

# VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

The bimonthly publication of the  
Virginia Chess Federation

2016 - #1



*illustration by Raúl Arias*

<http://deludoscachorum.blogspot.com/2016/02/el-tablero-politico-espanol.html>

# VIRGINIA CHESS

## Newsletter

2016 - Issue #1

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# Yining Memorial Open

by Zhiheng Yu

**T**HE NORTHERN VIRGINIA chess community showed great support in a charity memorial tournament, Yining Memorial Tournament 2016, on January 3, 2016. The tournament was in honor of a passionate chess parent/coach/player Yining Wang who passed away suddenly in December.

Yining was well known for his love of the game and his success in coaching his two kids into outstanding junior chess players. His daughter Joie has been one of the top girl players in the state for several years, and one of her achievement highlights was winning the U14 champion at the 2012 National All Girls Chess Championship. His son Andrew has likewise been one of the top boy players in this state and was K-5 co-champion of the 2015 Virginia State Scholastic Championship. Yining was the one who introduced them to chess and remained as their only coach. He not only taught them chess knowledges but also instilled in them a love of the game and fighting spirit.

Yining's unexpected death shocked and saddened the circle of chess parents. Condolences and donations to help his family through the difficult time came together thanks to a group of fellow chess parents led by Caijun Luo and Ya He. In addition, Mr Jie Xu came up with the idea to organize a chess memorial

48<sup>th</sup> annual

## Virginia Open

March 18-20, 2016

Washington Dulles Airport Marriott Hotel

45020 Aviation Dr, Dulles Virginia 20166-7506

5SS, rd 1 g/120, d/5, rds 2-5 40/115, g/30, d/5. \$\$3600 Guaranteed! In two sections: *Open (FIDE rated)*: \$650-410-300-240; top X, A each 200. *Amateur (under 1900)*: \$420-250-190; Top B, C, D, U1200 each 160, top Unrated 100. *Both*: Reg Fri 5pm-7pm; Rds 7:45pm, 10-3:30, 10-3:30. EF \$65 if rec'd by 3/15, \$75 later or at site. VCF membership req'd for Va residents (\$10 Adults, U19 \$5). One ½pt bye allowed, commit by Sat 9:30am. Re-entry \$40 & start rd2 with ½ pt. Hotel \$89, reserve by 3/6, 800-228-9200 ask for chess rate. Info [andreea2@yahoo.com](mailto:andreea2@yahoo.com) NS, JGP *Enter*: Checks payable to Virginia Chess Federation, mail to Adam Chrisney, PO Box 151122, Alexandria, Va 22135, or enter online at [www.vachess.org](http://www.vachess.org).



*A VCF Cup Event*



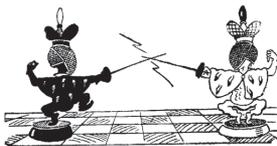
tournament in honor of Yining. The goals of the tournament would be to celebrate his love and life with chess as well as to help his children recover from the unspeakable loss by engaging them in the chess circle. The local American Chinese community embraced the idea. Luo, He and Xu reached out to chess circles and clubs in northern Virginia and received great support.

More than 140 players registered for the main tournament, a big success given the very short planning and preparation time (less than a week). A majority of the players came from Virginia, but Maryland, Delaware and even Pennsylvania were also represented. The main tournament consisted of four rounds of quick games. Jeevan Karamsetty, from Virginia, and Runya Xu, from Pennsylvania, each scored a perfect 4-0 and tied for first place.

Fun side events were held after the main tournament finished. These included a bughouse tournament, a blindfold chess competition, and simul games with Jeffery Kane, Joie Wang and Jennifer Yu. These turned out to be popular, especially with the young players and chess parents, fitting the goal of celebrating the game and spreading the love.



*Yining Memorial Open*





# Northern Virginia Chess League

by Paul Swaney

**I**N Sunday February 21 the first round of the Northern Virginia Chess League took place in Sterling Virginia. The ideas and structure of the league came about through months of discussions with the Virginia chess community. One main idea that separates this league from any other league in the United States is that it is both USCF and FIDE rated. The committee learned that the USA liaison for FIDE events submission, Tracey Vibbert, had not previously handed a long-running FIDE rated league. It took some research with FIDE rated leagues in Europe, and discussions with Tracey, to get this started and rolling.

The committee of the Northern Virginia Chess League consists of Anand Dommalapati, Adam Weissbarth, and Paul Swaney. Together they worked out the details to kick off a successful first season. Anand stepped up to handle all TD/Arbiter responsibilities.

Six teams registered for Season #1: Ashburn Fossils, Ashburn Junior, GMU Patriots, Morphy's Mojo, Omelette Kings, and Silver Knights. All matches are played with a 4 board line-up at a time control of game/90 minutes + 30 second increment per move. All chess equipment is provided, including wooden sets for all boards. Chess clocks are started promptly at 3pm no game day Sundays, and FIDE's zero tolerance rule is in place (if a player arrives 30 minutes after start time, they lose by forfeit). Team line-ups are due the Saturday before the match date, and pairings are posted by 3pm on that Saturday. This means players



*continued*



## Harold Mouzon Jr

We have learned that northern Virginia master Harold ('Hal') Mouzon died of natural causes on December 15, 2015 at the age of 86. A native of Charleston SC, Hal was a long time stalwart of the Arlington Chess Club. He won countless tournaments, including 3 South Carolina state championships.



have 24 hour notice to prepare for their specific opponents. The league committee provides light, healthy snacks for all the players during the round.

Having all the matches played at one site makes this league unique since its possible to quickly upload and submit the results just as any other tournament. Thus rating reports for the opening round were submitted to USCF and FIDE by the next day, and crosstables, individual and team standings were posted online as well as uploaded to the International Chess Tournaments Results server on the same day.

For more information and all of the details about the league, visit [www.nvachessleague.com](http://www.nvachessleague.com). If you are interested in forming a team, or joining an existing team, email the league from the contacts page.

