

VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

The bimonthly publication of the
Virginia Chess Federation

2021 - #4

Over-the-board Chess Returning...

**Evan Park Wins
2021 Virginia Open**

Helen Hinshaw

1950-2021



Allen and Helen Hinshaw, flanked by Harry Cohen (left) and Woody Harris, representing the Virginia Chess Federation at a USCF Annual Meeting circa 1994.

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53rd Virginia Open

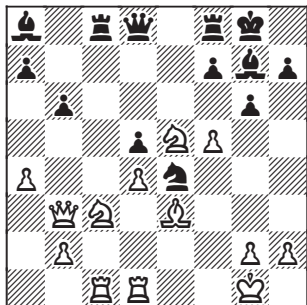
The 2021 Virginia Open was held April 9-11 at the Washington Dulles Airport Marriott. A total of 79 players competed in two sections, as over-the-board chess gradually emerged from hibernation. Pennsylvanian Evan Park, the top-rated entrant, pulled off a minor 'Swiss Gambit' by drawing his 1st round game and then sweeping the remaining four en route to winning the Open section. State champion Danny Miller tied for 2nd–4th with Isaac Chiu & Siddhant Nair.

The Amateur (under 1800) section saw a two-way tie for 1st between Joe Kucan & Gurru Muthukumaran, each 4½-½. Charles Compton, Ameya Haldankar & Asrith Biradavolu each finished a half point behind. Compton led the pack with the only perfect 4-0 score, but then top-seeded Kucan brought him down in the final round.

We customarily begin by featuring first of all games from the top group but, just for variety's sake, we'll begin this time with that decisive Under 1800 contest...

Joseph Kucan - Charles Compton Grünfeld

1 d4 Nf6 2 e3 g6 3 Nf3 Bg7 4 c4 c5 5 Nc3 O-O 6 Be2 cxd4 7 exd4 d5 8 O-O b6 9 Be3 dxc4 10 Ne5 Bb7 11 Bxc4 Nd5 12 Qb3 e6 13 Bxd5 exd5 14 f4 Nd7 15 Rac1 Nf6 16 Rfd1 Rc8 17 a4 Ba8 18 f5 Ne4



(diagram)

19 fxg6 hxg6 20 Nxe4 Rxc1 21 Bxc1 dxe4 22 Nxc6 Bd5 23 Qxd5 Qxd5 24 Ne7+ Kh7 25 Nxd5 Rd8 26 Nc3 Bxd4+ 27 Kf1 f5 28 Nb5 1-0

Returning our focus to the open section, Isaac Chui was also leading with 4-0 before meeting the top seed in the final round...





Evan Park - Isaac Chiu

Four Knights

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5 Bb4 5 d3 d6 6 O-O O-O 7 Bg5 Bxc3
8 bxc3 h6 9 Bh4 Qe7 10 Re1 a6 11 Bc4 Na5 12 Bb3 g5 13 Bg3 Bg4 14
Re3 Nxb3 15 axb3 Qe6 16 Qf1 Bxf3 17 Rxf3 Nh5 18 Re1 a5 19 d4 c6
20 h4 f6 21 Rd3 a4 22 bxa4 Rxa4 23 Qe2 Ng7 24 Red1 Qc4 25 Qg4
Qe6 26 Qf3 f5 27 exf5 Rxf5 28 Qe2 exd4 29 Qxe6+ Nxe6 30 cxd4 Nf4
31 Re3 d5 32 hxg5 hxg5 33 c3 Kf7 34 Rde1 Ng6 35 Re8 Ra1 36 Rxa1
Kxe8 37 Ra8+ Kd7 38 Rb8 b5 39 Rb7+ Ke6 40 Rc7 Ne7 41 Kh2 Rf8
42 Kh3 Rg8 43 Kg4 Rg7 44 Be5 Rg8 45 f3 Ra8 46 Bg7 Ra2 47 g3 Rg2
48 Bf8 Nf5 49 Rxc6+ Kd7 50 Rc5 Rxc6+ 51 Kxf5 Rxf3+ 52 Ke5 Rxf8
53 Rxb5 g4 54 Rxd5+ Kc7 55 Ke6 Rg8 56 Kf7 Rh8 57 Rg5 Rh3 58 c4
Rc3 59 c5 g3 60 Ke6 Kc6 61 Ke5 Re3+ 62 Kf4 Re8 63 Rg6+ Kc7 64
Rxc3 Kc6 65 Re3 Rf8+ 66 Ke4 Re8+ 67 Kd3 Kd5 68 Rxe8 1-0

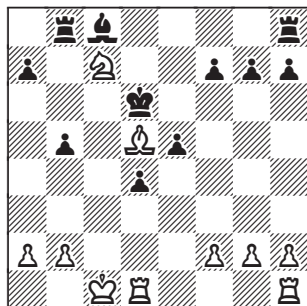
We regret that we do not have a complete list of class prize winners, etc. The complete crosstable can be viewed online at <http://www.uschess.org/msa/XtblMain.php?202104118212.0-15748464>. Mike Hoffpauir organized the Virginia Open and served as Chief TD on behalf of the VCF, assisted by Anand Dommalapati.

