

# VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

The bimonthly publication of the  
Virginia Chess Federation

2018 - #3



Strategic Moves by Daniel Ryan  
<http://delidoscachorum.blogspot.com/2018/03/movimientos-estrategicos.html>

# VIRGINIA CHESS

## Newsletter

2018 - Issue #3

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## Cherry Blossom Classic

The 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the Cherry Blossom Classic, held over Memorial Day weekend at the Washington Dulles Airport Marriott, attracted 252 players, including 7 grandmasters. GMs Elshan Moradiabadi & Fidel Corrales split the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> prizes in the Open section by scoring 6-1 apiece. In the Under 2200 section, Evan Rabin also scored 6-1 to take 1<sup>st</sup> place. The same score won the Under 1900 section for Edward Xiao. Kevin Zimmer topped Under 1600. Under 1300 went to Long Hua.

Since Jonathan Kenny inaugurated it in 2013, the Cherry Blossom Classic has grown in size and strength every year. Jonathan remains a strong supporter and co-organizer of the event, although since 2015 he has handed it over chief organizer duties to National TD and International Arbiter Anand Dommalapati. One distinctive feature of the Classic is the quality wooden boards and sets that are laid out for the entire Open and Under 2200 sections (and some of the Under 1900, as supplies allow). This year introduced online live broadcast of the moves from the top 6 boards in the Open and top 4 from the Under 2200—thank you to Grishmeshwar Sinha for technical work in setting this up.

The festivities also included 3 side events, drawing a total of 107 players—a Friday night Open Rapid (won by Jack Barrow scoring 4 ½ out of 5); a Saturday Night Open FIDE Blitz (won by GM Alder Escobar Forero scoring 9-1); and the Saturday Scholastic. Anand Dommalapati directed all events, assisted by TDs Greg Vaserstein, Andy Rea, Grishmeshwar Sinha, Sathish Nath & Maggie Luo. Visit <http://cherryblossomchess.com> for full crosstables, list of prizewinners, and other great stuff about this feature event on the chess calendar!



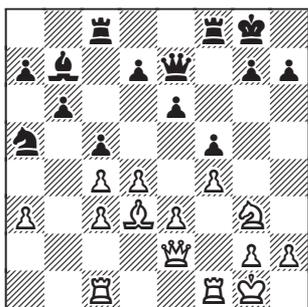
*Cherry Blossom founder Jonathan Kenny.  
Photo by Paul Swaney.*



### Cherry Blossom Classic, *continued*

Jason Morefield – Eishan Moradiabadi  
Nimzoindian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3  
b6 5 Ne2 Ne4 6 Bd2 Nxd2 7 Qxd2  
O-O 8 Ng3 Bb7 9 Bd3 c5 10 a3  
Bxc3 11 bxc3 Nc6 12 O-O Na5  
13 Qe2 Rc8 14 Rac1 f5 15 f4 Qe7

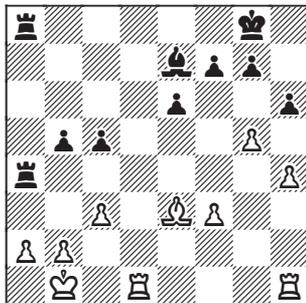


16 d5 Rce8 17 e4 exd5 18 cxd5 c4  
19 Bb1 Bxd5 20 Qh5 g6 21 Qh6  
Bxe4 22 Bxe4 fxe4 23 f5 Qg7 24  
Qxg7+ Kxg7 25 Rcd1 Re7 26  
Rd6 Rf6 27 fxg6 Rxf1+ 28 Kxf1  
hxg6 29 Ke2 Nb3 30 Ke3 Kf7 31  
h4 Nc5 32 h5 gxh5 33 Rh6 Re6  
34 Rxh5 Rd6 35 Nf5 Rd3+ 36  
Kf4 Rxc3 37 Rh7+ Kg8 38 Ke5  
e3 39 Re7 Rc2 40 a4 Rf2 0-1

Nikola Nestorovic - Fidel Corrales  
Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4  
Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 e6 7 Qd2 a6  
8 O-O-O h6 9 Nxc6 bxc6 10 Bf4  
d5 11 Qe1 Be7 12 f3 Qb6 13 g4  
Bb7 14 Bd3 c5 15 exd5 Nxd5 16

Nxd5 Bxd5 17 Be4 Bf6 18 c3 O-O  
19 h4 Bxe4 20 Qxe4 Qa5 21 Qc4  
Qb5 22 Qxb5 axb5 23 g5 Be7 24  
Kb1 Ra4 25 Be3 Rfa8



26 gxh6 Rxa2 27 Kc2 b4 28 cxb4  
Bf6 29 Bc1 c4 30 Rh2 R8a4 31 b5  
c3 32 Kb3 Ra5 33 hxg7 cxb2 34  
Bxb2 Rxb2+ 35 Rxb2 Rxb5+ 0-1

