Summer 2024

RANK & FILE

Magazine of the Southern California Chess Federation

So Close at SoCal State Championship

By Ala'a-Addin Moussa

Photo courtesy of Chris Roberts

Congratulations to the 2024 SCCF State Champion GM Ali Marandi.

When the SCCF Board and the Temecula Chess Club collaborated to bring back the SoCal State Championship after a long hiatus, little did we know that it would turn out to be the strongest invitational in SCCF history. The average rating would have been even higher if IM Kirk Ghazarian hadn't needed to withdraw due to a medical emergency just 10 days before the event.

The round-robin event hosted by the Temecula Chess Club took place June 13-16. The championship was broadcast live with a 15-minute delay on lichess.org and chess.com. The top two seeds, GM Vladimir Akopian and GM Cemil Can Ali Marandi, tied for first with five points out of seven. The tiebreak favored GM Ali Marandi, who is now the 2024 SCCF State Champion.

The following is a round-by-round game summary. SCCF thanks all of the participants who provided annotated games.

ROUND 1 HIGHLIGHTS

Eduard Hakobyan sacked a piece early with insufficient compensation and lost to GM Ali Marandi soon after. GM Khachiyan and his former student, IM Costello, played a balanced draw. FM Eidelman blundered in the endgame while IM Bryant pulled a Houdini escape close to the 50-move rule when IM Shlyakhtenko missed many opportunities to score a deserved win.

Shlyakhtenko, Robert (2402) - Bryant, John Daniel (2404)

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nge2 0-0 6.f3 c5 7.d5 e6 8.Ng3 exd5 9.cxd5 a6 10.a4 h5 11.Bg5 Nbd7 12.Be2 Qc7 13.Qd2 c4 14.0-0 Rb8 15.Rfc1 Ne5 16.Be3 Nfd7 17.f4 Ng4 18.Bd4 Nc5 19.Bxc4 Qb6 20.Re1 Bxd4+ 21.Qxd4 Nxa4 22.Qxb6 Nxb6 23.Ba2 h4 24.Nge2 Re8 25.h3 Nf6 26.Nd4 Nh5 27.e5 Nxf4 28.exd6 Bd7 29.Re7 Kg7 30.Rf1 g5 31.Nf3 Ng6 32.Rxe8 Bxe8 33.Nxg5 Rd8 34.Nce4 Nc8 35.d7 Rxd7 36.Nf6 Rd8 37.Nxe8+ Rxe8 38.Rxf7+ Kh6 39.Ne6 Nd6 40.Rd7 Nb5 41.Bb1 Rc8 42.Bf5 Rc1+ 43.Kf2 Rc4 44.Bd3 Rb4 45.Rd8 Rxb2+ 46.Kg1 Rd2 47.Bf5 Nc3 48.Rg8 Ne2+ 49.Kf2 Nef4+ 50.Ke3 Rxg2 51.Nxf4 Rg3+ 52.Ke4 Nxf4 53.Rh8+ Kg5 54.d6 Nd3 55.d7 Nc5+ 56.Kd4 Nxd7 57.Bxd7 b5 58.Rg8+ Kf6 59.Ra8 Ra3 60.Kc5 Kg5 61.Rg8+ Kh6 62.Bg4 Rc3+ 63.Kb4 Rc4+ 64.Kb3 a5 65.Rh8+

continued on page 14

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHESS FEDERATION

Board Officers:
President: Ala'a-Addin Moussa
Vice President: Abhishek Kylasa
Secretary: Chuck Ensey
Treasurer: Frank Lee
Membership Secretary: Randy Hough

Other Board Members:
Guy Reams
Jonney Machtig
Brian Glover
James Harrell
Dedian Guo
Jim Mennella
Irina Nizmutdinova

Rank & File Magazine
Publisher:
SCCF

Editor:
Karina Carrillo,
Carrillo Content & Editorial

Contributors:
Ala'a-Addin Moussa
Chuck Ensey
Craig Faber
Esther Jou
Irina Nizmutdinova
IM Jack Peters
John Wright
Randy Hough

Rank & File Magazine is published quarterly by the Southern California Chess Federation. SCCF Memberships: $20 Adult, $15 scholastic (under 18 years old).

Copyright © SCCF 2024.
The opinions expressed are strictly those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SCCF, its officers, or its members.

Contribute to R&F

Rank & File Magazine publishes four times per year. We invite readers to submit images, articles, and letters for publication. Our magazine does not have reporters or photographers. Contributors volunteer time and content and receive photo and byline credit.

You are welcome to submit content and make suggestions relevant to SCCF and the chess community for upcoming issues. Send article ideas and submissions to:

rankandfileeditor@scchess.com

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING:

1. Articles should be prepared in a Word document and attached to an email (not embedded within the email).
2. Be sure to cover who, what, when, where, why, and how.
3. Be as brief and clear as possible to avoid heavy edits and rewrite requests. Editing may result in errors.
4. No PDF formatted articles.
5. SCCF does not guarantee publication.
6. Submitted materials may be published online.
7. The Editor reserves the right to trim, rewrite, or request missing information as needed for clarity and accuracy.
8. We do not accept political content or ads.
9. Attach photos to your email in a high-resolution jpg or png format. This includes games and notations.

DEADLINE FOR THE FALL 2024 ISSUE IS:

October 31, 2024.

LETTER FROM THE BOARD

It has been an exciting three months since the Spring issue of Rank & File was published last April.

First, Dedian Guo, the International Children Education Association (ICEA) executive director in Los Angeles, joined the board to replace Keith Martin, who is relocating out of state.

Additionally, Guy Reams, owner of the Temecula Chess Club, rejoined the board to replace Mason Welch, who is also relocating out of state. The board thanks Keith and Mason for their long service.

Second, SCCF and Temecula Chess Club collaborated to bring back the SoCal State Championship after many years of absence. It turned out to be the strongest event in SCCF history, with average ratings of 2490 USCF and 2403 FIDE.

The board congratulates GM Ali Marandi on winning the 2024 SoCal State Champion title. Also, thank you, Guy Reams and Chris Roberts, for running the tournament in an exemplary fashion and broadcasting the games live on lichess.org and chess.com. The board is pleased by the competition's success and is already considering expanding it to a potential nine-round FIDE Norms event next year.

Third, young SoCal players continue to shine and succeed in competitive events. The board congratulates Esther Jou on winning the U2300 section at the 2024 National Open in Las Vegas and thanks her for sharing her experience in this issue of Rank & File.

Additionally, congratulations to SoCal's own IM, Ming Lu, who was one of the seven recipients of the 2024 Scholar-Chessplayer Awards earlier this year.

Finally, the board encourages SCCF members to play in the State Open, which will be held in San Diego—America's finest city—on Labor Day weekend. Members can meet board members on-site and vote for the six board seats up for re-election. This year, you can vote in person at the event or online using our new eVoting system.

The board hopes you enjoy this summer issue, which includes exclusive content such as games annotated by the top-ranked players in SoCal!

One last note: Don't forget to renew your SCCF membership to ensure you receive the next issue of Rank & File and remain eligible to vote in our upcoming board member election.

SCCF

CONTENTS:

Cover Story: SoCal State Championship

3 Letter from the Board

4 Memorial Day Classic

7 Esther Jou on becoming an NM

10 Club Roundup

25 SCCF Board Elections

26 State Championship Best Games

Bryant Triumphs in Memorial Day Classic

Photo courtesy of Brian C. Glover

IM John Bryant

By Randy Hough

A familiar face, IM John Bryant, topped a field of 74 players in the Open section of the Lina Grumette Memorial Day Classic with 5½-½. He previously won the event outright in 2010, 2018, and 2022, and tied for top honors in 2009 and 2017.

Bryant opted for the two-day schedule and went 3-0 against a relatively weak field, then beat FM Sihan Tao and 2404-rated Eduard Hakobyan in classical time control games.

The latter was central to his success, enabling him to take a quick draw with 2301-rated Alex Wang in the finale. Bryant annotates the critical game.

[Event "Memorial Day Classic"]
[Site "Van Nuys"]
[Date "2024.05.27"]
[Round "5"]
[White "Hakobyan, Eduard"]
[Black "Bryant, John"]
[Result "0-1"]
[ECO "C66"]
[WhiteElo "2404"]
[BlackElo "2510"]

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nf6 4. d3 d6 5. c3 Bd7 6. O-O g6 7. Re1 Bg7 8. Nbd2 O-O 9. Ba4Nh5 {Preparing f5 and preventing d4} **10. h3 Kh8 11. Bc2** (11. d4! exd4 12.cxd4 Nxd4 13. Nxd4 Bxd4 14. Nf3 Bg7 15. Bxd7 Qxd7 16. e5 f5 17. Be3 += It seems unobvious for humans to see that white is slightly better here from afar) **11... Qe8** (11... f5! 12. exf5 Bxf5! 13. g4 Nf4 14. gxf5 Nxh3+ 15. Kg2 Nf4+ The silicon wizard says this is a draw.) **12. b4 a6 13. a4 f5 14. d4 f4?** {My opponent correctly pointed out that this was a mistake after the game. Fortunately for me, he didn't punish it correctly.} **15. Bb2** (15. Ba3! exd4 16. cxd4 Nxd4 17. Nxd4 Bxd4 18. Rc1 Stockfish says this is winning or close to winning. It is hard to understand why though. I suppose it is difficult for black's knight to rejoin the game.) **15... exd4? 16. cxd4 Nxb4 17. Bb1** {This is actually a serious error and gives away most of his advantage. We agreed after the game that a5! was the way to go.} **17... a5** {Now, I'm the one who plays a5!} **18. Nc4** (18. e5! Perhaps this was the way to go. 18... d5 19. e6 Bxe6 20. Ng5 Rf6 21. Nxh7!! Kxh7 22. Qxh5+ with big advantage) **18... Qf7 19. Qc1 Rfe8 20. Nxa5?**

{This gives away all of his advantage.} **20... Rxa5 21. Qxc7 Raa8 22. Qxd6 Nc6 23. e5?!**

{This move is strategically very risky since the d5 blockade is now mine for the taking.} **23... Qe7** {I spent a lot of time to find this move. If Qxe7 Nxe7 intending Nd5, Bc6, etc.} **24. Ba3 Rxa4 25. Qxe7 Nxe7 26. Bc2 Nd5!**

{After sacking the exchange to secure my blockade, black has no chance of losing anymore.} **27. Bxa4 Bxa4 28. Ng5 Bc6 29. Nf7+ Kg8 30. Nd6 Rb8 31. Nc4 Bf8 32. Na5 Be8 33. Rec1 Ng7 34. Bxf8 Kxf8 35. Rc5 Bf7 36. Rb1??** {This is a blunder according to Stockfish. Instead, 36.Rb5 and black was only slightly better.} **b6 37. Nc4 Nf5 38. Rc6 Nxd4 39. Nxb6 Kg7 40. Rd6 Nf5 41. Rd7 Kg8??** {41... Nxb6 was completely winning. White has a small chance to save the game now.} (41... Nxb6 42. Ra7 Nd4 43. Ra6 Nd7 {Somehow this sequence eluded me.}) **42. Kh2??** {The game is over after this. The rest of the game needs no comment.} (42. e6! Bxe6 43. Ra7 f3 44. g4 Nd4 45. Ra8 Rxa8 46. Nxa8 {I suspected I'd still win

continued on next page

this, but perhaps the engine holds.}) **42... Rxb6 43. Ra1 Nde7 44. Ra8+ Kg7 45. Raa7 Re6 46. g4 fxg3+ 47. fxg3 Kf8 48. g4 Ng7 49. Kg3 g5 50. h4 gxh4+ 51. Kxh4 Ng6+ 52. Kg3 Nxe5 53. Rd8+ Ne8 54. Kf4 h6 55. g5 h5 56. g6 Nxg6+ 57. Kg5 Re5+ 58. Kh6 Ne7 59. Ra4 Ng8+ 60. Kh7 Re6** 0-1

Eduard Hakobyan – Alex Gojich
(Notes by Jack Peters)
Round 1

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. c3 Nf6 5. d3 0-0 6. Bg5 Be7 7. Nbd2 d6 8. a4 Be6 9. 0-0 Qd7 10. Re1 Bxc4 11. Nxc4 Nd8??
Heading for e6, but White will strike first. Black should settle for a tolerable disadvantage with 11…Rfe8 or 11…a5.

12. d4 exd4 13. e5! dxe5 14. Ncxe5 Qd6

The flaw in 14…Qf5 is shown by 15. g4! Qc8 16. Nxd4 Ne6 17. Nf5. Best appears 14…Qd5 15. Nxd4 Ne6, but it's doubtful Black can resist successfully against 16. Nxe6 fxe6 17. Qc2.

15. Nxd4 g6
If 15…Ne6, White gains a pawn by 16. Nxf7 Rxf7 17. Rxe6. After 15…Re8 16. Qc2 Bf8 17. Nf5, the Queen cannot hide by 17…Qa6 because of 18. Ng4! Rxe1+ 19. Rxe1 Nxg4 20. Re8, winning for White. Also 17…Qe6 18. Nf3 Qc6 19. Bxf6 ruins Black's defense.

16. Qf3!
Playing for attack. White could gain material by 16. Nb5, counting on the variation 16…Qxd1 17.Raxd1 Ne6 18. Bxf6 Bxf6 17. Nd7.

16. . .Nd5 17. Bxe7 Nxe7 18. Rad1 Re8 19. Ng4 Kg7
As 19…Rf8 loses to 20. Nb5 Qc5 21. Nf6+ Kg7 22. Nd7.

20. Ne6+ Qxe6 21. Rxe6 Nxe6 22. Qf6+ Kh8 23. Nh6, Black Resigns.

Yang, of the Regional High School Championship this year, yielded a draw to another up-and-coming youngster, Gordon Xu (post-event rating 2200), en route to the second-place tie.

No less than six players tallied 4½: Peters, NM David Gasparyan, NM Bryan Leano of Utah, Miles Zhao, Kaustubh Kodihalli (another 2200 at the end), and personable 12-year-old NM Ashwin Damaraju, who displayed tactical flair in his upset of Peters. Jack graciously annotates the game:

Jack Peters – Ashwin Damaraju
(Notes by Jack Peters)
Round 5

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. Bb5+ Nd7 4. 0-0 a6 5. Bxd7+ Bxd7 6. d4 cxd4 7. Qxd4 Nf6 8.c4
White wants to control d5, as in the Maroczy Bind.

8. . .g6 9. Nc3 Bg7 10. Qd3 0-0 11. a4
To restrain …b7-b5. Many alternatives permit 11…b5 12. cxb5 axb5 13. Nxb5 Nxe4.

11. . .Rc8 12. a5
Dreaming of binding the Queenside by Bc1-e3 and b2-b3. White could settle for about equal chances with 12. Be3.

12. . .Be6
I had spent most of my time looking at the similar idea of 12…Qc7 and the consequences of 13. b3 Nxe4 14. Nd5! Qd8 15. Qxe4 e6.

