

# VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

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Virginia Chess Federation

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## Newsletter

2020 - Issue #5

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## The Virginia Chess Federation (VCF)



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## Virginia Commonwealth Games & Online Closed

WITH over-the-board chess on hold, the Virginia Chess Federation (VCF) had its first go at organizing an online tournament with the 2020 Virginia Commonwealth Games & Virginia Closed, played October 17-18. Thirty-two players participated across three sections.

With six entries, the so-called Championship Section (open to all, no rating restriction) was played as a 5 game round-robin. No state championship title was at stake, despite the evocative name “Virginia Online Closed”. Top-rated Isaac Chiu scored  $4\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$  to take clear 1<sup>st</sup> place. Isaac Spence and former state champion Geoff McKenna each scored 3-2 and tied for 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>.

The 16-player Under 1800 section (“Amateur”) and the 10-player Under 1200 (“Novice”) were both run as 6-round swisses. Charles Compton & Timothy McCall tallied 4 points apiece to tie for 1<sup>st</sup> in the former. Eric Jensen, Kenneth Pestka, Avnith Vijayram & Joseph Micklos all followed at  $3\frac{1}{2}$ . Darsh Shetty’s  $5\frac{1}{2}$  points paced the Novice group. Alen Abhilash was runner-up, half a point behind, followed by Sai Chellarapu with  $4\frac{1}{2}$ . Jadon Gary & Vaneesha Vijayram rounded out the prizewinners at 4-2.

The logistics of running an online tournament are more complex than one might expect. Not to put too fine a point on it, the easy potential for cheating is a major concern. The original tournament announcement envisioned cash prizes with Zoom video monitoring of players contending for prizes. But for many prospective chess players, setting up an open-for-hours Zoom channel, apart from an Internet connection to the chess server, is difficult or just more trouble than a tournament may be worth. Monitoring all the players would also be a burden on the organizers—and still with no certainty of accomplishing the goal—see Armenia Eagles, ProChess League Finals! Over time



On the Cover: *Interior with Chess Game* by Fairfield Porter



the Commonwealth Games & Online Closed morphed into a trophy/plaques/medals event with no cash prizes, no Zoom monitoring, and presumably less incentive to cheat. There was also some shifting around before settling on the Hampton Roads Chess Association's (HRCA) private server as the playing 'venue'. HRCA Executive Director Christina Schweiss served as Tournament Director.

**Ronen Wilson - Isaac Chiu**  
**Virginia Online Closed 2020**

**Modern**

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 f4 a6 5 a4 Nc6 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Be2  
 O-O 8 Qd2 e5 9 fxe5 dxe5 10 d5 Nd4 11 Bxd4? [He had to just  
 live with the centralized knight, 11 O-O-O or 11 Nf3] 11...exd4 12  
 Qxd4 Re8 [intending Nxe4 and moving the White queen off the  
 bishop's diagonal doesn't stop it] 13 Qb4 Nxe4! 14 Nxe4 Qh4+  
 15 g3 Rxe4 16 Qb3 Qe7 17 O-O-O Rb4 18 Qa2 Rxb2 19 Qxb2  
 Bxb2+ 20 Kxb2 Qb4+ 21 Kc1 Bf5 22 Nf3 Qc3 23 Ne1 Qe3+ 24  
 Rd2 Qa3+ 25 Kb1 Qxa4 0-1