Evan Park - Max Mathura

Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 Bc5 7
Be3 d6 8 Bxc5 dxc5 9 Qxd8+ Kxd8 10 O-O-O+ Ke7 11 Nd5+ Nxd5
12 exd5 Nd4 13 d6+ Kd8 14 Nc7 Rb8 15 Bc4 b5 16 Bd5 Kd7 17
c3 Kxd6 18 cxd4 cxd4 (diagram)

19 f4 f6 20 fxe5+ fxe5 21 Rde1 Kxc7
22 Rxe5 Rb6 23 Bf3 Rd8 24 Kd2 Be6
25 Rhe1 Rdd6 26 h4 a6 27 b3 Kd8 28
Kd3 Bf7 29 h5 Rd7 30 Rc1 Re6 31 Rxe6
Bxe6 32 Be4 Bd5 33 Bf5 Rc7 34 Rxc7
Kxc7 35 Kxd4 Bxg2 36 Bxh7 Bf3 37
Bg6 Kd6 38 b4 Bg4 39 a3 Bf3 40 Ke3
Bd1 41 Kd4 Be2 42 Ke4 Bd1 43 Kf5 Kd5 44 Bf7+ Kd4 45 Kg6
Kc3 46 Kxg7 Bxh5 ½-½





Nicholas Thomas - Isaac Chiu

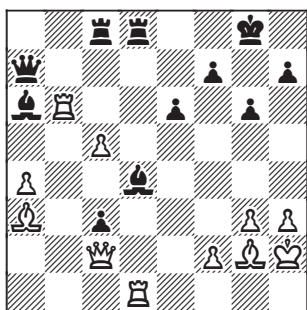
English

1 d4 g6 2 c4 Bg7 3 Nf3 d6 4 e3 Nf6 5 Be2 O-O 6 b3 c5 7 O-O b6 8 Bb2 cxd4 9 Nxd4 Bb7 10 Nc3 Nbd7 11 Rc1 Nc5 12 f3 a6 13 Re1 e6 14 Bf1 h5 15 Rc2 Qe7 16 Rd2 Rfd8 17 Nc2 h4 18 e4 Bh6 19 Ne3 Bf4 20 Qe2 Nh5 21 Red1 Qg5 22 Re1 f5 23 b4 Nd7 24 exf5 gxf5 25 Ned5 Ne5 26 Rd4 exd5 27 Nxd5 Bxd5 28 cxd5 Re8 29 Red1 Ng4 0-1

Eric Kurtz - Tyson Brady

English

1 c4 Nf6 2 g3 g6 3 Bg2 Bg7 4 Nc3 O-O 5 e4 d6 6 Nge2 c5 7 O-O Nc6 8 d3 Rb8 9 a3 a6 10 Rb1 b5 11 cxb5 axb5 12 b4 c4 13 dxc4 bxc4 14 h3 Ne5 15 a4 Nd3 16 Ba3 Bb7 17 Qc2 d5 18 exd5 Nxd5 19 Ne4 Rc8 20 Qd2 Qc7 21 Nc5 Nxc5 22 bxc5 Rfd8 23 Qc2 Ba6 24 Rfd1 e6 25 Nd4 Nb4 26 Rxb4 Bxd4 27 Rb6 Qa7 28 Kh2 c3

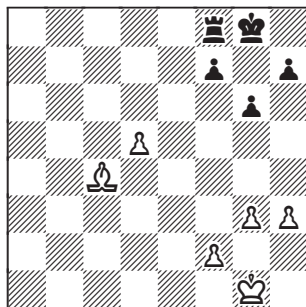


29 Rxd4 Rxd4 30 Qxc3 Qxb6 31 Qxd4 Qd8 32 Qc3 Qd3 33 Qb2 e5 34 c6 Qd4 35 Qc2 Bd3 36 Qb3 e4 37 Qb7 Re8 38 c7 Qd7 39 Bc5 Qc8 40 Qb6 Re6 41 Bd6 f5 42 Qc5 Kf7 43 g4 fxg4 44 hxg4 g5 45 Qf5+ Ke8 46 Qc5 Kd7 47 Bg3 Qb7 48 Qd4+ 1-0

Brian Tay - Andrew Peraino

Pirc

1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 Be2 O-O 6 O-O a6 7 a4 Nc6 8 Bf4 Bg4 9 h3 Bxf3 10 Bxf3 e5 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 Be3 Nd4 13 Bxd4 exd4 14 Ne2 c5 15 Nf4 Nd7 16 g3 Ne5 17 Bg2 Rb8 18 Nd3 Nd7 19 a5 b5 20 axb6 c4 21 Nb4 Qxb6 22 Nd5 Qd6 23 b4 Nf6 24 Qxd4 Nxd5 25 Qxd5 Qxd5 26 exd5 Bxa1 27 Rxa1 Rxb4 28 Rxa6 Rb2 29 c3 Rb3 30 Rc6 Rxc3 31 Bf1 Rc1 32 Rxc4 Rxc4 33 Bxc4



33...Rc8 34 Bb3 Kf8 35 h4 f6 36 Kg2 Ke7 37 Bd1 Kd6 38 Bf3 Rc3 39 g4 Ke5 40 Kg3 Rd3 41 h5 g5 42 h6 f5 43 gxf5 Kxf5 44 Kg2 Kf4 0-1

Daniel Miller - Guy Cardwell

Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 c3 Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 4 d4 cxd4 5 cxd4 d6 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 Bc4 Nb6 8 Bb3 d5 9 Nh4 e6 10 Nf3 Bd7 11 O-O a5 12 Nc3 a4 13 Bc2 Nb4 14 Bb1 Bc6 15 a3 Na6 16 Ng5 Qd7 17 f4 g6 18 f5 exf5 19 Bxf5 gxf5 20 e6 fxe6 21 Qh5+ Kd8 22 Nf7+ Kc8 23 Nxh8 Bg7 24 Nf7 Bxd4+ 25 Kh1 Nc4 26 Ne2 Bc5 27 Qxh7 d4 28 Bf4 b5 29 Rad1 Qd5 30 Qg7 Nxb2 31 Rxd4 Bxd4 32 Nxd4 Nc4 33 Nxc6 Qxc6 34 Rd1 Nc7 35 Nd8 Qb6 36 Qd7+ Kb8 37 Nxe6 Ra7 38 Qe8+ Kb7 39 Bxc7 Qc6 40 Nd8+ 1-0



Helen Hinshaw

by *Woody Harris*



Helen Schiffman Hinshaw, former President and long-time Secretary of the Virginia Chess Federation (VCF), died following a brief illness on May 19, 2021. She is survived by her daughter Melissa and grandson Chase. Helen was the widow of Allen Hinshaw, also a former VCF President. The two of them were active chess players, tournament directors and organizers from the 1970's to the 2000's.