**Victor Guzman - Andy Huang**  
**Northern Virginia Chess League 2016**  
**Queen's Gambit Declined**

*Notes by Victor Guzman*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 Bg5 Nbd7 6 e3 Qa5 7 cxd5 exd5** [Andy and I had played this line before at another tournament and I actually didn't know the theory before and so played 8 Bxf6, which really is not needed and gives White no advantage.] **8 Nd2 Be7 9 Bd3 O-O 10 O-O Re8 11 Qc2 Nf8 12 a3** [My plan is pretty simple b4-b5-bxc6 *aka* the minority attack.] **12...Bg4?!** [Andy said after the game that he just wanted to get his pieces out and so had the plan of Bg4-h5-g6 to neutralize the pressure on the b1-h7 diagonal.] **13 b4 Qd8 14 b5 Bd7 15 bxc6 Bxc6** [Minority attack complete and now there are weaknesses on the queenside that I can exploit but first...] **16 Bxf6 Bxf6 17 Rfc1?** [This is actually a waste of time and instead Rfb1 was better.] **17...g6?** [The bishop has no future on the a1-h8 diagonal and must return to watch the hole on c5.] **18 Rab1 Nd7 19 Bb5 Be7 20 Bxc6 bxc6 21 Nb3??** [A blunder! Daydreaming about a knight landing on c5, I overlooked his threat.] **21...Bxa3 22 Rd1 Bd6** [Now black is fine and should have an easy position to play.] **23 Na4 Qc7 24 g3 Nb6 25 Nac5 Nc4 26 Ra1 f5 27 Na6 Qe7 28 Na5 Nxa5 29 Rxa5 Rac8!?** [Why not the other rook? The e8 rook is doing nothing and could help defend the c6 pawn while the a8 rook watches the a7 pawn.] **30 Nc5 h5?** [Now I have some active play and should regain my pawn.] **31 Rb1 Rb8 32 Rba1 Ra8 33 Qa4 Rec8 34 Rxa7 Rxa7 35 Qxa7 Qxa7 36 Rxa7 Rc7 37 Rxc7 Bxc7 38 Nd3 Kf7 39 Nb4 Ke6 40 Nxc6** ½-½ After all the pieces are traded I manage to win a pawn but I don't think it's enough. I shuffle the king and knight for 10 or so more moves but it leads to nowhere for white. Good game with inaccuracies for both sides.





# Reflections

## REFLECTIONS



### Looking Back on an Amateur Chess “Career”

#### INTERESTING DRAWS – PART II (DOUBLE DRAWS)

Continuing on the theme from the last issue, another interesting thing about draws is that sometimes they come in pairs or sets versus the same opponent. You wiggle, you waggle, you take chances or play conservatively, but no matter what you do the result comes out drawn. My personal thought is that somehow there is a subliminal component, but I’m sure it also has to do with other more concrete factors as well (shared info such as opening choices, knowledge of patterns, tactics, motifs, etc).

If you play in enough local tournaments, you’ll likely encounter familiar opponents. You begin to learn a little more about that person’s play, their preferences, style, etc. The two sets presented below are against players who were both stronger than me, particular in the case of long-time Expert Robert J “Bob” Fischer. If you’re fairly active and astute, you won’t blink when you read that. Bob is a local business guru who happens to share the same name as one of the more famous players in history. I’ve never asked him about that but I’m sure he has some interesting stories to tell.

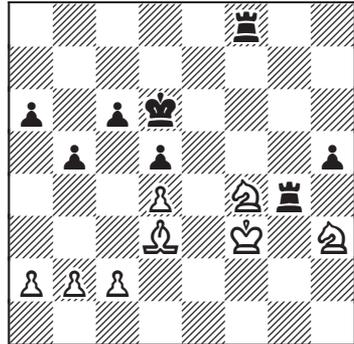
#### Bob Fischer - Mark Warriner 1987 Fredericksburg Open Caro Kann

**1 e4 c6** [It’s surprising to see myself play this back then as I wouldn’t dream of it these days, especially against a much stronger player. Funny the perspective time can provide in looking backwards. Hindsight, well, you know...] **2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 Nc3 e6 5 g4 Bg6 6 Nge2 Nd7** [Not so high on the list of candidate moves. These days 6...c5 is the popular choice.] **7 Be3** [and here 7 h4 instead] **7...f6** [We were already far down the list of preferred moves, but this is pushing credibility.] **8 f4** [8 exf6 gxf6 9 Qd2 Bb4 10 a3 Ba5 11 h4 Ne7 12 h5 Bf7 13 Bh3 Nb6 14 b3 Nbc8 15 Bh6 Nd6 16 b4 Bc7 17 Bg7 Rf8 18 Bxf8 1-0 Nijboer - De Saegher, Netherlands 1996] **8...Qc7** [This seems passive. Perhaps 8...Nh6; 8...Qb6; or even 8...fxe5 instead. But 8...Ne7 didn’t go any better in practice, eg 9 Qd2 h5 10 O-O-O Nb6 11 f5 Nc4 12 Qd3 exf5 13 exf6 gxf6 14 Nf4 Qd6 15 Nxc6 Nxe3 16 Nxc8 Nxd1 17 Nxd1 Bg7 18 Qh3 Bxh8 19 Qxh5+ Kd7 20 Bh3 Qf4+ 21 Kb1 Qxd4 22 gxf5 Rg8 23 Qe2 Rg1 24 Rxc1 Qxc1 25 Bg4 Qc5 26 Qe6+ Kd8 27 Qf7 Qg1 28 h3 Nxf5 29 a3 1-0 Vardanian – Zschischang, Yerevan 1996] **9 Bg2 a6 10 O-O**