13. Nd5 Nxd5 14. cxd5 Bd7 15. Nd4 Rc5
Also attractive is 15…f5.

16. Bd2 Qc7 17. Rad1?
A sensible player would have avoided the coming flurry of tactics! The position would remain balanced after a safe move such as 17. Rfd1 or 17. b3 or 17. h3.

17. . .Rc4 18. Nc6?!
I didn't care for 18. Bc3, the proper move.

18. . .Ra4 19. b3 Ra2 20. Nd4
White threatens to trap Black's Rook with 21. Qb1.

20. . .Qc5! 21. Bc3
I was worried but still did not see Black's winning idea. Stockfish confirms that White is losing and suggests abandoning a pawn by 21. Be3 Qxa5, which is hopeless.

21. . .Rc8 22. Rc1

No better are 22. Ba1 Rxa1 23. Rxa1 Bxd4 and 22. Qb1 Qxc3 23 Qxa2 Bxd4.

22. . .Bh6!
This is what I missed. Now White must yield a pawn by 23. Ra1 Rxa1 24. Bxa1 Qxa5, when Black should win routinely.

23. f4? Bb5 24. Qe3 Bxf1 25. Bd2
After 25. Bb2 Rxb2! 26. Rxc5 Rxc5 27. Kxf1 Rxa5, White will have to

continued on back cover

44th Annual Southern California Open

Aug. 31-Sep. 2, 2024

Marriott San Diego Airport/Liberty Station

(www.marriott.com/sanal)
2592 Laning Rd, San Diego CA 92106
619-221-1900

$20,000 PRIZE FUND (100% Guaranteed)

6 Rd Swiss, 7 Sections; 3 day is G/100 +30 second increment
Or for 2-day, first 3 games are G/40, w/5 second delay, then merge
Open & U2200 Sections FIDE rated except for the 2-day schedule

1. OPEN SECTION: 1st $2,200, 2nd $1,400, 3rd $1,000, 4th $600, 5th $400, 6th $200; BU2300 $800, 2nd $400
2. U2200: 1st $1,400, 2nd $800, 3rd $400, 4th $200
3. U2000: 1st $1,300, 2nd $700, 3rd $400, 4th $200
4. U1800: 1st $1,300, 2nd $700, 3rd $400, 4th $200
5. U1600: 1st $1,200, 2nd $600, 3rd $300, 4th $200
6. U1400: 1st $800, 2nd $400, 3rd $200, 4th $100
7. U1200: 1st $600, 2nd $300, 3rd $200, 4th $100

Reg.: 3-day: 8:30 to 9:30 AM Saturday; 2-day: 8:00 to 9:00 AM Sunday
Rounds: 3-day: 10 AM & 4 PM on Sat, 10 and 4:30 on Sun, 10 & 4 Mon
2-day: 9:30 AM, 11:30, 1:30 PM & 4:30 PM on Sun; 10 AM & 4 PM Mon

ENTRY FEE: $110 Early Bird Rate if received by 7/31, or $130 by 8/21, $150 after 8/21 and $170 if you pay at the door. Only $90 if U1200 or unr. GMs, WGMs, IMs & WIMs play for free, but $100 deducted from any prize. Unrated players are not eligible for any cash prizes; book or clock prize for best unrated in each section. Sept. Supplement will be used for official ratings. Provisional players (less than 26 games) can win only 50% of any prize, the balance goes to the remaining prize winners. Re-entry fee (3 day to 2 day): $75, must be U2300. $15 charge for refunds. Players may not have cell phones on during play; please leave them off in a bag at your table.

MAIL ENTRIES TO: SDCC, PO Box 120162, San Diego CA 92112, or enter online at the SCCF website (www.scchess.com). SCCF Membership required for all Southern California residents ($20, or $15 if under 18 years old). Two half-point byes are OK if booked at least 1 hour before the round; last round byes are OK but must be requested before round 3 and are irrevocable!

More info: *Chuck Ensey (858) 432-8006 or see www.sandiegochessclub.org*
$25 fine for forfeits. Please call Chuck ASAP if you can't make a round.
Hotel: $289, if booked by August 3, 2024, call 619-221-1900
Please book early, as rooms will sell out before the deadline.
150 Grand Prix Points (enhanced) and a State Championship Qualifier

Road to National Master:
An Extraordinary National Open

By Esther Jou

Last year, I co-won the National Open U2100 in June with a score of 6.5/7, increasing my rating from 2063 to 2133. I worked to increase my rating over the next six months in hopes of attaining the National Master title, peaking at 2178 after last year's North American Open in December.

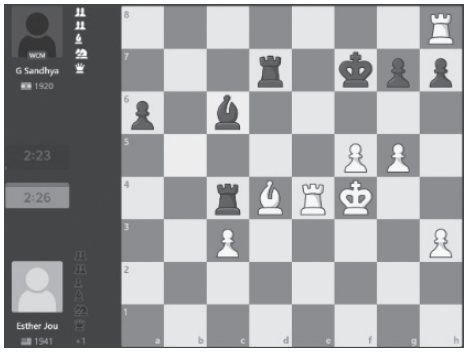
Photo courtesy of ICEA

The SCCF congratulates Esther Jou for winning the U2300 section at the 2024 National Open in Las Vegas.

In case you didn't know, the National Master title is a title awarded by the US Chess Federation to players who achieve a USCF rating over 2200. However, with the end of a stressful junior year approaching, I felt demotivated. A series of bad tournament results during my six-month tilt tanked my rating all the way to 2108.

2024-06-06 202406063042	2024 US WOMENS OPEN CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP (NV) 1: WOMENS OPEN	2111 => **2108**
2024-06-02 202406023312	21ST SUSAN POLGAR FOUNDATION GIRLS' INVITATIONAL (MO) 1: OPEN	ONL:1733 (P20) => **1742**
2024-05-27 202405278072	MDC 2024- OPEN (CA) 1: OPEN	2133 => **2111**
2024-03-17 202403170262	2024 SOCAL SUPERSTATES CHAMPIONSHIP (CA) 1: CHAMPIONSHIP K-12	2138 => **2133**
2024-03-03 202403031542	31ST ANNUAL WESTERN CLASS CHAMP (CA) 1: MASTER	2162 => **2138**
2024-01-15 202401151372	DKO 2024 (CA) 1: OPEN	2178 => **2162**
2023-12-29 202312303092	33RD ANNUAL NORTH AMERICAN OPEN (NV) 2: UNDER 2300	2167 => **2178**

During this period, I lost all hope of ever becoming a National Master. Nevertheless, I packed my bags for Vegas in time for the US Women's Open, a side event occurring before the National Open. I was determined to make a comeback and get to National Master this summer, and I scored 2/2 in the first two rounds. In round 3, I thought I had the win sealed against WCM Sandhya Goli. After navigating a difficult position for 37 moves under serious time pressure, I managed to get a completely winning position. However, I threw it all away with one wrong move the moment I began to relax.



I played Ree8??, which loses to Rdxd4+!

I was devastated by this and spent some time chatting with a friend, receiving some very helpful advice, which I will discuss later. Although I lost my chances of winning the tournament, I focused on salvaging my rating points at the end, winning the last two rounds of the 5-round Swiss and finishing with a score of 4/5.

Then, I braced myself for the National Open. Realistically, I knew I had a very small chance of winning in a very stacked field of NMs, FMs, and 2200-rated players. As the 39th-seeded player with a rating of 2133, my odds were slim. However, I was determined to do my best. As expected, I won in the first two rounds against an 1880 and a 2045 (although the 1880 missed a draw opportunity in the first round).

In the third round, I faced FM Henry Contreras, my first encounter with a player higher rated than me in the tournament. This critical upset gave me the momentum and confidence I needed to continue my winning streak and eventually win the National Open.

continued on next page

...NM continued from previous pg.

Esther Jou -
Henry Contreras FM
Vegas Chess Festival 2024
June 7, 2024

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 a6 3. c3 Nf6!? I was quite surprised to see this move on the board and having never encountered it in a game before I deduced that it must be either quite bad or a trap my opponent had prepared before the game in order to destroy me. **4. e5** Though e5 felt natural to me I spent a lot of time on this move as well as throughout the entire opening in order to ensure I was not making any mistakes in this unfamiliar variation. **4... Nd5 5. d4 cxd4 6. cxd4 b6?!** Even more questionable than Nf6. I had expected a normal-looking move like d6 or e6 to counterstrike in the center and felt that b6 was not only too slow but also a questionable way of developing the bishop. (6... d6 7. Bc4 e6 is OK for black) (6... e6 7. Nc3 d6 is OK for black) **7. Bc4!** With tempo and the recurring idea of Bxd5 followed by Nc3 and d5 **7... Bb7 8. O-O** (8. Bxd5! Bxd5 9. Nc3 Bb7 10. d5± In retrospect I do not know why I hesitated to play into this position but this was clearly better for white) **8...e6** (8... d6 Now the counterstrike does not work with Bb7 no longer controlling e6 like it did on c8 9. e6±) **9. Bg5?!** I was hoping to gain a tempo and force a bishop trade to simplify the position since I was incredibly nervous playing against a FM much higher rated than me but playing Bxd5 immediately was stronger than delaying it like I did in the game. (9. Bxd5! Bxd5 9... exd5± Creates doubled pawns and makes Bb7 bad 10. Nc3 Bb7 11. d5± Again this was still possible yet I hesitated for no reason) **9... Be7** It was at this moment that I came to the sudden realization that I could not let the game become drawish against a higher-rated player who would be far less likely to mess up than myself so I realized that Bxd5 which was long overdue was imperative as this was my last chance to fight for an advantage. **10. Bxd5 Bxd5 11. Bxe7 Qxe7 12. Nc3 Bb7 13. d5 As promised! 13... O-O** (13... Bxd5 14. Nxd5 exd5 15. Qxd5 Nc6 16. Rad1 Rd8 17. Nd2 With the intention of maneuvering the knight to c4 or e4 17... O-O 18. f4 Although it should be slightly better for me this is OK for black and nowhere near as disastrous as the actual game) **14. Qb3** Gaining a tempo on b6 and connecting the rooks **14... b5 15. Rfe1 Qc5 16. Rad1** White has full control of the center and prevents black from developing their pieces off the eighth rank an advantage that proves to be fatal for black in the game **16... b4?** Continuing to neglect development but it is hard to find an alternative move as white is simply better here **17. Ne4** The only move **17... Qa5?** Black is completely losing now (17... Qe7 Although white is still much better here Qe7 does not leave the king stranded on its own the way that Qa5 does) **18. Nfg5!** A quiet move that sets up a monster attack against the defenseless black king sealing the fate of the game in my favor **18... exd5** (18... Bxd5 19. Rxd5 Qxd5 19... exd5 20. Qh3 h6 21. Nf6+ Kh8 22. Qf5+− Leads to a position similar to that of the actual game) 20. Qh3 h6 21. Nf6+ gxf6 21... Kh8 22. Nxd5+− 22. Qxh6 fxg5 23. Qxg5+ Kh8 24. Qh5+ Kg8 25. Qg4+ Ensuring the king cannot run away to f8 while simultaneously protecting against black's Qd1 back rank threat 25... Kh8 26. Re3+− Checkmate is unstoppable) **19. Qh3** Checkmate is inevitable **19... h6 20. Nf6+ Kh8** (20... gxf6 21. Qxh6

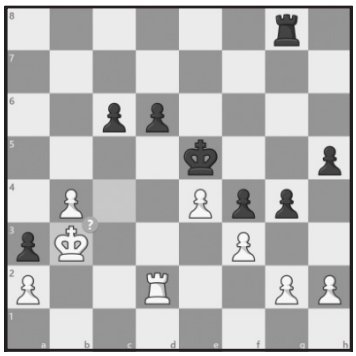
20. Nf6

Threatening Qh7# 21... fxg5 22. Qxg5+ Kh8 23. Rd3 With unstoppable checkmate) **21. Qd3** Although this is still completely winning I was angry at myself for not having found the forced and much cooler checkmate after Qf5 during the game. (21. Qf5! g6 The only move 22. Nxf7+! Kg7 22... Rxf7 23. Qxg6 With checkmate to come) 23. Nh5+ The move I missed when calculating Qf5. Now there are a million different ways to checkmate black no matter what move he makes. (23... Kh7 23... gxh5 24. Qf6+ Kh7 25. Qxh6+ Kg8 26. Qg6#) 24. Qf6 Rg8 25. Qg7+!! Rxg7 26. Nf6# A pretty smothered checkmate I wish I found during the game **21... g6 22. Nxf7+ Kg7** (22... Rxf7 23. Qxg6 With checkmate to come) **23. Nxh6** Nevertheless the game is completly won as I am not only up a pawn but have also obtained a huge lead in development and blown off his king's cover. **23... Nc6 24. Qh3 Rad8 25. Nf5+** 1-0 White wins. 25... Kf7 26. Nd6+ Ke7 27. Ng8+ Rxg8 28. Qh7+ Rg7 29. Qxg7+ Ke6 30. Qf7# 1–0

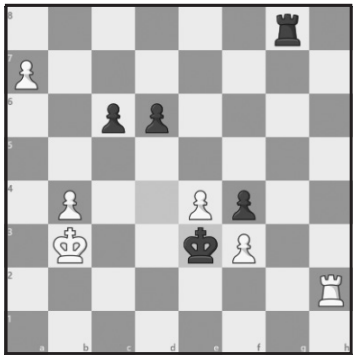
continued on next page

...NM continued

After coming out of the merge round unscathed, I felt like I had a chance to do well. I had not survived the merge in previous tournaments for a very long time. I won against Timur Aliyev (2287 USCF) in the fourth round and swindled Brandon Xie (2168 USCF) in the fifth round.



He missed h4! under severe time pressure, which would have been winning for him.



I pushed my a-pawn to distract his rook, winning his h-pawn, and after Ke3? I went Rc2!, later going Rxc6, Rc7, and b5 to win the game.

In round 6, the first round of the last day, I was getting more excited and nervous and had a lapse of concentration, blundering after over 20 minutes of thinking against French CM Alexandre Samuel Houhou.

Nc4?? loses to Rxe6+! with the idea of Nd4+ regaining the rook and emerging with an extra pawn after Kxe6

However, I managed to save this position, resulting in not only a draw but rather a win as my opponent fell into time pressure, messing up his position despite being up a pawn.

h4? is a mistake because of h5! which freezes the pawn in its tracks, making it a target for my knight and bringing the evaluation to about equal

The nail in the coffin came when he blundered his knight, allowing me to win the game and making me the most undeserving player to ever win the National Open U2300. With 6/6, I was guaranteed first if I drew the next round, and I still had second place under my belt if I lost. I will let you find the simple tactic that wins the knight after Kd5?? in the following position.

My last game ended in a quick draw against FM Arvind Jayaraman, sealing my tournament win with a score of 6.5/7. I gained 100 rating points from this event, going from 2108 to 2208 and becoming a National Master. Because of the USCF bonus system, I gained a lot more rating points. No particular game made me a National Master. The tournament made me a National Master.

The most important factor was my mentality. The second was luck. Playing in the US Women's Open right before the National Open helped get my mistakes and nerves out. I also tried hard to focus on the game during every round. I didn't think about my previous blunders or how close I was getting to NM. This was the helpful tip I learned from the good friend I mentioned earlier. Atop the leaderboard most of the tournament, I predicted who I would play next. This allowed me to prepare, which was helpful as an opening-reliant player.