Helen was most active as an organizer, including two successful US Opens in Fairfax (1976) and Alexandria (1996).

With a personality that could light up a small town, Helen could work a room like few people! To her, strangers were friends she had not yet met. She was wonderful at fixing things, mediating disputes and making players feel comfortable and appreciated, and at recruiting help for tournaments and the VCF in general.

Helen was also active for many years at US Chess Delegate meetings, frequently rising to speak when discussion would ramble on a bit too much. She became so known for 'calling the question' to end debate that when she approached the microphone to get in line, many waiting their turn would just sit down, realizing it was time to move on.

Helen, and her beloved husband Allen, were once-in-a-generation figures who did much for Virginia chess and its players. She will be sorely missed by her many friends. We share her family's grief and will long remember her dedication and devotion.



Charlottesville Open

July 10-11, 2021

Comfort Inn Monticello

2097 Inn Dr, Charlottesville Va 22911

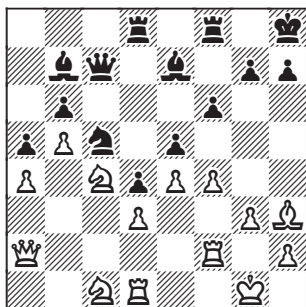
5-SS, rd 1 G/75+10, rds 2-5 G90+10. In two sections. *Open* \$\$ 500-300-200, top U2000 150, top U1800 140. *Under 1600* \$\$ 300-200-150, top U1300 140, top U1000/unrated 130. *Both* EF \$65 by Sunday, July 4, \$80 thereafter. Friday night (July 9) Blitz tournament. On Site reg Friday 5-9pm, Sat 8-9:15, rounds Sat 10-1:30-6, Sun 10-2:30. See www.vachess.org for full details and online registration.



Virginia Open, *continued*

Evan Park - Pranav Prem English

1 c4 e6 2 g3 d5 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Bg2 dxc4
5 Qa4+ Nbd7 6 Qxc4 a6 7 Qc2 c5 8 a4
b6 9 O-O Bb7 10 d3 Be7 11 Nc3 O-O
12 e4 Rc8 13 b3 Nb8 14 Ne5 Nfd7 15
Nc4 Nc6 16 Bf4 Nd4 17 Qb2 Ra8 18
Be3 Bc6 19 Bxd4 cxd4 20 Ne2 e5 21 f4
f6 22 b4 a5 23 b5 Bb7 24 Rad1 Qc7 25
Bh3 Nc5 26 Qa2 Kh8 27 Nc1 Rad8 28 Rf2



28...Bxe4 29 dxe4 Nxe4 30 Be6 Nxf2 31
Qxf2 Bc5 32 Qf3 Qe7 33 f5 g6 34 Nd3
Rde8 35 g4 Qc7 36 Qe4 Re7 37 Rc1 Rg7
38 Nxb6 gxf5 39 Bxf5 Qxb6 40 Rxc5
Rc7 41 Rc6 Qb8 42 Nc5 Rxc6 43 Qxc6
Rf7 44 b6 e4 45 b7 Qf4 46 Qc8+ 1-0

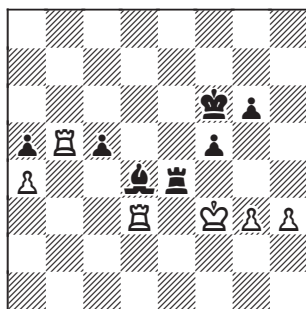
Ronen Wilson - Isaac Chiu Robatsch

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 f4 a6 5
Nf3 b5 6 Bd3 Nd7 7 e5 c5 8 Be4 Rb8
9 O-O Nh6 10 d5 O-O 11 h3 Nb6 12
g4 f5 13 exf6 exf6 14 f5 gxf5 15 Bxh6
Bxh6 16 Bxf5 Bxf5 17 gxf5 Qe8 18
Qe1 Qh5 19 Qh4 Qxh4 20 Nxh4 Be3+
21 Kh1 Bd4 22 Rad1 Rbe8 23 Rf4 Bxc3
24 bxc3 Re3 25 Rf3 Rxf3 26 Nxf3 Re8
27 Rd3 Re2 28 Rd2 Re3 29 Rd3 Rxd3
30 cxd3 Nxd5 31 c4 Nb4 32 a3 Nxd3

33 Nd2 Kf7 34 Kg2 b4 35 axb4 cxb4
36 Kf3 a5 37 Ke4 Nc5+ 38 Kd5 Ke7 39
Kc6 a4 40 Nf1 a3 41 Ne3 a2 42 Nc2 b3
43 Na1 b2 44 Nc2 b1 Q 0-1