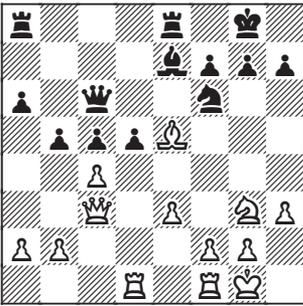
Eishan Moradiabadi - Nikola Nestorovic  
Dzindzi Indian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 a6 4 Nc3  
d5 5 cxd5 exd5 6 Bf4 Bd6 7 Bxd6  
Qxd6 8 e3 O-O 9 Qc2 b6 10 Be2  
Bb7 11 O-O Nbd7 12 Rac1 c5 13  
dxc5 bxc5 14 Rfd1 Qe7 15 Na4  
Rac8 16 Qb3 Rc7 17 Bf1 Rfc8 18  
Nb6 Nxb6 19 Qxb6 Qe6 20 Qa5  
Ne4 21 Bd3 Qf6 22 Bxe4 dxe4 23  
Nd2 Bd5 24 b4 h5 25 Nf1 Qe6 26  
bxc5 Rc6 27 Ng3 Bc4 28 Rd8+  
Kh7 29 Rxc8 Rxc8 30 Qb4 Bd3  
31 Nxb5 Qd5 32 Nf4 Qxa2 33  
h4 a5 34 Qc3 a4 35 Nxd3 exd3  
36 Qxd3+ Kg8 37 Qd7 Rf8 38 c6  
Qb2 39 Qd1 1-0



Sabina Foisor - Alder Forero Escobar  
Old Indian

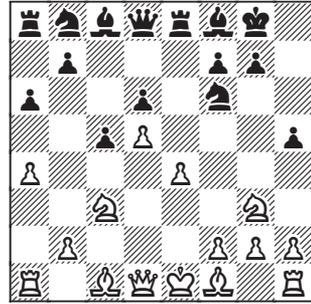
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 d6 3 Nf3 Nbd7 4 Nc3 e5 5 Bg5 Be7 6 e3 O-O 7 Qc2 exd4 8 Nxd4 Nc5 9 Be2 Re8 10 O-O Nce4 11 Bf4 Nxc3 12 Qxc3 Bd7 13 Bf3 Qc8 14 h3 a6 15 Rad1 c5 16 Ne2 Bc6 17 Bxc6 Qxc6 18 Ng3 d5 19 Be5 b5



20 b3 dxc4 21 bxc4 Qe6 22 Rc1 b4 23 Qb2 a5 24 f4 Nd7 25 Bxg7 Qg6 26 Bh8 f6 27 Bxf6 Bxf6 28 Qd2 Qxg3 29 Qxd7 Qxe3+ 30 Kh1 Qe6 31 Qd3 Rad8 32 Qf3 Kh8 33 g4 Rd2 34 g5 Qe2 35 Qg3 Re3 36 Rce1 Qxf1+ 37 Rxf1 Rxc3 38 gxf6 Rxh3+ 0-1

Jason Morefield - Michael Rohde  
Nimzoindian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 O-O 5 Ne2 Re8 6 a3 Bf8 7 d5 exd5 8 cxd5 c5 9 Ng3 d6 10 e4 a6 11 a4 h5 (diagram top of next column) 12 Bd3 h4 13 Nf1 h3 14 g3 c4 15 Bxc4 Nxe4 16 Nxe4 Rxe4+ 17 Ne3 Nd7 18 Bd3 Re8 19 O-O



Nc5 20 Be2 g6 21 Bd2 Ne4 22 Be1 Qe7 23 Bf3 Bg7 24 Nc4 Bf5 25 Bb4 b5 26 axb5 axb5 27 Rxa8 Rxa8 28 Ne3 Bd7 29 Re1 Ng5 30 Bh1 Bxb2 31 f4 Ra1 32 Qe2 Bg4 33 Qd2 Rxe1+ 34 Qxe1 Nf3+ 35 Bxf3 Bxf3 36 Kf2 Be4 37 Bc3 Bxc3 38 Qxc3 Qa7 39 g4 Bxd5 40 Qd3 Be6 41 f5 Qa2+ 42 Kg3 Qb3 43 Qd4 gxf5 44 gxf5 Bxf5 45 Kf4 Be6 46 Qxd6 Qa4+ 47 Kg3 Qe4 48 Qb6 b4 49 Kf2 b3 50 Qc7 Kh7 51 Qb8 Qd4 52 Qb5 b2 53 Ke2 Qf4 54 Kd3 b1Q+ 55 Qxb1 Bf5+ 0-1

Derek Clasby - Sabina Foisor  
Caro Kann

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 Nf3 e6 5 Be2 h6 6 Be3 Nd7 7 Nbd2 Ne7 8 O-O g5 9 b3 Bg7 10 Ne1 Qc7 11 c4 Bg6 12 Bh5 c5 13 Bxg6 Nxc6 14 cxd5 cxd4 15 Bxd4 exd5 16 Rc1 Qd8 17 Nd3 O-O 18 Re1 Re8 19 f4 gxf4 20 Nf3 Ndf8 21 Nc5 Qe7 22 Bb2 Rad8 23 Nd4 Nh4 24 Qe2 Qxe5 25 Qf2 Qg5 26 Nxb7 Rc8 27 Nd6 Rxc1 28 Rxc1 Bxd4 29 Bxd4 f3 30 Qg3 Re2



31 Bf2 fxg2 32 Rd1 Nfg6 33 Qc3 Qf4  
34 Qg3 Rxf2 35 Qxf2 Qxd6 36 Rd4  
Qc5 37 Rd1 Qxf2+ 38 Kxf2 Nf4 39  
Kg3 Ne2+ 40 Kxh4 g1Q 41 Rxg1+  
Nxc1 42 Kg4 f6 43 b4 Ne2 44 Kf3  
Nc3 45 a3 d4 46 a4 Kf7 0-1

