 38. Rg1 Qxh3) **37...Qxf1+** **38.**
Rg1 Qf3+ A relatively clean victory.
 I was quite proud that I found
 25...Rc5, swinging the initiative in my
 favor.



0-1

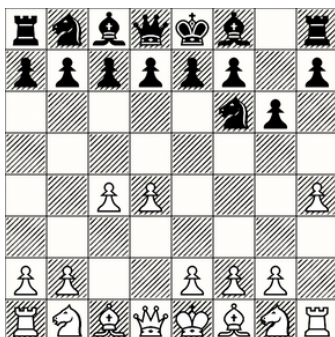
FM Julian Colville (2287)

Larry Yang (2108)

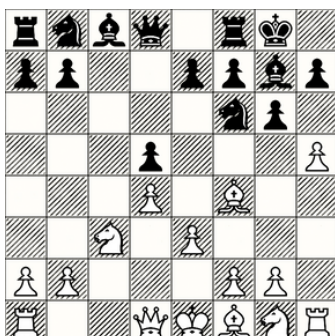
2025 North American Youth U16
 Championship (7), 1-0

Annotated by FM Julian Colville

I got paired in round 7 against
 another 2100, this time with White.
 Jonathan Wu lost in round 6, so I
 was now in a three way tie for first
 with 5 points. **1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. h4**

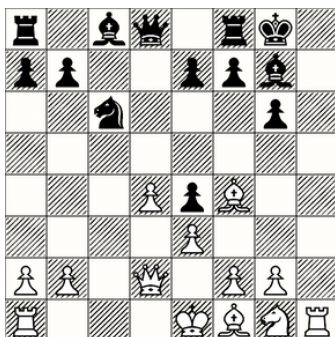


Aimed at preventing the Grunfeld.
 (i.e. 3...d5 4. exd5 Nxd5 5. h5) and
 White is better. **3...c6 4. Nc3 d5**
5. cxd5 cxd5 6. Bf4 Bg7 7. e3 O-O
8. h5

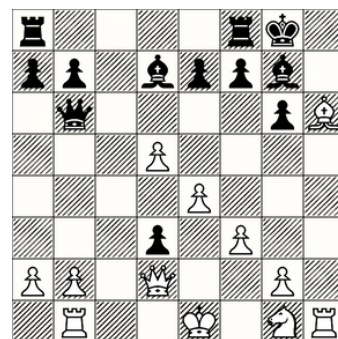


Trying to gain space and start an
 attack on the kingside. (8...Nhx5 9.
 Rxx5 gxx5 10. Qxx5 Nc6 11. Bd3 f5
 12. Nf3) Black has too many
 weaknesses, and White has more than
 full compensation for the exchange.
8...Nc6 9. hxg6?! (9. h6 was better,
 forcing the bishop back.) **9...hxg6 10.**
Qd2? (10. Qb3, putting pressure on
 the d5 pawn, was best.) **10...Ne4! 11.**

Nxe4 dxe4

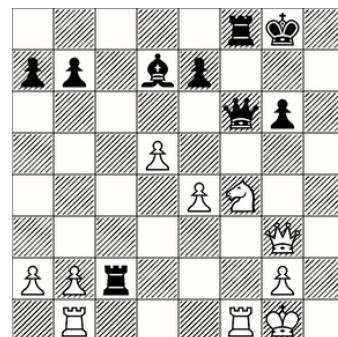


12. d5 Ne5 13. f3 Nd3+? (13...Qb6!
 14. fxe4 Bg4 Black is just better with
 a lead in development, despite being
 down a pawn.) **14. Bxd3 exd3 15. e4?!**
 (15. Qxd3 was better. The d3 pawn is
 much more important than b2.)
15...Qb6 16. Rb1? The black bishop
 on g7 is simply too strong. I should
 have traded it off with Bh6. **16...Bd7**
17. Bh6??



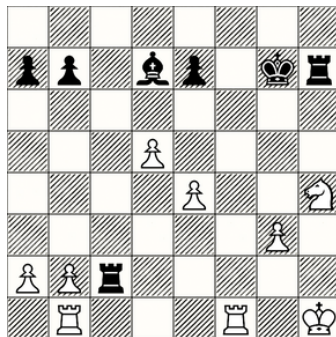
I saw that I was lost just after I
 played this move. **17...Qd4??±** (My
 opponent missed **17...Bd4!!** The
 bishop is so strong that Black should
 actually sacrifice an exchange to keep
 it alive. With such weak dark squares
 and poor development, my position
 falls apart.)

18. Bxg7 Qxg7 19. Qxd3 f5 20. Ne2
fxe4 21. fxe4 Qf6 22. Qg3 Rac8 23.
Nf4?! (23...Qxf4?? Qxg6#) 23...Rc2?! (23...Rf7!
 was the best defense.) **24. O-O!**

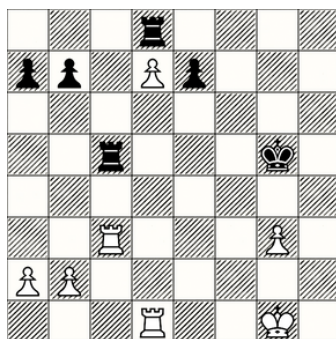


I thought for a long time on this

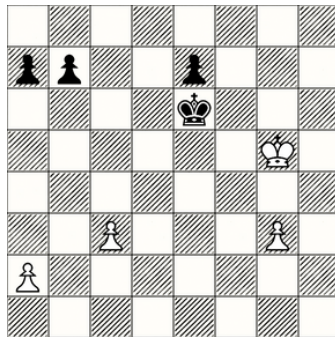
move. My king was extremely weak, and I could not find a solution, when I realized that I could still castle. While my rook was quite active on h1, the most important thing is to safeguard my own king and consolidate. 24...Qd4+ 25. Kh1 Rf7 26. Nxc6 Rh7+ 27. Nh4+ Qg7 28. Qxc7+ Kxc7 29. g3?!



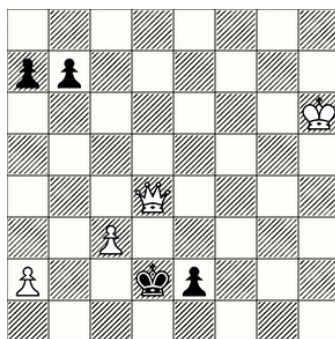
Better was Rf4 to defend my knight on h4, not weakening my king further. 29...Bh3 30. Rfe1 Rh8 31. Re3 (With the idea that 31...Rf8 loses to 32. g4 Bxc4 33. Rg1 Rf4 34. Reg3 where the bishop falls.) 31...Kf6 32. e5+ Kg5 33. Kg1 Rd8 34. Rd1?! (34. d6 exd6 35. e6 provided the best winning chances for White.) 34...Bg4 35. Nf3+ Bxf3 36. Rxf3 Re2? (36...Rxb2 was the best defense) 37. d6! Rxe5 38. d7! Rc5 39. Rc3?±



I thought the ensuing endgame was winning, but Black is just in time after trading the last pair of rooks to draw the king and pawn endgame. (I had to keep the rooks on the board, with a move like 39. Kg2.) 39...Rxc3 40. bxc3 Kf5 41. Kf2 Ke6 42. Ke3 Rxd7 43. Rxd7 Kxd7 44. Kf4 Ke6 45. Kg5



45...Ke5?? (The only move that held for Black was 45...b5! Black had to advance his pawns as far as possible while keeping the option for the king to come back in front of the pawn.) 46. g4! The only winning move. 46...Ke4 47. Kh6 Kd3 48. g5 e5 49. g6 e4 50. g7 e3 51. g8=Q e2 52. Qg1 Kd2 53. Qd4+



0-1 After 53...Kc2, The game might have continued 54. Qe3 Kd1 55. Qd3+ Ke1 56. Kg5. Every time the black king walks in front of the pawn on

e2, I will bring my king one step closer, repeating this pattern until my king reaches f3, allowing my queen to take the pawn on e2. Despite making a few early mistakes, I fought back. I should have taken more care to limit counterplay, as my opponent had multiple chances to save the game. In the next round, I drew FM Stephen Willy with black. I was still tied for first, but my head-to-head score was worse than both Stephen and Jonathan, both of whom were also on 6.5/8. In the final round, I beat CM Tony Lu as white in a highly tactical Winawer. In the end, I came in first on tiebreaks with 7.5/9. FM Stephen Willy came second on tiebreaks, with FM Dylan Tang in third, half a point behind. Throughout the tournament, I was proud of how I had kept fighting despite an early loss, and came back to win. I achieved my first IM norm from first place, and hope to earn my other two in the future.

Editor's Note: Shortly after winning the U16 North American Youth Championship, FM Julian Colville won the U20 North American Junior Championship with an impressive score of 8½/9, thus directly earning the International Master title.

2025 SoCal Open

By JJ Lang

...Continued from Cover

attract sponsors and increase visibility for the event. Both the current and one former mayor were even in attendance!



Photo courtesy of City of Glendale
Tatev Abrahamyan in action

In the Open, GM Viktor Matviishen won \$5,000 and the title of Southern California champion with his 5½/6 performance. The wins didn't come easy, though, as evidenced by IM Bohdan Bilovil's third-round effort:

GM Viktor Matviishen (2601)

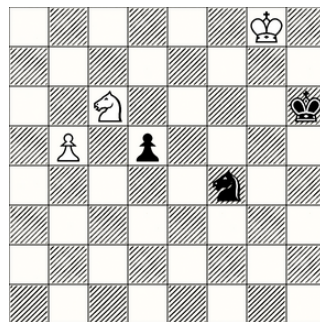
IM Bohdan Bilovil (2518)

2025 Southern California Open (3), 1-0

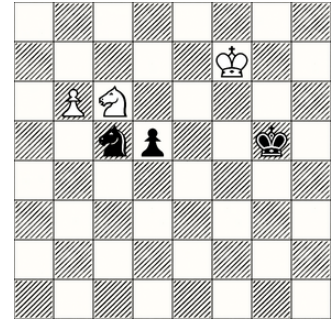
Annotated by JJ Lang

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. cxd5 exd5 5. Bg5 c6 6. e3 h6 7. Bh4 Be7 8. Bd3 O-O 9. Nge2 Re8 10. O-O Nbd7 11. a4 Nh5 12. Bxe7 Qxe7 13. a5 Ndf6 14. Qc2 g6 15. Na4 a6 16. Nb6 Rb8 17. Nxc8 Rbxc8 18. Nc3 Ng7 19. Na4 Ne4 20. b4 h5 21. Nc5 Nd6 22. Rae1 Ngf5 23. Re2 Qg5 24. Bxf5 Qxf5 25. Qxf5 gxf5 26. h4 f6 27. Nd3 Kf7 28. Nf4 Rh8 29. f3 Rce8 30. Kf2 Kg7 31. Rh1 Kh6 32. Rh3 Rhg8 33. Rg3 Rxc3 34. Kxc3 Nc4 35. Kf2 Re7 36. Nd3 Nd6 37. Kg3 Kg6 38. Re1 Nb5 39. Kf4 Re8 40. Rc1 Nd6 41. Nc5

Re7 42. Na4 Nc4 43. Rc3 Nd6 44. Nb2 Nb5 45. Rc2 Nd6 46. Rc1 Nb5 47. Nd3 Nd6 48. Re1 Nb5 49. Kg3 Nd6 50. Kf2 Nc4 51. Nc5 Nd6 52. Re2 Re8 53. Ke1 Re7 54. Kd2 Re8 55. Kd3 Re7 56. Re1 Rg7 57. Ke2 Re7 58. Kf2 Re8 59. Kg3 Re7 60. Kf4 Nb5 61. Rc1 Nd6 62. Rc2 Kg7 63. g3 Kg6 64. Rg2 Nc4 65. g4 fxe4 66. fxe4 hxe4 67. Rxe4+ Kh6 68. Rg3 b6 69. axb6 Nxb6 70. Nxa6 Re4+ 71. Kf5 Nc4 72. Kxf6 Nxe3 73. Nb8 Rxd4 74. Nxc6 Rf4+ 75. Ke6 Re4+ 76. Kf7 Rf4+ 77. Kg8 Nf5 78. Rd3 Nxe4 79. Rd4 Ng6? 80. Rxf4 Nxf4 81. b5



An equal game seemed to be winding down, but, especially given Black's clock situation, we were in for a nice reminder of how concrete (i.e., cruel) knight-and-single-pawn endgames can be. 81...Ne6? (81...d4!) 82. Kf7 Nc5 83. b6 Nb7?? (83...Kg5!