Isaac Chiu - Daniel Miller King's Indian

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2
O-O 5 O-O d6 6 d4 Nbd7 7 Nc3 e5
8 e4 c6 9 h3 Qb6 10 c5 dxc5 11 dxe5
Ne8 12 Qc2 Nxe5 13 Nxe5 Bxe5 14
Na4 Qc7 15 Nxc5 Ng7 16 Be3 Ne6 17
Nb3 Re8 18 f4 Bg7 19 Qf2 b6 20 e5
Bb7 21 Nd2 c5 22 Ne4 Rad8 23 Nd6
Rxd6 24 exd6 Qd7 25 Bxb7 Qxb7 26
f5 Nd4 27 fxg6 hxg6 28 Kh2 Nf5 29
Bf4 Bd4 30 Qc2 Rd8 31 Rae1 Nxd6 32
Bxd6 Rxd6 33 b3 Qd7 34 Qe4 Kg7 35
Qe8 Bf6 36 Qxd7 Rxd7 37 Rd1 Bd4
38 Rfe1 a5 39 a4 Rd6 40 Kg2 f5 41
Kf3 b5 42 Re7+ Kf6 43 Rb7 bxa4 44
bxa4 Re6 45 Rd3 Re4 46 Rb5

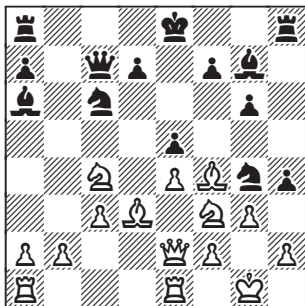


46...c4 47 Rd1 c3 48 Rc1 Re3+ 49
Kf2 Rd3+ 50 Ke2 Rxc3 51 Rxa5 f4
52 Rd5 f3+ 53 Kd3 f2+ 54 Ke2 c2?
(54...Rg1 55 Rf1 Be3! ♡) 55 Rxd4 Rg1
56 Rf4+ Ke5 1-0



Virginia Open, *continued*Neel Jay - Andrew Peraino
Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 g6 3 d4 Bg7 4 c3 b6 5 dxc5 Bb7 6 cxb6 Qxb6 7 Bd3 Nf6 8 Qe2 Nc6 9 O-O Ng4 10 Nbd2 Qc7 11 Nc4 h5 12 Re1 Ba6 13 g3 h4 14 Bf4 e5



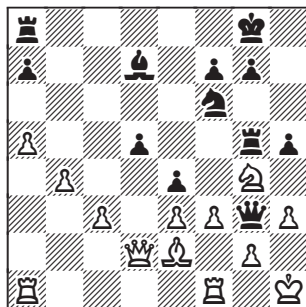
15 Nxe5 hxg3 16 hxg3 Nxe5 17 Nxe5 Bxe5 18 Bxa6 Bxf4 19 Qxg4 Be5 20 Rad1 d6 21 Kg2 Qb6 22 Qe2 g5 23 Bc4 Rb8 24 b3 Ke7 25 Qf3 Rbf8 26 Rh1 Qa5 27 Rxh8 Bxh8 28 Rd5 Qxc3 29 Qg4 Bf6 30 Rb5 Rd8 31 Rb7+ Ke8 32 Rxf7 Qe5 33 Rxa7 Kf8 34 Qh5 Qxe4+ 35 Kh2 Qxc4 36 bxc4 1-0

Ronen Wilson - Pranav Prem
Sicilian

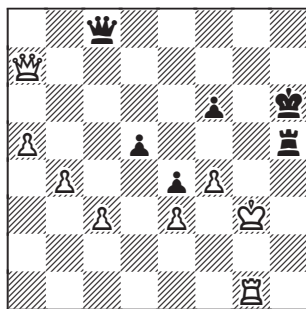
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 Nbd7 7 Bc4 Qb6 8 Bb3 e6 9 Qd2 Be7 10 O-O-O Nc5 11 f3 Qc7 12 Rhe1 O-O 13 g4 Bd7 14 Bxf6 Bxf6 15 g5 Be7 16 h4 b5 17 h5 b4 18 Nce2 a5 19 Ng1 a4 20 Bc4 b3 21 Kb1 bxa2+ 22 Bxa2 Rab8 23 Ka1 Qb6 24 Rb1 Ra8 25 b4 axb3 26 Nxb3 Qa7 27 Nc1 Rfb8 28 Rxb8+ Rxb8 29 c3 Qa3 30 c4 Bxg5 31 Qc2 Bxc1 32 Re2 Nb3+ 33 Kb1 Nd2+ 34 Ka1 Qb2+ 35 Qxb2 Bxb2# 0-1

Asrith Biradavolu - Naveen Balakrishnan
London

1 d4 Nf6 2 Bf4 d5 3 e3 e6 4 Nf3 Nbd7 5 Nbd2 Bb4 6 c3 Ba5 7 a4 c5 8 dxc5 Bc7 9 Bxc7 Qxc7 10 b4 b6 11 cxb6 Nxb6 12 Qb3 O-O 13 a5 Nbd7 14 Bd3 Ne5 15 Nxe5 Qxe5 16 Nf3 Qh5 17 Qc2 e5 18 Be2 Re8 19 h3 Bd7 20 O-O e4 21 Nh2 Qh4 22 Qd2 Re5 23 f3 Qg3 24 Kh1 Rg5 25 Ng4 h5



26 Qe1 Qc7 27 Nxf6+ gxf6 28 f4 Rg6 29 Bxh5 Rh6 30 Qd1 Rd8 31 Kh2 Kg7 32 Rc1 Rdh8 33 g4 Be6 34 Kg3 f5 35 Qd4+ f6 36 Qd1 Qc8 37 Rh1 fxg4 38 hxg4 Bf7 39 Qd4 Bxh5 40 gxh5 Rxh5 41 Rxh5 Rxh5 42 Qxa7+ Kh6 43 Rg1