**O-O-O** [begging for trouble; 10...Bf7 or 10...Ne7 instead] **11 f5 Bf7?** [Painful, but I really didn't fancy suffering through something like 11...exf5 12 Nf4 Nxe5 13 dxe5 d4 14 Ne6 dxe3 15 Qxd8+ Qxd8 16 Nxd8 Kxd8 17 gxf5 Be8] **12 fxe6 Bxe6 13 Nf4 Re8** [Now fortune smiled upon me and my opponent misses the thread.] **14 exf6?** [Either 14 g5 or 14 Nxe6 keeps the ball rolling.] **14...Ngxf6 15 g5 Bg4?** [Thinking to muddy the water, but just 15...Ng4 was better.] **16 Qd3** [16 Qe1; Qd2] **16...Nh5 17 h3?** [Since Black obtains real chances after this, the somewhat speculative N(either)xd5 was worth considering.] **17...Ng3?** [Black was in the driver's seat with 17...Bd6 but now he's in the doghouse.] **18 hxg4 Nxf1 19 Rxf1** [So the smoke has cleared from the first skirmish and White has space and two minor pieces for a rook, though the kingside pawns are unsightly.] **19...Bd6?** [Desperation, but 19...Nb6 was better desperation.] **20 Nh3??** [20 Ncxd5 was again the best way forward. {Just to be clear, after 20 Ncxd5 cxd5 21 Nxd5 and now say 21...Qa5 there is no decisive combinatory finish at hand for White, but in giving back some material he achieves terrific coordination and central control.—ed}] **20...Re7?** [Bad moves come in pairs, it is sometimes observed. More tenacious resistance came with 20...Nf8] **21 Bf4?** [21 Bxd5 again exposed the problem with Black's defense.] **21...Rhe8?** [Continuing the cavalcade of question marks; this time 21...Rf8 was right.] **22 Qg3?** [Again (sigh!) 22 Bxd5] **22...Re3?** [22...Bxf4] **23 Bxd6 Rxg3 24 Bxc7 Kxc7 25 Kf2?** [25 Nf2 takes control. Now, after a long series of mistaken thinking, the players settle down for a few moves.] **25...Rxxg4 26 Rd1 Rf8+ 27 Kg1 h6 28 gxh6 gxh6 29 Ne2 Re8 30 Nef4 Kd6 31 Kf2 Rf8 32 Kf3 h5 33 Re1 Rf6 34 Re8** [The less grandiose 34 Bf1 was a little better.] **34...Nf8 35 Rxf8?** [Tosses the game. The only problem for Black is that he can't figure out how to convert!]

*(diagram)*



**37...Rh4?** [In my defense, it's not all that easy to work this out, especially over the board playing an Expert. Engines offer solutions such as 37...Rg7 38 Ke2 Rg3 39 Bg6 h4 40 a3 a5 41 Bh5 b4 42 axb4 axb4 43 b3 Rf5 44 Bg6 Rf6 45 Bh5 c5 46 dxc5+ Kxc5 47 Kd2 Kd6 48 Be2 Rf5 49 Bd3 Rf7 50 Be2 Ke5 51 Nd3+ Kd4 52 Nhf4 Ke4 53 Ne6 h3 54 Nec5+ Kf5 55 Nf2 h2 56 Ncd3 Rg2 57 Ke3 Kg5 58 Nh3+ Kh4 59 Nhf2 Rgxf2 60 Nxf2 d4+ 61 Ke4 Rxf2—

that's a lot of maneuvering.] **38 Kg3 Rg4+ 39 Kf3** Being a little short on time, I decided to chop the point, believing I was better, but not know how to continue and not wanting to risk half a point. Discretion is the better part of valor. Still, remember Nigel Short's dictum: If your opponent offers you a draw, try to work out why he thinks he's worse off.  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

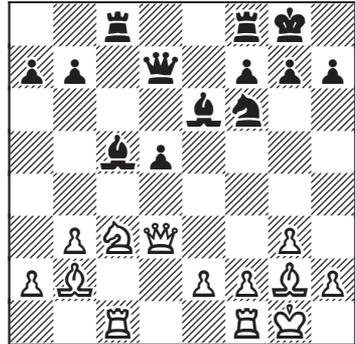


**Bob Fischer - Mark Warriner**  
**1995 Virginia Closed Championship**  
**Tarrasch Defense**

**1 c4 e6 2 Nf3 d5** [This game was played about eight years after our first encounter. I like to think that I showed a little more sophistication in the handling of the opening, but this probably isn't the reality. Otherwise I wouldn't have played something I didn't really know again.] **3 b3 Nf6 4 Bb2 c5 5 cxd5 exd5 6 g3 Be7 7 Bg2 O-O 8 O-O Nc6 9 d4** [Black can be happy as players such as Korchnoi and Spassky have defeated Tal and Larsen respectively from this position. Problem was I didn't know that, or what they played.] **9...Be6** [They didn't play that. 9...Ne4 or 9...Re8, also respectively, and interestingly both in 1984.] **10 Nc3** [Apparently my opponent did know that Benko, Larsen and Taimanov (who just turned 90) played that.] **10...Rc8 11 Rc1 cxd4** [Oops. I also didn't know that this is probably a mistake as Black has lost all six games in my database in which it was played. All but one of these games took place *after* my game. So what else? Well, engines like 11...h6, 11...b6, or 11...cxd4. *Hmm.*] **12 Nxd4 Nxd4 13 Qxd4 Bc5 14 Qd3 Qd7** [Probably a misstep; 14...b6 or 14...Qa5 instead. It's insidious how a series of little mistakes leads to all sorts of big disasters, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as "drift."] (*diagram*)

**15 Nxd5**

Here I realized I was just dropping a pawn, at least, and that I'd have to engage in some fancy moves just to stay alive, probably also facing the bishop pair. Something like 15...Nxd5 16 Rxc5 Rxc5 17 Qd4 Nc3 18 Qxc5 Rc8 19 Qe5 f6 20 Qe3 Nd1 would have been better than what I did was, but I couldn't have found that during the game.