The biggest change that helped me was my mentality. Even when I lost games, I was learning. I almost quit, but I knew I was bound to have a good result. It takes dedication and hard work, but if you put your mind to it, you can become a National Master, too. I hope you learned something from my experience, because I certainly did!

The Club Roundup

SAN DIEGO CHESS CLUB

The Gambito Open

By Chuck Ensey

There are several reasons for the increased popularity of the Gambito Open. Whether it's data-based or purely speculative, one thing is for sure: attendance is up at nearly every chess club in the country. And the Gambito Open is no exception.

Pandemic stay-at-home orders helped bring new players to the game. Chess.com grew exponentially due to COVID-19 mandates, with more than a two-fold increase in subscribers by April 2020, according to Forbes. "The Queens Gambit," a 2020 Netflix miniseries, is also credited with fueling the chess boom of the last few years.

San Diego's Gambito Open has benefitted from expanded interest in the game. The event attracts approximately twice the number of players it did before the pandemic. At more than 20 years old, the Gambito Open is well-known throughout Southern California and often draws players from as far as the San Francisco Bay Area, Nevada, and Arizona. It is also drawing attendees who have played all over the Los Angeles area, but have never been to Gambitos.

And now for the more speculative theories for the Gambito Open's upward trend. One reason is the assurance high-rated players have of competing against other high-rated players. This arrangement, officially known as the Elite Section, began more than two years ago. It consists of the top 12 rated competitors and was set up to prevent large point discrepancies between players, which often occurred due to lower-rated players wanting to play up.

The idea of giving highly ranked players their own section has worked well in practice. It seems many now aspire to be part of the Elite Section, but the rule remains that players must rank in the top 12 to participate. Whenever more than 12 Experts or Masters attend, the Elite Section is expanded to accommodate them.

It also seems that the more equal distribution of prizes has helped make the Gambito Open a success. Under the current setup, the four or five sections each receive a more even share of the total prize fund, with only a slightly higher amount going to the top sections. The fees for the event are also quite modest at $75 for the club and $75 to $150 for the TD, depending on the number of players.

Considering that the TD puts in 12-hour days at the event and works very hard, this seems to be a relatively low price to pay. TD Jim Harrell has contributed greatly on almost a weekly basis and receives assistance from me (Chuck Ensey), Ken Green, Sonsea Agonoy and a few other club members as needed.

The Gambito Open Sections consist of: Elite, Open, U1700 and U1300. With enough players, a U1000 section is also included. Prizes are awarded for U2000 and U1800 in the Open; U1700 and U1500 in the third section; and U1000 and U800 prizes in the lower sections.

Low-rated players come for a chance to win 3 out of 4 games in a section. Scholastic players from Irina Nizmutdinova's programs who are ready for more challenging play, have also participated. Irina has done an impressive job of attracting new players from San Diego schools to the San Diego Chess Club scholastic program. It includes both online and over-the-board events nearly every week and she has had to limit the number of players in her events as a result of increased demand.

Playing four games in a day is another bonus of the Gambito Open. Learning opening theory and getting to practice endgames are among the most notable benefits. Many players at the event have increased their rating dramatically by playing at the SDCC.

continued on next page

...Club Roundup continued

Omar Orduno won a trophy for "Gambito Player of the Year in 2023." His rating went from U1000 to over 1800! Many newly minted Masters earned their stripes at the Gambito. Also, many of the International Masters that came up through San Diego also received their start by playing at the Gambito.

IM Cyrus Lakdawala (now retired) played for the first 20 years of the Gambito and IM Dionisio Aldama, and occasionally Alex Costello, Ming Lu, and Kirk Ghazarian attend. If you have not played at the Gambito Open yet, we encourage you to make the effort to join in. In addition to the many reasons just listed for its success, you are sure to meet new friends and have a great time.

SAN GABRIEL VALLEY CHESS CLUB

By John Wright

If you have ever played at the San Gabriel Valley Chess Club (SGVCC), you are likely to have played against a member of the Daftuar family.

Ten-year-old Rohan is rated 1867, and his eight-year-old sister, Leya, is rated 1357. Then there's Dad, Sumit, who just started playing a little over one year ago and has a respectable 1200 rating.

Photo courtesy of SGVCC

The Daftuar family makes chess a family affair.

Mom Lilyn is part of the team, too, helping with much-needed transportation and sometimes getting the kids back home early when Dad has a long game. It has become quite common to look at the pairings chart and see that all three won their games on a given night. In fact, at the Mount Lowe Swiss in October of 2023, this trio all won prize money. And don't look now, but little brother Ojas has just started playing rated events.

This ability for everyone in a family to engage in the same activity is truly one of the unique aspects of chess. Unlike other sports or activities, age, gender, or size don't matter. You don't have to be the fastest or the strongest; just play good chess moves!

At SGVCC, we are pleased to have quite a few chess-playing families. Plus, we discount our club membership dues by offering a family membership plan. So, as they say, if you're looking for a night out the whole family can enjoy, SGVCC is your place!

Leo Wang Wins Club Championship

Expert Leo Wang went 6-1 to become the 2024 SGVCC Champion. The annual seven-round event concluded on April 30 and drew 62 players. It all came down to Round 7, when Wang faced top-seeded Axel Muller (2141). They were both tied at 5 points, and a draw would have resulted in a four-way tie. It was a worthy final game, and both players showed their competitive spirit. Muller played the Dubov Gambit with White, a sharp line in the Giuoco Piano. Leo's response was not to be found in the opening books, but he's shown a tenacity for defending tough positions. As the clock became a factor for both players, Wang found his way through the complications and earned a hard-fought victory.

Leo is now our second Club Champ and has his name engraved on the Club's Perpetual Trophy, just below last year's winner, NM Karl Tolentino. Second place was shared by Ex-

continued on next page

Photo courtesy of SGVCC

pert Mladen Kolar and Craig Vieregg, who also won the Best Class A plaque. Other Best in Class winners were Gary Tao (Class B), Michael Colangelo (Class C), Garik Yegoryan (Class D), Haoxuan Huang (Class E) and Ethan Kinoshita (Best under 1000).

In addition to the trophy and plaques there was also a $605 cash prize fund, courtesy of the Arcadia Chess Club. Arcadia Chess Club ran rated events for over 40 years, meeting on Monday nights at the Senior Center in Santa Anita Park. Additional cash prize winners were Amin Zoghlami, Davit Bakhtaryan, Leya Daftuar and Lawrence Preciado.

LA PALMA CHESS CLUB

By Craig Faber

La Palma Chess Club meets Friday nights at La Palma Central Park, 7821 Walker Street, La Palma, CA. The club runs quarterly sessions with two tournaments per quarter, a six- or seven-round one-section Swiss, and a five-round tournament in three sections by rating. The club opens at 5 pm with the rated game beginning at 6 pm. More details are available at lapalmachessclub.com.

Our last tournament was our seventy-player 34th Club Championship, won by Gregg Fritchle with 6.5-0.5. Six players tied for second with 5.0-2.0: Ike Miller, Larry Stevens, Randy Hough, Robert Klein, Manu Prasad, and Edira Xiao.

Fritchle's performance was notable because this was his fourth LPCC Championship win (all won outright), a feat no other La Palma player has achieved. His wins came in 1995, 2000, 2002, and 2024. Gregg also regained his long-held Expert rating with his result.

Below is a miniature: a Fritchle win over Jake Nemeth from the tournament.

Photo courtesy of LPCC

Gregg Fritchle

[Event Club Championship]
[Site LPCC]
[Date May 10, 2024]
[Round 2]
[White Nemeth, Jake 1701]
[Black Fritchle, Gregg 1962]
[Result 0-1]

1. Nf3 Nf6 2. g3 g6 3. Bg2 Bg7 4. O-O O-O 5. c4 d6 6. Nc3 Nc6 7. d3 Nh5 8. a3 (book is Rb1 or Bd2) **f5 9. Qc2 a5 10. h4?** (10. h3 keeps control of the g4 square) **f4 11. Ne4** (better is 11. gxf4 Nxf4 12. Bxf4 Rxf4 13. e3) **Bg4 12. e3** (12. Qd2 is necessary) **fxg3 13. fxg3 Ne5 14. Nh2** (14. Nxe5 is a better try) **Qd7 15. d4** (exchanging rooks first, then d4 is better) **Rxf1+ 16. Bxf1 Nf3+ 17. Nxf3 Bxf3 18. Kh2??** (18. Be2 Bxe4 19. Qxe4 Nxg3 leaves white a pawn down but it's still a game) **Qg4!** 0-1 (if 19. Bh3 Bxe4 or if 19. Bg2 then …Rf8 is crushing).

...Club Roundup continued from previous page

Local High Schools Come Together in First Annual Regional Chess Championship

By Irina Nizmutdinova

Months of anticipation resulted in a lively showdown at the 1st Annual Regional High School Chess Team Championship. The event brought together ten high schools from across Southern California and took place at the San Diego Chess Club in Balboa Park on May 19.

Photos courtesy of Irina Nizmutdinova

Canyon Crest Academy takes first place with 24.5 points.

Participants from Canyon Crest Academy, San Diego High School, Pacific Ridge School, Cathedral Catholic High School, Westview High School, Patrick Henry High School, Fountain Valley High School, Hilltop High School, Gompers Preparatory Academy, and Beaumont High School competed. Each team, composed of six players and sometimes alternates, came prepared with school spirit and stamina.

As the day unfolded, leaderboard teams began to solidify their positions. The final rounds were particularly nail-biting, with a face-off between Patrick Henry and Canyon Crest Academy in the fourth round.

Three teams emerged as leaders with impressive four-win records. Canyon Crest, captained by Roger Shi, won with 24.5 points. The team included Tan Vu, David Liu, Nathan Guo, Eleyn Xiong, Aditya Shah, Shane Sitaram, and Keshu Yang.

Left to right: Patrick Henry High School vs. Canyon Crest Academy; Hilltop High School vs. Westview High Shcool.

Patrick Henry, led by Kathryn Mokhov, finished second with 20.5 points. Their team members were Anthony Mokhov, Jonathan An, Fausto Borquez, Cole Winter, and Brody Thai.

Westview High, captained by Wesley Rullman, secured third place with 18.5 points.

This inaugural event proved motivational and entertaining for organizers and players. Organizers say that it marked an important milestone for San Diego chess. Irina Nizmutdinova, the Scholastic Chairperson at the San Diego Chess Club, reaffirmed the club's dedication to its new annual tradition. For them, this event wasmore than a chess tournament. It brought teens together to challenge each other and create lasting friendships as they learned the value of teamwork.

Here's to friendly competition among young minds and many more championships to come!

continued on back cover

...State continued from front cover

Photo by Chris Roberts

IM John Bryant

Kg7 66.Rxh4 a4+ 67.Ka3 Rc3+ 68.Kb2 b4 69.Bd1 a3+ 70.Ka2 Rg3 71.Bc2 Rg2 72.Rc4 b3+ 73.Kxb3 Rg3+ 74.Kb4 a2 75.Rc7+ Kf6 76.Ra7 Rxh3 77.Kc4 Ke5 78.Ra5+ Kf4 79.Kd4 Rh1 80.Rxa2 Rh8 81.Bb3 Rb8 82.Bc4 Rb4 83.Rf2+ Kg5 84.Kd5 Ra4 85.Ba2 Ra5+ 86.Ke4 Rb5 87.Bd5 Ra5 88.Ke5 Rb5 89.Rg2+ Kh5 90.Rg8 Ra5 91.Ke4 Rb5 92.Bf7+ Kh4 93.Kf4 Rb4+ 94.Kf3 Ra4 95.Bd5 Kh5 96.Be4 Ra1 97.Kf4 Rf1+ 98.Bf3+ Kh6 99.Rg3 Ra1 100.Be4 Rf1+ 101.Ke5 Rf7 102.Bf5 Rg7 103. Rh3+ Kg5 104.Rh1 Re7+ 105.Be6 Ra7 106.Rg1+ Kh4 107.Bf5 Kh5 108.Kf4 Kh6 109.Ke5 Rg7 110. Rh1+ Kg5 111.Rh2 Re7+ 112.Be6 Rg7 113.Rh1 Rg6 114.Bf7 Ra6 115.Rg1+ Kh4 116.Bd5 Ra5 117. Kf4 Kh5 118.Be4 Kh6 119.Rg6+ Kh5 120.Rg7 Kh4 121.Rg1 Ra3 122.Rd1 Rg3 123.Rh1+ Rh3 124. Rg1 Ra3 125.Bc6 Rc3 126.Rg6 Kh5 127.Re6 Rc4+ 128.Be4 Ra4 129.Re7 Ra6 130.Rh7+ ½-½

Photo by Brian C. Glover

IM Robert Shlyakhtenko

Photo by Brian C. Glover

GM Vladimir Akopian

Eidelman, Gabriel (2376) -
Akopian, Vladimir (2586)

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Bb4+ 4.Nbd2 d5 5.Qa4+ Nc6 6.a3 Be7 7.e3 0-0 8.Qc2 Nb8 9.Bd3 b6 10.e4 dxe4 11.Nxe4 Nbd7 12.Ne5 Bb7 13.Ng5 g6 14.h4 Nxe5 15.dxe5 Nd7 16.Bf4 Nc5 17.0-0-0 Qd4 18.Be4 Bxe4 19.Rxd4 Bxc2 20.Kxc2 a5 21.h5 f6 22.Nf3 g5 23.Be3 h6 24.exf6 Bxf6 25.Rg4 Rad8 26.Nd4 Bxd4 27.Bxd4 Rf5 28.f3 a4 29.Re1 Nb3 30.Bc3 Kf7 31.Rd1 Rd6 32.Bb4 Rxd1 33.Kxd1 c5 34.Bc3 e5 35.Ke2 Ke6 36.Kd3 Nc1+ 37.Ke3 Nb3 38.Kd3 Rf7 39.Re4 Rd7+ 40.Ke3 Nd4 41.Kf2 Rf7 42.Re3 g4 43.b3 g3+ 44.Kf1 axb3 45.Bxd4 cxd4 46.Rxb3 Kf5 47.Rxb6 Ra7 48.Rg6 Rxa3 49.Rxg3 Kf4 50.Rg4+ Ke3 51.Re4+ Kd2 52.Rxe5 d3 53.g4 Kc3 54.Rd5 Ra1+ 55.Kf2 d2 56.Ke3 d1Q 57.Rxd1 Rxd1 58.Ke4 Kxc4 59.f4 Kc5 60.Ke5 Kc6 61.g5 Kd7 62.Kf6 Ke8 63.Kg7 hxg5 64.fxg5 Rd7+ 65.Kg8 Rd5 66.h6 Rxg5+ 67.Kh8 Kf7 68.h7 Kg6 69.Kg8 Kh6+ 70.Kh8 Ra5 0-1