Daniel Lowinger - Josiah Stearman  
Sicilian

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 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11  
c3 Bg5 12 Nc2 O-O 13 a4 bxa4 14  
Rxa4 a5 15 Bc4 Rb8 16 b3 Kh8 17  
Nce3 g6 18 Ra2 Kg7 19 h4 Bxh4  
20 g3 Bf6 21 Rd2 Bg5 22 f4 exf4 23  
gxf4 Bh4+ 24 Kf1 h5 25 Rdh2 Bg3  
26 Rg2 h4 27 Nf5+ gxf5 28 Qd3  
Rg8 29 exf5 Kf8 30 f6 Qd7 31 Qh7  
Qf5 32 Rxh4 Qxh7 33 Rxh7 Bf5 34  
Rh5 Bg4 35 Rh7 Bf5 36 Rh5 Be4  
37 Ra2 Re8 38 Nb6 Nb8 39 Bb5  
Re6 40 Bc4 Rxf6 41 Rhxa5 Bxf4  
42 Nd5 Bxd5 43 Rxd5 Be5+ 0-1

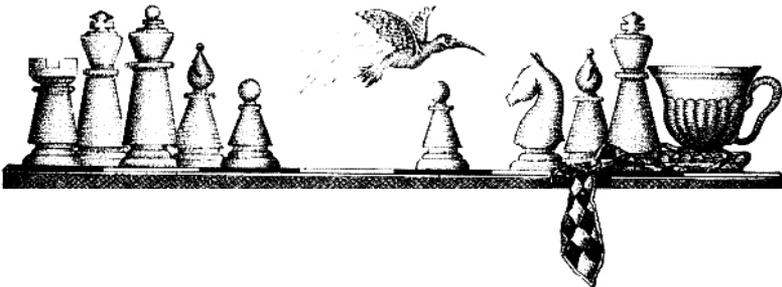
Alonso Zapata - Akshay Indusekar  
Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4  
a6 5 Nc3 b5 6 g3 Bb7 7 Bg2 b4  
8 Na4 Nf6 9 O-O Bxe4 10 Bxe4  
Nxe4 11 Re1 Nc5 12 c3 Nxa4 13

Qxa4 Qb6 14 Be3 Bc5 15 Nxe6  
fxe6 16 Bxc5 Qxc5 17 Rxe6+ Kf7  
18 Re4 Re8 19 Qb3+ Re6 20 cxb4  
Qc6 21 Rae1 Ra7 22 Qf3+ Kg8 23  
Qg4 Rxe4 24 Rxe4 d5 25 Re6 Qd7  
26 Qf4 Rb7 27 Rd6 Qe7 28 Rxd5  
Rxb4 29 Qd2 Nc6 30 Rd6 Rxb2 31  
Qd5+ Qf7 32 Qxf7+ Kxf7 33 Rxc6  
Rxa2 34 h4 h5 35 Kg2 Ra3 36 Rc5  
g6 37 Rc6 Kg7 38 Rb6 Kf7 ½-½

Eishan Moradiabadi - Michael Rohde  
Neo-Grünfeld

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 d5 4 Nbd2  
g6 5 e3 Bg7 6 Be2 O-O 7 O-O Bg4  
8 h3 Bxf3 9 Bxf3 e6 10 b3 Nbd7 11  
Bb2 Qe7 12 Rc1 Rfd8 13 Qc2 a5 14  
Rfd1 a4 15 Bc3 axb3 16 axb3 h5  
17 Qb2 Nh7 18 Ra1 Ng5 19 Be2  
Nf6 20 Rxa8 Rxa8 21 Ra1 Rb8 22  
Qa3 Qe8 23 Bd3 b5 24 cxb5 cxb5  
25 Bb4 Nge4 26 Nf3 g5 27 Ne5 g4  
28 Qa7 g3 29 fxg3 Bh6 30 Bxe4  
Nxe4 31 Nc6 Bxe3+ 32 Kh2 h4  
33 Qxb8 Qxb8 34 Nxb8 hxg3+ 35  
Kh1 Nf2+ 36 Kg1 Nd3+ 37 Kf1  
Nxb4 38 Rd1 f6 39 Nd7 Kf7 40 Ke2  
Bf2 41 Rc1 Bxd4 42 Rc7 Kg6 43  
Nf8+ Kf5 44 Rh7 e5 45 Rh5+ Ke4  
46 Nh7 f5 47 Ng5+ Kf4 48 Nf7 1-0





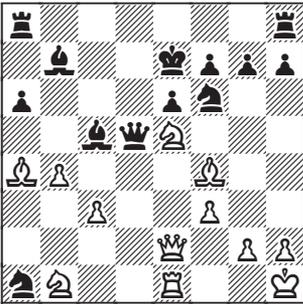
## 2<sup>nd</sup> North Eastern Masters GM & IM Norm Invitational

by Anand Dommalapati

Capital Area Chess organized it's 2<sup>nd</sup> North Eastern Masters Invitational at the Westin Dulles Hotel May 18-22, the weekend prior to the Cherry Blossom Classic. The Grandmaster section was a 10-player round robin with 4 GMs, 4 IMs and 2 FMs. The two top-rated players, GMs Aleksandr Lenderman & Priyadharshan each scored 7-2 to share first prize, while IM Alex Ostrovskiy, of New York, scored an impressive 6½-2½ to achieve his first grandmaster norm. IM Craig Hilby defeated both of the co-winners(!) but narrowly missed a norm.