**15...Bxf2+ 16 Kxf2 Nxd5 17 Rcd1?** [White had at least two better alternatives: 17 Rxc8 Rxc8 18 Rd1; and 17 Qd4 f6 18 Rfd1] **17...Nf6?** [Returning the favor as moving either rook to d8 was better.] **18 Qf3?** [Why not just 18 Bxf6?] **18...Qe7 19 Kg1** [perhaps overly cautious] **19...b6** [19...Rc2 looks awfully good these days.] **20 Qe3** [again, just Bf6] **20...Ng4**





**21 Qf4** [Either d4 or e4 were a happier home for the queen.] **21...Rc2** [didn't miss it that time!] **22 Rd2?** [This hands Black the advantage, which of course I promptly fumbled.] **22...Rfc8?** [22...Qc5+] **23 Rfd1 Rxd2 24 Qxd2 h6 25 h3 Nf6 26 Kh2 Nh5** [26...Bf5, eyeing c2] **27 Be5 Qg5 28 Qd6 Nf6 29 Bb7?** [This should have handed a plus to Black, but again I eschewed a good move for a bad one.] **29...Re8 30 Rf1 Qh5 31 Bxf6 Qxh3+ 32 Kg1 gxf6 33 Rxf6 Qh5 34 Rf2 Qg5 35 Qf4 Rd8 36 Qxg5+ hxg5 37 Be4 Rc8 38 e3?** [Either 38 Rf1 or 38 Bf5 were better.] **38...Rc1+?** [38...Rc3 was stronger] **39 Kg2 Rc7 40 Rc2 Rxc2+ 41 Bxc2 Kg7 42 Kf3 Kf6** ½–½

I used to see Glenn Tomkinson around tournaments a lot in the late 1980's. I didn't know much about him except that he knew a lot more about openings than I did. Evidently he applied himself, whereas I was a little more relaxed (*ahem*—read “lazy”) in my approach. Sadly, in researching this article I came across an obituary for Glenn dated back in 2007 (see Alex Dunne's “The Check is in the Mail” column in the August 2007 CHESS LIFE). It's difficult for me to think that I've been playing long enough for so many opponents to have passed. I don't remember Glenn that well, except that he was very pleasant to me during both our games and helpful in discussing/analyzing afterwards. He seemed soft-spoken and thoughtful. He clearly enjoyed chess. It was nice to discover that like me, he'd gone on to enjoy correspondence games. I highly encourage participation in this to improve one's play.

### Mark Warriner – Glenn Tomkinson

#### 1985 VA Closed Championship

#### Grunfeld Defense

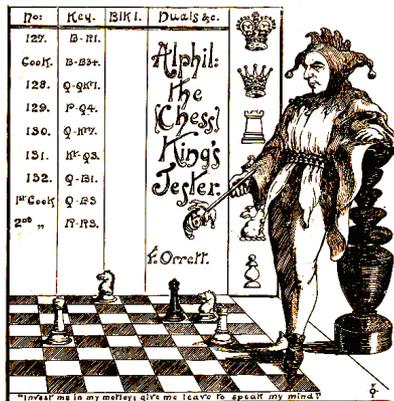
**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 c5 7 Nf3 Bg7 8 Rb1** [I don't remember where I originally read about this move but I believe it was a game involving Victor Korchnoi. I really like how it looks compared to the alternatives, and it gets a rook going early.] **8...cxd4 9 cxd4 Nc6** [And just like that, perhaps surprisingly, we're at a position with only a couple of games in the database. Of course I chose the continuation favorable to my opponent...] **10 Be3 O-O 11 Be2 Qa5+ 12 Qd2 Qxd2+ 13 Kxd2 Rd8** [By transposition we've arrived at a position where the results heavily favor Black.] **14 Rhc1** [At least I chose the continuation that gives White his best chances to save equality.] **14...Nxd4 15 Nxd4 Bxd4 16 Bxd4 Rxd4+ 17 Ke3 e5** [17...Ra4 may have been more testing] **18 Rc7 Be6 19 Rbxb7 Bxa2 20 Rxa7 Rxa7 21 Rxa7 Bb1 22 f3** [So far, so good. Nothing outrageous by either player, things seem headed to a peaceful resolution.] **22...Kg7?** [But this could have made things interesting.] **23 Ra1?** [Mark, Mark, Mark... 23 Re7 picks up the e-pawn {*thanks to the tactic 23...Kf6 24 Rxe5 Kxe5 25 f4+ —ed*}] **23...Bc2?** [again offering up the e-pawn] **24 Rc1?** [And again missing the point. 24 Rc1 and after the bishop moves, 25



Rc5] 24...Bb3? 25 Ra1? [I guess I just really didn't want that pawn. 25 Rc5 f6 26 f4 Ra4 27 fxe5 fxe5 28 Rxe5] 25...f5 26 Ra7+ Bf7 27 exf5 gxf5 28 Bd3 f4+ 29 Ke2 Rd6? 30 Bc4? [30 Bxh7 looks pretty good...] 30...Rf6 31 Rxf7+ Rxf7 32 Bxf7 Kxf7 33 Kd3 Kf6 34 Kc4 Kf5 35 Kd3 h6 36 g4+ fxg3 37 hxg3 h5 38 Ke3 Kg5 39 Ke4 Kf6 40 Kd3 Kf5 41 Ke3 Kg5 42 Ke4 ½-½ Whenever you think a draw is the inevitable result, just remember; your opponent (and you!) may still be making mistakes.

Mark Warriner – Glenn Tomkinson  
 1986 VA Closed Championship  
 Sicilian Defense

1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 Nf3 g6 4 d4 cxd4 5 Nxd4 Bg7 6 Be3 d6 7 Be2 Nf6 8 f3 O-O 9 Qd2 Re8 [Nothing earth shattering here, though this last move hasn't scored well. 9...Bd7 is more typical.] 10 O-O-O Nxd4 11 Bxd4 a6 12 g4 Be6 13 h4 Qa5 14 a3 b5 [Still nothing terribly inspired, mostly "as expected" type moves. Now White had a chance at keeping up interest with 15 h4 but instead I chickened out.] 15 Nd5 Qxd2+ 16 Rxd2 Bxd5 17 exd5 [Obtaining the bishop pair, but perhaps it doesn't mean that much in the given position.] 17...Rec8 18 Kb1 Nd7 19 Bxg7? [Still, it would have made sense to keep the pair with 19 Be3 just in case it did matter later in the game.] 19...Kxg7 20 f4 Nb6 21 Bf3? [Oops. What was wrong with just 21 h5 or 21 g5?] 21...Nc4? [21...Rc4 was just a bit stronger] 22 Rd3 Rc7 23 g5 Rb8 24 c3 a5 25 Rc1 f5 26 Bd1 b4 27 axb4 axb4 28 Bb3? [This could have cost the game after 28...Na5; 28 b3 ought to have been played instead.] 28...bxc3? 29 Rxc3 Nd2+ 30 Rxd2 Rxc3 31 bxc3 Rxb3+ 32 Kc2 Ra3 33 Kb2 Ra4 34 Rd4 Rxd4 35 cxd4 Kf7 36 Kc3 Again it seemed like both players decided at some point that this was "just a draw" and missed some chances, though mostly Black showed too much respect for White. Keep your eyes out for those "interesting draws!" ½-½