**Isaac Chiu - Isaac Spence**  
**Virginia Online Closed 2020**

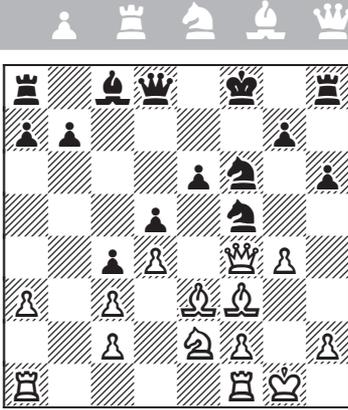
**Grünfeld**

1 Nf3 d5 2 c4 c6 3 e3 Nf6 4 Nc3 g6 5 d4 Bg7 6 Bd3 O-O 7 O-O  
 Bg4 8 h3 Bxf3 9 Qxf3 dxc4 10 Bxc4 Nbd7 11 Rd1 Qc7 12 Qe2  
 e5 13 d5 cxd5 14 Nxd5 Nxd5 15 Bxd5 Nb6 16 Bb3 Rfd8 17  
 Rxd8+ Rxd8 18 e4 Bf8 19 Bg5 Rd6 20 Qf3 Kg7 21 Rc1 Qd7 22  
 h4 f6 23 Be3 Rc6 24 Rd1 Rd6 25 Rxd6 Bxd6 26 h5 g5? 27 Qe2  
 [missing an immediate win by 27 h6+] 27...Qc6 28 Bxb6 axb6 29  
 g3 Qc1+ 30 Kg2 Bc5 31 Qf3 Qd2 [opportunity knocks twice!]  
 32 h6+ Kf8 33 Qxf6+ Ke8 34 Ba4+ 1-0

**Aasa Dommalapati - Geoff McKenna**  
**Virginia Online Closed 2020**

**French**

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Bb4 5 e5 h6 6 Be3 Ne4 7 Qg4  
 Kf8 8 a3 Bxc3+ 9 bxc3 c5 10 Bd3 Qa5 11 Ne2 f5 12 exf6 Nxf6 13  
 Qf4 c4 14 Bg6 Nc6 15 O-O Ne7 16 Bh5 Nf5 17 Bf3 Qd8 18 g4?!



18...g5! 19 Qe5 Nh4 20 Qg3 Bd7 21 Bg2 Nxg2 22 Kxg2 Kg7 23 f4 Ne4 24 Qf3 Qe7 25 f5? [deal with Black's knight first, 25 Ng3] 25...exf5 26 gxf5 Raf8 27 Ng3 Nxg3 28 f6+ Rxf6 29 Qxf6+ Qxf6 30 Rxf6 Kxf6 31 Kxg3 Bf5 32 Rf1 Re8 33 Bc1 Re2 34 Rf2 Re1 35 Bd2 Ra1 36 h4 Rxa3 37 hxg5+ hxg5 38 Kf3 Ra2 39 Bc1 Rxc2 40 Rxc2 Bxc2 41 Kg4 Bd1+ 42 Kg3 Kf5 43 Kf2 Bh5 44 Ke3 Kg4 45 Ba3 Kh3 46 Bd6 Kg2 47 Bb8 a6 48 Bd6 g4 49 Kf4 g3 50 Kg5 Kh3 51 Bxg3 Kxg3 52 Kxh5 Kf4 0-1

## Personal & General...

*from the Editor...*



**W**E SHALL START with the “General”, ie chess news odds and ends... Over-the-board chess peeks its head out of quarantine in fits and starts. On the world stage, the Altibox tournament in Stavanger, Norway came off successfully with Carlsen, Caruana, et al. But FIDE’s plan to resume the Candidates tournament in November had to be retracted. Closer to home, Virginia Beach hosted the 2020 United States Armed Forces chess championship October 10-12. The annual tournament was very different from its customary form owing to COVID precautions, but it was indeed played over-the-board.

The field, limited to 20 players, allotted slots among active duty, reservists, retirees, cadets, midshipmen, and ROTC from the different services. **Andrew Peraino**, USN, took 1<sup>st</sup> place with a score of 4½-½ and also led the Navy to victory in the team competition. Former champion and long-time regular on the Virginia chess circuit Larry Larkins finished in clear 2<sup>nd</sup> place.