### Aleksandr Ostrovskiy - Christopher Yoo Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Bb5+ Nd7 4  
O-O a6 5 Bd3 Ngf6 6 Re1 e6 7  
c3 b5 8 Bc2 c4 9 a4 Bb7 10 d4  
cxd3 11 Qxd3 Nc5 12 Qe2 bxa4  
13 e5 dxe5 14 Nxe5 Qd5 15 f3  
Nb3 16 Bf4 Bc5+ 17 Kh1 Nxa1  
18 Bxa4+ Ke7 19 b4



Black's problem is his queen

getting caught in the middle of the board, eg 19...Ba7 20 Rd1

19 ... Nh5? [There was a way out in 19...Nb3! Δ 20 Rd1 Nd4. If White replies 20 Qb2 there would be mutual chances after 20...Ba7 21 Bxb3 Qd8] 20 Bg5+ f6 21 Rd1 Qd6? [He should at least try 21...Bd6 22 Rxd5 Bxd5] 22 Rxd6 Bxd6 23 Nc4 fxg5 24 Nxd6 Kxd6 25 Qd2+ Kc7 26 Qd7+ Kb8 27 Qd6+ Ka7 28 Qc5+ Kb8 29 Qd6+ Ka7 30 Qc5+ Kb8 31 Qxg5 g6 32 Qe5+ Ka7 33 Qd4+ Kb8 34 Qxh8+ Ka7 35 Qd4+ Kb8 36 c4 1-0

The IM section, also a 10-player round robin, had a field of 1 GM, 2 IMs, 5 FMs and 2 untitled players. Here too the top-rated player came out on top. In fact, Canadian IM Raja Panjwani dominated, his 7½-1½ score winding up 2 ½ points clear of the rest of the field!

International Arbiter Anand Dommalapati organized both events. Korey Kormick served as Chief Arbiter, assisted by Gregory Vaserstein.



## European Vacation (part 1 - Berlin)

*by Macon Shibut*

**M**Y YOUNGEST DAUGHTER spent the spring semester as an exchange student at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. Naturally, I saw an opportunity to visit her there and, well, if it just so happened that a chess tournament...

I selected the Prague Easter Open as my target. Not only would it be but a few metro stops from my daughter's apartment, but the start date of March 30 was two days after the conclusion of the FIDE Candidates Tournament in Berlin, Germany—just a few hours' train ride from Prague. Thus are great ideas born.

I do not particularly enjoy flying, but my Atlantic crossing went smoothly enough, although my suitcase failed to make the changeover in Zurich. I filed lost baggage paperwork and stumbled out from Tegel Airport's main terminal into the bright sunlight of an unseasonably warm Berlin morning. As I scanned the scene for a taxi stand, a guy read my look and asked, in English, "Do you need Uber?" Sure, Uber would work fine. As I fired up the app on my iPhone, I remarked that where I live they don't let Uber operate inside the airports. "They don't let us here either," my new acquaintance replied.

My hotel was the Mercure Berlin Mitte, which proved to be an excellent choice. It was no-frills but comfortable, clean, less than \$100 per night despite being in the heart of one of the world's major cities—and not 200 yards from the Candidates tournament venue.

I had wisely purchased my Candidates ticket online before I left home. There had been no guarantee any drama would remain. First place is really the only thing that matters in the Candidates, and it was possible the winner could have been essentially determined before I even reached Berlin. Happily, it worked out that the result was still wide open. The climactic and decisive final round was completely sold out, but I would get to witness chess history in the making.



**T**HREE PLAYERS still had a realistic shot at qualifying for the next World Championship match. (A fourth player, Ding Liren, also had a mathematical chance, but it involved him winning his final game, plus Caruana losing, plus Mamedyarov not winning, *plus* Ding then winning some kind of rapid/blitz playoff the next day.) Fabiano Caruana stood half a point ahead of Sergey Karjakin & Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, but he also suffered a tiebreak disadvantage against either of them. Caruana would win if he maintained his lead, but either of the others would jump ahead merely by catching up (eg, by winning while Caruana only drew). The arcane tiebreak rules were such that there would be no playoff involving Caruana and Karjakin/Mamedyarov—Caruana was simply out if a tie involving him happened.

In an interview afterwards, Caruana recalled that he felt good about his chances going into the round. As someone rooting for him, I was not so sanguine. Caruana had to play Black against Alexander Grischuk. Grischuk had entered the event as one of the outsiders, but he played well throughout and remained in contention himself until losing to Mamedyarov just the day before. It was hard to predict how he would approach this final game. There was at least a chance he might leverage the White pieces to merely ‘block’ and try to end his tournament peacefully. In any case, beating him with Black seemed a tall order, especially considering Grischuk had not lost a game with the White pieces thus far.

Mamedyarov would also be Black, against Vladimir Kramnik. On paper this seems an even more imposing challenge. But Kramnik had played enterprising, even wild chess throughout the tournament. There was every reason to believe he would continue to take risks and

Mamedyarov would at least get chances to fight it out in a full, rich position.



To my way of thinking, the greatest threat to Caruana was Karjakin. Karjakin is no stranger



to last-round pressure in a Candidates tournament, having won just such an encounter (over Caruana!) three years ago. This time around he started poorly but roared back with clutch wins in rounds 9, 11 and 12, again beating Caruana head-to-head (thus sealing that tiebreak advantage). So he had a hot hand, plus he also had the advantage of the White pieces for his crucial last round, plus he had in Ding Liren an opponent who would play all out even as Black because he still nursed faint hopes of qualifying himself. Without any disrespect to Ding Liren, who was undefeated in the tournament thus far, I felt the totality of circumstances made a Karjakin win quite likely—which meant Caruana would be facing a ‘must win’ situation as Black.