84. Ke7 Kf5! 85. Kd6 Ne4+! 86. Kc7 (86. Kxd5 Nf6+ 87. Kd6 Kd6 Ne4+ 88. Kc7 Ke6! (88...Nc5?? 89. Nb4! Ke5 90. Kc6 Kd4 91. Nd3!+-) 89. b7 Nc5=)

84. Kf6 Kh7 85. Nd4 Kg8 86. Ke7 Kg7 87. Nb3 d4 88. Nxd4 Na5 89. Kd7 Kf7 90. Nc6 Nb3 91. Kd6 Nd2 92. Ne5+ 1-0



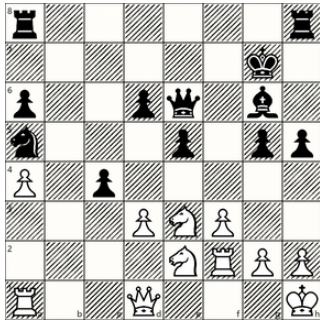
Photo courtesy of City of Glendale
(From left) Sponsor David Ayvazyan, current Mayor of Glendale Ara Najaryan, Armen Ambartsoumian, Councilmember and former Mayor of Glendale Elen Asatryan, sponsor David Gasparian (President of Phonexa), and sponsor David Tonoyan (President of Dot 818)

GM Fidel Corrales Jiménez (2608)
 GM Viktor Matviishen (2601)
 2025 Southern California Open (6),
 0-1

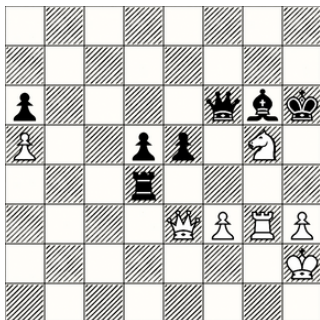
1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. c3
 Nf6 5. d3 d6 6. a4 a6 7. Bg5 Ba7 8.
 O-O h6 9. Bh4 Qe7 10. Nbd2 g5 11.
 Bg3 Nh7 12. Kh1 Nf8



13. Ng1 h5 14. f3 Ng6 15. b4 Kf8 16.
 Bf2 Bxf2 17. Rxf2 Kg7 18. Ne2 f5
 19. b5 Na5 20. bxa6 bxa6 21. Bd5 c6
 22. exf5 cxd5 23. fxg6 Bf5 24. Nf1
 Bxg6 25. Ne3 Qe6 26. c4 dxc4



27. dxc4 Rhc8 28. Rc1 Rab8 29. h3
 Kh7 30. Ng3 Nxc4 31. Nxc4 Rxc4
 32. Ne4 Rxc1 33. Qxc1 Qe7 34.
 Nxc5+ Kg7 35. Kh2 Rb4 36. a5 Qf6
 37. g3 h4 38. Rg2 hxg3+ 39. Rxc3 d5
 40. Qd2 Rd4 41. Qe2 Kh6 42. Qe3



Playing hall

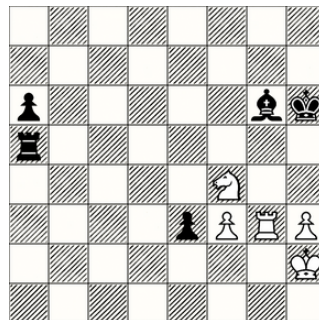
Photo courtesy of City of Glendale



GM Viktor Matviishen's final game against GM Fidel Corrales Jiménez

Photo courtesy of City of Glendale

42...Qf4 43. Qxf4 Rxf4 44. Ne6 Rf6
 45. Nc5 d4 46. Nd7 Rf5 47. Nc5 e4 48.
 Nb3 e3 49. Nxd4 Rd5 50. Ne2 Rxa5
 51. Nf4



51...Ra2+ 52. Rg2 Rxc2+ 53. Kxc2
 a5 54. Nd5 a4 55. Nb4 a3 56. f4 Bh5
 57. Kf1 Kg6 58. Ke1 e2 59. Kd2 Kf5
 60. Na2 Kxf4 61. Nc3 Ke5 62. h4 Bg4
 63. Na2 Kd4 64. Nc1 Kc4 65. Na2
 Kb3 66. Nc1+ Kb2 67. Nd3+ Kb1 68.
 Nb4 a2 69. Nxa2 Kxa2 0-1

Tom Williams: First California State Correspondence Chess Champion

By Tom Williams, Assistant Tournament Director, North County Chess Club

As a teenager I developed two passions: chess and computing. I was always trying to combine the two in different ways.

While at the University of South Dakota, I joined the chess club and the USCF. Because rated games were so difficult to find in the sparsely populated state, I also tried USCF Correspondence chess. Correspondence moves were sent by post cards in those days, and some games lasted years. I won some games, and lost some, but I soon lost interest and quit. Still, playing correspondence chess led me to an intriguing insight: if left to “think” for days on a single move, a computer might produce very strong games.

Alas, the USCF had already adopted a “no computers” policy for its correspondence games. You could use books, but no computers. I thought the rule was silly for a couple reasons: first, computers were not very strong in 1984; and second, there was no way to enforce the rule.

Decades later, I heard about the International Correspondence Chess Federation (ICCF), which was the FIDE-recognized correspondence organization—and most interesting to me, it allowed computers!

Despite my over-the-board rating of 1650, I decided to test my idea that computers could help me to produce very strong chess games. The answer turned out to be a resounding YES!

I had a Chessbase subscription, an ample chess library, and a strong personal computer. These resources would allow “me” to play strong openings, and then I would heavily

rely on engines for the rest of the moves. In 2006 I entered my first ICCF tournament. I didn’t want to deceive anyone, so in my first games, I told my opponents that I was using chess engines to help me select moves. But I quickly learned that all ICCF players use engines...and likely the same engine as me.

After a few years of playing on ICCF, I learned that, to win, I not only needed to outsmart my opponent, but I had to outplay his/her chess engine as well. Though risky, I could occasionally “outsmart” the engines, even though some of them had a super GM rating. My favorite method was to steer the engine to more promising positional lines based on my humble human judgement. For example, bishop endgames were flawed for some engines, and it is still thought that today’s engines overestimate White’s space advantage in French Defense and King’s Indian Defense openings.

Indeed, my ICCF rating kept improving -- but it went much further than I expected. In 2015, after 124 games, I was awarded the International Correspondence Chess Master title awarded by: *La Fédération Internationale des Echecs par Correspondance*. But of more interest to readers of the Rank & File, in 2017, I also became the 1st California State Correspondence Chess Champion! Here is the only decisive game from that double-round-robin tournament among 6 top Californians, including 2 Senior IMs, and 2 IMs (including myself):

CIM Thomas Williams (2422)

CIM John Ballow (2416)

1st ICCF California State Championship (6), 1-0

Annotated by Thomas Williams

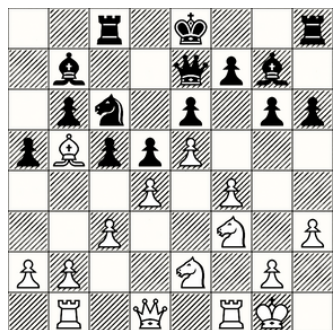
1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 I played this for 2 main reasons: StockFish (SF) and Komodo, the two strongest engines at the time, seemed to struggle while defending against the Trompowsky Attack. And I noticed that in Ballow's ICCF games, he had only faced it as Black once, and he was losing.

2...e6 (In the game he eventually lost, Ballow played 2...c5 and soon had trouble: 3.d5 Ne4 4.Bf4 Qb6 5.Bc1!? Ha! The bishop has now moved 3 times in the first 5 moves, and is back to its home square! 5...g6 6.f3 Nd6 7.e4 Bg7 8.Nc3 O-O?! (8...f5 ½-½ (40) Adams,M (2725) - Gelfand,B (2703) Cap d'Agde FRA 2003) 9.h4 h5 10.a4 a5 11.Nh3 c4 12.g4 hxg4 13.fxg4 Bxc3+?! 14.bxc3 Nxe4 15.Bg2 Nf6 16.h5 d6 17.Nf2 game in progress as of 2016 October 1st: De Carlos Arregui,I (2370) - Ballow,J (2417) ICCF 2016)

3.e4 h6 Now I pondered the question: will Black’s bishop pair compensate for his cramped position? **4.Bxf6 Qxf6 5.c3 g6!?** This was a novelty when John played it; 5...d6 is most common. To me, it looked too dangerous for Black’s kingside. Many ICCF players tend to play early novelties, to “get out of book”. Indeed, my books and databases were no longer useful in this game. But I decided to favor engine lines that mostly focus on Black's kingside.

6.e5 Qe7 7.Bd3 d5 8.Nd2 c5 9.Ne2 Bg7 10.f4 Nc6 11.O-O b6 12.Nf3

12...Bb7 13.Rb1 a5 After this move, John offered to draw both of our games. I accepted a draw in the other game (I was Black in a drawish Slav Defense), but in this game I felt I might have a slight lead. 14.h3 Rc8 15.Bb5

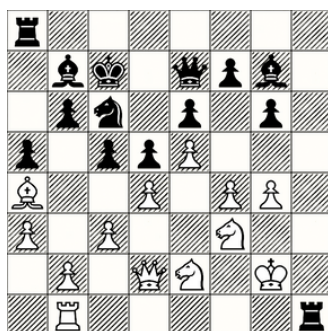


Black is quite cramped, and his kingside may be vulnerable. It looks something like a French Defense Advance Variation where the opening went badly for Black.

15...Qd7 16.Qd2 Qe7 Black is reduced to mere shuffling.