Lee Bennett - Alex Strobehn  
 2020 Armed Forces, Va Beach  
 English

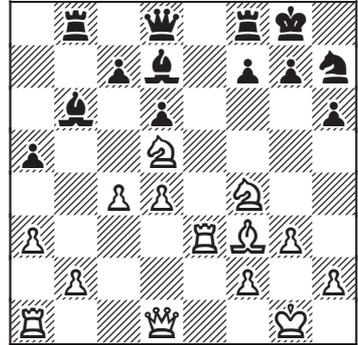
Notes by Lee Bennett

1 c4 e5 2 g3 Bc5 3 Bg2 Nc6 4 Nc3 Nf6 5 e3 d6 6 Nge2 O-O 7 O-O Bf5 8 d4 exd4 9 exd4 Bb6 10 a3 a5 11 Bg5 h6 12 Be3 [My reason behind 11 Bg5 was to create a weakness on Black's kingside with ...h6, then I would draw my bishop back to e3. Trading 12 Bxf6 seemed pointless to me; after Qxf6 Black would have three attackers on my d4 pawn.] 12...Ne7? 13 Bxb7 Bh3 14 Re1 Rb8 15 Bf3 Nh7 16 Nd5 [17 Nf4 would have been fine too, but I didn't like the thought of pulling a protector away from d4.] 16...Nf5 17 Nef4 Nxe3 18 Rxe3 Bd7 (diagram)

I calculated 19 Ne7+ Kh1 20 Nfg6+ fxg6 21 Nxg6+ Kg1 22 Bd5+ Rf7, but I could not see clearly how to proceed, considering 23 Bxf7+, 23 Re7 and 23 Rf3...

19 Ne7+ Kh8 20 c5

So rather than give up two pieces for rook plus pawns straightaway, I decided to attack the bishop and further open the a2-g8 diagonal for my queen. However, there was indeed a pretty clear win in 20 Nfg6+ fxg6 21 Nxg6+ Kg8 22 Bd5+ Rf7 beginning with the move 23 Ne7+! Which leads to the outright capture of Black's rook, since after 23...Kf8 24 Bxf7 Kxf7 gets mated: 25 Qh5+ Kf8 26 Ng6+ Kf7 27 Ne5+ Kf6 28 Qg6+ Ke7 29 Qf7 mate



20...Ng5 21 Nfg6+ fxg6 22 Nxg6+ Kh7 23 Nxf8+ Qxf8 24 cxb6 Rxb6 25 Qc2+ Bf5 26 Qc3 Bh3 27 Rae1 Nxf3+ 28 Rxf3 Qa8 29 Qd3+ Kh8 30 d5 Rxb2 31 Qg6 [planning 32 Re8+ winning the Black queen] 31...Qg8 32 Rf7 [32 Re8 doesn't work now because there is no check and 32...Rb1+ would pull my queen away; but besides the move played, 32 g4! would be good to trap the bishop.] 32...Rb8 33 Rfe7 [33 Ree7 was better but at this point the threat 34 Re8 is also winning.] 1-0



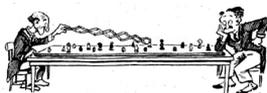
**M**EANWHILE, down in North Carolina Peter Giannatos' Charlotte Chess Center and Scholastic Academy (CCCSA) has been hosting over-the-board invitational events, and the participant list has included the two players who faced off on board one in the final round of last year's Virginia Closed state championship: Praveen Balakrishnan & Justin Paul.\* Played with stringent anti-virus protocols (masks required, everyone's temperature checked upon arrival at the playing room, hand sanitizer provided at every board, etc) these tournaments are designed to offer IM and GM norm opportunities. Balakrishnan played in the uber-strong GM norm event and scored 4 out of 9. Paul played in the IM norm event and was in contention to get a norm until the last round, when he lost to the tourney's top-rated player IM Zurab Javakhadze. Another player with a Virginia connection (he lived here and played regularly in VCF events until his family moved to New York in 2019) Jason Liang actually achieved an IM norm.