## Paul Morphy & Contemporary Chess

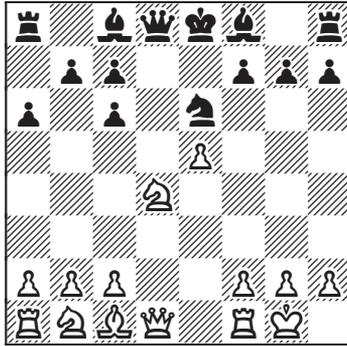
by Macon Shibut

In my 1991 book *Paul Morphy and the Evolution of Chess Theory* I did not annotate the 14<sup>th</sup> and final game of Morphy's 1858 match versus J J Lowenthal. The fact is I didn't find this game to be anything special. The opening appeared rather primitive, and Lowenthal's defeat seemed largely the consequence of a simple blunder. Recently I had occasion to revisit this game and discovered that my perception of it has, well, *evolved* quite a bit!



### Paul Morphy - Johann Jacob Lowenthal London 1858 Ruy Lopez

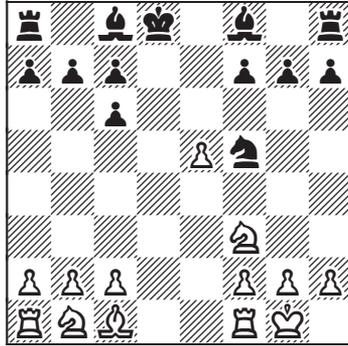
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 e5 Ne4 7 O-O Nc5 8 Bxc6 dxc6 9 Nxd4 Ne6



In 1990 the cutting edge of Ruy Lopez practice was the Flohr-Zaitsev Defense, the favorite of former world champion Anatoly Karpov: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 O-O Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 O-O 9 h3 Bb7 10 d4 Re8 11 Nbd2 Bf8. The dense and strategically complex play resulting from this line was wonderfully exemplified by the 4<sup>th</sup> game of the world championship match that year. Kasparov-Karpov 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 O-O Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 O-O 9 h3 Bb7 10 d4 Re8 11 Nbd2 Bf8 12 a4 h6 13 Bc2 exd4 14 cxd4 Nb4 15 Bb1 c5 16 d5 Nd7 17 Ra3 f5 18 exf5 Nf6 19 Ne4 Bxd5 20 Nxf6+ Qxf6 21 Bd2 Qxb2 22 Bxb4 Bf7 23 Re6 Qxb4 24 Rb3 Qxa4 25 Bc2 Rad8 26 Rbe3 Qb4 27 g3 a5 28 Nh4 d5 29 Qe2 Qc4 30 Bd3 Qc1+ 31 Kg2 c4 32 Bc2 Bxe6 33 Rxe6 Rxe6 34 Qxe6+ Kh8 35 Ng6+ Kh7 36 Qe2 Qg5 37 f6 Qxf6 38 Nxf8+ Kg8 39 Ng6 Qf7 40 Ne7+ Kf8 ½-½



Compared to that, the structure in our diagram seemed rather lacking in potential (or “primitive” as I put it above). But that perception changed ten years later following the 2000 world championship match between Garry Kasparov and Vladimir Kramnik. As his primary defense to 1 e4 Kramnik resurrected an old variation of the Berlin Defense that had been played back in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but rarely seen in top level chess over half a century: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 O-O Nxe4 5 d4 Nd6 6 Bxc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 Nf5 8 Qxd8+ Kxd8...

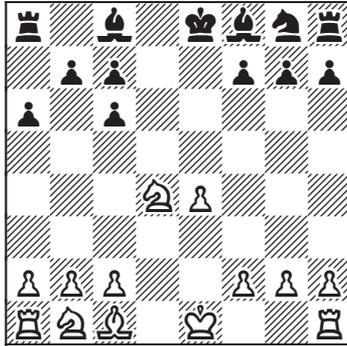


*The Berlin Wall*

Ruy Lopez players of that time had not given this Berlin line much thought because first, no one was playing it against them; and second, their understanding of such positions was informed by Bobby Fischer’s successful revival of another old line, the Exchange Variation (1 e5 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6) in the 1960s. In that connection the Berlin looked like a more favorable (for White) version of the Exchange because White has the same “heathy” 4:3 pawn majority on the kingside versus Black’s crippled queenside majority, but in the Berlin the queens are already gone (ie, the endgame that is supposed to favor White is closer), plus Black has lost the right to castle.

Nonetheless, Kramnik’s choice proved to be nothing less than devastating in the match. The great Kasparov failed to win a single game. He basically squandered his entire White half of the match in a futile effort to break down what came to be known as the Berlin Wall. This eye-popping result marked an inflection point in the theory of the Ruy Lopez. The Berlin became one of the most popular defenses in grandmaster play, a status it retains today. With all this attention and experience has come a greater appreciation for the subtleties of the characteristic pawn structure.

I’m going to add a third diagram by continuing the Exchange Variation a few more moves to reach a position more directly analogous to the other two: 4... dxc6 5 d4 exd4 6 Qxd4 Qxd4 7 Nxd4



*An Exchange Variation*

The similarities between all three diagrammed positions is obvious. So why is the Berlin not just a slightly inferior version of the Exchange Variation? And what can this tell us about Morphy-Lowenthal?

Theory holds that in the Exchange Variation Black's bishop pair compensates for his inferior pawn formation. However, it's a dynamic type of compensation. Black must find ways to use his bishops in active middle game operations. If play just goes along with nothing much happening besides the occasional exchange of pieces, White's pawn majority gradually asserts itself. In the extreme eventuality of a pure pawn ending, the structure is practically winning for White.