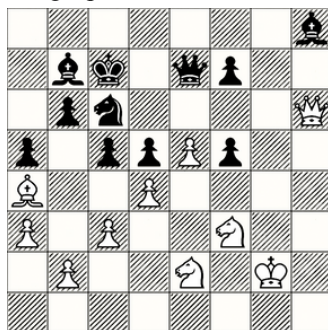
17.g4 (Here SF was recommending 17.Rfc1, but I overruled it to keep applying kingside attack pressure. [SF: 17.Rfc1 h5 18.a3 Bh6 19.Kf1 Rc7 20.Kf2 Bg7 21.g3 Qd8 22.dxc5 bxc5 23.b4 O-O 24.bxc5 It looks like a decent line for a White advantage, but I decided that 17.g4 would be an intimidating surprise, for a psychological advantage which no engine could consider.]

17...h5 18.Kg2 hxg4 19.hxg4 Kd8 20.Ba4 Ra8 21.Rh1 Kc7 22.a3 Rxb1!?



I thought this was probably losing, but it is hard to find decent moves for Black. He's still very cramped; I supposed he'd have to make a center pawn break soon...but it never happened.

23.Rxb1 Rh8 24.Rxb8 Bxb8 25.f5 gxf5 26.gxf5 exf5 27.Qh6 Now I'm clearly winning. Black is in a kind of zugzwang; his pieces are all tied up defending squares, or each other.



27...Bxe5 (27...Qd8 does not work: 28.Kf2 cxd4 29.cxd4 Ne7 30.Ng5 Ng8 31.Qd6+ Qxd6 32.exd6+ Kxd6

33.Nxf7+) 28.dxe5 Nxe5 29.Nxe5 f6 ([SF: 29...d4+ (or 29...Qxe5 30.Kf1 d4) 30.Kf1 Qxe5 31.cxd4 cxd4 32.Qc1+ Kb8 33.Qf4 is a winning endgame for White.]

30.Kf1 fxe5 This may be a mistake, but even in the alternative variations, Black was struggling to hang on.

31.Ng3 Qf7 32.Qh8 Qe6 33.Qg7+ Kc8 34.Ke1 At this point, I switched engines from SF to asmFish; the latter having recently beat SF in engine competition.

34...f4 35.Bd1 Here John messaged me: "That was a really good move -- maybe the winning move!" I responded: "Thanks John. There were a few variations, where you push one or another of your center Ps (I was expecting ...e4) about move 30-32, where a few moves later, Ke1 followed by Ba4-d1 is the best line I could find. And I kept it in mind".

35...Kb8 36.Bg4 Qd6 37.Nf5 Qc7 38.Qf6 Ka7 39.Nd6 Qh7 40.Be2 Ba6 41.Bxa6 Kxa6 42.Qxe5

And on 2017 Sep 24, John resigned, saying: "Congratulations Tom! A well-played game!!" This was the last remaining game of the tournament.

<https://www.iccf.com/event?id=61442>
Start: 2016/Oct/31 End: 2017/Sep/24

Double round-robin

					1	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	5	5	6	6	Score	
1		51427 7	IM	Williams, Thomas	2422			1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1	1/2	1 ^E	1 ^D	6.5
2		51129 6	SIM	Biedermann, Thomas	2409	1/2	1/2			1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1 ^D	1 ^D	6
3		51421 3	SIM	Proof, Michael C.	2431	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2			1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1 ^E	1 ^D	6
4		51487 7		Biedermann, Kyle	2328	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2			1/2	1/2	1 ^D	1 ^D	6
5		51447 6	IM	Ballow, John	2416	1/2	0	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2			1 ^D	1 ^D	5.5
6		51512 8		Torres, Chris	2394	0 ^D	0 ^E	0 ^D	0 ^D	0 ^D	0 ^E	0 ^D	0 ^D	0 ^D	0 ^D			0

Chess for Cure

By CM Ala'a Addin Moussa and FM Mikayel Rostomyan

FM Mikayel Rostomyan won the Chess for Cure open tournament with a score of 4.5 points from 5 rounds. The event was organized in Monrovia by Wendy and Adelyne Yang (pictured) in collaboration with Discovery Chess of Ohio to celebrate the 7th annual World Gynecologic Oncology Day. Chess for Cure is listed as one of the organized worldwide events on the World GO Day website.



Photo courtesy of SGVCC
Adelyne Yang (left) and FM Mikayel Rostomyan (right)

It was fitting for an event that also celebrates women in chess for FM Rose Atwell to tie for first in the open section, and for Sophia Zada Rosenholtz to win the U2000 section. Both sections were Fide-rated.

Here are a few of Rostomyan's games:

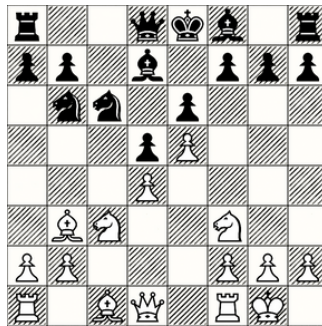
Forest Sherwood (2134)

FM Mikayel Rostomyan (2358)

Chess for Cure (2), 0-1

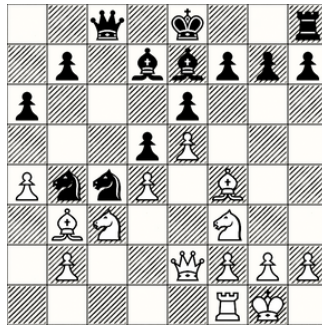
Annotated by WFM Angela Liu

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. c3 Nf6 4. e5 Nd5
5. Bc4 d6 6. O-O Nb6 7. Bb3 Nc6

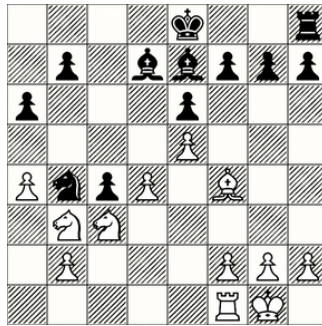


8. d4 cxd4 9. cxd4 Bd7 10. Nc3 d5

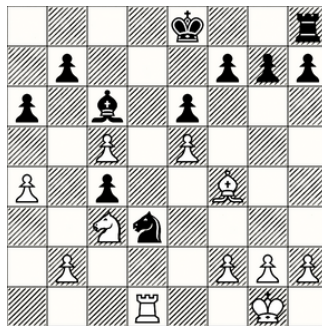
11. a4 Be7 12. Bf4 a6 13. Rc1 Rc8 14. Ne2 Nb4 15. Rxc8 Qxc8 16. Nc3 Nc4 17. Qe2



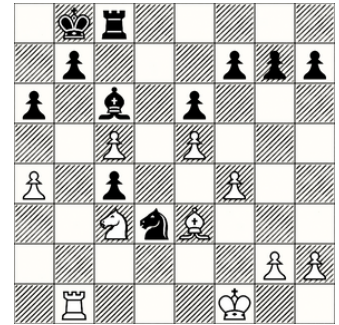
- 17...Na5 18. Nd2 Nxb3 19. Nxb3 Qc4 20. Qxc4 dxc4



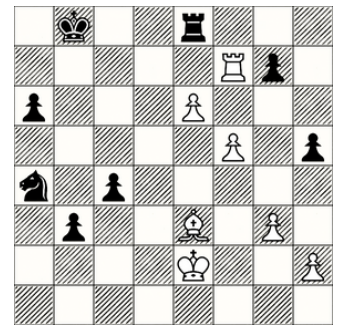
21. Nc5 Bc6 22. Rd1 Bxc5 23. dxc5 Nd3



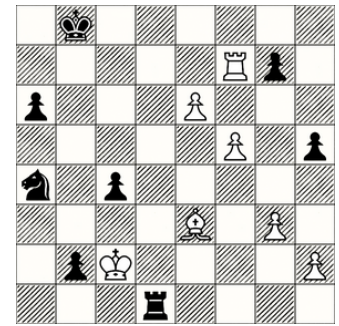
24. Be3 Nxb2 25. Rb1 Nd3 26. f4 Kd7 27. Ne2 Kc7 28. Nc3 Kb8 29. Kf1 Rc8



30. Ke2 Bd5 31. Rd1 h5 32. g3 Nxc5 33. Nxd5 exd5 34. Rxd5 Nxa4 35. Rd7 b5 36. Rxf7 b4 37. e6 Re8 38. f5 b3



39. Kd2? (39. Bf4+ Ka8 (39...Kc8? 40. Rc7+ Ke8 41. Kd2!+- with threats like Bd6 and Rxc7 coming next.) 40. Kd2=) 39...Rd8+ 40. Kc1 b2+ 41. Kc2 Rd1!



- Black allows the promotion of his connected passed pawns while stopping White's pawns from behind. 42. Bf4+ Ka8 43. Rf8+ Ka7 44. Rb8 Re1 45. Bd2 Re2 46. Rd8 c3 0-1

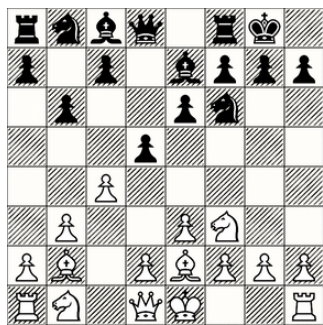
FM Mikayel Rostomyan (2358)

NM Gabriel Sam (2342)

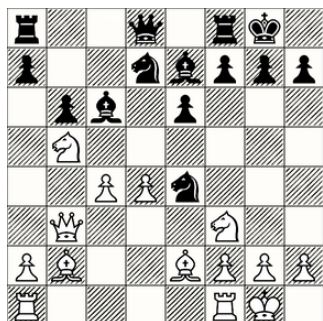
Chess for Cure (4), 1-0

Annotated by WFM Angela Liu

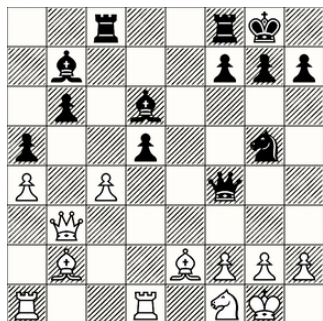
1. Nf3 d5 2. e3 Nf6 3. c4 e6 4. b3 Be7
5. Bb2 O-O 6. Be2 b6



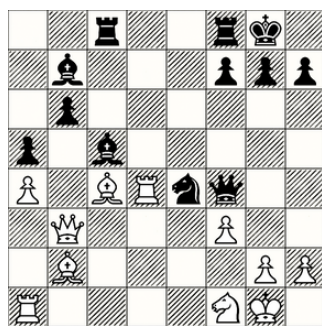
7. Nc3 Bb7 8. Qc2 Nbd7 9. O-O dxc4
10. bxc4 c5 11. d4 cxd4 12. exd4 Rc8
13. Qa4 Bc6 14. Qb3 Ne4 15. Nb5
Ra8



16. Rfd1 a6 17. Nc3 Nxc3 18. Qxc3
Bb7 19. a4 Rc8 20. Qb3 Qc7 21. Ne1
a5 22. Nc2 Nf6 23. Ne3 Ne4 24. d5
Qf4 25. Bf3 Ng5 26. Be2 Bd6 27. Nf1
exd5