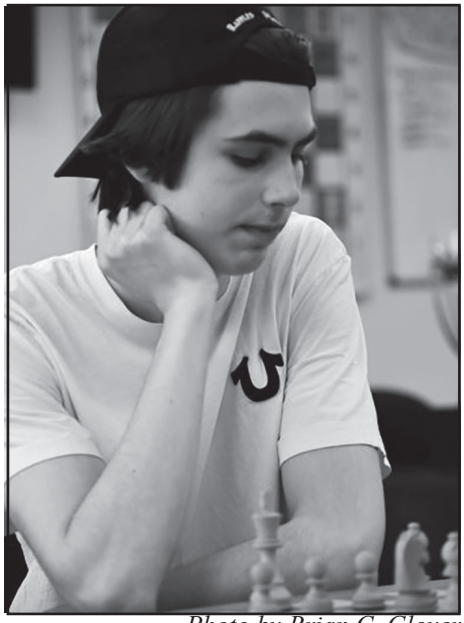


Photo by Brian C. Glover

Gabriel Eidelman

Ali Marandi, Cemil Can (2511) -
Hakobyan, Eduard (2297)
(Notes by GM Ali Marandi)

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0 5.0-0 d6 6.c4 Nbd7 7.Nc3 e5 8.e4 exd4 9.Nxd4 Re8 10.Re1 Nc5 11.b3!? [11.h3 Main line] **11...Ng4** [11...Bg4?! 12.Qd2 (12.f3? Nfxe4! 13.Nxe4 Nxe4 14.Bb2 (14.fxg4? Nc3 15.Rxe8+ Qxe8 16.Qd2

continued on next page

Photo by Brian C. Glover

GM Cemil Can Ali Marandi

Photo by Brian C. Glover

Eduard Hakobyan

Bxd4+ 17.Kf1 (17.Qxd4?? Ne2+-+) 17...Qe6) 14...Bd7!? (14...Qf6?? 15.Qc2 c5 16.fxg4 Ng5 (16...cxd4 17.Rxe4+-) 17.h4+-) 15.Rxe4 Rxe4 16.fxe4 c5 17.Qd3 cxd4 18.Bxd4 Be5=)] **12.Bb2 Ne5** [12...Qf6 13.Nf3 Ne5! (13...Nxe4?! 14.Rb1!) 14.Rxe4? Rxe4 15.h3 (15.Nxe4? Qxb2-+) 15...Nh6! 16.g4!? Nxg4! 17.hxg4 Rxg4; b) 14.Qe2? Bd7; 14...Qf5 (14...Ngxf2?? 15.Nxe4 Qxb2 16.Nxf2+-) 15.Nxe4 Rxe4 16.Qd2! Nf6 (16...Rxe1+ 17.Rxe1 Nf6 (17...Bxb2 18.Re8+ Kg7 19.Qxb2+ Nf6 20.Re7+-) 18.Bc3 Bd7 19.Nh4±) 17.Bc3)] **13.Re3** [13.Bf1? Bg4 14.f3 Ned3! 15.Bxd3 Bxd4+ 16.Kg2 Qf6 17.Bc2 (17.Nd5?? Bxf3+ 18.Qxf3 Qxf3+ 19.Kxf3 Bxb2 20.Rad1 Rac8-+) 17...Bxc3 18.Bxc3 Qxc3 19.fxg4 Re6] **13...h5?!N** [13...a5 14.h3 a4 15.Rb1 c6 16.f4 axb3! 17.axb3 Ned7 18.Kh2=] **14.f4** [14.h3] **14...Ng4 15.Re1 h4?** [15...Nf6 16.Rb1 c6 17.h3 a5; 15...c6 16.h3 Nf6 17.Qd2 a5] **16.h3! hxg3??** [16...Nf6 17.g4±] **17.hxg4 Bxg4** [17...Qh4 18.f5 Qh2+ 19.Kf1+-] **18.Qxg4 Bxd4+ 19.Kf1** [19.Kh1?? Nd3! 20.Qxg3 Nxb2=] **19...Nd3 20.Rad1! Nf2** [20...Nxe1 21.Rxd4 Nxg2 22.Kxg2+-; 20...Nxb2 21.Rxd4 Qf6 22.e5 dxe5 23.Nd5+-] **21.Qxg3 Nxd1 22.Rxd1 Bg7** [22...c5 23.Rxd4! cxd4 24.Nd5 Qa5 25.Qf2+-] **23.e5 Qb8 24.Ne4 dxe5 25.Bxe5 Bxe5 26.fxe5 Kg7 27.Rd7 Rd8 28.e6**

Position after 28.e6

Rxd7 29.Qe5+ f6 [29...Kf8 30.e7+! Ke8 (30...Kg8 31.Nf6+ Kg7 32.Nxd7++-; 30...Rxe7 31.Qh8#) 31.Nf6#; 29...Kh6 30.exd7+-] **30.Qxf6+ Kg8 31.Qxg6+** [31.Qxg6+ Rg7 32.Nf6+ Kf8 (32...Kh8 33.Qh6+ Rh7 34.Qxh7#) 33.e7+ Kxe7 (33...Rxe7 34.Qg8#) 34.Qxg7++-] 1-0

Costello, Alexander (2219) - Khachiyan, Melikset (2435)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6 5.Nc3 Bg7 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Bc4 0-0 8.Bb3 Re8 9.h3 d6 10.Qd3 Na5 11.0-0 Nxb3 12.axb3 b6 13.Nd5 Bb7 14.c4 a6 15.Bg5 e6 16.Nxf6+ Bxf6 17.Bxf6 Qxf6 18.b4 d5 19.exd5 exd5 20.c5 Re4 21.Rfd1 a5 22.Qc3 Rc8 23.Rac1 axb4 24.Qxb4 Kg7 25.f3 Rh4 26.c6 Bxc6 27.Qxb6 Ba4 28.Qxf6+ Kxf6 29.Rxc8 Bxd1 30.Nc2 Bxc2 31.Rxc2 Rb4 32.Re2 h5 33.Kf2 d4 34.h4 Rb3 35.g4 hxg4 36.fxg4 Rh3 37.Re4 Rh2+ 38.Kg3 Rd2 39.b4 d3 40.Kf3 Rh2 41.Rd4 Ke5 42.Rxd3 Rh3+ 43.Ke2 Rxh4 44.Re3+ Kd5 45.Rd3+ ½-½

Photo by Brian C. Glover

Alexander Costello

Photo by Chris Roberts

GM Melikset Khachiyan

ROUND 2 HIGHLIGHTS

Two games finished with a perpetual. They were GM Akopian vs. GM Ali Marandi (the top two seeds) and IM Bryant vs. GM Khachiyan.

There were two decisive games: Eduard Hakobian bounced back by beating IM Costello in a time scramble. Then, IM Shlyakhtenko made sure to convert his advantage this time around, earning the full point against FM Eidelman.

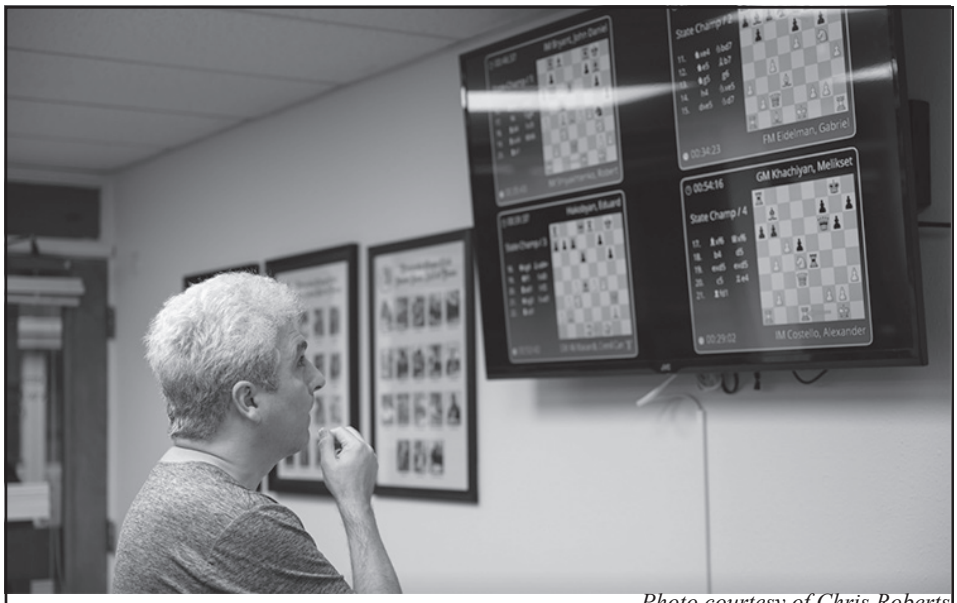


Photo courtesy of Chris Roberts

The event was broadcast live on an in-room monitor plus on lichess.com and chess.com with a 15-minute delay.

Bryant, John Daniel (2404) - Khachiyan, Melikset (2435)

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nxc6 bxc6 6.e5 Qe7 7.Qe2 Nd5 8.c4 Ba6 9.Nd2 0-0-0 10.b3 d6 11.Bb2 Nb4 12.Qe4 d5 13.cxd5 Bxf1 14.d6 cxd6 15.Kxf1 d5 16.Qe2 c5 17.g3 h5 18.Nf3 h4 19.Nxh4 Qe6 20.Ng2 g5 21.Ne3 Be7 22.Ba3 Qxe5 23.Rc1 Kb7 24.Bxb4 cxb4 25.Qb5+ Ka8 26.Qc6+ Kb8 27.Qb5+ ½-½

Hakobyan, Eduard (2297) - Costello, Alexander (2219)

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3 Bb4 4.Bg2 0-0 5.Nf3 Re8 6.0-0 c6 7.d3 Bxc3 8.bxc3 d5 9.Nd2 Be6 10.Rb1 Qc7 11.Qb3 b6 12.cxd5 Bxd5 13.Qc2 Bxg2 14.Kxg2 c5 15.e4 Nbd7 16.Nc4 Rac8 17.a4 Qc6 18.f3 a6 19.Be3 Rb8 20.Rb2 Red8 21.Rfb1 Ne8 22.f4 f5 23.fxe5 fxe4 24.dxe4 Nc7 25.Rd1 Qe6 26.Qe2 b5 27.axb5 axb5 28.Rd6 Qe7 29.Rbd2 Ne8 30.Na5 Nxe5 31.Rxd8 Rxd8 32.Rxd8 Qxd8 33.Qxb5 Qa8 34.Nb7 Nf6 35.Qxc5 Qa2+ 36.Bf2 Nd3 37.Qc8+ Kf7 38.Nd6+ Ke7 39.Nf5+ Kf7 40.Qc7+ 1-0

Photo courtesy of Chris Roberts

GM Ali Marandi and GM Vladimir Akopian

Akopian, Vladimir (2586) - Ali Marandi, Cemil Can (2511)

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.d3 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.a3 0-0 9.h3 Be6 10.Nbd2 h6 11.Re1 Qd7 12.Bxe6 fxe6 13.a4 Na7 14.b4 bxa4 15.c4 Rfb8 16.Rxa4 Nc6 17.Ba3 Qe8 18.Nb3 Nh5 19.Kh2 Qg6 20.Na5 Nxa5 21.Rxa5 Rf8 22.Bc1 Rab8 23.Bd2 Nf4 24.Bxf4 Rxf4 25.Rxa6 Rxb4 26.Ra7 Bd8 27.Ra8 Rf8 28.Qd2 Rb7 29.Rea1 Kh7 30.Rc8 Be7 31.Raa8 Rxc8 32.Rxc8 Qf7 33.Qe3 c5 34.g3 Bf6 35.Kg2 Rc7 36.Rxc7 Qxc7 37.h4 Qf7 38.Qe2 Qb7 39.Qa2 Kg6 40.g4 Kf7 41.g5 hxg5 42.hxg5 Be7 43.Qa1 Qb3 44.Qh1 Qxd3 45.Qh5+ Kf8 46.Qh8+ Kf7 47.Qh5+ Kf8 ½-½

continued on next page

Shlyakhtenko, Robert (2402) - Eidelman, Gabriel (2376)

1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.d4 exd4 4.Qxd4 Nc6 5.Qd3 Bb4 6.Bd2 d6 7.0-0-0 Be6 8.f4 a5 9.Nge2 0-0 10.Be1 Bg4 11.a3 Bxc3 12.Bxc3 Qe7 13.Qg3 h5 14.Bxf6 Qxf6 15.Rd2 Bxe2 16.Bxe2 h4 17.Qe3 Rae8 18.Bf3 Qh6 19.Re1 Kh8 20.Rd5 f5 21.g3 g6 22.e5 Re7 23.Rb5 Nd8 24.Rxa5 c6 25.Qd2 d5 26.c4 dxc4 27.Qb4 Qg7 28.Qxc4 Ne6 29.Rd1 Qh6 30.Rd6 Rfe8 31.Kb1 hxg3 32.hxg3 Qh2 33.g4 Qxf4 34.Qxf4 Nxf4 35.Ra4 g5 36.gxf5 Rxe5 37.f6 R5e6 38.Rxe6 Nxe6 39.Re4 1-0

ROUND 3 HIGHLIGHTS

A fighting round! IM Bryant showed his skill by storming FM Eidelman's King and finishing with a rook sacrifice after White got lost in the complications. GM Khachiyan scored his first win when Hakobyan miscalculated in an endgame right after the first time control. GM Ali Marandi led with 2.5 points after defeating IM Shlyakhtenko in a Sicilian, where the latter missed the only saving move, 25... Re2!! IM Costello came close to a major upset after winning a pawn against top seed GM Akopian but failed to convert in the endgame.