### Praveen Balakrishnan – Gauri Shankar

#### CCCSA Summer GM 2020

#### Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 O-O Nxe4 5 d4 Nd6 6 dxe5 Nxb5  
 7 a4 Nbd4 8 Nxd4 d5 9 exd6 Nxd4 10 Qxd4 Qxd6 11 Qe3+ Be7  
 12 Nc3 O-O 13 Rd1 Qc5 14 Qe4 Bf5 15 Be3 Qxc3 16 Qxf5 Qxb2  
 17 Rab1 Rad8 18 Rf1 Qc3 19 Rxb7 a6 20 Ra7 Qc4 21 Qa5 Bd6  
 22 Qxa6 Qxc2 23 Rc1 Qe4 24 Qb7 Qe5 25 g3 Rb8 26 Qf3 h5 27  
 a5 h4 28 a6 h3 29 Rb7 Ra8 30 a7 Rfe8 31 Qc6 Kh7 32 Rb5 Qe6  
 33 Rb7 f5 34 Qc4 Qf6 35 Qd4 Qxd4 36 Bxd4 c5 37 Be3 Re7 38  
 Rxe7 Bxe7 39 Ra1 Kg8 40 Kf1 Kf7 41 Ra6 Ke8 42 Ke2 Kd7 43  
 Bf4 c4 44 Be3 Bf6 45 Ra5 c3 46 Kd3 Kc6 47 Kc2 f4 48 Bxf4 Bd8  
 49 Ra3 Bb6 50 Be3 Bxe3 51 fxe3 Kd5 52 Ra4 1-0



\* - lest there be any confusion, Balakrishnan indeed defeated Paul on board one in the final round of the 2019 Virginia Closed, however, once the tie-breaks were settled, it transpired that the state champion emerged from board 2 game where Daniel Miller beat Ed Kites.



Vincent Tsay – Justin Paul

CCCSA Summer IM 2020

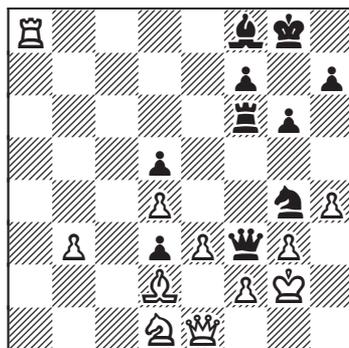
King's Indian

*Notes based on remarks by Justin Paul*

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 O-O 5 O-O d6 6 b3 c6 7 Bb2  
 a5 8 c4 a4 9 Nc3 a3 10 Bc1 e5 11 h3 e4 12 Ne1 Re8 13 e3 b5?!  
 [13...d5 could lead to a similar attack without allowing the queenside  
 counterplay that happened in the game] 14 cxb5 d5 15 b4 cxb5 16  
 Qb3 Bf8 17 Nc2 Nc6 18 Bxa3 Be6 19 Rfb1 Qd7 20 h4 [if 20 Kh2  
 Black intended 20...h5 eg 21 Ne2 g5 etc] 20...Ne7 [not 20...Bh3 21  
 Nxd5!] 21 Bc1 Bh3 22 Bd2 Rec8 23 Ne1 Qf5 24 Qd1 Ra3 25 Rb3  
 Rxb3 26 axb3 Nc6 27 Qe2 Bxg2 28 Kxg2 Nxb4 29 Qxb5 Ng4 30  
 Qe2 Rc6 [probably 30...Kg7 was wiser] 31 Ra8 Rf6 32 Nd1? [32  
 Nxe4! Qxe4+ 33 f3 Qe7 34 fxg4 would have been to White's advantage]  
 32...Nd3 33 Nxd3 exd3 34 Qe1 Qf3+

*(diagram)*

35 Kh3? [Black expected 35 Kg1 eg  
 35...Nxf2 (35...Kg7) 36 Qxf2 Qxd1+  
 37 Qe1 Qxb3 and if 38 Bb4 Black has  
 38...d2 39 Qxd2 Qb1+ 40 Qe1 (40  
 Kh2? Qf1 winning) 40...Qxe1+ 41  
 Bxe1 Rb6] 35...Kg7 36 Re8 Qxd1  
 37 Qxd1 Nxf2+ 38 Kg2 Nxd1 39  
 Be1 d2 40 Bxd2 Rf2+ 0-1