43...Qh3+? (43...Rh3+ 44 Kf2 Rf3+ 45 Ke2 Qc4+ =) 44 Kf2 Qf3+ 45 Ke1 Rg5 46 fxg5+ fxg5 47 Qb6+ Kh5 48 a6 Qh3 49 a7 Qh4+ 50 Kd1 Qh2 51 Re1 Qa2 52 Rh1+ Kg4 53 Qe6+ 1-0



Representing the USA in Coín

SPAIN IN SLOW MOTION

by *Aleksey Bashtavenko*

"In Spain nothing, from a meal to a battle, ever happens at the appointed time. As a general rule things happen too late, but just occasionally—just so that you shan't even be able to depend on their happening late—they happen too early. [...] Such things can be a little trying. In theory I rather admire the Spaniards for not sharing our Northern time-neurosis; but unfortunately I share it myself." - George Orwell

IARRIVED AT THE TOURNAMENT HALL at 9:30, having slept only a few hours the night before. I tried to order my coffee but there was no electricity in the building. I wandered into the playing hall to see players crowding the tournament director. Despite the apparent chaos unfolding, he had the situation under control. Dressed in a polished suit and tie, he stood confidently by the entrance and calmly directed players to their respective boards. The tournament hall was a baroque building that appeared to have been constructed as a military outpost. Deep in the Andalusian mountains, there wasn't even a McDonalds within ten kilometers, which left me wondering who had the brilliant idea to hold an international chess tournament here. That made as much sense as hosting the World Open in Pulaski, Virginia...

Which is not to say that the organizers performed poorly. On the contrary, they were extraordinarily professional, far better prepared than most American TDs. The pairings and standings were logged in an accessible and well-maintained website; the chief tournament director knew exactly where each player belonged, and made it a special point to collect both score sheets after each match. His slightest gestures exuded confidence and authority. On his watch, there was no time for unruly disputes such as constantly erupt in American tournaments. His assistants likewise carried themselves with dignity and civility. An epiphany dawned upon me: the Spaniards excel at organizing events of higher culture, but their handling of day-to-day operations leaves much to be desired.

Sleep-deprived and discombobulated, I stumbled upon a board with my nametag bearing the flag of the USA, and my opponent complaining about how there were no lights in the restroom. While inclined to dismiss his comments as exaggeration, he had piqued my curiosity. A few minutes into our game, I excused myself to go explore the antiquated passageway leading to the restroom and soon realized that he was correct.



The substandard playing conditions affected us both. By move 15, we both were shivering and had used over 30 minutes on our clocks.

Miguel Vega de Alba - Aleksey Bashtavenko Nimzoindian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 f3 O-O 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 e4 Nc6
8 e5 Nh5 9 Ne2 g6 10 Be3 d6 11 g4 Ng7 12 exd6 Qxd6 13 dxc5 Qe7
14 Bg2 Rd8 15 Qb3 e5 16 O-O Be6 17 Qa4 Rd3 18 Bf2 Rd2 19 Ng3 f5
20 gxf5 gxf5 21 Rfd1 Rad8 22 Rxd2 Rxd2 23 Nf1 Rd3 24 Qc2 Bxc4
25 Ne3 Ba6 26 c4 e4 27 Nd5 Qe5 28 Re1 Rxa3 29 fxe4 Ra1 30 Rxa1
Qxa1+ 31 Bf1... 1-0

The opening took us into the Saemisch variation of the Nimzoindian Defense. I doubled White's pawns with 5...Bxc3, and dared him to triple them with 6...c5. Disregarding the provocation, White responded with 7

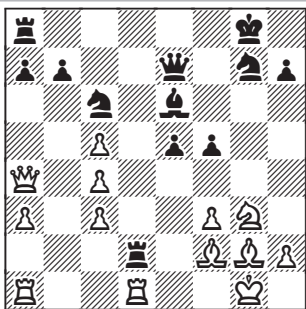




e4 and defined the character of the opening: White's pawn center versus Black's pressure with pieces. 7...Nc6, prompted further the assertion 8 e5. The battle lines were drawn. My opponent commanded a spatial advantage and had the dynamic potential inherent in his bishop pair; I enjoyed a superior pawn structure and chances of taking the initiative in the middlegame by attacking the center and creating semi-closed situations where my knights could outperform his bishops.

13 dxc5 won a pawn but incurred the 'Irish pawn center' on the c-file. Notwithstanding his obvious structural defects. White caught up in development, castled and prepared to contest the d-file. The critical moment approached after I seized the initiative with 17...Rd3, forcing the bishop retreat to f2. White could have challenged control of the d-file with 21 Rad1. But he played the wrong rook...





Position after 21 Rfd1

Here I considered the exchange sacrifice with 21... Rxf2 but shied away. I was already down a pawn and reluctant to give up rook for bishop merely to capture one of White's crippled c-pawns. What I did not take account of was that besides material considerations, after 21...Rxf2 White's king has no choice but to advance to the center. 22 Kxf2 Qxc5+ 22 Ke1 (23 Kf1 also fails; 23...Bxc4+ wins another pawn and then 24 Ne2 brings only cold solace after Black activates his knight with 24...

Ne6, preparing a deadly ...Nf4!) 22...Qg1+! 23 Bf1 Qxh2! We see Black would trade his rook for not just a bishop and a crippled pawn, but also a perfectly healthy one on h2. Moreover, the White king remains stranded in the center and White cannot stop Black from breaking the position open with ...e4, exposing the king to a systematic attack.

I failed to notice these developments because I looked only for a concrete way to deliver mate or win material. Clearly, I missed the forest for the trees. King *security* was much more important than material here.

So instead of striking while the iron was hot, I played an intuitive and a seemingly natural 21...Rad8, which led to the exchange of rooks. Nonetheless, I was happy with my position. My rook stood firmly on the 7th rank. White had a difficult challenge on his hands, and in attempting to dislodge my rook by 23 Nf1 he offered me a second chance for the thematic sacrifice 23...Rxf2!