The Berlin Kühlhaus was once the largest cold storage facility in Europe. Nowadays it has been converted to an event gallery that hosts trade shows, conventions, etc. The building’s rough industrial architecture has been preserved. Exposed brick and ductwork, steel girders, harsh lighting, noisy freight elevators—imagine the Candidates Tournament set in a Mad Max movie and you have the general idea. There were banks of TV monitors throughout the building serving as demo boards with the live positions from all four games on display.



*The Berlin Kühlhaus—imagine the Candidates Tournament in a Mad Max movie*



The players were on the ground floor in a specially constructed stage that gave each game its own isolated quadrant. A spectator could not see but one game at a time on the playing level. I certainly could not complain about access, however, as one could approach to within a few feet of the boards.

The second and third levels of the building were open at the center, and spectators stood at the railing to look down into the playing area below. It was possible to see all four games (or at least the heads of all the players) at once from the third level, but you were up too high to make out positions. On the second level, again you could only follow a single game from any particular vantage, but being just a few feet above the players made it easy to see the positions and even the clock times.

For most spectators, the fourth floor was Mission Control. It was a large, mostly open space with some kind of structural barrier up the core of the building. One side had a theater of sorts. GM Arthur Yusopov held court here, providing live commentary (in German) for the benefit of spectators seated in front of him. Whenever a game concluded, Yusopov would take a break and the players would slide into his place for their post-game interviews, which went out on the live Internet broadcast.

The other side of the 4<sup>th</sup> floor contained a number of chess tables. Spectators clustered around them, analyzing games in progress while keeping a watchful eye on the demo monitors. Over in a corner was a small area with a bar selling refreshments. There were a few odd and expensive souvenir items for sale as well, but there was no official program and nothing for sale that I would ever want, especially at the prices asked.

Former world champion Anatoly Karpov was on hand as a special guest, although I never actually saw him. Karpov is an avid philatelist, with one of the best chess-theme stamp collections in the world. Some of his stamps were on display in glass cases mounted on the wall.

The Kühlhaus has a fifth floor as well, but my ticket did not allow me access there. This was the press center and VIP room, where the players' seconds and various other elites (eg, Karpov) followed the games. The set for the official live stream, starring GM commentator Judit Polgar, was up there too.



I WANDERED AROUND throughout the 6+ hours of play. Most of my time was on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, which was the only place a spectator could sit down, but I made regular excursions to the players' level and the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor overlook, to stretch my legs and soak in the vibe closer to the action.

The first player to arrive was Ding Liren. He reached his board at least ten minutes before start time, adjusted *every* piece, and settled in to put on his game face. I spotted Kramnik next, not at his own board but, rather, walking around the stage greeting people. At some point a burst of applause and camera clicks arose, but I was at a place where I could not see what happened. Turns out it was Karpov executing a ceremonial first move on one of the other boards.

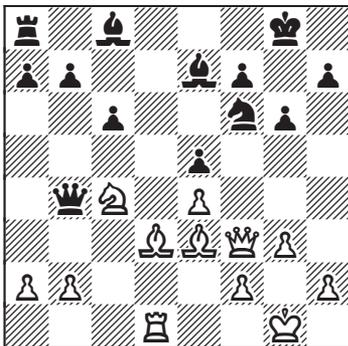
I watched the opening moves from the second floor balcony, then headed up to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor as the players settled into longer thinks. I hardly arrived there before the first result was already registered. Two players who I have not mentioned yet, Levon Aronian and Wesley So, were at the bottom of the score table and coincidentally paired against one another for a game that had absolutely no bearing on Candidate outcome. They agreed to a draw after maybe 20 minutes and materialized upstairs for their press conference. After that, they hung around for a while signing autographs and posing for photographs, a practice that other players were to repeat later whenever games concluded.

I had read where several players voiced dissatisfaction with the conditions during the early rounds of the tournament. Karjakin, for instance: *"Actually I don't like almost anything in the organization of the tournament. I don't like the hotel, I don't like the venue and also it was a few times very noisy during the game."* By the final round, however, it appeared, to me at least, that steps must have been taken to iron out the problems, and I thought the playing conditions looked pretty good. The only thing I would not like if I were playing, especially given the circumstances of this final round, is that it was impossible to keep an eye on the other games without leaving your own board and walking around the partitions.



**C**HES AND THE INTERNET are perfect together. From the standpoint of simply following the play, watching at home on your computer is superior to actually attending a tournament. You can listen to commentary, you can monitor all the games simultaneously, consult with an engine, and you've got the comforts of home—freedom to get up, take a break, make noise, eat a snack. But as a one-off adventure, the atmosphere of the actual battleground is irresistible. In this case it was also a bit of a time machine, back to the days before computer engines. Not speaking German and without access to computer analysis, I was thrown back on my own chess liveware. I am struck by how my rooting interests influenced my assessment of positions as they unfolded.

Kramnik sacrificed a pawn early for activity. His position looked nice, but a pawn is a pawn. I had already witnessed him overstep the bounds of good judgement in this tournament, so I worried Mamedyarov had achieved precisely the game with counterchances that he needed.