Eidelman, Gabriel (2376) - Bryant, John Daniel (2404)
(Notes by IM John Bryant)

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.Nbd2 Bg7 (3... d5 4. b4 is fine for Black, but I find it distasteful. I don't think Nbd2 is particularly threatening against the Pirc/Modern.) **4.e4 d6 5.Bb5+ c6 6.Bc4** (Bd3 makes a lot more sense to me.) **6...d5 7.exd5 cxd5 8.Bb3 Nc6 9.c3 0-0 10.0-0 e6** (My bishop would just get harassed outside of the pawn chain. I think Black is very solid here. White's advantage will depend on establishing a knight on e5 while preventing Black from establishing a knight on e4.) **11.Re1 Ne7 12.Ne5 Nf5 13.Nd3?** (This is his first real mistake. He shouldn't move the knight unless I compromise my structure with f6. On the other hand, I was dreaming of f6-e5 one day.) **13...b6 14.a4 a5 15.Nf1 Bb7?** (The point was to support Ne4 or f6-e5, but this isn't too useful. Ba6 immediately was better.) **16.Ng3 Nxg3 17.hxg3 Ne4 18.g4** (He was worried about f6-e5, so he wanted to clamp my structure with g5. Bf4 was a much better way to do this though, and it prepared f3.) **18...Ba6!** (I anticipated that he wanted to play f3, so I set a trap in addition to putting my bishop on the best square. **19.f3? Bxd3! 20.Qxd3 Qh4** (For this one moment I'm able to create an attack based on his dark squared weaknesses and undefended rook. **21.Be3?! Ng3?!** (21...f5! This was better since it eliminated the counterplay that was possible in the game. 22.gxf5 (22.fxe4 fxg4 g3 is lethal.) 22...Ng3 23.Bd2 Rxf5 24.Rxe6 Raf8 25.Qe3 Kh8 26.Bc2 Rf4) **22.Qd2 f5?** (Stockfish posits the question mark and asserts that I should take a draw with Qh1-Qh4-Qh1. In practice f5 won me the game since the refutation proved too difficult to find.) **23.Bg5 Qh1+ 24.Kf2 Qh2 25.Rxe6?** (Mistake. 25.Qf4!! was best. Even if one has the ingenuity and bravery to consider putting the queen in my rook's line, it's easy to reject this in view of 25...fxg4 26. Qxg3 Rxf3+ -+ 25...fxg4 26.Qxg4 However, THIS is the move to beat back Black's attack. 26...Rf5 27.Rxe6 Raf8 28.Re3 Nh1+ 29.Rxh1 Qxh1 30.Bxd5+ Kh8 31.Be4 Rxg5 32.Qxg5 Bf6 33.Qb5 Bh4+ 34.Ke2 Qxg2+ 35.Kd3 Qf1+ 36.Kc2 Qxb5 37.axb5 With a pawn to the good, white is probably winning, but Black retains some drawing chances due to opposite bishops and passed h-pawn.) **25...fxg4 26.Bxd5??** (This loses on the spot. He had to find Ke3!! to even stay in the game. **26.Ke3!! Rf5 27.Kd3**

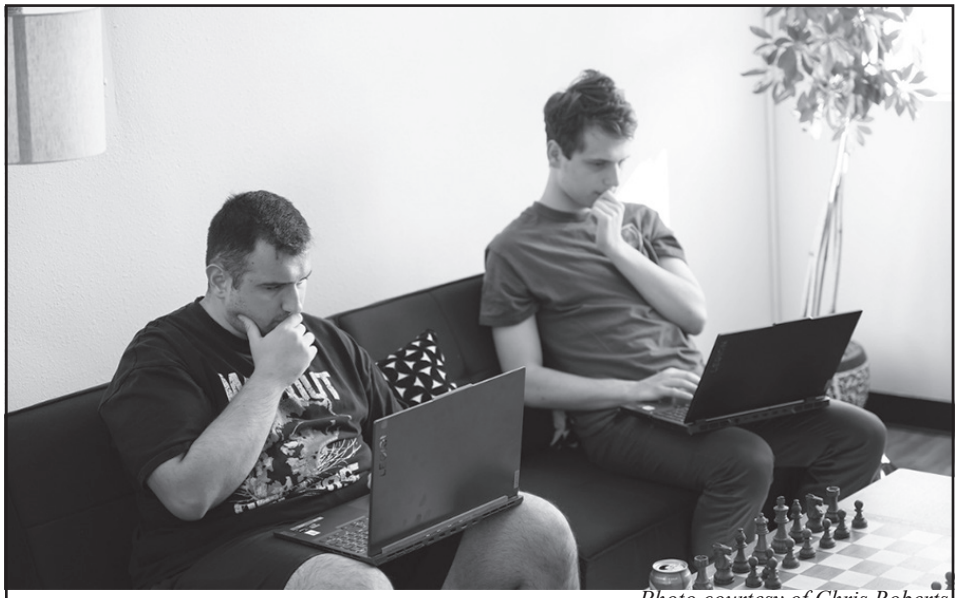


Photo courtesy of Chris Roberts

GM Ali Marandi and IM Robert Shlyakhtenko prepare for their opponents after getting the first round pairings only shortly before play.

continued on next page

Raf8 28.fxg4 Rf2 29.Qxf2 Rxf2 30.Bxd5 Kh8 31.Rae1 h6 32.Re8+ Kh7 33.Bg8+=) 26...Rxf3+!

Position after 26th move

27.Bxf3 Rf8 28.Qf4? (This hastens his demise, but there was no remedy.) **28...gxf3 29.Kxf3 Nh5 30.Qxf8+ Bxf8 31.Re5 Bd6 32.Rb5 Qg3+ 33.Ke4 h6 34.Bd8?!** (Inaccuracy. Bh4 was best.) **34...Nf4** 0-1

Ali Marandi, Cemil Can (2511) - Shlyakhtenko, Robert (2402)
(Notes by GM Ali Marandi)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.c4 Nf6 6.Nc3 Bb4 7.Bd3 Nc6 8.Nxc6 dxc6 9.e5 Nd7 This was played very quickly by opponent which surprised me since 9...Qd4 or 9...Qa5 is the main line [9...Qd4 10.exf6 Bxc3+ 11.bxc3 Qxc3+ 12.Bd2 Qxd3 13.fxg7 Rg8 14.Bh6 Qc3+ (14...Qg6 15.Qd2) 15.Kf1 Qf6 16.Qc1 Main line] **10.f4 b5 11.0-0 0-0 12.Bc2!?** [12.Qc2 f5 13.Be3 Bc5 14.Qf2 Bxe3 15.Qxe3 Qb6 16.Qxb6 Nxb6 17.b3±] **12...Nb6 13.Qf3!** [13.cxb5 Qxd1 14.Rxd1 cxb5; 13.Qh5 g6 14.Qf3 (14.Qh6 Qd4+ 15.Kh1 Bxc3 16.Rf3 Rd8 (16...f5) 17.Be3)] **13...Nxc4?** [13...Bxc3 14.Qxc3 bxc4 (14...Nxc4? 15.b3 Nb6 16.Ba3±) 15.b3 cxb3 16.Qxb3] **14.Ne4! Be7** [14...a5 15.Qh3 h6 16.Nf6+ gxf6 17.Qxh6 f5 18.Rf3+-] **15.Kh1!?** [15.Rd1 Qb6+ 16.Kh1 Rd8 17.Rf1! g6 18.b3 Na3 19.Bxa3 Bxa3 20.Qh3 Kg7 21.Qh4+-; 15.Qh3 g6 16.Rd1 Qb6+ 17.Kh1 Rd8 18.Re1±] **15...Ra7 16.b3 Nb6 17.Qh3 h6** [17...g6? 18.Bb2 Nd5 19.Rad1 Rd7 20.Qh6! (20.Rxd5 cxd5 21.Nf6+ Bxf6 22.exf6 d4) 20...f5?? (20...a5?? 21.Rxd5 cxd5 22.Nf6+ Bxf6 23.exf6+-) 21.exf6 Bxf6 22.Nxf6+ Nxf6 23.h3+-; 17...f5 18.exf6 Bxf6 19.Nxf6+ gxf6 20.Be3+-] **18.Be3** [18.Bb2] **18...c5?** [18...Rb7 19.Nc5 Rc7 20.Rad1 Nd5 21.Bg1±] **19.Nf6+?** [19.Rad1 Nd5 20.f5! exf5 21.Bxh6! f4 (21...fxe4 22.Qg3 g6 23.Bxe4 Rd7 24.e6+-) 22.Qh5 g6 23.Qf3 Be6 24.Bxf4+-; 19.Rf3!? Nd5 20.Rg3 Bh4 (20...Kh8?? 21.Rxg7 Kxg7 22.f5 h5 23.f6++-; 20...Nxe3?? 21.Qxh6 Nf5 22.Rxg7+ Nxg7 23.Nf6+ Bxf6 24.Qh7#) 21.Nf6+ Nxf6 22.Qxh4 Ne4! 23.Rg4 f5 24.Bxe4 (24.exf6 Qxf6 25.Re1 Qxh4 26.Rxh4) 24...Kh8 25.Bc2 fxg4 26.Qxg4 Rd7 27.Qg6 Rf5 28.Bxc5 Rd2] **19...Bxf6** [19...gxf6?? 20.exf6 Bxf6 21.Qxh6+-; 19...Kh8 20.f5+-] **20.exf6 Qxf6 21.Bxc5 Rc7** [21...e5?? 22.Qd3 g6 23.Bxf8 Kxf8 24.fxe5+-] **22.Qd3!** [22.Bxf8? Rxc2 23.Qd3 Rc3 24.Qd2 Bb7! (24...Kxf8?? 25.Qd6+ Kg8 26.Qxb6+-) ; 22.b4? Nd5 23.Qd3 g6 24.Bxf8 Kxf8 25.Bb3 Bb7] **22...Qf5** [22...g6?? 23.Bxb6+-] **23.Bxf8?** [23.b4! Qxd3 24.Bxd3 Nc4 25.Bxf8 Kxf8 26.Rac1±; 23.Bxb6?? Rxc2] **23...Rxc2 24.Qxf5** [24.Qd4!? Qg6! 25.Rf2 Rxf2 26.Qxf2 Bb7 27.Bd6 Nd5 28.Re1; 24.Qd8?? Bb7 25.Bc5+ Kh7 26.Rf2 Rxf2 27.Bxf2 Qe4 28.Rg1 Nd5-+] **24...exf5 25.Rfc1!?**

Position after 25 Rfc1

[25.Bb4?? Bb7-+] **25...Rxc1+??** [25...Re2 26.Rc6 (26.Bc5 Bb7! (26...Nd5?? 27.Re1+-) 27.Bxb6 Rxg2 28.h4 (28.Rc7?? Be4-+) 28...Rg6+ 29.Kh2 Rxb6) 26...Bb7 27.Rxb6 Bxg2+ 28.Kg1 Kxf8 29.Rxa6; 25...Rd2 26.Bb4 Re2 27.Rc6 Bb7 28.Rxb6] **26.Rxc1 Kxf8 27.Rc6 Ke7?? 28.Rxb6 Kd7 29.a4!** Black overlooked this move when they played 25...Rxc1, and the rest is easy technique for white [29.Rb8?? Kc7 30.Ra8 Kb7-+] **29...bxa4 30.bxa4 Kc7 31.a5 Bb7 32.Kg1 Bc8 33.Kf2 Bb7 34.g3 Bc8 35.Ke3 Bb7 36.Kd4 Bc8 37.Kc5 Bb7 38.h4 h5 39.Kd4 Bc8 40.Ke5 f6+ 41.Kd5 Kd7 42.Kc5 Kc7 43.Rc6+ Kd7 44.Kb6 Kd8 45.Rc1 g6 46.Rc6** 1-0

Costello, Alexander (2219) - Akopian, Vladimir (2586)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.exd5 exd5 5.Bd3 Nf6 6.a3 Bxc3+ 7.bxc3 0-0 8.Ne2 c5 9.dxc5 Nbd7 10.Be3 Qe7 11.0-0 Nxc5 12.Ng3 Nce4 13.Bd4 Be6 14.Re1 Qc7 15.Nh5 Nxh5 16.Qxh5 Qf4 17.f3 g6 18.Be5 Nf6 19.Qxh7+ Kxh7 20.Bxf4 Nd7 21.Be3 Rfc8 22.Bd4 Nc5 23.h4 Nxd3 24.cxd3 Re8 25.Kf2 Bf5 26.Red1 Bd7 27.g4 f5 28.Kg3 fxg4 29.fxg4 a6 30.Rf1 Kg8 31.Rf6 Re6 32.Raf1 Rae8 33.Rf7 R6e7 34.R7f3 Re1 35.Rxe1 Rxe1 36.Kf4

continued on next page

Re2 37.Kg5 Rg2 38.Rf4 b5 39.h5 gxh5 40.Kxh5 Rh2+ 41.Kg6 Rh4 42.Kg5 Rh7 43.Rf3 Rh2 44.Kf6 Rh6+ 45.Kg5 Rh7 46.Bf6 Rh2 47.Kf4 Rh6 48.Bd4 Rh7 49.Ke5 Rg7 50.Kxd5 Bxg4 51.Rf6 Be2 52.Rxa6 Rg4 53.c4 bxc4 54.dxc4 Rg5+ 55.Be5 Bxc4+ 56.Kxc4 Rxe5 57.Rf6 Re4+ 58.Kc5 Ra4 59.Rf3 Ra8 60.Kb6 Kg7 61.Kb5 Rb8+ 62.Kc4 Ra8 63.Kb4 Rb8+ 64.Kc3 Ra8 65.Kc4 Rc8+ 66.Kb5 Rb8+ 67.Ka6 Ra8+ 68.Kb7 Ra4 69.Rc3 Kf7 70.Kb6 Ke7 71.Kb5 Ra8 72.a4 Rb8+ 73.Kc5 Rc8+ ½-½

Khachiyan, Melikset (2435) -
Hakobyan, Eduard (2297)

1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 c6 4.0-0 Bg4 5.c4 Bxf3 6.Bxf3 e6 7.Qb3 Qb6 8.d4 Nbd7 9.Nc3 Be7 10.c5 Qxb3 11.axb3 e5 12.e3 0-0 13.b4 a6 14.Bd2 Rad8 15.Rfe1 e4 16.Be2 Nb8 17.Na2 Ne8 18.Nc1 Rd7 19.Nb3 Bd8 20.Bc3 f5 21.Nd2 Nc7 22.f3 exf3 23.Nxf3 Bf6 24.Bd3 g6 25.Kg2 Re7 26.h3 Bg7 27.g4 fxg4 28.hxg4 Nd7 29.g5 Ref7 30.Rf1 Re8 31.Bd2 Nf8 32.Rh1 Nfe6 33.Raf1 Rxf3 34.Rxf3 Nxg5 35.Rf4 Ne4 36.Be1 h6 37.Rhh4 g5 38.Rxe4 dxe4 39.Rxe4 Rxe4 40.Bxe4 Nd5 41.Kf3 Kf7 42.Bf5 Ne7 43.Bd7 h5 44.Ke4 Bf6 45.Kd3 g4 46.e4 Kg6 47.Be6 Kg5 48.e5 Bg7 49.Ke4 Nd5 50.Bd2+ Kh4 51.Bxd5 cxd5+ 52.Kxd5 g3 53.Ke4 Kg4 54.d5 h4 55.c6 bxc6 56.dxc6 Bxe5 57.Kxe5 Kf3 58.c7 g2 59.Be3 Kxe3 60.c8Q Kf2 61.Qf5+ Kg3 62.Qf4+ Kh3 63.Qf2 a5 64.b5 1-0

ROUND 4 HIGHLIGHTS

Both GM Khachiyan and IM Costello got bad positions out of the opening and each lost in 24 moves against GM Akopian and IM Shlyakhtenko, respectively.

IM Bryant tried to convert an extra pawn in a knight and king endgame vs. Eduard Hakobian but could only manage a draw.

GM Ali Marandi solidified his lead to 3.5/4 after winning against FM Eidelman, who was having a tough tournament and was yet to score any points.