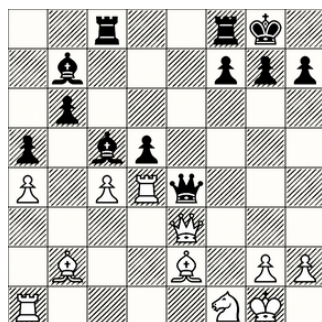


28. Rd4? (28. cxd5=) 28...Ne4 29. f3?
Bc5? (29...dxc4 30. Bxc4 (30. Qe3
c3! 31. Bc1 Qf6-+ with ...Bc5 next)
30...Bc5

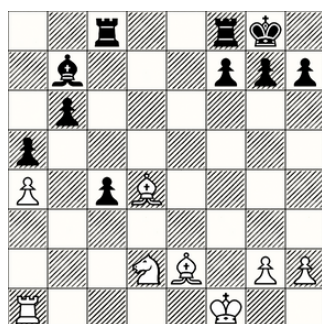


31. Rd1 (31. fxe4 Bxd4 32. Bxd4
Qxe4-+) Rfd8-+ is crushing.)

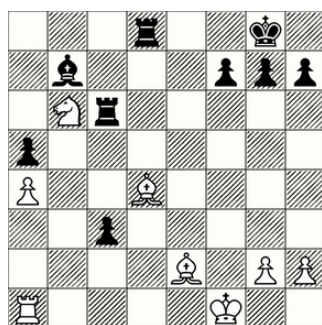
30. fxe4 Qxe4 31. Qe3



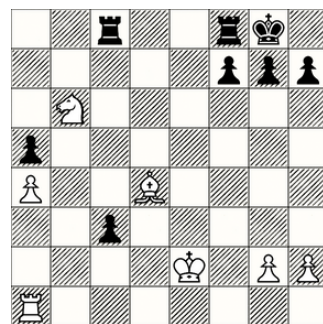
31...Qc2 32. Qd2 Qxd2 33. Nxd2
dxc4 34. Kf1 Bxd4 35. Bxd4



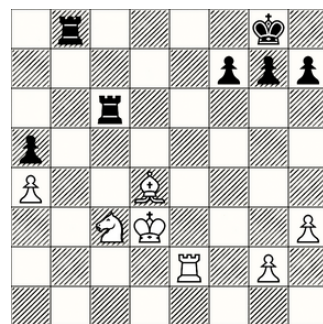
35...c3 36. Nc4 Ba6? (36...Rc6
defends the pawn. For example, 37.
Nxb6? (or 37. Bxb6? Ba6-+, and
either the knight or dark-squared
bishop is lost.) 37...Rd8



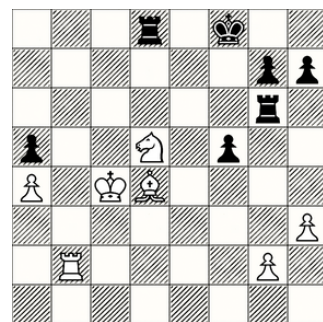
38. Be3 (38. Bf2 c2-+) 38...Rf6+
39. Kg1 Re8 40. Nc4 Bd5-+ wins
a piece.) 37. Nxb6 Bxe2+ 38.
Kxe2



38...Rc6?= allows 39. Nd5 with a
tempo, and White will capture the
passed pawn. (38...Rc7!-+ prevents
White from consolidating because
39. Nd5 fails to 39...Rd7) 39. Nd5
Re6+ 40. Kd3 c2 41. Rc1 Rc8 42.
Nc3 Rh6 43. h3 Rhc6 44. Rxc2 Rb8
45. Re2



45...Kf8? 46. Re5 Ra6 Suddenly,
White has the advantage. 47. Rb5
Rd8 48. Kc4 Rg6 49. Rb2 f5
50. Nd5



50...Rc8+? 51. Bc5+ Ke8 52. Re2+
Kd8 53. Ne7 Rxc5+ 54. Kxc5
1-0

Renae Chen: World Chess Cadet

By Renae Chen

Editor's Note: The FIDE World Cadet Championship is an annual international youth chess tournament organized by FIDE. It is considered one of the most prestigious global championships for young chess players.

The championship brought together over 800 young players from around 88 countries. There are six sections: Open and Girls divisions for U8, U10, and U12. The tournament used an 11-round Swiss system with 90 min + 30 s time control.

This year, the championship was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan at the Baluan Sholak Sports Palace, from September 18 to October 1.

Renae Chen played in the G10 section and scored a 6/11. Here is one of her games:



Photo courtesy of Renae Chen
Renae Chen at the 2025 World Chess Cadet

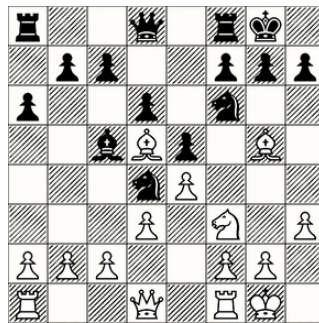
Inzhu Abibulla (1534)

Renae Chen (1734)

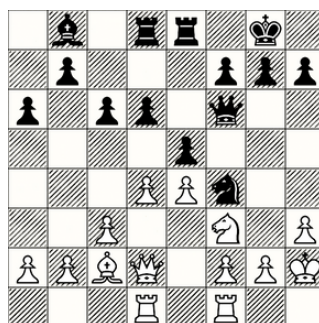
2025 FIDE World Cadet (8), 0-1

Annotated by Renae Chen

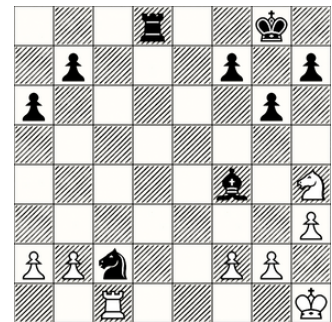
1. e4 e5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. Bc4 (3. f4 main move.) **Bc5 4. d3 Nc6 5. h3 O-O 6. Nf3 d6** Black wants to play Be6 **7. Bg5 Be6** Black is stopping Nd5 (7...h6 8. Bh4 g5 (8..Kh8) 9. Nxc5 hxg5 10. Bxc5 Be6) **8. Bb3 Nd4** (8...h6 9. Bh4 g5 (9...Kh7) 10. Nxc5 hxg5 10. Bxc5 Kg7 12. Qd2 Rh8) **9. O-O a6** (9...Nxb3 10. axb3 h6 11. Bh4 g5 12. Bg3 Nh5 13. Bh2 Nf4±) (9...Bxb3 10. axb3 Ne6±) (9...h6 10. Be3 Nxb3 11. axb3 Bxe3 12. fxe3=) **10. Nd5** (10. Bxe6) **10...Bxd5**



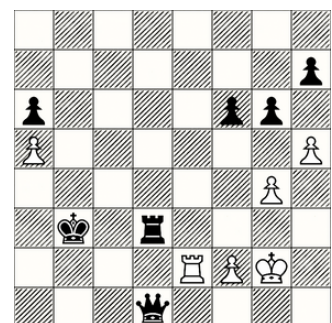
11. Bxd5 c6 12. Bb3 Ne6 Black wants to win the bishop pair by playing Nxc5. **13. Bh4 Nf4** Black is planning to play Ng6 **14. c3 Ng6 15. Bxf6 Qxf6 16. d4 Ba7 17. Bc2 Nf4 18. Kh2 Rfe8 19. Qd2 Rad8** Improving the pieces. **20. Rad1 Bb8**



21. Rfe1 (If White plays a random move like 21. a3, Black's plan is 21...d5 striking the center.) **21...d5 22. exd5 exd4 23. Kh1 Rxe1?** (Better move was 23...dxc3 24. Rxe8+ Rxe8 25. bxc3 Nxd5± and Black is up a pawn.) **24. Rxe1 dxc3 25. Qe3 g6** Stopping checkmate. (25...h6?? 26. Qe8+ Rxe8 27. Rxe8#) **26. dxc6 Nd5!** In-between move. **27. Qh6?? Bf4!** White most likely missed Bf4. **28. Qh4 Qxh4 29. Nxc4 Nb4 30. c7 Bxc7 31. Bb3 c2 32. Bxc2 Nxc2 33. Re1 Bf4**



The rest of the game was easy for Black to play and win. **34. Rb1** (White cannot play 34. Rxc2 because of 34...Rd1#) **Re8 35. Nf3 Rd8 36. g3 Rd3 37. Kg2 Bh6 38. g4 f6 39. b3 Nd4 40. Nxd4 Rxd4 41. Re1 Kf7 42. a3 Rd3 43. Rb1 b5 44. a4 b4 45. a5 Ke6 46. h4 Bf4 47. Rb2 Kd5 48. h5 Rd2 49. Rb1 Kd4 50. Re1 Kc3 51. Rb1 Rb2 52. Rh1 Kxb3 53. Rh3+ Ka2 54. Rd3 Rd2 55. Rf3 b3 56. Rxf4 b2 57. Ra4+ Kb3 58. Re4 b1=Q 59. Re3+ Rd3 60. Re2 Qd1 0-1**



My Experience at the 2025 FIDE World Youth Chess Championship

By NM Felix Guo

The 2025 FIDE World Youth Chess Championship took place from October 4–15 in Durrës, Albania, bringing together 721 players from 83 countries. As one of the most prestigious youth tournaments in the world, the event is known for its challenging 11-round format, compared to the standard 9 rounds in most international competitions. The list of past champions includes several players who have since become top grandmasters—such as Sarin, Praggnanandhaa, Gukesh, Murzin, Gujarati, Nepomniachtchi, and Duda—making this event a true stepping stone for future stars.

The Road to Albania: Balancing School and Chess

Participating in such a major international event was both exciting and demanding. The tournament took place right in the middle of my school semester, which meant I had to miss two weeks of classes. Thankfully, my school was supportive, but I had to take multiple tests and quizzes early and make up a large amount of work once I returned.

Balancing academics and chess is never easy, but this experience taught me the importance of time management and discipline.

Overcoming the Distance and Cost

Traveling to Albania was no small feat. It was literally on the other side of the world, and the cost of flights and accommodations added up quickly. I was extremely grateful to receive a \$1,500 scholarship from the organization Kids for Chess, which helped support me and two other U.S. representatives. Their generosity made



Photo courtesy of ICEA Chess
(from left to right): David Gasparyan, Bonnie He, Ashley Lin and Felix Guo

it possible for me to compete and gain this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Competing Among the World's Best

Representing Team USA was an incredible honor. I played in the Under 14 (U14) section, which featured 149 strong players from across the globe. I began the tournament seeded around 70th, right in the middle of the pack.

My overall performance was not my best result, but still an enriching learning experience. Competing against diverse international players showed me how important it is to adapt to different playing styles, stay focused even during tough moments, and keep pushing forward no matter the outcome.

Making Friends Across the World

One of the most memorable parts of the trip wasn't just the chess—it was the friendships I made along the way. I met players from Europe, Asia,

Africa, and South America, and despite coming from different cultures, we all shared the same passion for chess. We practiced together between rounds, and I still keep in touch with them online. That really showed that chess is truly a universal language that connects people across borders.

Representing Southern California

In addition to representing Team USA, I was proud to be one of four players from Southern California. It was inspiring to see familiar faces from our SoCal chess community competing alongside some of the best young players in the world. Each of us brought our own unique strengths and playing styles to the event, and together, we showcased the talent and dedication that Southern California chess is known for. I will post one memorable game from each of the four SoCal players at the end of this article to share and analyze, which highlights the spirit of our experience.

End of the Journey—But Not the End
 Although I didn't achieve a standout result, the experience was incredibly valuable. I learned what it takes to compete on the world stage and realized how much effort players from every country put into reaching this level.