However, the critical difference between the Exchange Variation and the Berlin Wall is not that Black has lost his castling privilege (although it's still surprising how effortlessly Black copes with having his king in the center, in game after game with this variation). *The more important difference is the fact that White's e-pawn has advanced to e5 in the Berlin, as opposed to being still back on e4 in the Exchange line.* The kingside pawn majority is supposed to be White's main strategic trump. However, with the pawn already committed to e5, it turns out Black is able establish an almost ironclad blockade on the light squares.



26. Morphy's English Opponents



Try as they might, the advocates of White have not managed to find a reliable plan for advancing the kingside pawn mass in an orderly fashion. The fact that Black's light-square bishop is the unopposed one plays no small part in this. In the course of trying to push through Black's innate superiority on the light squares, 'holes' appear in White's structure while his own king comes under attack. But that pawn majority is a "use it or lose it" proposition—if White holds back to maintain the integrity of his structure, the majority plays no role and Black basically enjoys the bishop pair in an open position 'for free'.

In Morphy-Lowenthal we see the same key feature: White's pawn is at e5. Far from being just a "primitive" 19<sup>th</sup> century handling of the defense, Lowenthal's handling of the opening begins to look more like an anticipation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Ruy Lopez!

**10 Nxe6 Bxe6** [Black would like to head directly for the full Berlin experience (and a better version at that—he can still castle!) by 10...Qxd1 but that doesn't work as White would desperado the knight 11 Nxg7+] **11 Qe2 Bc5 12 Nc3 Qe7?**

This was a significant inaccuracy. Centralization 12...Qd4! would have been awkward for White. 13 Be3 drops the e-pawn, so evidently 13 Rd1 is the natural response, but then 13...Qg4! and White can hardly avoid the exchange of queens, whereupon Black could announce "*Ich bin ein Berliner!*"

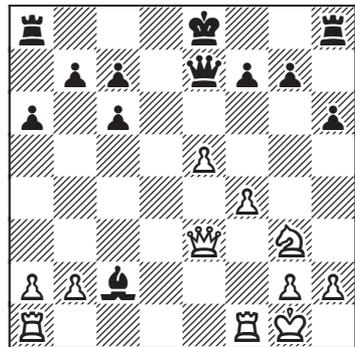
Lowenthal's move looks reasonable. The preconditions for a light square blockade are still present, so one would expect decent chances to equalize here too. However, dynamic factors now come to the fore and Morphy is able to pose difficult problems.

**13 Ne4** [A rebuke to the oft-stated notion that Morphy's strategic vision began and ended with the idea of rapid development. For the moment Black is prevented from castling because 13...0-0 14 Bg5 the queen cannot maintain protection of Bc5] **13...h6 14 Be3! Bxe3 15 Qxe3** [Now 15...O-O 16 f4 Bf5 17 Ng3 could transpose to the next note, whereas 15...0-0-0 16 Qa7 is too dangerous.] **15... Bf5 16 Ng3! Bxc2 17 f4** (*diagram*)

Thanks to the preceding tactics White will achieve f5, the crest of a wave normally unattainable against the Berlin Wall. In 1990 I mistook Lowenthal's next move to be a naïve blunder.

**17...g6!**

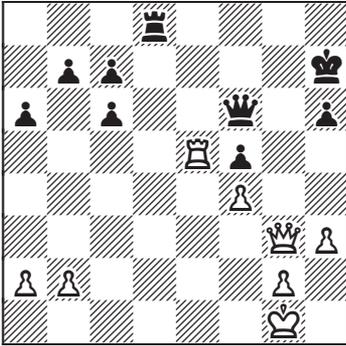
In fact it is the best defense, if only because nothing else works! 17...O-O (if 17...O-O-O again 18 Qa7) would have led to something like 18 f5 Qg5 19 Qc3 Ba4 20 f6 (20 Ne4 Qh5 21 Rf3 also looks strong) g6 21 e6 fxe6 22 Ne4 followed by f7+ and Nf6+





**18 e6** [Threatening to hit two undefended pieces by Qc3—but I was the naïve one to believe Lowenthal could have overlooked this obvious tactic.] **18...Bf5!** [If 18...O-O 19 Rf2! and in the event of 19...Ba4 the bishop unexpectedly runs out of squares on the queenside, 20 b3 Bb5 21 a4. That means Black would have to return it to f5 in any case, eg 19...Bf5 20 Nxf5 gxf5 21 Qb3 b6 22 Re1 While this may not be completely hopeless, a comparison with the actual game shows it was better to save a tempo by not castling when the castle position was destined to be broken apart anyway.] **19 Nxf5 gxf5 20 exf7+** [So for instance, if now 20 Qb3 Black's having refrained from ...0-0 pays immediate dividends: 20...O-O-O! 21 exf7 Rd5 etc] **20...Kxf7 21 Qh3 Qf6 22 Rae1 Rhe8 23 Re5!** [Still, it seems just a matter of time before his exposed king must doom Black.] **23...Kg6** [forced since f5 is attacked and if 23...Rxe5 24 fxe5 the queen and f5 are both threatened] **24 Rfe1 Rxe5 25 Rxe5** [if 25 fxe5 Qe6 hangs on] **25...Rd8 26 Qg3+ Kh7 27 h3**

(diagram)



I distinctly recall mentally awarding 27 h3 an exclamation mark back when I first analyzed this game. White underscores the basic advantage, that he can make a secure nest for his king while Black cannot do likewise. Today I appreciate that h2 is neither as “secure”, nor Black’s king so “exposed”, as appearances might indicate.

Lowenthal could have demonstrated the true state of affairs by 27...Rd5! and after 28 Re8 Qg7 29 Qh4 (if 29 Qxg7+ Kxg7 30 Re7+ Kg6 31 Rxc7 Rb5 is fine) 29...Rd1+ 30 Kh2 Rd2

secures a draw 31 Re7 Rxcg2+ etc. But his position is robust enough that even the less convincing continuation played might have drawn as well.