**F**INALLY, the “Personal”... For some reason, following chess from home these last few months has turned the Editor’s thoughts back to the days of his youth playing at the old Richmond Chess Club, which met on Thursday nights in the day room of The Virginia Home, near Byrd Park and Maymont. The club had a cabinet full of equipment, including old-style rollflex boards, cheap BHB clocks (Jim Snapp would take them home for repair as needed) and really heavy chess pieces made of molded resin(?). There is a well-known picture of teenage Bobby Fischer playing on what appears to be the same kind of set.



The chess club went away after long-time Virginia Home resident Jesse Burke died. Does anyone know whatever became of that equipment? Does anyone have one of those sets? Please let the Editor know!



### Wilbur Moorman

Our state championship trophy, engraved with the names of every titleholder since 1934, is the Wilbur Moorman Cup. However, probably very few VCF members even know who Wilbur Moorman was.

The very first champion named on the Moorman Cup is John Buck. He won it again in 1940. In the May 1963 issue of *Chess Review*, Buck wrote about “my onetime good friend and chess coach Wilbur L Moorman,” who he called “probably the strongest chess player Virginia ever had.”

“During the summer of 1934, [Moorman] was kind enough to play a long series of semi-serious games with me. (I was trying to sharpen up for the State Tournament to be held in Staunton over Labor Day that year.) From time to time I’d urge him to enter the tournament (even though it had been years since he’d undertaken tournament chess). I told him



and meant it quite seriously that no state title would have any meaning unless he played. Finally, in spite of his advanced age, he consented to enter. And he soon made me regret my importuning by defeating me in an early round. As we sat down for the final round, Lt John Matheson (now the retired Colonel who conducts the Armed Forces Tournament), who was Intercollegiate Champion that year, was leading the tournament by a half point. I turned to Moorman, who was playing Black and said half in jest: ‘Well, you put me out of it. Now put me back in. If you’ll beat Matheson, I’ll beat Mitchell’ (our good friend W M P Mitchell of Brookline, who passed away in ‘62). As luck would have it, Moorman did just that (and so did I) and I skimmed through to the top. The remarkable thing to me is that in his late 70s or early 80s (I don’t know his exact birth date, unfortunately) Wilbur Moorman finished third in a strong state tournament and had the satisfaction of beating both the players (much younger than he) who finished ahead of him. On Friday of that same week, (September 7, 1934), Moorman [died] suddenly while sitting at his chess table playing over a game from the state tournament in which he had just competed. He was a grand old gentleman.”

Now Mark Warriner points out an interesting entry in the blog “Tartajubow on Chess II” ([tartajubow.blogspot.com](http://tartajubow.blogspot.com)) about the 1909 championship of the New York State Chess Association. The tournament was played July 26-30 at the Fort Lowry Hotel in Bath Beach, a neighborhood in Brooklyn. Among the entrees, the overwhelming favorite was Frank Marshall, who was a world class player and long-time United States champion. However, an upset defeat of Marshall at the hands of Charles Jaffe enabled Herbert Rosenfeld to win the title. The entry goes on to tell about “another interesting player in this tournament ... Wilbur L Moorman.

“Moorman of Lynchburg, Virginia was a tobacconist and one of the largest real estate owners in the area. Moorman was a former Virginia state champion in both chess and checkers. I [*ie*, “Tartajubow”—*a pen name, apparently a conjunction of Tartakower and Bogoljubow*] have no idea how he came to be playing in this tournament.