More importantly, I came home not only with better chess skills but also with new friendships and unforgettable memories. This journey inspired me to train harder, think deeper, and aim higher. Representing Team USA was a privilege, and it reminded me why I love chess.

Outside the tournament hall, Durrës offered a unique blend of ancient history and peaceful seaside views, providing much-needed breaks between the intense rounds. However, one funny lesson I learned was that food matters more than I thought during tournaments. The local meals were great at first, but eating the same dishes for nearly two weeks got repetitive quickly. It's something I'll definitely plan better for next time!

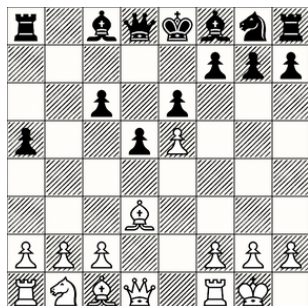
NM Felix Guo (2055)

Sigur H Myny (1981)

2025 FIDE World Youth Chess Championship (7), 1-0

Annotated by NM Felix Guo

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.Nf3 cxd4 Not a move I had expected or prepared deeply in. Even though it was the top move, it is quite common to play Nc6 and my opponent had played Nc6 before. **5.Nxd4 Nc6 6.Nxc6 bxc6 7.Bd3 e6 8.O-O a5**



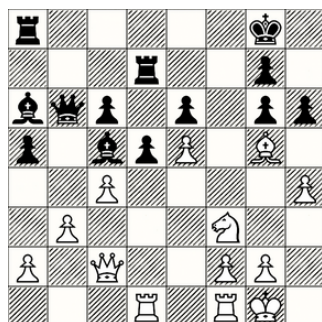
With the idea of Ba6 trading the bad bishop of black **9.Qe2 Ne7 10.Nd2**

Qb6 Interesting idea that makes sense over the board. Black is trying to force Ba6 in and trade the bishops. **11.c4 Ba6 12.b3 Ng6 13.Nf3 Bc5 14.Bd2**

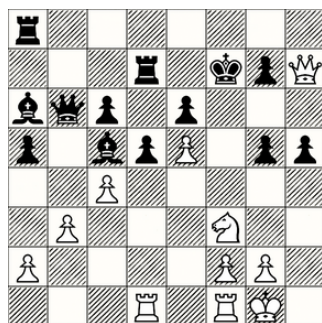
Perhaps h4 was better here **14...O-O 15.h4 Rfd8 16.Bg5 Rd7**



Now, he has to play Ne7 instead of Rd7, so that his knight won't be attacked with a tempo later. **17.Rad1!** Too slow of a move **17...h6 18.Bxg6 fxg6 19.Qc2**



19...Kf7 (19...Qb8! Insane defense idea and the only way to counter my bishop sacrifice 20.Qxg6 Qe8) (19...hxg5 20.Qxg6 With Nxg5 next, Black is losing.) **20.h5!!** Breaking through **20...gxh5 21.Qh7 hxg5** That move just loses. Qb8 might be able to survive.



22.Nxg5+ Ke8 23.Qxh5+ Kf8 24.Qh8+

24...Ke7 25.Qxg7+ Ke8 26.Qg8+ Bf8 27.Qg6+ 1-0

NM David Gasparyan (2212)

IM Daniyal Sapenov (2445)

2025 FIDE World Youth Chess Championship (1), 1/2-1/2

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 Nc6 7.Nxc6 bxc6 8.Bc4 h6 9.Bxf6 gxf6 10.Qh5 e6 11.O-O O-O Qb6 12.Rd2 Rb8 13.Bb3 Rg8 14.f4 a5 15.Re1 Rb7 16.a4 Qb4 17.g3 Bd7 18.e5 fxe5 19.Ne4 Be7 20.fxe5 d5 21.Rf1 Rf8 22.Nf6+ Bxf6 23.exf6 c5 24.Qe5 c4 25.Rf4 Rg8 26.Rxd5 Rg5 27.Rxc4 Rxe5 28.Rxb4 Re1+ 29.Kd2 axb4 30.Ra5 Rf1 31.Ra8+ Bc8 32.Rxc8+ Kd7 33.Ra8 Rxf6 34.a5 Kc7 35.Bc4 Rf2+ 36.Be2 b3 37.c3 Rb8 38.Ra7+ Rb7 39.Ra8 Rb8 40.Ra7+ Kc6 41.Ke3 Rxh2 42.Rxf7 Rg8 43.g4 Rg5 44.Bf3+ Kb5 45.Rb7+ Kxa5 46.Rxb3 Re5+ 47.Kd4 Rb5 48.Ra3+ Kb6 49.b4 Rd2+ 50.Ke3 Rd8 51.Ke4 Rbd5 1/2-1/2

Bonnie He (1719)

Le Tian Hoang Anh (1895)

2025 FIDE World Youth Chess Championship (5), 1/2-1/2

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Bc4 Nf6 5.e5 d5 6.Bb5 Ne4 7.Nxd4 Bd7 8.Bxc6 bxc6 9.O-O Bc5 10.Be3 O-O 11.f3 Ng5 12.f4 Ne6 13.f5 Bxd4 14.Bxd4 Nxd4 15.Qxd4 Qg5 16.h4 Qh5 17.Qf4 Rae8 18.Nc3 g6 19.e6 fxe6 20.Qxc7 Rf7 21.fxe6 Bxe6 22.Rxf7 Bxf7 23.Rf1 Rf8 24.Qf4 Qf5 25.Qxf5 gxf5 26.Rxf5 Re8 27.Kf2 Bg6 28.Rf6 d4 29.Ne2 c5 30.b4 Bxc2 31.bxc5 d3 32.Nc3 Rd8 33.Rd6 Rxd6 34.cxd6 Kf7 35.Ke3 Ke6 36.Nb5 a6 37.Nd4+ Kxd6 38.Nxc2 dxc2 39.Kd2 h5 40.Kxc2 Ke5 41.Kc3 Kf4 42.Kb4 Kg4 43.Ka5 Kxh4 44.Kxa6 Kg3 45.Kb6 1/2-1/2

Ashley Lin (1802)

Devi Narahari Saranya (1906)

2025 FIDE World Youth Chess Championship (5), 1-0

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Qb6 5.Nb3 e6 6.Be3 Qc7 7.a3 Nf6 8.Nc3 a6 9.f4 d6 10.Bd3 b5 11.O-O Bb7 12.Qf3 Ne7 13.Qg3 h5 14.h3 h4 15.Qe1 Nc6 16.Nd4 Na5 17.Bf2 Rc8 18.e5 Nd5 19.Nxd5 Bxd5 20.f5 dxe5 21.fxe6 exd4 22.exf7+ Kd8 23.Qe8# 1-0

San Gabriel Valley Chess Club Championship

By John Wright

The Club Championship had 70 players in one open section and ran from September 8 to October 27, 2025. It was SGVCC's strongest event to date, with three masters, six experts, and eight players over 1900. The Champion gets their name inscribed on our perpetual Champion's Trophy. There were also Best in Class plaques from Best Expert to Best under 1000.

CM Leo Wang won the SGVCC Club Championship for the second consecutive year. As the reigning Club Champion, he has played regularly at SGVCC for the past four years and is well known to our members. But prior knowledge can only take you so far and Leo was up to the challenge if anyone thought they could use it to their advantage. He turned in an undefeated score of 6/7—winning five games and only allowing two draws. The second draw came in the seventh and final round, where he held off Will Webster's attempt to force a tie



Photo courtesy of John Wright

2025 SGVCC Championship prize winners

for the top score. And since he's just a sophomore at La Canada High, don't be surprised if he goes for a "threepeat."

Will Webster finished clear second with a score of 5.5/7 and earned Best Expert. Wang and Webster also collected a cash prize of \$200 and \$100 respectively.

Best Class A honors went to Kevin Ludwig with a score of 5-2. He was the only player to draw both Wang and Webster, so quite a feat.

In addition to Best in Class, there were special prizes. Ashley Lin won Best Female Player honors with a score of 4.5 out of 7. She even found time to take a few rounds off and travel to Albania for the World Youth Championship.

Expert Manu Prasad earned Best Game honors for his exciting win over Axel Muller, which is shown on the next page of this article.

Young Andrew Lu won the Biggest Upset prize for his victory over an opponent more than 300 points above his rating. He was also Best Under 1000.

Phil Chase and I directed and the Best Game was chosen by a committee of Chase, Randy Hough and myself.

In closing, the entire SGVCC Team would like to congratulate all our prize winners and thank all our players and chess parents for another successful Club Championship.

Leo Wang – Club Champion
Wilton Webster – Best Expert
Kevin Ludwig – Best Class A
Christian Glawe – Best Class B
Arturo Baula – Best Class C
Albert Bao – Best Class D
Paul Longstaffe – Best Class E
Andrew Lu – Best under 1000
Ashley Lin – Best Female Player
Andrew Lu – Biggest Upset Winner
Manu Prasad – Best Game



Photo courtesy of John Wright
CM Leo Wang wins 2025 SGVCC Championship

Manu Prasad (2032)

NM Alex Muller (2126)

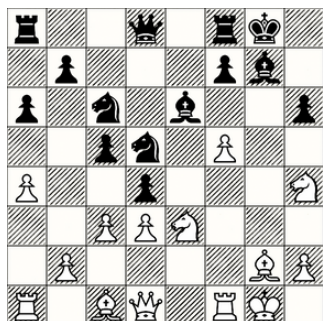
2025 San Gabriel Valley Chess Club
Championship (4), 1-0

Annotated by John Wright

1. Nf3 c5 2. g3 Nc6 3. Bg2 Manu's had a lot of success of late with this flexible approach 3...g6 4. O-O Bg7 5. e4 e5 6. d3 Nge7 7. Nbd2 O-O Black adopts a Botvinnik set up.