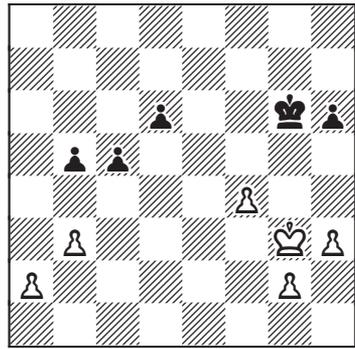
**27...Rd7?! 28 Qe3 b6 29 Kh2 c5 30 Qe2 Qg6!** [As White ‘aimlessly’ shuffles pieces around, the thing that must be understood is that Black is close to zugzwang. Eventually the queenside pawn moves will run out, at which point it may be hard to avoid disturbing the delicate kingside defenses. Lowenthal played rather capily, shifting his posture just when Morphy appears to be threatening a pawn.] **31 Re6!** [The point is that if 31 Qxa6? Black is ready to counterattack 31...Rg7 32 Qf1 (White must defend both g2 and f4 against ...Q-g3+xf4) Qg3+ 33 Kh1 Rd7 34 Rxf5 (there is no more useful move) Re7! 35 Re5 Rxe5 36 fxe5 Qxe5 and White might as well force the draw immediately by 37 Qf7+ etc] **31...Qg7?** [Only this mistake lets slip the draw for certain. 31...Qg8! would have held fine, eg 32 Rf6 (or 32 Qe5 Rf7 33 Re8 Qg7) 32...Rf7 33 Rxf7+ Qxf7 34 Qxa6 Qe6 35 Qd3 Kg6 36 b3 Qd6 White cannot win.] **32 Qh5!** [But *this* threat to f5 is serious—and it would have been impossible after the correct 31...Qg8 because White’s rook is



hanging. Morphy was alert to the opportunity and Black's position is now hopeless. White wins not by breaking through in force, but rather by finessing Black into compromising his own fortress. ] **32...Rd5** [The first bad news is that **32...Rf7** fails because of **33 Rxh6+ Qxh6 34 Qxf7+**] **33 b3!** [The second bad news is that now Black really faces zugzwang. His rook cannot move for fear of **Qxf5+**; his king and queen must both stay put to prevent catastrophe on either g6 or h6 (for instance, ...Qf8 allows **Qg6+** followed by **Re8**). So something has to give on the queenside.] **33...b5** [Surrendering the least important part of his structure in hopes of regrouping to make a last stand. After **33...a5 34 a4** Black would have to choose an even worse poison.] **34 Rxa6 Rd6** [The bid for counterplay **34...c4 35 bxc4 bxc4 36 Rc6 Rd2** gets snuffed out mercilessly by **37 Qxf5+ Kh8 38 Rg6**] **35 Qxf5+ Qg6 36 Qxg6+ Kxg6 37 Ra5**

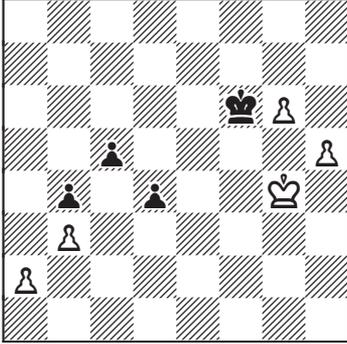
The pawn ending was also winning: **37 Rxd6+ cxd6 38 Kg3** (diagram)

White will form a pair of connected passed pawns on the kingside, which can defend themselves. Black's central pawns can be frozen in the meantime, since advancing them lead to White having a passed a-pawn as well. White's general procedure will be to advance his kingside pawns as far as possible, then rush up his king to force them through. This last step will involve leaving the 'square' of Black's d-pawn, but it turns out White can strike the killing blow just in time. Play would continue something like **38...d5**





39 Kf3 (but not 39 a4 c4!—care is always needed! But a4 will become a threat as White's king moves across, so eventually must play ...b4 to head it off.) 39...b4 40 g4 Kf6 41 h4 Ke6 42 h5 Kf6 43 Ke3 Ke6 (Black avoids ...d4 as long as possible in order to deny White's king the square e4; as for ...c4, that will always lose to the direct plan of trading pawns followed by Kd4, which forces ...c3, followed by Kc3,



Still inside the 'square' of the d-pawn

and then a3 to liquidate all the queenside pawns, after which White's king returns to escort his pawns forward.) 44 g5 hxg5 45 fxg5 Kf5 46 g6 Kf6 47 Kf4 d4 (It can only be delayed one more move anyway (47...Kg7 48 Ke5); and 47...c4 48 bxc4 dxc4 49 Ke3 would lose as described before.) 48 Kg4 (diagram)

Now Black can choose how he wants to be mated. 48...Ke6 49 h6 Kf6 50 h7 Kg7 51 Kf5 d3 52 Ke6 d2 53 h8Q+! Kxh8 54 Kf7 d1Q 55 g7+ Kh7 56 g8Q+ Kh6 57 Qg6mate is nice; 48...Kg7 49 Kg5! d3 50 h6+ Kf8 51 Kf6! d2 52 g7+ Kg8 53 Kg6 d1Q 54 h7mate seems even nicer.

This analysis appears convincing. It may be the most "precise" winning method, whatever that means. However, it is also long, a bit study like, and affords no margin for error. As a practical player, Morphy of course retained his rook to neutralize any possible counterplay from the Black pawns. He will still be able to eventually form connected passed pawns on the kingside, and with good support from his king and rook those pawns must win.