Bryant, John Daniel (2404) -
Hakobyan, Eduard (2297)

1.e4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nc3 Bg4 4.h3 Bxf3 5.Qxf3 Nf6 6.d4 e6 7.exd5 cxd5 8.Bd3 Nc6 9.Ne2 g6 10.0-0 Bg7 11.c3 0-0 12.Bf4 Re8 13.Rfe1 Qb6 14.Bg5 Nd7 15.b4 Qc7 16.a4 a5 17.b5 Ne7 18.Bf4 Qd8 19.c4 dxc4 20.Bxc4 Nb6 21.Bb3 Nbd5 22.Rad1 Rc8 23.g4 h6 24.Kg2 g5 25.Bg3 Ng6 26.Kf1 Qd7 27.Rc1 Rxc1 28.Rxc1 Rc8 29.Rxc8+ Qxc8 30.Bxd5 exd5 31.Qxd5 Qc2 32.Ng1 Qxa4 33.Nf3 Qa1+ 34.Kg2 a4 35.b6 a3 36.Qxb7 a2 37.Qa8+ Nf8 38.b7 Qb2 39.b8Q a1Q 40.Qxa1 Qxa1 41.d5 Qa4 42.d6 Qc6 43.Qc7 Qd5 44.Qe7 Kh7 45.Qe2 Ne6 46.Qc2+ Kg8 47.Qf5 Qxf5 48.gxf5 Nc5 49.Be5 Nd7 50.Bd4 Bxd4 51.Nxd4 Kg7 52.Kf3 Nc5 53.Ke3 Kf6 54.f4 h5 55.fxg5+ Kxg5 56.Nb3 Nd7 57.Ke4 Kh4 58.Kd5 Kxh3 59.Nc5 Nb6+ 60.Kc6 Nc4 61.Nd3 Nxd6 62.Kxd6 Kg3 63.Ke5 h4 64.Nf4 h3 65.Nxh3 ½-½

Akopian, Vladimir (2586) -
Khachiyan, Melikset (2435)
(Notes by GM Vladimir Akopian)

We have been playing with Melik since 1978! We come from the same city of Baku and started playing with each other quite early. Later we both played for the Armenian national team. And even though our personal score is heavily in my favor, Melik has always been a dangerous opponent. For example, last year he beat me in the first round of the US Senior Championships and then went on to become the champion in convincing fashion.

Photo courtesy of Chris Roberts

Eduard Hakobyan observes GMs Vladimir Akopian (left) and Melikset Kachiyan.

continued on next page

1.e4 d6 A pleasant surprise. I was preparing mainly for 1...e5 and 1...c5. **2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Nbd7** We have the Philidor defense now. I cannot tell for everybody but I have always liked White's position. Nowadays that you have to suffer terribly to get any kind of advantage, here White immediately enjoys it! **5.Bc4 Be7 6.a4 0-0 7.0-0 a5 8.h3** I have always preferred to do without 8.Re1. **8...c6 9.Ba2** I spent some time here choosing between 9.Be3 and the text. But it seems that simple 9.Be3 was stronger. **9...exd4 10.Nxd4 Nc5 11.Qf3 Nfd7?!** [The correct continuation would have been 11...Be6! where after 12.Rd1 White is only slightly better] **12.Be3 Ne5** [12...Nb6 deserved serious attention here] **13.Qh5 Bf6** [now after 13...Be6 14.Nxe6 Nxe6 15.Rad1 Black is going to suffer] **14.f4 Ng6 15.Nf3** [After 15.Nde2 Black plays 15...b6; But 15.Rae1 was the strongest continuation. If now 15...Bxd4 16.Bxd4 Be6 17.Bxc5 dxc5 18.Qxc5 Bxa2 19.Nxa2 Black has no compensation and is going to lose after all] **15...Qe7?** This loses without a fight. I was calculating [15...Qb6 where 16.Nd1 seemed strong to me, for example: 16...Be6 17.Bxe6 fxe6 18.Bxc5 Qxc5+ 19.Qxc5 dxc5 20.g3 with a significant advantage in the endgame]

Position after 16. e5!

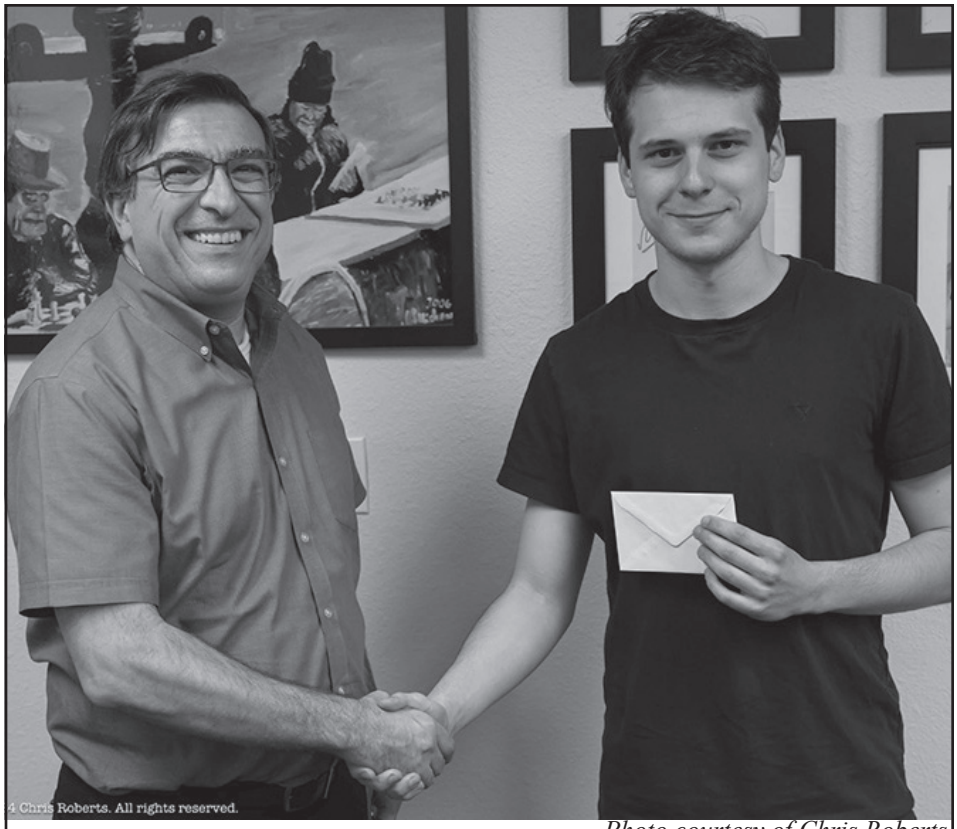


Photo courtesy of Chris Roberts

SCCF President Ala'a-Addin Moussa and Robert Shlyakhtenko

16.e5! This strong move destroys Black's defense. **16...Nd7** [16...dxe5 loses to 17.fxe5 Nxe5 18.Ng5 Bxg5 (18...h6 19.Nxf7!) 19.Bxg5 Qd6 (19...Qc7 20.Bf4 Ncd7 21.Rae1 Qb6+ 22.Kh2 Ng6 23.Bd6) 20.Bf4 Qd4+ 21.Kh2 Ng6 22.Rad1! Nxf4 23.Bxf7+ Kh8 24.Bg6!] **17.Rae1 dxe5 18.f5 Nh8 19.Ne4** The concentration of White's pieces becomes threatening. The rest is pretty straightforward. **19...Qb4 20.Bg5 Bxg5 21.Nfxg5 h6 22.f6 Nxf6 23.Nxf6+ gxf6 24.Rxf6 The simplest. 24...Qxe1+ 25.Kh2** [25.Kh2 now after 25...Bf5 (25...hxg5 26.Qxg5+; and 25...Qe3 26.Rg6+ lead to quick mate) I intended 26.Rxf5 (26.Nxf7 also wins) 26...Kg7 27.Bxf7 Qe3 (27...Rad8 28.Ne6+ Kh7 29.Qxh6+!; 27...Rae8 28.Qg4! hxg5 29.Qxg5+ Kh7 30.Qh5+ Kg7 31.Qg4+) 28.Ne6+ Kh7 29.Rf6! mating. And so Black resigned.] 1-0

Shlyakhtenko, Robert (2402) - Costello, Alexander (2219)

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 Bxc3+ 5.bxc3 d6 6.Bd3 e5 7.Ne2 c5 8.0-0 Nc6 9.e4 0-0 10.h3 b6 11.Be3 Ba6 12.f4 Nd7 13.fxe5 cxd4 14.cxd4 dxe5 15.d5 Nb4 16.Ng3 Rc8 17.Rc1 Nxa2 18.Ra1 Nb4 19.Ra4 Nxd3 20.Qxd3 Bb7 21.Rxa7 Qc7 22.Nf5 Nc5 23.Bxc5 Qxc5+ 24.Qe3 1-0

Eidelman, Gabriel (2376) - Ali Marandi, Cemil Can (2511)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 Bf5 5.Nc3 e6 6.Nh4 Be4 7.f3 Bg6 8.Qb3 Qc7 9.Bd2 Be7 10.Nxg6 hxg6 11.0-0-0 dxc4 12.Bxc4 b5 13.Be2 a6 14.Ne4 Nxe4 15.fxe4 c5 16.Kb1 Nc6 17.d5 exd5 18.exd5 Ne5 19.h4 Rd8 20.Bc3 Rxh4 21.Rxh4 Bxh4 22.Qc2 Bf6 23.Bb4 Be7 24.Qc3

continued on next page

Qb8 25.Bxc5 Bxc5 26.Qxc5 Qd6 27.Qd4 Rc8 28.Rc1 Rxc1+ 29.Kxc1 Ke7 30.b3 Nd7 31.Kb2 b4 32.Qe4+ Kf8 33.Kc2 a5 34.Bb5 Nf6 35.Qc4 Nxd5 36.Qc8+ Ke7 37.Qe8+ Kf6 38.Bc4 Nc3 39.Qxf7+ Kg5 40.Bd3 Nxa2 41.Kd2 Qf6 42.Qd5+ Kh6 43.Ke1 Nc3 44.Qxa5 Qh4+ 45.Kf1 Qh1+ 46.Kf2 Nd1+ 47.Ke2 Nb2 48.Be4 Qd1+ 49.Kf2 Qxb3 50.Qb6 Nd1+ 51.Kf3 Qf7+ 52.Kg3 Qf2+ 53.Kg4 Qf6 54.Qxb4 Qg5+ 55.Kh3 Nf2+ 56.Kh2 Qh4+ 57.Kg1 Nxe4 0-1

ROUND 5 HIGHLIGHTS

There was no Frasier Crane - Martin Crane "Chess Pains" psychological drama in the father son encounter as peace was declared rather quickly between the Hakobyans. GM Khachiyan followed suit and offered a draw to Robert Shlyakhtenko on move 10.

In the decisive games, GM Ali Marandi outprepared IM Bryant in the Berlin Defense when the latter went astray with 19. ...gf4 rather than the drawish 19. ...gh4. IM Costello inexplicably walked his King into a mating net in an equal position allowing FM Eidelman to score his first point in the tournament.

Ali Marandi, Cemil Can -
Bryant, John Daniel (2404)
(Notes by GM Ali Marandi)

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.0-0 Nxe4 5.Re1 Nd6 6.Nxe5 Be7 7.Bf1 Nxe5 8.Rxe5 0-0 9.d4 Bf6 10.Re1 Re8 11.Bf4 Rxe1 12.Qxe1 Ne8 13.Nc3 Bxd4 14.Nd5 d6 15.Bg5 f6 16.Bh4 g5 17.Qe4 Bxb2 18.Re1 Be5 19.f4 gxf4!?N Well-known theory up to this point, but my opponent was not familiar with the correct 19...gxh4, which leads to a forced draw if Black knows everything [19...gxh4 20.fxe5 dxe5 21.Bd3 Bf5 22.Qxf5 Qxd5 23.Qxh7+ Kf8 24.Qh6+ Ke7 25.Qh7+=] **20.Nxf4** Best choice since I am not sure where to put my light squared bishop [20.Bd3!? Qd7 21.Bxf6! Nxf6 22.Qxe5! dxe5 23.Nxf6+ Kg7 24.Nxd7 Bxd7 25.Rxe5 Re8 26.Rg5+ Kh6 27.Ra5 a6 28.Rc5 c6 29.Kf2=; 20.Bc4 Kh8 21.Nxf4 Ng7! 22.Bd3 Bf5 23.Qxb7 Rb8 24.Qxa7÷] **20...c6?** [20...a5?? 21.Qd5+ Kh8 22.Rxe5+-; 20...Qe7 21.Bc4+ Kh8 22.Qf3; 20...Kh8 21.Nd3] **21.Bc4+!** [21.Bd3 Qe7] **21...d5** [21...Kg7?? 22.Bd3 f5 23.Qxe5+! dxe5 24.Bxd8 exf4 25.Rxe8+-] **22.Nxd5! cxd5?** [22...Kg7!? 23.Qxe5 fxe5 24.Bxd8 Be6! 25.Bc7 Bxd5 26.Bxe5+ Kg8 27.Bd3±] **23.Bxd5+ Kg7**

Position after 23. ...Kg7

24.Qxe5 fxe5 25.Bxd8 Nf6 [25...Be6 26.Bxe6 Rxd8 27.Rxe5 Kf6 28.Rd5 Rd6 (28...Rxd5 29.Bxd5 Nd6 30.Kf2 Ke5 31.Bf3 Kd4 32.Kg3+-) 29.Rxd6

No.	Player	USCF Rtg	FIDE Rtg	1 JJ	2 VA	3 RS	4 MK	5 JB	6 EH	7 AC	8 GE	Total	Place
1	GM "JJ" Ali Marandi	2570	2511		½	1	½	1	1	0	1	5	Tie 1st-2nd, $$2,500 + Title & Trophy
2	GM Vladimir Akopian	2654	2586	½		½	1	1	½	½	1	5	Tie 1st-2nd, $$2,500
3	IM Robert Shlyakhtenko	2486	2397	0	½		½	½	1	1	1	4.5	3rd, $1,500
4	GM Melikset Khachiyan	2522	2430	½	0	½		½	1	½	1	4	4th, $$1,200
5	IM John Bryant	2518	2409	0	0	½	½		½	½	1	3	Tie 5th-6th, $875
6	Eduard Hakobyan	2404	2297	0	½	0	0	½		1	1	3	Tie 5th-6th, $875
7	IM Alexander Costello	2353	2219	1	½	0	½	½	0		0	2.5	7th, $$500
8	FM Gabriel Eidelman	2412	2376	0	0	0	0	0	0	1		1	8th, $$250
	Average	2490	2403										

continued on next page

Nxd6 30.Bg8 h6 31.Kf2 Ne4+ 32.Ke3 Ke5 33.Bc4+-] **26.Bxf6+?** [26.Rxe5? Nxd5 27.Rxd5 Be6 28.Rd6 Bxa2=; 26.Bb3 Bf5 27.Rxe5 Rxd8 28.Rxf5+-; 26.Bf3±] **26...Kxf6 27.Rf1+ Ke7 28.Rf7+ Kd6 29.c4!?** [29. Bxb7 Bxb7 30.Rxb7 h5= Black has enough counterplay] 29...Rb8 30.Rxh7 a5?? [30...b5! 31.Rxa7 bxc4 32.Bxc4 Rb2 Black should have enough counterplay to make a draw with the e-pawn] **31.Rh6+!** [31.a4?? Bd7=] **31...Kc5** [31...Kc7 32.c5!+-] **32.Rh8** b5 [32... Kd6 33.Be4 b5 34.cxb5+-] **33.Be6 Bxe6 34.Rxb8 bxc4** [34...Bxc4 35.a3 b4 36.axb4+ axb4 37.Kf2 b3 38.Ke3 Bb5 39.Kd2 e4 40.Kc3 e3 41.Rb7‡ a) 41.Ra8?? b2 (41...e2 42.Ra1 Kd5 43.Kxb3 Kd4 44.Kc2 Ke3 45.h4 Ba4+ 46.Kb2 Bd1 47.Ra8 e1Q 48.Re8+ Kf2 49.Rxe1 Kxe1=) 42.Kxb2 e2 43.Ra1 Kd4 44.Kc2 Ke3 45.h4 Ba4+ (45...Kf2?? 46.Kd2+-) 46.Kb2 Bd1 47.Ra8 e1Q 48.Re8+ Kf2 49.Rxe1 Kxe1=; b) 41.Kxb3?? e2-+; 41...e2 42.Re7 Bc4 43.h4+-] **35.Kf2 Kd4 36.Rd8+ Ke4 37.Ke2 c3 38.Kd1 Bxa2 39.Kc2 a4 40.Kxc3 Ke3 41.h4 Kf4 42.g3+ Kxg3 43.h5 a3 44.Rd1** [=44.Ra8 Bb1 45.Rxa3 (45.h6 Kg4 46.Ra7 a2 47.Kb2 Kf4 48.h7 Bxh7 49.Rxh7 e4 50.Kxa2 e3 51.Kb2) 45... Kg4 46.h6 Kg5 47.Ra6 Bg6] **44... Kf3 45.h6 Bg8 46.Rd7** [46.Rd7 e4 47.Rg7+-] 1-0

Photo courtesy of Chris Roberts

The Temecula Chess Club hosted the round robin event.