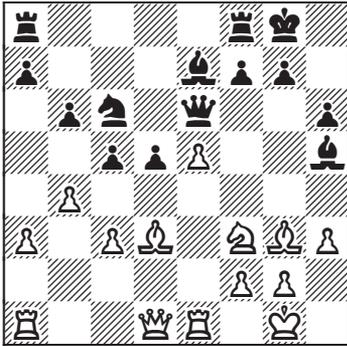
**Kramnik – Mamedyarov**  
*White to Play*

**26 Nxe5 Qxb2 27 Bf4** The group analysis at a table where I was standing focused exclusively on **27...Qxa2** but Mamedyarov played **27...Be6** and after **28 Rb1 Qxa2 29 Rxb7 Bc5** Black is threatening ...Ng4! Kramnik's **30 Kg2** did not appear to me the sort of move that shouts "good compensation for the pawn!" In fact, however, White is doing well, and after **30...Re8** the

advantage might have become clear had Kramnik played the correct **31 Bg5. 31 h3** He was still fine here too, but after Mamedyarov fired off **31...Bxf2** Kramnik sunk into a long thought and I became truly alarmed. I calculated the sequence **32 Qxf2 Bxh3+ 33 Kg1 Qxf2+ 34 Kxf2 Rxe5 35 Bxe5 Ng4+ 36 Kg1 Nxe5**. When this kind of thing happens in my own games (as White), especially after sacrificing a pawn, it's usually a sign that something has gone very wrong. The



longer Kramnik hesitated over his 32<sup>nd</sup> turn, the more it felt as if he had missed ...Bxf2 and Mamedyarev might be winning, which would be bad news for my man Caruana.

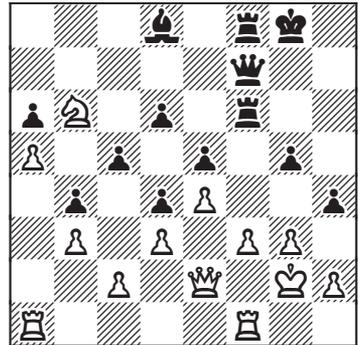


**Grischuk – Caruana**  
*White to Play*

Speaking of Caruana, his game was lagging behind the others because Grischuk was taking a long time thinking. They'd played only 15 or so moves (Kramnik-Mamedyarev were already past move 30) and Grischuk already faced time trouble. He dropped a tactic onto the board: **16 Nd4**. Someone nearby asked me what happens if Black takes the knight, and I explained that 16...cxd4 17 Qxh5 dxc3 would

run into 18 Bf5. I predicted instead **16...Bxd1 17 Nxe6 fxe6 18 Raxd1**, which in fact happened. I was amused to read grandmaster assessments the next day explaining how Black (Caruana) has a great position here. In the moment, I saw a White bishop pair and rooks sitting pretty on the center files. Meanwhile...

As I judged this position, Karjakin's winning prospect lay in a good-knight-versus-terrible-bishop endgame. I figured he'd stand well if the major pieces came off, even if he lost the a5 pawn. **27 Nd5?** In his press conference afterwards, Karjakin recalled this move bitterly as "a total blunder". Because I feared a Karjakin win, I overrated his chances in general and assumed what now followed was an intentional sacrifice. **27...h3+! 28 Kg1** (the point is 28 Kxh3? loses straightaway to 28...g4+) **28...Rxf3**



**Karjakin – Ding**  
*White to Play*



I had joined a group who seemed to be mostly about expert strength, with a somewhat stronger player holding court—sitting at the board, moving the pieces, while everyone else stood and directed suggestions through him. I do not speak German, but it seemed that collectively they shared my assumption Karjakin *sacrificed* his f-pawn, and they were analyzing the continuation 29 Rxf3 Qxf3 30 Qxf3 Rxf3 31 Rf1. I interjected the suggestion White might instead play 29 g4—the major pieces aren’t going to leave the f-file anyway, and perhaps White can combine trading them with rounding up h3 somehow (K-f2-g3xh3). The leader furrowed his brow and raised a hand as if to pause discussion while he considered the idea. Before he could render a verdict, someone watching a monitor excitedly reported that 29 g4 had indeed been played. I had instant credibility around the table, and pointedly everyone switched to speaking English. 29... Kg7 30 Rxf3 Qxf3 31 Qxf3 Rxf3 32 Rf1 Rxf1+ 33 Kxf1 “My” table reached this position in analysis ahead of the actual game. Our debate now centered on whether Black could just take a5, or was it necessary first to bring his king over to prevent the knight from starting to hop around (eg, N-e7-f5). I gradually began to realize my good-knight-versus-terrible-bishop paradigm might be totally missing the point. By the time Karjakin and Ding had revealed the further moves 33... Bxa5 34 Ne7 Kf6 35 Nf5 Ke6 we’d figured out that “rounding up the h3 pawn” was not in the offing. For instance, if 36 Kf2 Bb6 37 Kg3 a5 38 Kxh3 a4! 39 bxa4 c4! 40 dxc4 d3! 41 cxd3 b3 it’s Black who wins!

**O**F COURSE, everyone knows how things came out. Karjakin moved his king towards the queenside to safeguard against the sort of breakthrough we just saw. That done, Ding’s bishop was so bad he could not make progress despite two extra pawns. Meanwhile, Kramnik easily held against Mamedyarov. In an interview, Caruana recalled checking their position once his own game reached time control and relaxing when he saw Kramnik’s ending was “easily drawing”—again an assessment that, in the moment, was not clear to me at all. And Caruana—*Caruana!*—was the only one to haul in the full point, even after a draw would have sufficed.