37...Rb6 [37...c4 38 bxc4 bxc4 39 Rc5 was clearly hopeless; also if 37...c6 38 a4 bxa4 39 Rxa4 and then roll the kingside. Lowenthal's move at least maintains some ambiguity on the queenside.] 38 g4 c6 39 Kg3 h5 [hurrying the end along but there was nothing else to do anyway] 40 Ra7 hxg4 41 hxg4 Kf6 42 f5 Ke5 43 Re7+ Kd6 44 f6 Rb8 45 g5 Rf8 46 Kf4 c4 47 bxc4 bxc4 48 Kf5 c3 49 Re3 1-0



# Chess Clubs

*Please send additions / corrections to the Editor:*

■ *Alexandria:* Kingstowne Chess Club, Kingstowne South Center, 6080 Kingstowne Village Parkway, Tuesdays 7-9:30pm, info Gary McMullin, gary.at.kcc@gmail.com, (571) 295-5463 ■ *Arlington:* Arlington Chess Club, Arlington Forest United Methodist Church, 4701 Arlington Blvd, Fridays 7:30pm. Registration for rated Ladder and Action events ends 8pm. Blitz/Quick tourney first Friday of each month. Info www.arlingtonchessclub.com or email chrisney2@gmail.com Δ *Arlington Seniors Chess Club*, Madison Community Center, 3829 N Stafford St, Mondays, 9:30am, info 703-228-5285 ■ *Ashburn:* Ashburn Chess Club, Sakasa Tea and Coffee House, 44927 George Washington Blvd, Suite 125. Tuesdays 5pm, Saturdays 3pm. Bring board and set. Info www.meetup.com/Ashburn-Chess-Club/ or Scott Knoke, 703-433-2146 ■ *Blacksburg:* Chess Club of Virginia Tech, GB Johnson Student Center, Rm 102, Virginia Tech, Wednesdays 7-9pm ■ *Charlottesville:* Charlottesville Chess Club, St Mark Lutheran Church, Rt 250 & Alderman Rd, Monday evenings Δ Senior Center, 1180 Pepsi Place, 6-8pm on Thursdays. Info 434-244-2977 ■ *Chesapeake:* Zero's Sub Shop, 3116 Western Branch Blvd (Rt 17) in Poplar Hill Plaza near Taylor Rd intersection, Mondays 6pm to closing Δ Great Bridge United Methodist Church, corner of Battlefield Blvd & Stadium Dr, Tuesdays, 6:30-10pm, info 686-0822 ■ *Culpeper:* Culpeper Chess Club, Culpeper County Public Library, 271 Southgate Shopping Center, Culpeper, VA 22701. Wednesdays 6:30-8:30pm 540-727-0695 ■ *Danville:* Danville Chess Club, Danville YMCA, 810 Main Street. Mondays 6:30-9:30 pm. Info John Thompson 434-799-8898 ■ *Fort Eustis:* contact Sorel Utsey 878-4448 ■ *Fredericksburg:* Fredericksburg/Spotsylvania area chess players get together every Friday evening 6-10pm on the second floor of Wegman's in Central Park. ■ *Glenns:* Rappahannock Community College-Glenns Campus Chess Club, Glenns Campus Library, Tuesdays 8-10pm in the student lounge, info Zack Loesch 758-5324(x208) ■ *Gloucester:* Gloucester Chess Club, Gloucester Library (main branch), Tuesdays 5-8pm, www.co.gloucester.va.us/lib/clubschess.html ■ *Harrisonburg:* Shenandoah Valley Chess Club, Trinity Presbyterian Church, corner of S High (rt 42) & Maryland Ave (Port Republic Rd), Fridays 7:30pm ■ *McLean:* Booz Allen Hamilton CC, Hamilton Bldg, Rm 2032, 8283 Greensboro Dr. Thursdays, info Thomas Thompson, 703-902-5418, thompson\_thomas@bah.com ■ *Mechanicsville:* Mechanicsville Chess Club, various times and locations—see www.mechanicsvillechessclub.org for up-to-date details Δ Stonewall Library, Stonewall Pkwy, Mondays 6:30-9pm 730-8944 ■ *Norfolk:* Larchmont Public Library, 6525 Hampton Blvd, Wednesday 6-9pm Δ ODU Chess Club, Webb Univ Ctr, Old Dominion University, info www.odu.edu/~chess ■ *Orange County:* Wilderness Branch Library Chess Club, 6421 Flat Run Rd, Locust Grove VA 22508 most 1st and 3rd Tuesdays 6:30-8:30pm 540-854-5310 ■ *Reston:* Reston Community Ctr Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Rd, Thursdays 6:30-9:30 pm. Limited number of sets & boards available or bring your own. No fee but you must sign-in at each meeting ■ *Richmond:* Henrico Chess Club, Virginia Center Commons food court, 10101 Brook Rd, Glen Allen, Va, Wednesdays & Fridays 6-9, www.henricochessclub.com, 443-823-5530 Δ Huguenot Chess Knights, Bon Air Library Community Room, 1st & 3rd Friday of each month, 7-11pm, info Walter Chester 276-5662 Δ Panera Bread Chess, Panera Bread-Ridge Shopping Center, 1517 N Parham Rd, Richmond, Va 23229. Thursdays 6-10 pm, casual games, blitz, rapid or no clock. Lots of tables and room to play, heated outdoor patio. ■ *Roanoke:* Roanoke Valley Chess Club, Saturday afternoons 1-6pm in the coffee shop of the Roanoke Natural Foods Co-Op, 1319 Grandin Road SW. For more information www.roanokechess.com or write PO Box 14143, Roanoke, VA 24038, (540) 725-9525 ■ *Stafford:* Bella Cafe, 3846 Jeff Davis Highway, Stafford VA 703-291-5690 very chess friendly - games most days - more show up Tuesdays 6-9pm ■ *Virginia Beach:* Tidewater Community Chess Club, Bldg D ("Kempsville") Cafeteria, Tidewater Community College Va Beach Campus, 1700 College Crescent Rd. Mondays 7-10pm ■ *Warrenton:* Warrenton Chess Club, St James Episcopal Church, 73 Culpeper Street, Warrenton VA 20186, Thursdays 6:40pm info http://warrentonchessclub.com/ or email jonathan@maxwellchess.com Occasionally the church is unavailable and the club meets 1 mile away at the Warrenton Community Center, 430 East Shirley Avenue, Warrenton VA 20186 - check web page for announcements. ■ *Waynesboro:* Augusta Chess Club, Books-A-Million, 801 Town Center Dr, every Saturday 10am-noon. Contact Alex Patterson 540-405-1111 or AugustaChessClub@gmail.com ■ *Winchester:* Winchester Chess Club, Westminster-Canterbury Home for the Elderly, Tuesdays 7pm

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