And again I declined to play it, not noticing that after 24 Kxf2 Qxc5+ 24 Ne3 would be unplayable because the knight can be immediately hit with 24...f4!

The unnecessary retreat 23...Rd3 forfeited my advantage. In disbelief that my initiative had withered away, I tried to force matters with 24...Bxc4, effectively acknowledging that it would have been a good idea to win White's crippled pawn a few moves earlier. To my chagrin, the realization came a little too late. White wrested the control of the d-file, the pendulum started swinging the other way, and my opponent heaved a heavy sigh of relief.

By move 31, over four hours of action had passed and both players were exhausted. With just minutes remaining on the clock, I stopped keeping score. The game could have gone either way, but my opponent clearly felt more confident after I'd missed two golden opportunities to play a lethal exchange sacrifice. In a queen and knight ending with three pawns apiece, he found a decisive Qa2+, winning a pawn on a7.

As I resigned, I noticed that my game was one of the last to finish. One bit of consolation was that the electricity had finally come back on! At last I could go to the cafe and order the cup of coffee I needed prior to the round. Being the expatriate that I am, I behaved according to Hemingway's description: *"You're an expatriate. You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed with sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You are an expatriate, see? You hang around cafes"*.

Instead of analyzing my game at the bar, I settled into the European pace of life, admiring the view from this former military outpost. To my dismay, even this small pleasure was short-lived as the assistant tournament director found me and informed me that the second round had started five minutes ago. For reasons unbeknownst to me, it began at 16:30 rather than the posted 17:00.





Aleksey Bashtavenko - Carlos Narvaez

Four Knights

1 e4 e5 2 Bc4 Nf6 3 Nc3 Nc6 4 d3 Bc5 5 Nf3 d6 6 h3 Na5 7 O-O Nxc4 8 dxc4 h6 9 Qe2 Be6 10 Nd5 a5 11 Nxf6+ Qxf6 12 b3 g5 13 Be3 g4 14 hxg4 Bxg4 15 Bxc5 dxc5 16 Qe3 Bxf3 17 Qxf3 Qxf3 18 gxf3 O-O-O 19 Rfd1 Rd6 20 Rd5 Rhd8 21 Kf1 Rxd5 22 cxd5 Rd7 23 Ke2 f5 24 Rh1 Rd6 25 Ke3 c6 26 c4 cxd5 27 cxd5 b5 28 f4 ½-½

Rattled by the disappointing result in the first round, I opened the second with 1 e4 instead of the my customary 1 d4 repertoire. On move 7, I should have retreated my bishop to b3. Were Black to capture, he would improve my pawn structure, as a pawn on b3 controls more squares than one on a2. Furthermore, the rook a-file would have acquired a half-open file. Looking back on this game, I cannot explain my 11 Nxf6+, as the knight was under no pressure to capture. Have the fake European standards ruined me? Should I blame the sleep deprivation or the electrical outage?

Still, after 24 Rh1 I had a significant advantage. To win, all I needed to do was play Rh5. Black would have no way of protecting his isolated pawn on a6 and his central pawns on fifth rank.

With just a measly half a point going into the third round, I selected the ultra-sharp Sveshnikov variation of the Sicilian Defense.

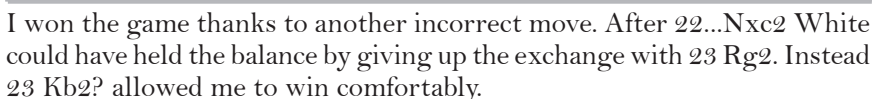
Miguel Guimares - Aleksey Bashtavenko

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 Nxf6+ gxf6 12 Qd2 Be6 13 b3 d5 14 exd5 Qxd5 15 Qxd5 Bxd5 16 O-O-O Be4 17 f3 Bf5 18 g4 Bg6 19 Rd6 Nd4 20 f4 Be4 21 Rg1 Ke7 22 Rb6 Nxc2 23 Kb2 Nb4 24 fxe5 fxe5 25 Rh6 Rac8 26 Rg3 Rhd8 27 Nxb5 axb5 28 Re3 Rd2+ 0-1

My opponent misplayed the position. There was no reason for 11 Nxf6+ and White's knight stood comfortably on d5. During the game I fretted over White's 'threat' 13 Qd5, when in truth I would have had a completely satisfactory position after ...Bb7 and ...Rd8.

In any case, White opted for the dreadfully passive 13 b3, presumably intending to defend a2. The Sveshnikov is a dynamic opening where the loss of even a single tempo can be fatal. My thematic 13...d5 break was an apparently an error, however. Laying claim to the vital dark squares 13...Qb6 was apparently better. So White managed to equalize by exchanging heavy pieces in the center.



1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3
c5 8 Rb1 O-O 9 Be2 Nc6 10 d5 Bxc3+ 11 Bd2 Bxd2+ 12 Qxd2 Nb8
13 h4 f6 14 h5 g5 15 Nxc5 fxc5 16 Qxc5+ Kf7 17 h6 Ke8 18 Bh5+
Kd7 19 Qg4+ Kc7 20 Qg3+ Qd6 21 e5 Qxd5 22 Rd1 Qe4+ 23 Kf1
Qf4 24 Qxf4 Rxf4 25 g3 Rd4 26 Rxd4 cxd4 27 Bg6 Nc6 28 f4 Be6 29
Bxh7 Bxa2 30 g4 Rf8 31 Bf5 e6 32 h7 exf5 33 gxf5 Bb1 34 f6 Bxh7
35 Rxh7+ Kc8 36 Ke2 b5 37 Kd3 b4 38 Rh1 Kd7 39 Ke4 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

Instead of 18 Bh5, I ought to simply castle. Although down a piece, I'd have Black's king in the center and there is simply no way to withstand the coordinated attack once White's king is safely out of the way.