“Moorman entered the tobacco business at the age of 25 with his uncle and retired from the business in 1903 and took up investing in real estate, conducting agricultural projects and dealing in civic and charitable projects. He endowed money for the perpetual care of the church cemetery where his parents were buried and where he attended church as a boy. For years he contributed large quantities of milk to be given daily to the poor children in the local school. He was also active in the Methodist church.

“According to newspaper reports, Moorman died suddenly at his home in Amherst Heights, Virginia, at one-thirty in the afternoon while working on puzzles. His funeral was held in his home on Saturday afternoon and he was buried in Spring Hill cemetery. Moorman came from a family of Quakers.”

# Reflections

## Reflections

by *Mark Warriner*



Looking Back on an Amateur Chess “Career”

CHESS IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Before delving into the near inevitable topic of this installment of “Reflections”, I’d like to thank you, dear reader, for the many kind condolences and expressions of sympathy I’ve received this year. My prolonged absence from these pages was due to the passing of my father. It’s a difficult thing to experience, and closing an estate can be arduous, depending upon circumstances. Add a global pandemic and it becomes a convoluted, lengthy process indeed.

By this time I thought I’d be writing about how I performed in the never-to-be 2020 VA Closed OTB State Championship, after having played in at least of couple of tournaments earlier in the year. Sadly, for several reasons, this is not the case. My sincerest sympathies to all those impacted by the coronavirus, directly or indirectly. Leisure time,



while not high on the list of the necessities of life, is something that we all need at some point, but might be delayed indefinitely. Many of us are experiencing that now as in-person tournaments are rendered problematic, as has in-person club play. It's been breathtaking, to say the least, the now well-documented explosion of online chess that has taken place. It's most gratifying to see our game finally achieve such a level of interest and exposure, even if it is due to a most unfortunate set of circumstances. Though I've been quite busy with personal affairs, I too have increased my online playing time.

So how to continue my quest for the FM title? Yes, I've modified my goal from NM to FM. Well, lessons with my coach/trainer are now conducted via Skype, and training games have moved to one or two of the various online playing sites. While you lose a little something by not being able to work together in person, I've found there are benefits as well. I'd encourage you to give it a go if you haven't already. Some of my training partners of the last three years reached out and as I finally have time, I've gratefully re-started my improvement efforts. My first training game this year was with my most frequent training opponent, Joe Faries. He has not wasted the time made available by misfortune; quite the contrary, Joe has done something that almost no other senior player has done in my experience—he has set about re-inventing himself! Many players talk about it, but Joe is actually doing it and quite earnestly. I myself am doing the same, and though I'm over 50 and can, according to tournament rules, claim to be a "senior", at a couple of decades older, Joe is bona fide.

We agreed to play via a popular online site. This in and of itself is an interesting dynamic. Gone is the ability to see your opponent, their expressions, their body language, etc. Present are all the distraction of playing in the comfort of your own home. Just as in tournament play, I recommend you turn off your phone; the last thing you need is a phone call at a critical juncture in the game. And, make certain you have a reliable Internet connection. You don't want to be disqualified for a disconnect that's not your fault.