Costello, Alexander (2219) - Eidelman, Gabriel (2376)

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 d6 6.Re1 Bd7 7.d4 b5 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.Bb3 h6 10.c3 Bd6 11.Nbd2 0-0 12.h3 Qc8 13.Nf1 Rd8 14.Nh4 Be6 15.Qf3 Bxb3 16.axb3 Qe6 17.Qf5 a5 18.Qxe6 fxe6 19.Nf3 Nd7 20.Be3 Nc5 21.N1d2 Nd3 22.Reb1 Bc5 23.Bxc5 Nxc5 24.Kf1 Kf7 25.Ke2 Kf6 26.g3 g5 27.Rc1 Ra6 28.Ra3 Rb6 29.Ra2 h5 30.Rc2 Rbb8 31.Ra3 Rb6 32.Ra1 Nd7 33.Ne1 Rh8 34.Nd3 h4 35.Rh1 Rbb8 36.Rcc1 Rh7 37.Nf3 Ne7 38.gxh4 gxh4 39.Rhg1 c5 40.Nh2 Ng6 41.Ng4+ Kf7 42.Ne3 c4 43.bxc4 Nf4+ 44.Kd2 Rd8 45.Nxf4 exf4 46.Ng4 bxc4 47.Ke2 Nc5 48.Ne5+ Kf6 49.Nxc4 Nxe4 50.Nxa5 Rd2+ 51.Kf3 Kf5 52.Rgf1 Rg7 53.Nc4 Rg3+ 0-1

Photo courtesy of Chris Roberts

GM Melikset Khachiyan and Alex Costello

Khachiyan, Melikset (2435) - Shlyakhtenko, Robert (2402)

1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 Bg4 3.e3 Nf6 4.Bb2 e6 5.h3 Bxf3 6.Qxf3 Nbd7 7.g4 Be7 8.g5 Ne4 9.h4 0-0 10.d3 Nd6 ½-½

Hakobyan, Eduard (2297) - Akopian, Vladimir (2586)

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.0-0 Bg4 6.h3 h5 7.c3 Qd3 8.hxg4 hxg4 9.Nxe5 Bd6 10.Nxd3 Bh2+ 11.Kh1 Bg3+ 12.Kg1 Bh2+ 13.Kh1 Bf4+ 14.Kg1 Bh2+ ½-½

continued on next page

Photo courtesy of Chris Roberts

Eight elite contenders vied for the title in a historic SoCal State Championship.

ROUND 6 HIGHLIGHTS

IM Costello upset the leader GM Ali Marandi after withstanding huge positional pressure. GM Akopian regained the lead by outplaying IM Bryant. FM Eidelman blundered in a drawn endgame and fell to GM Khachiyan. IM Shlyakhtenko took sole lead of 3rd place by beating Eduard Hakobian.

Photo courtesy of Chris Roberts

IM John Bryant, Gabriel Eidelman, and Robert Shlyakhtenko

Bryant, John Daniel (2404) - Akopian, Vladimir (2586)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 c5 4.exd5 Qxd5 5.Ngf3 cxd4 6.Bc4 Qd6 7.0-0 Nf6 8.Nb3 Nc6 9.Nbxd4 Nxd4 10.Nxd4 a6 11.Re1 Bd7 12.c3 Qc7 13.Bb3 0-0-0 14.Qf3 e5 15.Ne2 Bg4 16.Qg3 h5 17.Bg5 Bc5 18.Bc2 Be6 19.h3 h4 20.Bxh4 Rd2 21.Rac1 Rxc2 22.Rxc2 Ne4 23.Qxg7 Rxh4 24.Ng3 Nxf2 25.Qg8+ Kd7 26.Rd2+ Kc6 27.b4 Nxh3+ 28.Kf1 Rf4+ 29.Ke2 Bf2 30.gxh3 Kb6 31.Rc1 Bxh3 32.Kd1 Be3 33.Ne2 Bg4 34.Kc2 Bxd2 35.Kxd2 Qd6+ 0-1

Shlyakhtenko, Robert (2402) - Hakobyan, Eduard (2297)

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.b3 d5 3.e3 c6 4.Bb2 Bg4 5.h3 Bxf3 6.Qxf3 Nbd7 7.g4 Qc7 8.h4 e5 9.g5 Ng8 10.d3 Bb4+ 11.Ke2 Ne7 12.Bh3 Bd6 13.Nd2 Rf8 14.c4 f5 15.gxf6 Rxf6 16.Qh5+ g6 17.Qg5 Nf5 18.h5 h6 19.Qg2 Ne7 20.hxg6 Rxg6 21.Qf3 Qa5 22.cxd5 cxd5 23.Rhg1 Rxg1 24.Rxg1 Qxa2 25.Qh5+ Kd8 26.Qg4 Nc5 27.b4 h5 28.Qxh5 Nxd3 29.Kxd3 Qxb2 30.Qh8+ Kc7 31.Qxa8 Bxb4 32.Rd1 Bxd2 33.Rxd2 Qb5+ 34.Kc2 Qa4+ 35.Kb2 Qb4+ 36.Kc1 Qa3+ 37.Kd1 Qa1+ 38.Ke2 Qa6+ 39.Ke1 Qa1+ 40.Rd1 Qa5+ 41.Kf1 Qa6+ 42.Kg1 Qg6+ 43.Bg2 Qc2 44.Ra1 Nc8 45.Bxd5 Qg6+ 46.Bg2 1-0

Eidelman, Gabriel (2376) - Khachiyan, Melikset (2435)

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.d4 Bg7 5.Bg5 Ne4 6.Bf4 Nxc3 7.bxc3 c5 8.e3 0-0 9.cxd5 Qxd5 10.Be2 cxd4 11.cxd4 Qa5+ 12.Qd2 Nc6 13.Qxa5 Nxa5 14.0-0 Be6 15.a4 Rfc8 16.Rfb1 Rc3 17.Rc1 Rac8 18.Rxc3 Rxc3 19.Kf1 Nb3 20.Rd1 Nc1 21.d5 Bf5 22.d6 exd6 23.Rxd6 Nxe2 24.Rd8+ Bf8 25.Kxe2 Rc8 26.Rxc8 Bxc8 27.Bb8 a5 28.Bc7 Bb4 29.Ne5 Be6 30.Kd3 Bb3 31.Nc4 Bxa4 32.Bxa5 Be7 33.Bb6 f6 34.Kd4 Kf7 35.Na5 Bc6 36.Nxc6 bxc6 37.Bc7 Ke6 38.e4 g5 39.f3 h5 40.g3 g4 41.f4 f5 42.Bb6 h4 43.gxh4 Bxh4 44.Kd3 Be7 45.Be3 Bd8 46.Bc5 Bc7 47.Ke3 Ba5 48.Kd3 Bc7 49.Ke3 Bb8 50.Bd4 Bd6 51.Ba7 Ba3 52.exf5+ Kxf5

continued on next page

53.h3 Bc1+ 54.Kf2 gxh3 55.Kg3 Bxf4+ 56.Kxh3 Ke4 57.Kg2 Be3 58.Bb8 c5 59.Kf1 c4 60.Ke2 c3 61.Bd6 c2 62.Ba3 Bg5 63.Bb2 Bh6 64.Ba3 Kd4 65.Bb2+ Kc4 66.Ba3 Kc3 0-1

Photo courtesy of Chris Roberts
GM Ali Marandi "JJ"

Ali Marandi, Cemil Can (2511) - Costello, Alexander (2219)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 e6 4.Bxc6 bxc6 5.d3 Ne7 6.Nbd2 Ng6 7.h4 h5 8.e5 f6 9.Qe2 Kf7 10.Nc4 d5 11.exd6 Bxd6 12.Nfd2 Be7 13.Ne4 e5 14.Be3 Qd5 15.0-0-0 Bf5 16.f3 Nf8 17.Rhe1 Ne6 18.Qf2 Rad8 19.Nc3 Qd7 20.f4 exf4 21.Bxf4 Bg4 22.Rd2 Nxf4 23.Qxf4 Bd6 24.Qf2 Rhe8 25.Ne4 Bf8 26.Rf1 Qd4 27.Qf4 Kg8 28.c3 Qd7 29.Ne3 Be6 30.c4 Qf7 31.g4 Rd4 32.Nc2 Rd7 33.gxh5 Qxh5 34.Ne3 Kh8 35.Kc2 Bg8 36.Nf5 Re5 37.Nfg3 Qe8 38.h5 Rf7 39.Nf5 Rd7 40.Nfg3 Rf7 41.Nf5 Rd7 42.Qg4 Qe6 43.h6 g6 44.Ne3 f5 45.Qh3 Be7 46.h7 Bf7 47.Qf3 Bd8 48.Qf4 fxe4 49.Qh6 Qe8 50.Ng4 Rh5 51.Qe3 exd3+ 52.Rxd3 Qxe3 53.Rxe3 Bg5 54.Re5 Bxc4 55.Rf8+ Kxh7 56.Ree8 Bf7 57.Ra8 Re7 58.Ne5 Bd5 59.Nd3 Rh2+ 60.Kc3 Kg7 61.Nxc5 Bf6+ 62.Kd3 Rh3+ 63.Kd2 Bxb2 64.Rfe8 Rxe8 65.Rxe8 Bd4 66.Nd3 Rh2+ 67.Ke1 Rxa2 68.Nf4 Bf7 69.Rd8 c5 70.Rd7 Kf6 0-1

ROUND 7 HIGHLIGHTS

An exciting end to the SoCal State Championship. It was a quick draw between GM Khachiyan and GM Ali Marandi and a hard-fought draw between GM Akopian and IM Shlyakhtenko. GM Akopian and GM Ali Marandi both finished with five points each. However, the tie-break favored Ali Marandi, making him the new Southern California State Champion.

Costello, Alexander (2219) - Bryant, John Daniel (2404)

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0 5.0-0 d6 6.d4 Nbd7 7.Nc3 e5 8.e4 exd4 9.Nxd4 Re8 10.Re1 c6 11.h3 a5 12.Rb1 Nc5 13.b3 Qb6 14.Be3 Qb4 15.Qc2 Nfd7 16.Red1 a4 17.Nce2 Nf6 18.Nc3 Nfd7 19.Nce2 Nf6 20.Nc3 Nfd7 21.Nce2 Nf6 ½-½

Khachiyan, Melikset (2435) - Ali Marandi, Cemil Can (2511)

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.d4 exd4 5.Nxd4 Bb4 6.Nxc6 bxc6 7.Bd3 d5 8.exd5 cxd5 9.0-0 0-0 10.Bg5 c6 11.Qf3 h6 12.Bxf6 Qxf6 13.Qxf6 gxf6 14.Ne2 ½-½

Hakobyan, Eduard (2297) - Eidelman, Gabriel (2376)

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 d6 6.Re1 Bd7 7.c3 g6 8.d4 Bg7 9.h3 0-0 10.Nbd2 exd4 11.cxd4 Nb4 12.e5 Bxa4 13.Qxa4 Nfd5 14.Qb3 a5 15.Ne4 a4 16.Qc4 Qd7 17.a3 Qc6 18.Qxc6 Nxc6 19.exd6 Na5 20.Bg5 h6 21.Be7 Nxe7 22.dxe7 Rfe8 23.Nc3 c6 24.Nxa4 Nb3 25.Nb6 Ra6 26.Nc8 Nxa1 27.Nd6 Raa8 28.Nxe8 Rxe8 29.Rxa1 Rxe7 30.Kf1 c5 31.Re1 Rd7 32.Re8+ Kh7 33.Ke2 cxd4 34.Kd3 Rc7 35.Re2 g5 36.Rc2 Rd7 37.Rc5 Re7 38.a4 Kg6 39.b4 f5 40.a5 Bf6 41.g3 h5 42.b5 g4 43.hxg4 fxg4 44.Nh4+ Bxh4 45.gxh4 Rf7 46.a6 bxa6 47.bxa6 Rxf2 48.Ra5 Rf3+ 49.Kxd4 Rf4+ 50.Ke3 Rf8 51.a7 Ra8 52.Kd4 g3 53.Ke3 g2 54.Kf2 g1Q+ 55.Kxg1 Kf6 56.Kf2 Ke6 57.Ke3 Kd6 58.Kf4 Kc6 59.Kg5 Kb7 60.Kxh5 Rh8+ 61.Kg4 Rg8+ 62.Kh3 Ka8 63.h5 Rc8 64.Kh4 Rc1 65.h6 Rc6 66.Kh5 Rc7 67.Rg5 Rc1 68.h7 Kxa7 69.Kh6 Rc6+ 70.Rg6 Rc8 71.Rg7+ 1-0

Akopian, Vladimir (2586) - Shlyakhtenko, Robert (2402)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Bd3 Bc5 6.Nb3 Ba7 7.Qe2 Ne7 8.e5 Nbc6 9.Nc3 Ng6 10.Bxg6 fxg6 11.Be3 0-0 12.0-0-0 b5 13.f4 Bb7 14.Bxa7 Rxa7 15.Qe3 Ba8 16.Rd6 Rc7 17.Rhd1 Qc8 18.Qd2 Rf7 19.h4 Nb4 20.a3 Nd5 21.Nxd5 Bxd5 22.Nd4 Rf8 23.g3 Qb7 24.Qa5 Ra8 25.b3 Qa7 26.Qb6 Qxb6 27.Rxb6 Kf7 28.Kb2 Be4 29.Re1 Bf5 30.Ra1 Rac8 31.a4 bxa4 32.Rxa4 Bxc2 33.Rbxa6 Rc3 34.Rd6 R3c7 35.Rda6 Rc3 36.Ra8 Bd3 37.Ra1 Ke7 38.Rxc8 Rxc8 39.Rd1 Be4 40.Nb5 Rc2+ 41.Ka3 Rg2 42.Nd6 Bc6 43.Rd3 Kd8 44.Kb4 Kc7 45.Rc3 Rd2 46.Nc4 Rd4 47.Re3 Rd1 48.Rc3 Rd4 49.Ka3 Rd1 50.b4 Kb7 51.Kb2 Rd4 52.Nd6+ Kb6 53.Rc4 Rd2+ 54.Rc2 Rd3 55.Rc3 Rd2+ 56.Rc2 ½-½

SCCF 2024 Board Elections

Below are the candidates and their statements. The six candidates with the most votes will be elected to two-year terms on the SCCF Board of Directors. You may cast your vote online using the eVote system or at the State Open, where the results will be tallied and announced.