*No complaints about access. I could walk right up and take this picture late in the Grischuk-Caruana battle.*

During the final phase of Caruana's endgame, I spent a while on the first floor, standing right in front of his table. I wanted to witness up close the moment he became the official challenger. But Grischuk hung on and on, until fatigue and jet lag forced me back up to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor where I could at least sit. I staked out a good spot to wait for the victory press conference and followed the final moves with Yusopov. When it was all over, I returned to my hotel to find my lost bag already delivered and waiting in my room. German efficiency! A couple days later I was sitting down at a chess board in Prague to commence my own tournament. *And I will tell you all about that in the next issue.*

## Book Review *by Alex Bashtavenko*



### THE TARRASCH DEFENSE: MOVE BY MOVE

Everyman Chess, paperback 256 pages, list price \$27.95

Sam Collins provides a comprehensive account of the main ideas and the key lines underpinning the Tarrasch Defense. Material is organized as follows:

- (1) Main line where white plays 9 Bg5 and Black responds with ...cxd4
- (2) Main line where Black breaks the tension in the center with 9...c4
- (3) Main line variation where Black preserves the tension by developing a piece with 9...Be6
- (4) White deviates from the main line with 8 dxc5
- (5) Move eight alternatives for White—8 b3, 8 Be3 *et al*
- (6) The Symmetrical Tarrasch—both sides have pawns on the c-, d- and e-files.
- (7) Sidelines—6 dxc5, 6 Bg5 *et al*
- (8) Reti setups—White fianchettoes and refrains from playing an early d4



While Collins provides a variety of games illustrating the key positions resulting from each variation, that is not the main purpose of his work. At the very beginning, he characterized the Tarrasch Defense as an Isolated Queen Pawn (IQP) opening and maintained that by studying it the reader will develop a deeper understanding of such positions. “The main characteristic of an opening is the structure to which it leads, and for no opening is this more true than the Tarrasch. The perceived (and actual) inferiority of Black’s structure compared to White’s is the only reason for not playing an opening with such great development and, ordinarily, a central space advantage.”

IQP positions can easily transform into the “hanging pawn” structure. This frequently happens in the Tarrasch when Black develops his queen bishop to e6 and White responds Nxe6. Collins elaborates how such a pawn-structure emerges and the implications it carries for the strategic plans on both sides. “At first glance it seems that White must have a significant advantage here, with two bishops and a superior pawn structure. In fact Black gets major trumps of his own. First, his pawn structure is improved—the d5 pawn is now solidly defended and his rook will be active on the half-open f-file. Black’s central control is now extremely strong, with more space and a 2-1 central majority. In addition, the pawns on d5 and e6 have a limiting effect on the white bishop on g2, which is no longer attacking an isolated pawn on d5.”

The theme of hanging pawns resurfaces in the section where White’s Nd4 captures Black’s knight on c6. Collins describes positions with a pair of hanging pawns on the c- and d-files in the following terms: “White’s plan is based on blockading the c- and d- pawns and, ultimately, winning one of Black’s queen’s side weaknesses. Note, however, that c6 is more difficult to attack than d5. Therefore Black has time to try to build up his counterplay and the risk of an early disaster is reduced”.

In addition to the typical IQP and the hanging pawns positions, Collins examines scenarios where Black preserves the integrity of his pawn structure by playing an early ...c4. “Black gains additional queenside space and prepares, if allowed, a massive advance with b7-b5-b4. In addition, the d5 pawn isn’t as weak as it would be if it sat on the end of a half-open d-file... The positions in this structure tend to become quite sharp. White’s most reliable method is to seek to destroy the Black pawn chain by Ne5-Nxc6 and b2-b3”.

The reputation of the Tarrasch waned in large part because Kasparov lost some games to Karpov. Collins concedes that the Tarrasch has no exponents among today’s world class players, but argues that it remains entirely acceptable on lower levels. Although his book is about an opening, it is also a guide to understanding the basics of various pawn structures that can emerge from many different openings. In that regard, *THE TARRASCH DEFENSE: MOVE BY MOVE* is worth reading for anyone who would like to learn how to play with or against the “damaged” IQP and hanging pawn formations



# Reflections

## REFLECTIONS



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

#### THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY – AU REVOIR TO THE FRENCH DEFENSE, PART I

My first and last tournament games were French Defenses with the Black pieces. I played the French 15 times in between, some wins, some losses, a few draws. I never did get a handle on the opening. I had a little fun along the way but also some nightmares. I also essayed the French three times in correspondence play, with more no better fortune that over the board.

Here and continuing for a couple more articles, I present my little *au revoir* to the French Defense. I’ve had enough with these types of struggles and no longer wish to suffer such. With apologies to the dear reader, much of this first installment is drivel. These games were played in my very debut into tournament chess. The quality, if I can even use that word, improves later—relatively speaking, of course. Enough! Let us excise some demons.