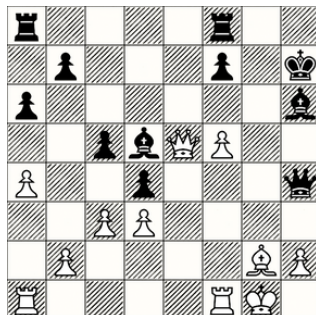


8. a4 d6 9. Nc4 h6 10. c3 Be6 11. Ne3 a6 (11...d5 immediately seems better) 12. Nh4 d5 13. f4 exf4 14. gxf4 d4 15. f5 Neither side is backing down! 15...gxf5 Risky, as the White f-pawn will later cause Black a lot of trouble. (The engine prefers 15...dxe3 16. fxe6 fxe6 with a small plus for White) 16. exf5 Nd5

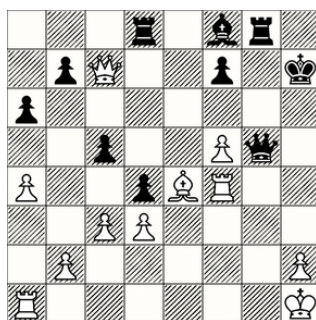


The computer now gives White a winning advantage. But it's a complicated position and not easy to find all the engine's best moves. 17. Nxd5 Bxd5 18. Qg4 Logical. White protects his knight and threatens f6 (18. f6+- Bxf6 19. Bxd5 Bxh4 20. Qh5 Bg5 21. Rf5 Bxc1 White is clearly winning) 18...Ne5 19. Qg3

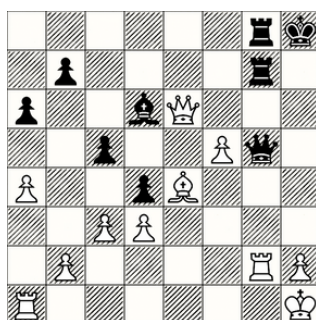
19...Kh7 20. Bxh6 Stripping Black's king bereft of pawns, but f6 was stronger. The position is now rated equal but good luck trying to find your way with the clock ticking 20...Bxh6 21. Qxe5 Qxh4



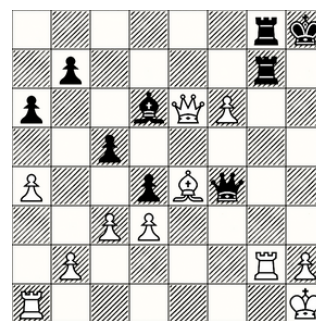
22. Bxd5? A mistake, Qxd5 was necessary. 22...Rg8+ Black misses his moment. (22...Rae8+ 23. Qd6 dxc3 24. bxc3 Re2 and now it's the white king feeling the heat) 23. Kh1= Rae8 24. Qd6 Rd8 (24...Re2 is still the way. Activity is everything with Rooks.) 25. Qc7 Bf8 26. Rf4 Qg5 27. Be4 (27. Rf2+-)



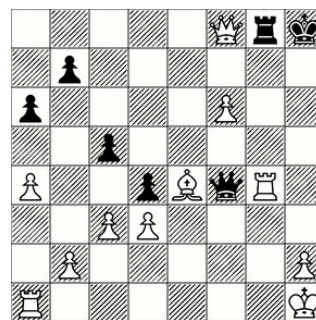
27...Bd6 Threat and counter threat. The game resembles two Medieval combatants hacking away with broad swords 28. Qxf7+ Kh8 29. Rf2 Rg7 30. Qe6 Rdg8 31. Rg2



31...Qf4 A great looking move as it protects the h6 square from a white queen check and creates a nasty looking battery with the queen and bishop. But the engine now gives White a winning edge. (31...Qe7 was necessary White is still better but Black is not losing.) 32. f6 A great move for a number of reasons, the most important one not being so obvious. I was watching this battle live and thought White had blundered.



32...Rg4 (32...Rxc2 was the move I had seen but then I realized 33. Qh3+ forces Black to give up his Queen! So the real beauty of the f6 push was not its forward motion, but rather that it allowed the white queen to go back to h3. Backwards moves are a thing of beauty!) 33. Qd7 R8g6 34. Qe8+ Bf8 35. Qxf8+ Rg8 36. Rxc4 Black resigned. A very worthy Best Game winner. The game could have gone either way and both players left it all on the board.



1-0

San Diego Open

By Chuck Ensey, GM Samy Shoker, FM Mikayel Rostomyan

This event had 5 rounds of G/100 +30 second increment games, starting with one game on Friday night 10/24, then two on Saturday and two on Sunday at the Courtyard Marriott Liberty Station. This is one of our favorite hotels due to the very nice ballroom, free parking (except for overnight), nearby fast food and a spacious park right next to the hotel. 213 players competed in 7 sections with the largest sections being at the top (41) and the bottom (55). The top Elite Section had a rule that only players rated 2000 or above could compete there, with no “playing up” allowed. For other sections, players could play up one section above their normal rating section, but had to pay a \$100 “play up” fee to do so. 30 players did this, so this added \$3,000 to the income for the event which allowed it to cover all the various expenses, including the \$20,000 guaranteed prize fund. Overall, this was a very successful event that everyone enjoyed based on the feedback received. We look forward to more events in the future at this great location. All the prize winners can be found on the SDCC website, but here are most of them:

Elite Section: 1st/2nd Place: GM Samy Shoker (4) and FM Mikayel Rostomyan (4), \$1,800 each; 3rd-6th /1st/2nd U2300: a pooled prize of \$378 each between 9 players with 3½ points: GM Melikset Khachiyani, CM Ethan Guo, FM Teemu Virtanen, IM Keaton Kiewra, FM Carlos Varela, FM Eugene Yanayt, Ashwin Damaraju, Sarthak Gattani, \$378 and Aayansh Guntaka.

U2200 Section: 1st Place: Matthew Shuben (4), \$1,400; 2nd/3rd/4th: Raffi Ghazarian, Thomas Gonda and Victor Yi with 3½ for \$467 each.

U2000 Section: 1st Place: Daichi Siegrist (4½), \$1,300; 2nd Place: Jose Cardiel (4), \$700; 3rd/4th Place: Jackson Scamehorn (3½) and Mark Bronshtein (3½), \$300 each.

U1800 Section: 1st/2nd Place: Joseph McEntee (4½), and Hiro Uchiyama (4½), \$1,000 each; 3rd Place: Lucas Park (4), \$400; 4 others tied for 4th for \$50 each.

U1600 Section: 1st Place: Toby Chen (4), \$1,200, 2nd/3rd/4th Place: Taylor Liu, Jeffrey Chen and Martin Valkanov, with 3½ for \$367 each.

U1400 Section: 1st Place: Jonah Lee (4½), \$400 (provisional); 2nd Place: Michael Pecherskiy (4), \$600; 3rd Place: Robin Hao (3½), \$400; 4th Place: 5 others for \$20 each.

U1200 Section: 1st Place: Michael Sicner (5), \$300, provisional; 2nd/3rd/4th Place: 8 other players with various prizes depending on if they were provisionally rated or not.

The top two sections were FIDE rated with Randall Hough as the arbiter. Jim Harrell directed the other sections with help from several assistants. Organized by Chuck Ensey with website help by Irina Nizmutdinova.
-Chuck Ensey

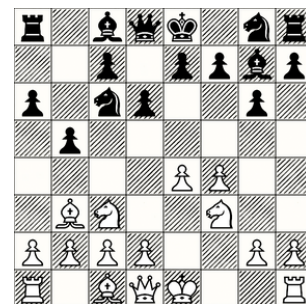
NM Ashwin Damaraju (2283)

GM Samy Shoker (2534)

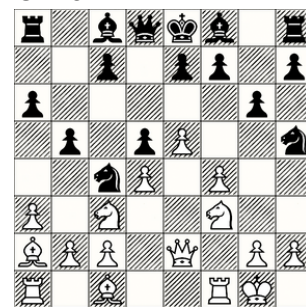
2025 San Diego Open (2), 0-1

Annotated by GM Samy Shoker

1. e4 In this game, my young opponent played without inhibition and I was fortunate to win this crucial game, since any result could have happened.” 2. d6 2. Nc3 g6 3. f4 Bg7 4. Nf3 a6 5. Bc4 b5 6. Bb3 Nc6

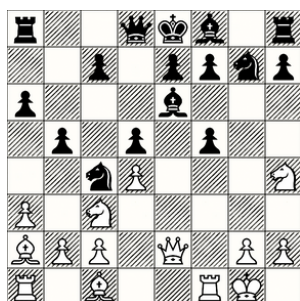


Trying to play something unusual to avoid Grand Prix Attack's ideas. The idea is ...Na5 to capture the light square bishop 7. a3 Nf6 Already a bad decision. Black won't be able to put pressure on the center. (7...Nd4 was necessary to prevent d4 8. Nxd4 Bxd4 9. d3 e6 10. Qf3 (10. Ne2 Bb6 11. d4 Bb7 12. Nc3 Nf6 13. Qd3 c5 14. dxc5 dxc5 Too many threats: 15...c4 and the e4-pawn) 10...Bb7 11. Be3 Qh4+ 12. g3 Bxc3+ 13. bxc3 Qe7) 8. e5 (8. d4 Bg4 9. Be3 e6 (9...O-O 10. e5 Nd7 11. Bd5) 10. h3 Bxf3 11. Qxf3) 8...Nh5 9. d4 (9. Bd5 Bd7 (9...Bb7 10. d4 With g4 idea to trap the knight e6 (10...Qd7 11. O-O Black is suffering from a lack of space. The knight on h5 and the bishop on g7 are dominated) 11. Bxc6+ Bxc6 12. g4 Nxf4 13. Bxf4 dxe5 14. d5 Bxd5 (14...exd5? 15. Bxe5 Bxe5 16. Nxe5 Qh4+ 17. Kf1 Bb7 (17...Qh3+ 18. Kf2) 18. Qd4) 15. Nxd5 exf4) 10. d4 Bh6 11. O-O) 9...Na5 10. Ba2 Nc4 11. Qe2 d5 12. O-O Bf8

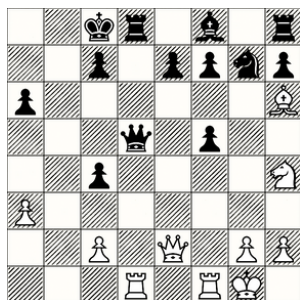


13. f5 Strong positional sacrifice! White exploits Black's lag in

development and the exposed position of the Black king in the center. **13...gxf5** One pawn up for Black, but huge compensation for White **14. Nh4** (14. Bxc4 bxc4 15. b3) (14. a4 "It was important to keep opening the center to accelerate the game c6 15. axb5 axb5 (15...cxb5 16. Nxb5 axb5 17. Bxc4 Rxa1 18. Bxb5+ Bd7 19. e6 fxe6 20. Ne5 Nf6 21. Bxd7+ Nxd7 (21...Qxd7 22. Nxd7 Nxd7 23. Qxe6) 22. Qh5#) 16. Nxb5) **14...Ng7 15. e6** Initiative at all costs! **15...Bxe6** Two pawns up.