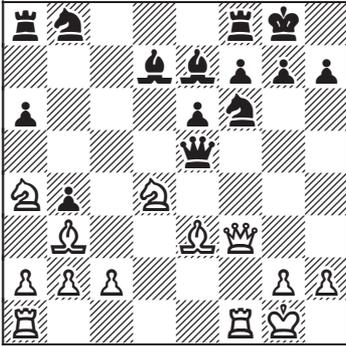
Joe Faries – Mark Warriner

2020 Training Game 1

Sicilian

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4** [Good for you, Joe! No more timid 4 d3 or the like. Joe is courageously, and I feel correctly, going for main lines and solid play. Many amateurs think that trying to “get them out of book” is wise strategy. Based on my 40 years of play, I’d advise otherwise. Maintain a solid position versus a stronger player as long as is possible. You’ll be on your own soon enough against someone who likely achieved their higher rating through a superior understanding of the game. The longer you are not on your own, the better.] **3...cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bc4** [I have to confess, I was not surprised—I was prepared! The advantage of having a very good coach/trainer is opening preparation. Much to Joe’s consternation, we actually looked up his online games and studied his improvement efforts. Even at the amateur level, it’s necessary to engage in this level of practice if you want to achieve positive results these days. It’s common practice to study an opponent’s games, and if you know their “handle” where they play... Moreover, there are some wonderful tools to help you quickly digest this information. For over two decades now there has been ChessBase, and I can recommend another powerful and free online tool: [www.openingtree.com](http://www.openingtree.com)] **6...e6 7 Bb3 b5 8 O-O Be7 9 Be3** [Less common than either 9 Qf3 or 9 f4, and I started forgetting the prep at this point. It’s okay though, as I did recall this move is not as good as the aforementioned and Black should get a comfortable game.] **9...O-O 10 f4 b4 11 Na4 Bd7** [Playable, but not as nice as either 11... Bb7 or 11...Nxe4] **12 Qf3** [12 e5 and 12 c3 have been tried before] **12...Qa5** [I remember my coach telling me to be aware of the idea of White’s knight getting in trouble on a4 after ...Qa5, and I mistakenly thought this was one of those situations. 12...Nc6 gives Black some slight pull.] **13 e5** [I think 13 a3 gives White better counterplay] **13...dxe5 14 fxe5 Nd5?**

Big mistake. I did calculate 14...Qxe5, but significant oversights made me reject it. What follows is from our Metal Friend:



15 Qxa8 Ng4 16 Bf4 Qxd4+ 17 Kh1 Bc6;

15 Rae1 and now

15...Bxa4 16 Bf2 Qd6 17 Bxa4 Nbd7;

15...Bd6 16 g3 Bxa4 17 Qxa8 Bxb3  
(17...Bd7 18 Qf3 h5 19 c3 bxc3 20  
bxc3) 18 cxb3 Bc5 19 Nc2 Ng4 20  
Qf3 Nxe3 21 Nxe3

**15 Bxd5 exd5** [15...Qxd5 is slightly better but Black's situation is dire in any case.] **16 b3?** [I knew I was in a lot of trouble and was just waiting for Joe to play 16 Qg3 but this was a nice reprieve.] **16...Nc6 17 Nxc6** [17 e6 fxe6 18 Nxc6 Bxc6 19 Qg4 Qc7 20 Qxe6+ Kh8 21 Nb6 Rad8 22 Rxf8+ Bxf8 23 Rf1 Bb5 24 Nxd5 Qxc2 25 Ne7 Bxe7 26 Qxe7 Rg8 27 Rc1 Qe2 is lengthy and just equal] **17...Bxc6** [Here I had spent a lot of time trying to figure out how best to handle 18 Bb6 but...] **18 Qg3?** [...this eliminated those concerns!] **18...Kh8?** [Another miscalculation. I wanted to badly to play 18...Bxa4 19 bxa4 but was afraid of 19 Bh6, missing the resource 19...Qb6+] **19 Bg5?** [Again I found myself burning time trying to calculate 19 Bb6, but sadly for Joe he again blunders. 19.Bb6 Qb5 20 Bd4 Qa5 21 Nb2 Bc5 22 Qe3 Bxd4 23 Qxd4 would give White a comfortable game.] **19...Bxg5 20 Qxg5 Bxa4 21 bxa4 Qc5+** [I was feeling good again about my play, realizing that it was correct to eschew the a-pawn as Black had more important things to do.] **22 Kh1 Rae8 23 Qf5** [23 a3 bxa3 24 Qg3 offers a little more resistance] **23...Re6 24 Rae1 a5 25 Rf3 Qe7?** [Pessimistic. I was down on the clock (the control was 90m+8s) and I sped up to regain some time. I was worried about Joe getting all of his pieces aiming at my kingside. Anyhow, 25...Kg8 or 25...g6 were preferable.] **26 Rh3 g6 27 Qf4 f6 28 Rf3** [A short and accurate sequence until...] **28...Kg7?** [*Long think, wrong think.*] I simply forgot the necessity of playing ...Kg8 to avoid the all-important check.] **29 exf6+ Rxf6 30 Rxe6 Rxe6 31 Qd4+ Rf6 32 h3 Qf7 33 Rd3** [Realizing I'd chucked a sizeable advantage, I went into swindle mode.] **33...g5 34 Qxd5?** [It was important to maintain the pin on the rook with 34 Qe5.