By Impatiently pursuing my search for forced checkmate, I merely drove his king to safety. Black defended accurately and managed to exchange queens. He seemed certain to win, being up a piece and with a passed pawn. However, I had one last hope: the advanced h6 pawn. To that end I played 25 g3, prompting an exchange of rooks, and once the rooks were exchanged I proceeded with 27 Bg6!

His 27...Nc6 envisioned ...Nxe5-f7, stopping the h-pawn dead in its tracks. My retort 28 f4 overlooked that Black could have now called my bluff, 28...hxg6, and even if my pawn queens, Black may sacrifice his queen on h8 and reach the endgame with a passed pawn on the c-file and two minor pieces against a rook.

Fortunately, my opponent preferred the ill-conceived 28...Be6, to which I have responded with 29 Bxh7. Then 30 g4, seemingly with initiative on the kingside, but weakening my f-pawn. The less ambitious 30 Be4 would have been preferable. Black could have blockaded the passed pawn with 34...Rh8, but he chose to eliminate it once and for all by sacrificing his bishop.

White had to activate his king in order to survive, so 36 Ke2 was absolutely vital. Nonetheless, Black could have consolidated a decisive advantage by



37...a5. The move he in fact played, 37...b4, might have allowed a further activation of White's king, 38 Kc4. But, anticipating ...a5, I returned my rook to h1, which was a mistake.

Instead of 39 Ke4, I would have been better off playing 39 Rh2+ and 40 Kc4—piece activity still offers the best chance of compensating for the material deficit. However, after 39 Ke4, my opponent *thought for 20 minutes and accepted my draw offer*. Clearly he had a much superior position. But I had held the initiative for most of the game, and now he was wary of some mating net that I might be weaving. (Imagine Rh7+ and on ...Ke6 then f4 resulting in mate, for instance.) Of course, Black not only saw this possibility but also understood that he didn't have to step into checkmate. Yet, a mixture of time pressure and mental fatigue led him to accept the draw instead of fighting for a win.

Daniel Vara - Aleksey Bashtavenko

Queen Pawn Game

1 d4 Nf6 2 Bf4 d6 3 Nc3 Bf5 4 f3 Nc6 5 e4 Bg6 6 Bb5 a6 7 Ba4 Nd7 8 Nge2 b5 9 Bb3 b4 10 Nd5 Qb8 11 Ba4 Qb7 12 Bxc6 Qxc6 13 Nxb4 Qb7 14 Nd3 e6 15 O-O Be7 16 c4 e5 17 dxe5 dxe5 18 Nxe5 Bc5+ 19 Kh1 Nxe5 20 Bxe5 Rd8 21 Qa4+ Kf8 22 Rad1 1-0

Round 5 was unequivocally terrible, perhaps the worst game I have played in a tournament. Against 3 Nc3, I considered reverting to a classical style d-pawn game with 4...d5, but I was hesitant to use another tempo with a pawn I'd already moved. I generally prefer hypermodern defenses against 1 d4, but here I would have been better off playing a comfortable classical position instead of an uncomfortable hypermodern one. 3...Bf5 developed a piece with little forethought, and after 4 f3 I again declined to change the character of the position with 4...d5, instead going 4...Nc6 and White comfortably amassed a pawn center. My piece activity could not compensate for the spatial disadvantage.

Nonetheless, I might have fought for equality with 8...e5. 8...b5 did not address the core problem of the position, White's full control of the center. Seeking space on the queenside gave my opponent further opportunities to press his advantage in the center. The situation could not have been clearer after 16 c4. White's opening was a resounding success: he had full control of the center, an extra pawn, his king was castled and his pieces were much more active. The only positive feature of the Black position was the semi-open b-file. White had no reason to fear that, and once he broke open the d-file, my king emerged as the more salient factor. A miraculous comeback was not on the cards, and 21 Qa4 brought the game to a rapid conclusion.





Aleksey Bashtavenko - Mauricio Muñoz

Benko Gambit

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 Nc3 axb5 6 e4 b4 7 Nb5 Nxe4 8 Qe2 Qb6 9 Qxe4 Ra5 10 a4 d6 11 Bf4 e6 12 Bc4 e5 13 Bxe5 dxe5 14 Qxe5+ Kd8 15 Nf3 Be7 16 O-O Bf6 17 Qe2 Re8 18 Qc2 Nd7 19 Rfe1 Ne5 20 Nxe5 Rxe5 21 Rxe5 Bxe5 22 Re1 Qf6 23 b3 Bd7 24 Qe2 Bb8 25 Qe3 Qf4 26 Qe7+ Kc8 27 Qxc5+ Kb7 28 g3 Qd2 29 Re7 Qd1+ 30 Kg2 Qg4 31 Qc6mate 1-0

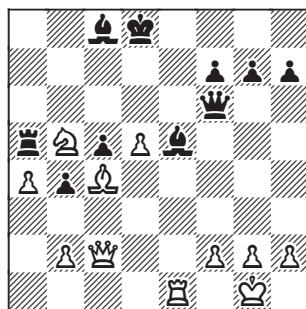
While round 5 was a disaster straight from the opening, the next round saw the opposite. I played the Nescafe Frappe Attack against the Benko Gambit, exactly as in a 1989 game between Jeremy Silman and Larry Christensen. But whereas Christensen played the much needed 7...d6, creating breathing room for his king and contesting White's control of the center, my opponent swallowed the poisoned pawn with 6...b4 and 7...Nxe4.