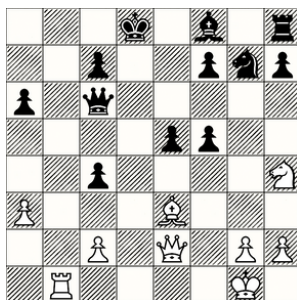


16. Bh6 (16. Bxc4 bxc4 17. b3 White needs to open the lines to prevent Black from reorganizing cxb3 18. cxb3) **16...Qd6 17. Bxc4** White had the right idea, but one move too late **17...bxc4** (17...dxc4 18. d5 Bd7 19. Bf4 Qb6+ 20. Kh1 O-O-O) **18. b3 O-O-O** (18...Bd7 19. Bf4 Qc6 allowed Black to maintain a slight advantage) **19. bxc4 dxc4 20. d5** Keeping the fighting spirit, but dubious for tactical reasons **20...Bxd5** Three pawns up but still compensation for White! **21. Nxd5 Qxd5 22. Rad1**

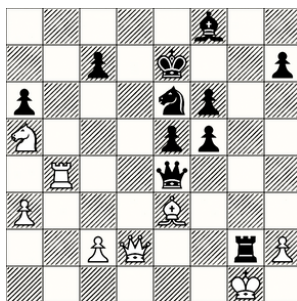


22...Qc5+ (22...Qe6 23. Rxd8+ Kxd8 24. Qf3 Qe4 engine has this position as slightly better for Black but difficult for humans to imagine that it is

possible to regroup pieces, especially with the Kd8 in the center and the awkward positions of Rh8, Ng7, and Bf8... 25. Qxe4 (25. Qg3 Ne8 26. Nxf5 f6) 25...fxe4 26. Rxf7 Ne6 27. Bxf8 Rxf8 28. Rxf8+ Nxf8 29. Kf2 Nd7) **23. Be3** (23. Kh1 Qc6 24. Rxd8+ Kxd8 25. Rd1+ Kc8 26. Qd2 Qd6 27. Qc1 Qc6 28. Qd2 Qd6) **23...Qc6 24. Rxd8+ Kxd8 25. Rb1 e5**



After this move, I am safe! I control the center, have more space, and can develop my pieces ready to give back some material if needed. **26. Rb8+ Kd7 27. Nf3 f6 28. Nd2 Rg8 29. Nxc4 Ne6 30. Qd2+ Ke7 31. Na5 Qe4 32. Rb4 Rxc2+**



Simplifying the position to get one exchange for 3 pawns. In addition, White's king is unsafe and I have three passed pawns. **33. Qxg2 Qxe3+ 34. Qf2 Qc1+ 35. Qf1 Qg5+ 36. Kh1 Kf7 37. Rc4 Bxa3 38. Rc6 Qc1 39. Qxc1 Bxc1 40. Rxa6 e4 41. Nc4 Bg5 42. Kg2 f4 43. c3 f3+ 44. Kf2 Nc5 45. Rc6 Nd3+ 46. Kf1 Bf4 47. h3 h5 48. h4 Ke7 49. Ra6 e3 50. Nxe3 Bxe3 0-1** After a tense game, I finally won. It gave me confidence for the rest of the tournament, where I tied for 1st place.

FM Mikayel Rostomyan (2372)
Ararat Baghdasarian (2173)
2025 San Diego Open (1), 1-0

1. c4 Nf6 2. g3 g6 3. Bg2 c5 4. Nc3 Bg7 5. a3 Nc6 6. Rb1 d6 7. b4 Bf5 8. d3 cxb4 9. axb4 Rb8 10. Bd2 O-O 11. b5 Ne5 12. f4 Nxd3+ 13. exd3 Bxd3 14. Rb4 e5 15. Nge2 exf4 16. Bxf4 Bxe2 17. Nxe2 Qa5 18. Qa4 Qb6 19. Bf3 Rfe8 20. Kf1 Qc5 21. h4 Ne4 22. Rh2 h6 23. Qc2! Qf5 24. c5 d5 25. Bxe4 dxe4 26. Rf2 Qh3+ 27. Kg1 Rbd8 28. Rf1 Qe6 29. Qc4 Rd5 30. Be3 g5 31. hxc5 hxc5 32. Ra4 Rf8 33. Rxa7 Be5 34. Rxb7 Bxc3 35. Nxc3 Qg4 36. Kg2 1-0

FM Mikayel Rostomyan (2372)
GM Melikset Khachiyan (2463)
2025 San Diego Open (3), 1/2-1/2

1. Nf3 Nf6 2. b3 g6 3. Bb2 Bg7 4. e3 O-O 5. d4 d5 6. c4 c6 7. Nc3 Bf5 8. Bd3 Bxd3 9. Qxd3 Nbd7 10. O-O dxc4 11. bxc4 e5 12. dxe5 Ng4 13. e6 Nde5 14. Nxe5 Nxe5 15. Qe2 Qd3 16. c5 fxe6 17. Rfd1 Qxe2 18. Nxe2 Rad8 19. Nf4 Kf7 20. Bd4 Rfe8 21. Rab1 Re7 22. Kf1 Bf6 23. Bxe5 Rxd1+ 24. Rxd1 Bxe5 25. Nd3 Bc7 26. Rb1 Bb8 27. Rb4 e5 28. e4 Ke6 29. Ke2 Rd7 30. g3 g5 31. f3 Ke7 32. Nb2 Kd8 33. Nc4 Kc8 34. Na5 Bc7 35. Nxb7 a5 36. Rb3 Rd4 37. Nd6+ Bxd6 38. cxd6 Kd7 39. Ra3 1/2-1/2

FM Mikayel Rostomyan (2372)
Vyas Miansh (1976)
2025 San Diego Open (5), 1-0

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 g6 3. b3 Bg7 4. e3 c5 5. Bb2 cxd4 6. Nxd4 Nc6 7. Be2 O-O 8. O-O a6 9. c4 d6 10. Nc3 Bd7 11. Rc1 Rc8 12. Nxc6 Bxc6 13. b4 Bd7 14. Qb3 Be6 15. Rfd1 b5 16. Nb1 a5 17. Na3 axb4 18. Qxb4 bxc4 19. Bxc4 Rb8 20. Nb5 Qb6 21. a4 Rfc8 22. Bxe6 fxe6 23. Qb3! Kf7?? 24. Rxc8 Rxc8 25. Nxd6+ Qxd6 26. Rxd6 exd6 27. Qb7+ 1-0

NM David Gasparyan: LA Open

By NM David Gasparyan

Editor's Note: NM David Gasparyan won the LA Open, tying for first place with GM Jianchao Zhou with 4.5/6. The 20th annual LA Open took place in Hilton Orange County Airport from Nov. 7-9.

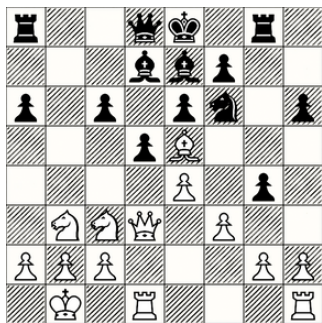
NM David Gasparyan (2337)

WFM Jenny Qi (2086)

2025 Los Angeles Open (3), 1-0

Annotated by FM David Gasparyan

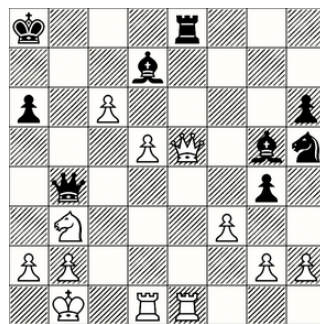
1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 Nc6 I had expected 5...a6, but was glad to see 5...Nc6, leading to the Rauzer. 6. Bg5 Bd7 7. Bb5 I knew that Bb5 wasn't the most accurate, but I wanted to take her out of prep. 7...e6 8. Qd3 h6 9. Bh4 Be7 10. O-O-O a6?! I felt a6 was a loss of tempo, as I was planning to take on c6 sooner or later. 11. Bxc6 bxc6 12. Nb3 g5 At this point, I was very happy with my position, as after g5 Black's king became vulnerable in the center. 13. Bg3 d5 14. Be5 Rg8 15. f3 g4 16. Kb1!



It's important not to forget about prophylaxis, even during an attack. 16...Qb6 17. Rhe1 Threatening to capture on f6 followed by exd5

17...O-O-O? a mistake, but an understandable one as Black's position is already difficult, and finding the right plan is not easy. The king will soon become exposed, as you'll see in the game. 18. Na4! Qb5 19. Qd4 c5 20. Naxc5 Nh5 21. exd5 f6 22. Qc3!!

A beautiful move, keeping the bishop hanging while threatening a discovered check. 22...fxe5 23. Nxe6+ Not the top engine move, but the simplest and most practical choice in the position. 23...Kb7 24. Nxd8+ Rxd8 25. Qxe5 Bg5 26. c4! Elegant move, attacking the queen by tempo and preparing to advance the pawn. 26...Qb4 (26...Qxc4 doesn't work because of Na5+ fork.) 27. c5 Re8 28. c6+ Ka8



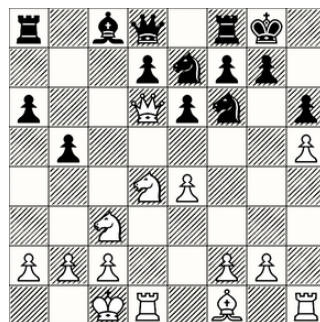
29. Qxe8+!! A beautiful final sacrifice, that ends the game on the spot. 29...Bxe8 30. Rxe8+ Ka7 31. c7 (32.c8=Q is unstoppable, Black resigned here.) 1-0

NM David Gasparyan (2337)

FM Julian Colville (2358)

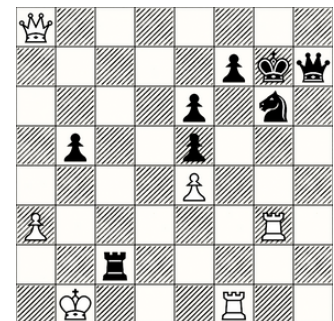
2025 Los Angeles Open (5), 1-0

Annotated by FM David Gasparyan



15. g4! Excellent move, g4 pawn cannot be taken because g-file would open and black's king would be in danger. 15...Bb7 16. f3 Rc8 17. a3 useful prophylactic move, prevents

future b4 ideas. 17...Rc7 18. Nb3 Rc6? needed to attack the queen with Nc8, followed by Nh7. 19. Qd2! Now, g5 cannot be stopped by Nh7, as the d7 pawn hangs. 19...Qc7? 20. g5! hxc5 21. Qxg5 Rxc3!? expected this sacrifice, gives Black some counterplay, but position still lost. 22. bxc3 Qxc3 23. Bd3? Rd3 was the best approach, but chosen to play safe and avoid complications. 23...Rc8 24. h6 Ng6?! g6 was better. 25. hxg7 Nh7 26. Qh5 Qxg7 27. e5! precise move, stops queen's influence and improves king safety. 27...Bd5 28. Rdg1 Nhf8 29. Nd2 d6! good move, trying to reopen the a1-h8 diagonal. 30. Rg5!? sacrificing the pawn, but stopping Qe5 threat. 30...dxe5 31. Ne4 nice move, stopping e4 ideas and keeping the diagonal closed. 31...Bxe4 32. Bxe4 Nh7? 33. Rg3 Rg6 was the top engine sacrifice, but in time pressure this was objectively and practically the best choice. 33...Nf6 34. Qg5 Nxe4 35. fxe4 Kf8 36. Rd1 Kg8 37. Rdg1 Kh7 38. Rf1 Kg8 39. Kb1 useful move, just trying to reach move 40 to get extra 30 minutes, then figure out the plan. 39...Rb8 40. Qd2 Qh7 41. Qd6 Rc8 42. Qxa6 Rxc2?? completely missed Rc2, last hope for Black, Kxc2 would equalize the position. 43. Qa8+ Kg7



44. Qa7!! fortunately this winning idea existed, f7 and Rc2 hanging. 44...Rb2+ 45. Kxb2 Qh2+ 46. Qf2 Black resigned. 1-0



Coachella Chess Club

By Axel van der Velden

The Coachella Chess Club (CCC) was founded in early 2019 by myself and a small handful of friends that met at my home once or twice a month. Shortly after the Covid shutdowns we began meeting weekly at the La Quinta Public Library and have grown from 4-6 people meeting every other week to regular attendance of 15-30 every week!

One of our original members, FM Lars Meyer, was instrumental in the Club's success as he regularly welcomes matches against all comers as well as offering group and individual lessons to players of all abilities.

The CCC tries to maintain a high level of energy and enthusiasm hosting USCF Rated events on a regular basis as well as exhibitions and lectures by FM Meyer and IM Vincent McCambridge. IM McCambridge is currently conducting a series of lectures on the Legendary World Champion, Jose Capablanca--and all of these lectures are Free!