Randy Hough

Over 31 years of experience on this Board and currently membership secretary. Though now retired as an organizer, I'm willing to continue my service as a sort of senior advisor if the voters wish.

Jim Mennella

Dear Chess Players of Southern California, once again, I ask for your permission to serve you as a member of the SCCF's board. I have been on the board for nine years and have worked hard to make sure the interests of the players in the region are always first on the agenda. I have been a US Chess delegate for 45 years in four different states and have made many valuable contacts and friends in other state affiliates that work together with us in areas of mutual interest. I would like to continue. Thanks!

Frank Lee

Please allow me to promote chess in Southern California, expanding player numbers and tournament play. As the current treasurer and a seasoned marketer, I'm well-equipped to tackle modern challenges to serve our events and communications.

Jim Harrell

I have been very active at the San Diego Chess Club as a TD at the Gambito and also helped to TD many larger events such as the Dreaming King Open, The Pacific Southwest Open, and the Southern California Open. I am happy to continue my service on the SCCF board.

Brian Glover

As a USCF Life Member, active tournament player, chess teacher, and current member of the SCCF Board, I will serve again if reelected.

Karl Rollert

Hey there SoCal chess pals! I'm not super well-known for my chess ability, but I've been serving chess in Los Angeles. For almost a decade, in addition to founding and running the Los Angeles Chess Social (an entity that has encouraged many formerly active players to return to the scene), I've also tutored chess in 1/1 sessions, taught summer school chess classes, and was the VP of UCR Chess for a few years. I've studied the L.A./greater SoCal region for years and years. I'm a candidate who is aware that L.A. could actually be a place that chess players visit because of their love of the game, not a place that people have to struggle to find a chess community. The SCCF needs young(ish) enthusiastic people to help make L.A. a desirable chess scene/destination.

Linus Eisenberg

Hi! My name is Linus N. Eisenberg and I am running for the SCCF board of directors. 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. Vote for me!

State Championship Best Game Winners

By IM Jack Peters

As the judge of the best game prizes in the State Championship, I was delighted to see a crop of outstanding games. Here are two more high-quality efforts. (Akopian's win against Khachiyan was chosen for the best game prize of $250 and Shlyakhtenko's win against Hakobyan for the 2nd prize of $100.)

John Daniel Bryant -
Vladimir Akopian
Round Six

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nd2 c5 4. exd5 Qxd5
This variation of the Tarrasch French has an excellent reputation for Black.

5. Ngf3 cxd4 6. Bc4 Qd6 7. 0-0 Nf6 8. Nb3 Nc6 9. Nbxd4 Nxd4 10. Nxd4 a6
All standard. White has no more than a minimal edge.

11. Re1 Bd7
Keeping the option of castling Queenside. Years ago, Black relied on 11…Qc7 12. Qe2 Bd6.

12. c3 Qc7 13. Bb3 0-0-0 14. Qf3
If White keeps control of e5 by 14. Qe2 Bd6 15. Nf3, Black's Bishops come to life with either 15…Bc6 or 15…Bb5 16. c4 Bc6.

14. . .e5 15. Ne2?
A mistake that Black fails to punish. White had to settle for 15. Nc2 e4 16. Qe2.

15. . .Bg4?
The finesse 15…Bc5! 16. Be3 Bd6! threatens to trap the Queen by 17…e4, and 17. Ng3?? Bg4 doesn't help. Stockfish suggests 15…Bc5! 16. h3 Bc6 17. Qf5+ Nd7! 18. Ng3 g6 19. Qc2 f5, clearly favoring Black.

16. Qg3 h5
Now White does not mind 16…Bc5 17. Be3.

17. Bg5! Bc5! 18. Bc2
Preventing …Nf6-e4. White sensibly rejects 18. Bxf6? gxf6 19. h3 Be6, when Black operates with ideas of …Rh8-g8, …Rd8-d2, and …f6-f5.

18. . .Be6 19. h3 h4! 20. Bxh4?
White must have overlooked something. He can keep chances even by 20. Qf3, intending Bc1-e3.

20. . .Rd2 21. Rac1?
To hang on to the pawn, White had to try 21. Bxf6 gxf6 22. Rac1, although it's difficult to imagine how he can free his pieces without yielding material. Stockfish claims a large advantage for Black with the patient 22…Kb8.
Perhaps White should give back the pawn by 21. Bxf6 gxf6 22. Bb3 Rxb2 23. Rab1, trying to reduce Black's pressure by a trade of Rooks.

21. . .Rxc2! 22. Rxc2 Ne4 23. Qxg7 Rxh4 24. Ng3?!
White has just about enough material after 24. Qg8+ Qd8 25. Qxd8+ Kxd8 26. Nc1 f6, but Black is winning. The Bishops rule!

24. . .Nxf2! 25. Qg8+
Black refutes 25. Rxf2 convincingly by 25…Bxf2+ 26. Kxf2 Qb6+ 27. Ke2 (useless is 27. Re3 Rf4+ 28. Ke2 Qxb2+) Qxb2+ 28. Kd1 Qxc3.

25. . .Kd7 26. Rd2+ Kc6
Black's King runs to safety. Unfortunately for White, his King cannot do the same, as 27. Kf1 Rf4 28. Ke2 would allow 28…Bc4+.

27. b4 Nxh3+ 28. Kf1 Rf4+ 29. Ke2 Bf2
One of several ways to win. Two others are 29…Bg4+ 30. Kd3 Bf2 and 29…Rf2+ 30. Kd1 Rxd2+ 31. Kxd2 Qd6+ 32. Kc2 Nf2.

30. gxh3 Kb6
Threatening simply 31…Qxc3.

31. Rc1
White could reach a hopeless endgame by 31. Qd8 Bc4+ 32. Kd1 Qxd8 33. Rxd8 Bxg3 34. Rg1 Rf3.

31. . .Bxh3 32. Kd1 Be3 33. Ne2 Bg4 34. Kc2 Bxd2 35. Kxd2 Qd6+, White Resigns.
If 36. Ke1, Black either checkmates or wins White's Queen by 36…Re4 37. Rc2 Qd3.

Cemil Can Ali Mirandi -
Robert Shlyakhtenko
Round Three

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 a6
The Kan variation of the Sicilian Defense.

5. c4 Nf6 6. Nc3 Bb4
The alternative is to set up a Hedgehog formation, starting with 6…d6 or 6…Qc7.

continued on next page

7. Bd3 Nc6 8. Nxc6 dxc6 9. e5 Nd7
Accepting a cramped and lifeless position. Can Black get away with 9…Qd4!? 10. exf6 Bxc3+ 11. bxc3 Qxc3+ 12. Bd2 Qxd3 13. fxg7 Rg8? Some games have tested 14. Bh6 Qc3+ 15. Kf1 Qf6 16. Qc1 e5, which may be satisfactory.

10. f4 b5 11. 0-0 0-0 12. Bc2
Instead of the obvious 12. Qc2 or 12. Be3.

12. . .Nb6 13. Qf3!
The most effective way to offer a pawn. Black more easily tolerates 13. Qe2 Bxc3 14. bxc3 Nxc4 and 13. Qh5 g6 14. Qh3 Bxc3 15. bxc3 bxc4.

13. . .Nxc4?
Black must eliminate the dangerous Knight by 13…Bxc3 14. Qxc3 bxc4, with only a small disadvantage. Note that 14…Nxc4? would run into 15. b3 Nb6 16. Ba3 Re8 17. Bc5 Nd5 18. Qh3 g6 19. Qh6, leaving Black fatally weak on the dark squares.

14. Ne4 Be7 15. Kh1 Ra7 16. b3 Nb6 17. Qh3 h6
After 17…g6 18. Bb2 Nd5 19. Qh6, White plans Ra1-d1 and Ne4-f6+. It's unlikely that Black can survive with 19…f5 20. exf6 Nxf6 21.Rad1 or 20…Bxf6 21. Nxf6+ Nxf6 22. Rad1 Rd7 23. Rxd7 Qxd7 24. Rd1.

18. Be3 c5 19. Nf6+?!
Not absolutely decisive. Stockfish points out the improvement 19. Rad1 Nd5 20. f5! exf5 21. Bxh6!, imagining checkmate after 21… gxh6 22. Qxh6 followed by 23. Rxd5 and 24. Nf6+. Nor can Black stand 21…fxe4 22. Qg3 g6 23. Bxe4. Black can keep the game going by 21… f4 22. Qh5 g6 23. Qf3 Be6, but 24. Bxf4 restores material equality, and White's initiative continues. Of course, this is nearly impossible for a human to find.

Photo courtesy of Chris Roberts
Vladimir Akopian's win was chosen for the best game prize.

19. . .Bxf6
Forced.
It's checkmate after 19…gxf6? 20. exf6 Bxf6 21. Qxh6. And 19…Kh8? 20. f5 makes 21. Bxh6 deadly.

20. exf6 Qxf6 21. Bxc5 Rc7 22. Qd3 Qf5 23. Bxf8?
The best way to gain the exchange is 23. b4! Qxd3 24. Bxd3 Rd7 25. Be4 Nc4 26. Bxf8 Kxf8 27. Rfd1 Rc7 28. Rac1. Black can put up a fight, but it's most likely that White can win with very precise play.

23. . .Rxc2 24. Qxf5 exf5 25. Rec1!
White must have counted on this sharp idea. Both players overlook Black's saving defense.

25. . .Rxc1+??
Black saves a half-point with 25… Re2 26. Bc5 Bb7! 27. Bxb6 (Black gets sufficient compensation from 27. Rg1 Nd5) Rxg2 28. h4 (not 28. Rc7?? Be4, as White must give back a Rook to avoid checkmate) Rg6+ 29. Kh2 Rxb6 30. Rc7 Be4 31. Rd1 Rg6.

26. Rxc1 Kxf8 27. Rc6
Recovering the piece and reaching a winning endgame.

27. . .Ke7
No better is 27…Nd5 28. Rxd8+ Ke7 29. g3.

28. Rxb6 Kd7
Trapping the Rook, but White can support it.

29. a4 bxa4 30. bxa4 Kc7 31. a5 Bb7 32. Kg1
The Rook restricts both Black pieces. White has plenty of time to bring his King into the battle.

32. . .Bc8 33. Kf2 Bb7 34. g3 Bc8 35. Ke3 Kd7 36. Kd4 Kc7 37. Kc5 Bb7 38. h4 h5
Soon Black will run out of pawn moves, and White's King will attack the pawns.
If Black tries 38…Bc8, White's King reaches b6 by 39. Rc6+! Kb7 40. Kd6 Be6 41. Rc7+ Kb8 42. Kc6 Bd5+ 43. Kb6.

39. Kd4 Bc8 40 Ke5 f6+ 41. Kd5 Kd7 42. Kc5 Kc7 43. Rc6+ Kd7 44. Kb6 Kd8 45. Rc1 g6 46. Rc6, Black Resigns.

RANK & FILE
Southern California Chess Federation

P.O. Box 120162
San Diego, CA 92112

For more information, visit our website:
www.scchess.com

...MDC continued from pg. 5

give up the Knight to delay checkmate.

25. . .Bxf4! 26. Qxf4 Qxd4+ 27. Be3 Rxc1 28. Bxd4 Rd1
Threatening the Bishop and a discovered checkmate.

29. h4 Bxg2+ 30. Kh2 Rxd4, White Resigns.

The tournament drew 198 players to the Airtel in Van Nuys, the second straight financial and aesthetic success for SCCF. Its namesake, the revered Lina Grumette, was one of the founders of SCCF in 1978 and inaugurated this event in 1980. It continued after her untimely passing in 1988.

Topping the Under 2000 section were Elena Zhang and Benjamin Bankhead (who notched a rating gain of 153 points!). Under 1800 also produced two five-pointers, David Galstian and Sergey Hakobyan (Eduard's brother).

In the smaller Under 1600 section, 5-1 earned clear first for Archer Declan Berenson. Under 1400 had a mere ten participants, and fully half of them finished on top at 4-2: Joseph Sorci, Andrew You, Rishi Ramesh, Rafael Nersesyan, and Vincent Pineda. And Jacob Harwin captured Under 1200 laurels with 5-1.

Separately in the 24-player Scholastic, Yashveer Jashnani topped the K-8 group, while Albert Bao, a nine-year-old bundle of energy, scored the weekend's only perfect result, 5-0, in K-4.

This writer, fighting a nasty cold, organized and directed with much help from Jim Harrell. Young Yanfeng Guo, while scoring 3½ and gaining 34 rating points in the Open section, also pitched in to help keep the event running smoothly.

...Club Roundup continued from pg. 13

NORTH COUNTY CHESS CLUB

By Ala'a-Addin Moussa

The North County Chess Club of San Diego meets at 2993 Mac Donald St, Oceanside, CA. The club runs a five-round Swiss-format chess tournament and each game is played on Thursday night starting at 7 pm. Information is available at northcountychess.com.

SCCF President Alaa-addin Moussa won the April and May tournaments. Below is the encounter between the top two finishers in the April tournament.

[Event "NCCC"]
[Site "Oceanside"]
[Date "2024.04.17"]
[Round "3"]
[White "Norman, A."]
[Black "Moussa, A."]
[Result "0-1"]
[ECO "B33"]

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 e5 6. Ndb5 d6 7. Bg5 a6 8. Na3 b5 9. Bxf6 gxf6 10. Nd5 f5 11. c3 Bg7 12. exf5 Bxf5 13. Nc2 O-O 14. Nce3 Be6 15. Bd3 f5 16. Qh5 e4 17. Bc2 Ne7 18. Rd1 Nxd5 19. Nxd5 Be5 20. O-O Ra7 21. f3 (21. f4 +=) **21... Rg7 22. fxe4?? f4! 23. h3 Rg5 24. Qh6 Rg6 25. Qh5 Rg5 26. Qh6 Bc8! 27. Kh1 Kh8?** (27... f3!) **28. Rd2??** (28. Rd3!) **28... f3! 29. Rg1 Bg7 30. Qh4 fxg2+ 31. Rdxg2 Rxg2 32. Ne7 Rxg1+ 33. Kxg1 Bf6 34. Ng6+ Kg7 35. Qg3 hxg6 36. e5 Qb6+** 0-1