Now follows liquidation to an equal R+P ending. I decided to test Joe as the position presents minimal risk for Black. It's remindful of one of those lumberjack contests where contestants stand on a log in water, rolling it back and forth trying to throw the opponent into the drink.] **34...Rf1+ 35 Kh2 Qf4+ 36 Rg3 h6 37 Qd3 Rf2 38 Qe3 Qxe3 39 Rxe3 Kf6 40 a3 bxa3 41 Rxa3 Rxc2 42 Kg3 h5 43 Kf3 Rc4 44 Ke3 Ke5 45 g3** [45 Rb3 is better, keeping tension, forcing Black to react] **45...Kd5 46 Rb3 Rb4 47 Ra3?** [And there's the slip! 47 Rxb4 axb4 48 Kd3 Kc5 49 Kc2 Kb6 50 g4 hxg4 51 hxg4 Ka6 52 Kb2 Kb6] **47...h4?** [I hurried with time winding down and again allowed equalization. 47...Kc4 wins.] **48 g4 Rc4 49 Rb3 Rxa4 50 Rb5+ Kc4 51 Rxc5 Ra3+** [Still equal, but...] **52 Kd2?** [52 Kf4 a4 53 Rh5 Ra1 54 Rh8 Rf1+ 55 Kg5 a3 56 Rc8+ Kb3 57 Rb8+ Kc3 58 Rc8+ keeps the draw] **52...a4 53 Kc2?** [It's all hopeless now, but at least 53 Ra5 Kb4 keeps trying.] **53...Rxb3 54 Ra5 Rh2+ 55 Kb1 Kb4?!** [Not giving up the advantage, but bad technique nonetheless. It allowed a chance to forget the proper plan... which I did! 55...h3] **56 Ra7 a3?** [Had I remembered Dvoretzky (*Dvoretzky's Endgame Manual*, 5th ed, Russell Enterprises, 2020) I would have known that even after ...Kb4, the h-pawn was the one to push. 56...h3 57 Rh7 Kb3 58 Kc1 Rh1+ 59 Kd2 a3 60 g5 a2 61 Kd3 Rd1+ 62 Ke2 a1Q] **57 Rb7+ Kc3 58 Rc7+ Kb3 59 Rb7+ Kc4** [Nothing to do but try to confuse the issue. Once again Caissa smiled upon an unworthy student.] **60 Ra7?** [60 g5 Kd5 61 g6 Ke4 62 Rh7 Kf3 63 Rf7+ Ke3 64 Rh7] **60...a2+** [60...Rg2 also works] **61 Rxa2?** [61 Ka1 at least forces Black to demonstrate technique. Given my sloppiness, it should have been attempted!] **61...Rxa2 62 Kxa2 h3 0-1**

I'll certainly take the result. I'm satisfied that I kept my cool despite the ups and downs. As noted, the opening prep was especially helpful. Things will become easier moving forward as I spend time working on a more complete understanding of the ideas behind the variations. By way of validation and to share learning experiences, I posted my results online. I was flattered to receive a response from GM Mikhail Golubev, author of *The Sicilian Sozin* (Gambit Publications, 2001, ISBN 978-1901983388) and *Understanding the Sicilian* (Gambit Publications, 2017, ISBN 978-1911465102)! Rather than dismiss it as an amateur game, he amazed me by calling it was a typical pitched battle in the Sozin. How cool was that?!

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