8 Qe2! introduced an immediate threat of mate. After having thought for over 30 minutes, my opponent avoided that by surrendering the knight on e4. In hopes of recovering the lost piece, he mobilized the queen to b6 and the rook to a5, perhaps overlooking the defense 10...bxa3 11 Nxa3 nets a sizable advantage to White (11...Qb4 12 Qxb4 cxb4 13 Nc2! Black's threat on the a-file is shown to be an illusion).

Black desperately attempted to close the center with 12...e5, but at last I had learned the lesson from previous rounds: *king security often matters more than material*. And so the immediate counter-sacrifice 13 Bxe5! Although I was now only one pawn ahead, I was prepared to castle and the coordination of Black's pieces left much to be desired. The game seemed all but over after 16 0-0.

Yet, it wasn't too late to mess up.

On my 23rd move, 23 Qe4 looked "natural". Had I played it, Black could have reasserted control of the a-file with 23...Rxa4, daring White to capture the bishop: 24 Qxe5? Qxe5! It's not just a simple back rank trick, however. An intriguing variation emerges, from which Black not only equalizes on material, but his centralized king and queenside pawn majority become insurmountable advantages. 25 Rxe5 Ra1+ 26 Bf1 Ba6 27 Re8+! (the only way!) Kxe8 28 Nc7+ Ke7 29 Nxa6 Kd6 and Black comes out much better. White's isolated pawn on d5 will inevitably fall, there is no way to defend it. Moreover, Black has ...Rb1 in his agenda. White's b-pawn must fall and the outside passed pawns will be unstoppable.



Position after 23...Bd7



It is also worth mentioning that White might preserve some advantage even after the dicey 23 Qe4 Rxa4 by just creating a flight square for his king. However, I had not seen that during the game and so I opted for the prophylactic 23 b3! sealing the a-file. White does not need to hurry. Note that 23 b3 again *maximized the security of my king* by avoiding all back rank issues. The underlying message is clear and consistent: long-term security of the king matters more than immediate gain or loss of material.

Black did not have time to secure *his* king and as it turned out I did not need to increase my material advantage in order to win. The blunder 25... Qf4? allowed a decisive attack beginning 26 Qe7!

Lucia Sanchez - Aleksey Bashtavenko Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bc4 Bb4 8 Bg5 d6 9 Qd3 O-O 10 O-O Be6 11 Bxe6 fxe6 12 Qc4 Qa5 13 Bxf6 Rxf6 14 Qxc6 Raf8 15 Kh1 Bxc3 16 bxc3 Qb6 17 Qxb6 axb6 18 Rad1 Rxf2 19 Rxf2 Rxf2 20 Kg1 Rxc2 21 Rxd6 Rxa2 22 Rxe6 Rc2 23 Rxb6 Rxc3 24 Rb5 Rc2 25 Rxe5 Kf7 26 Kf1 Kf6 27 Ra5 g6 28 Ra7 Ke5 29 Rxh7 Kxe4 30 Re7+ Kf5 31 Re2 Rc1+ 32 Kf2 g5 33 Kf3 Rc3+ 34 Re3 g4+ 35 Kf2 Rc2+ 36 Kg3 Ra2 37 Rb3 Ra4 38 Rc3 ½-½

For the final round, I again sought out a dynamic game straight from the opening. Unfortunately, my opponent shied away from entering the main line by 6 Nxc6 rather than 6 Ndb5. The ensuing position was relatively drawish, but both sides had chances to seek an advantage. As playable as 8...d6 was, 6...Bxc6 would have been better. My reluctance to cede the bishop pair was understandable, but I would not have much opportunity to put the dark square bishop to use.

Moreover, as played I could not prove that my bishop was more valuable than White's knight, and after 9 Qd3 a favorable exchange of minor pieces was much harder to arrange.

White could claim an advantage after I my seemingly natural developing move 10...Be6. She exchanged on e6 and activated her queen, forking two pawns. The critical moment arrived on move 15. White should have played 15 Na4, but instead 15 Kh1 allowed me to double her pawns with 15...Bxc3.

I played 16...Qb6 with the understanding that the resulting rook endgame would be drawish. 16...d5 appeared more dynamic but I did not see a way to achieve an advantage there. Confronted with the choice between a drawish game with a simple plan and a less predictable one, the former seemed more desirable. White emerged from the ensuing series of exchanges with an extra pawn but no substantial winning chances.



COIN GAVE ME THE TASTE of a European tournament, with all of its strengths and weaknesses. The playing field felt much tougher than in the US. Most of my opponents appeared to play a class above their American counterparts. That could be attributed in part to the relative nature of ratings. While 1500 may represent the skill of an average tournament player, the meaning of “average” is location-specific. It could also be the case that the post-pandemic chess world is attracting only the most serious of competitors, as playing in a tournament is now more complicated and inconvenient. Finally, it is possible that some players have improved substantially since the pandemic started and are now underrated.

Altogether, it was a delightful experience. I played some of the most dynamic games in my tournament career. The world has changed and I've adapted to it. Notwithstanding minor inconveniences like waiting 20 minutes for an Uber, or playing in a facility that lacked basic amenities, the tournament was memorable and distinctive for a myriad of reasons.



**BREAKING
NEWS!**

Cherry Blossom Classic

As we go to press, the 8th Cherry Blossom Classic (May 27-31 in Dulles, Virginia) has ended in a three-way tie for 1st between GMs Illia Nyzhnyk & John Burke and IM Nikolas Theodorou. The winners each scored 7 out of 9 in an incredibly strong field that featured 14 grandmasters. We hope to have a complete report on this event in our next issue.

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