**Paul Louie – Mark Warriner**

#### 1984 Richmond City Junior Championship

This was my first rated game. I started playing “serious” chess at the late age of 17. Paul Louie was a rival from another high school and we’d played a couple of casual games in school matches. It was clear before the start of the Richmond City Junior Championship that the winner would be one of us. As luck would have it, we were paired in the first round. My nerves, never very good, got the better of me, but I suppose given the circumstances that is understandable. **1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bd2** [This was the first move that wasn’t covered in the only book I’d read at that point, *The Complete Chess Course* (ISBN 0385004648, Doubleday, 1959). Fred Reinfeld, you let me down.] **4...c5** Not the best move. Either 4...dxe4 or 4...Ne7 are much better.] **5 dxc5** [5 a3 scores much better.] **5...dxe4** [Not good. 5...Bxc5 or 5...Nc6 keep the ball rolling okay.] **6 Nxe4 Bxd2+ 7 Qxd2 Qxd2+ 8 Nxd2** [So White’s just up a pawn and should grind it out. Which he does.] **8...Bd7** [Trying to activate my bishop, but 8...Nf6 is better if Black wants to continue hoping for a miracle.] **9 Ngf3 Nc6** [9...Nf6] **10 O-O-O** [Either 10 Ne4 or 10 Nc4 would have presented more problems.] **10...Nge7 11 Nc4** [Now my opponent gets back on track.] **11...Rb8** [I really had no idea what to do and didn’t even understand how much trouble I was in. No calculation whatsoever.] **12 Nd6+ Kf8 13 Bb5** [Missing the forcing and winning 13 Nxf7] **13...f6 14 Nf7** [14 a3; 14 c3] **14...Kxf7 15 Rxd7 a6** [15...Rhc8] **16**



**Bxc6 bxc6 17 Rhd1** [White has a stranglehold and there's not much Black can even try.] **17...e5** [17...Rb5 would have at least tried to create some threats vs the c5 and b2 pawns.] **18 Nh4** [18 R1d6 Rhc8 19 Nd2 Ke8 20 Nc4 and Black's running out of options.] **18...g6 19 Ra7** [No need to give Black even a glimmer of hope. Just 19 R1d6] **19...Ra8** [19...Rb5] **20 Rdd7** [20 Rad7] **20...Rhe8?** [A big blunder which should have been punished. Instead 20...Rxa7 21 Rxa7 e4 with dreams of creating counterplay, having temporarily restricted White's knight.] **21 Nf3?** [Not losing, but 21 Rxe7+ .Rxe7 22 Rxa8 looks pretty good.] **21...Rxa7 22 Rxa7 Rb8** [22...Ke6] **23 c4** [23 c3] **23...h5** [No idea what I was thinking. Our Metal Friend prefers either 23...a5 or 23...g5] **24 Rxa6 Ke6 25 Kc2 f5** [Why did I move that pawn? No clue. 25...g5] **26 h4** [26 Kc3] **26...f4** [Or this one? Again, no clue. I'll spare the reader further comment as at this point White just mops up. While amateurish, Paul's technique was up to the task and I crumbled in a patzer-like heap.] **27 Ng5+ Kf5 28 f3 e4 29 Nxe4 Rd8 30 Ra7 Ng8 31 Rc7 Rd4 32 b3 Rxe4 33 fxe4+ Kxe4 34 Kd2 Kf5 35 a4 Kg4 36 Ke2 Kxh4 37 a5 Nf6 38 Rf7 Ng4 39 Rxf4 g5 40 Rxg4+ Kxg4 41 Kf2 h4 42 Kg1 Kg3 43 a6 g4 44 a7 h3 45 gxh3 gxh3 46 Kh1 Kf2 47 a8 Q 1-0**

Dan Louie – Mark Warriner

#### 1984 Richmond City Junior Championship

The final round of the same tournament, thus my fifth rated game ever, squared me off against Dan Louie's younger brother. Hungry for a measure of revenge, I took it out on him. **1 e4 e6 2 Nf3** [a move that I would become found of myself some 20+ years later] **2...c6** [Unsurprisingly, this hasn't been played often, and certainly not by any top players.] **3 Nc3** [3 d4] **3...d5 4 d4 Nd7** [Not the best choice. With 4 d4 we'd transposed back to a decent position, but I took things back off-course. 4...Nf6; 4...Bb4] **5 exd5 [5 Bd3] 5...cxd5 6 Bg5 Be7** [6...Ngf6] **7 Bb5??** [Dan was quite young and inexperienced at the time. An unfortunate mistake by a novice, just trying to activate all his pieces but overlooking the obvious.] **7...Bxg5 8 O-O Be7** [8...Bf4 would have been an interesting way to maintain the bishop pair and eyeball White's castled king. I'll let most of the rest of the game pass without comment as my opponent lost focus after his gaff and continued to drop material.] **9 a4 a6 10 Bd3 Ngf6 11 Nb5?? axb5 12 Bxb5 O-O 13 c4 dxc4 14 Bxc4 Nb6 15 a5? Nxc4 16 b4 Nd5 17 Ne5 Nxe5 18 dxe5 Nxb4 19 Qh5 Rxa5 20 Rxa5 Qxa5 21 Rd1 Rd8 22 Re1 Nd3** [22...Bc5] **23 g3?? Qxe1+ 24 Kg2 Qxf2+ 25 Kh3 Nf4+?** [For some reason I failed to calculate the simple mate-in-2 and instead found the mate-in-3. Go figure. 25...Qf1+ 26 Kg4 Rd4mate] **26 Kg4 Nxh5?** [But then I messed even that up. 26...Qe2+ 27 Kxf4 Rd4mate] **27 Kxh5?** [Matters not a whit, but White could have prolonged things by one move. 27 Kh3 Qf1+ 28 Kg4 Qf5mate] **27...Qf5mate 0-1** So nothing noteworthy or requiring any real effort on my part, but it was nice to capture 2<sup>nd</sup> place in my first tournament, though I had badly wanted first.

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