We currently meet each Thursday afternoon from 4:00-6:30 pm and welcome players of all ages and skill



Photo courtesy of Alex van der Velden
FM Lars Meyer simul

level. For more information about the CCC, please visit our website at www.coachellachessclub.com.

We hope to see YOU at the CCC!

Attached are a couple of games from our club tournaments annotated by FM Meyer as well as a few photos from recent events.

Axel van der Velden
Founder, Coachella Chess Club

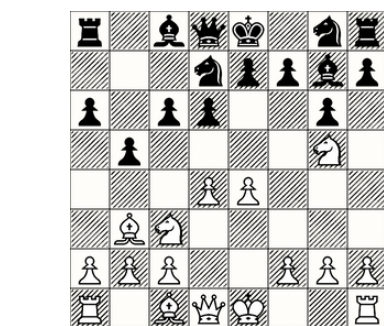
Steven Mariscal (N/A)

Kenneth Farr (1503)

Coachella Club Match, 1-0

Annotated FM Lars Meyer

1. e4 g6 2. d4 Bg7 3. Nf3 d6 4. Nc3 a6 5. Bc4 b5 6. Bd5 c6 7. Bb3 Nd7?! 8. Ng5!

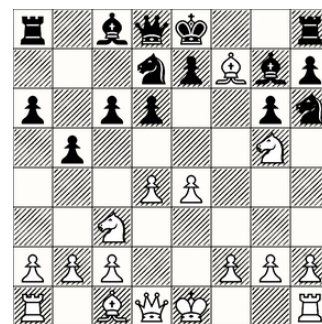


(8. Bxf7+ is not good enough as Black's knight can't get out after 8...Kxf7 9. Ng5+ Ke8 10. Ne6 Qb6 11. Nxc7+ Kf7∞) **8...Nh6** (8...e6!? 9. Bxe6 fxe6 10. Nxe6 Qe7! (10...Qa5? 11. Nxc7+ Kf7 12. Nxa8 Bb7 13. Nc7 Nb6±)

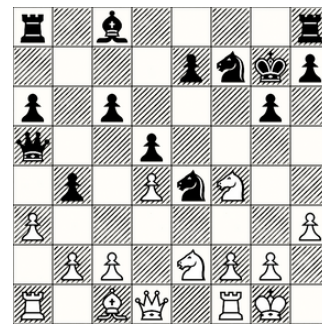


Photo courtesy of Alex van der Velden
IM Vince McCambridge Lecture

9. Bxf7+!!

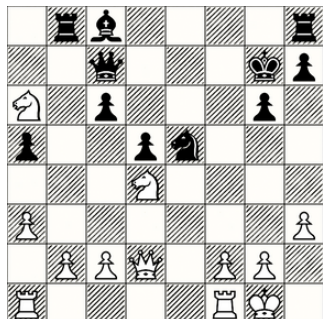


9...Nxf7 10. Ne6 Qa5 11. Nxc7+ Kf8 12. Ne6+ Kg8 13. O-O Nf6 14. Nf4 b4 15. Nce2+- Nxe4 16. h3 Kg7 17. a3! d5? (17...e5 18. Nd3 b3 19. cxb3 Bf5 Offered some counterplay but White should still be winning)



18. Bd2 Nxd2 19. Qxd2 Rb8 20. Nd3 Qc7 21. Nxb4 This move is less accurate than 21.axb4, keeping full control of the dark squares in the

center and activating the Rook—but it does open the door for an aesthetic finish! **21...e5 22. dxe5 Nxe5 23. Nd4 a5 24. Na6!** Overloading the Bishop on c8. What a nice finish!



1-0

FM Lars Meyer (2271)

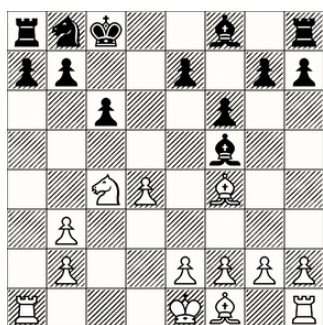
Axel van der Velden (1831)

Coachella Club Championship G/30,

1-0

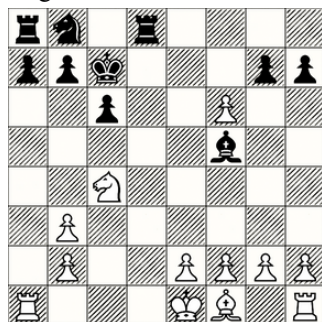
Annotated by FM Lars Meyer

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. Nc3 Bf5
5. Qb3 Qb6 6. cxd5 Nxd5 7. Nxd5
Qxb3 8. Nc7+ Kd8 9. axb3 Kxc7 10.
Bf4+ Kc8 11. Ne5 f6 12. Nc4

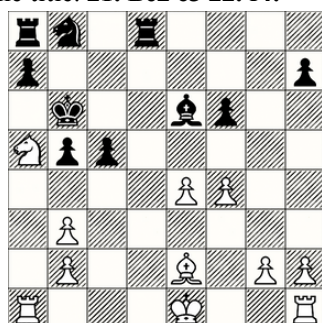


All of this has been played before. The position is close to equal, but the pawn structure makes it a difficult position to play with both the White and Black pieces. **12...e5!?** Novelty **13. dxe5 Bb4+ 14. Bd2 Bxd2+ 15. Kxd2 Kc7 16. exf6 Rd8+ 17. Ke1?** Despite my nervousness facing his

preparation, **17. Kc3** was better. Now, White has a very difficult position to play even though the d-file which ensures Black a small but firm advantage.

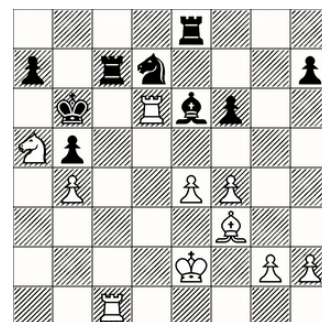


17...gxf6 18. f3 b5 19. e4? White's plan with f3 and e4 is actually wrong, no matter how natural it seemed to me during the game. The problem is mainly the control over the d-file which ensures Black a small but firm advantage. **19...Be6 20. Na5 Kb6** Black plays scarily precise and had he offered me a draw here, I would probably have taken it! However, by winning this game, Axel could ensure himself a spot in a three-way playoff for the title. **21. Be2 c5 22. f4?**



Again I err. After this move Black is close to having a winning advantage. **22...Nd7?** Chess is cruel. Just one "not optimal" move and White is back in the fight! Had he continued with **22...Na6**, Black could have maintained control of the d-file with the prospect of putting even more

pressure on my ill-coordinated pieces. White would have had to fight an uphill battle to stay alive. **23. Bf3 Rac8 24. Ke2 c4?** With this move, the roles have been completely reversed. **25. b4 c3** When it rains, it pours. Black's position has completely collapsed, and White is winning. (**25...Nb8** would have kept some fighting chances for Black.) **26. bxc3 Rxc3 27. Rhd1 Re8 28. Rac1 Rc7 29. Rd6+** Black resigned, faced with mate next move. This was a really interesting game, and I am impressed with his creativity in coming up with an interesting novelty in a well-known position. While I believe **12...e5** is perfectly playable, leading to positions that are close to equal, I would still prefer the Theoretical continuation of **12...Nd7**.



1-0



Photo courtesy of Alex van der Velden
Coachella Chess Club Tournament



The Dreaming King Open

January 17-19, 2026

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

Sonesta Los Angeles Airport LAX Hotel

5985 West Century Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90045

6 Rd Swiss, 7 Sections

3-day: G/100 +30 second increment

2-day: first 3 games G/40 d5; merges Rd 4

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 11/30/25

\$130 Regular Rate by 12/23/25

\$150 starting 12/24/25, jumps to \$160 on 1/08

\$170 at door on 1/17 (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.scchess.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

2nd-6th: \$1,500-\$1,200-\$600-\$400-\$300

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; must be 1100+

U1300

\$600-\$300-\$200-\$100; must be 1000+

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.

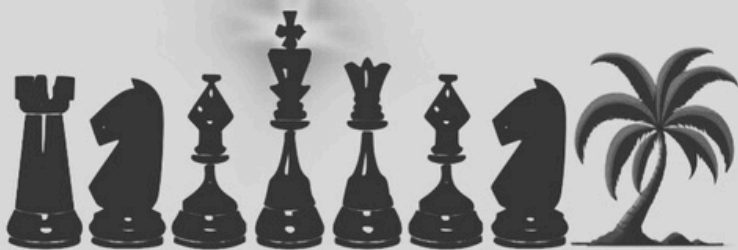
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SOCAL INTER CLUB STATE CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

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CALIFORNIA**

TO REGISTER, EMAIL ALAA MOUSSA:
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FEB 22ND, 2026
SUNDAY, 10 AM - 7 PM



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CHESS FEDERATION**

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SECTIONS: Championship & Reserve U1800
TEAM RATING: Average rating of top 4
LUNCH: pizza for all players!
FORMAT: 4 rounds, G60d5
ENTRY FEE: Free
VENUE: San Diego Chess Club
REQUIRED MEMBERSHIPS: USCF & SCCF



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State Qualifier Competition for the National Invitational Championships

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SCHEDULE

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- Ask a Master Q&A
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FRI 3/20 4-6 pm

K-12 Blitz Championship

K-12 Bughouse Championship

FRI 3/20 6:30-8:30 pm

Communitywide 4-Player Team Competition

Perfect for family, school, club or buddy teams!

FRI 3/20 6:15-8:15 pm

JUNIOR VARSITY

SAT & SUN

K-12	U 1600
K-8	U 1400
K-5	U 1000
K-3	U 700
K-1	U 400

5-2SS, G/40; d/5

SCHEDULE OF ROUNDS:

SAT 3/21 10 am, 2 pm & 5 pm;
SUN 3/22 9 am & 1 pm

SATURDAY ACTION

K-12	OPEN
K-6	U 600
K-3	U 300

RISING STAR (UNRATED)

K-12
K-5
K-2

5-SS, G/25; d/5

SCHEDULE OF ROUNDS:

SAT 3/21 10 am, 11:15 am,
12:30 pm, 2:30 pm & 3:45 pm

SUNDAY ACTION

K-12	OPEN
K-6	U 600
K-3	U 300

RISING STAR (UNRATED)

K-12
K-5
K-2

5-SS, G/25; d/5

SCHEDULE OF ROUNDS:

SUN 3/22 9 am, 10:15 am,
11:30 am, 1:30 pm & 2:45 pm

CHAMPIONSHIPS SATURDAY & SUNDAY

Section	Rating	Qualifier for
K-12	1000+	Denker Invitational (High School, Gr 9-12 only)
K-8	800+	Barber Invitational (Middle School, Gr 6-8 only)
K-5	600+	Rockefeller Invitational (Elementary, Gr K-5 only)
K-3	400+	Ashley Invitational (Elementary, Gr K-3 only)
ALL GIRLS K-12	400+	Haring Invitational (K-12, Girls only)

SCHEDULE OF ROUNDS:

SAT 3/21 10 am, 2 pm & 5 pm; SUN 3/22 9 a m, 1 pm & 4 pm

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