

VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

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2022 - Issue #1

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Zofchak Memorial

by Christina Schweiss



The 29th David Zofchak Memorial, a VCF Cup event, was held December 11-12 in Virginia Beach with a record turnout of 112 players. Hosted for the first time by Hampton Roads Chess Association, the event featured two-day Open and U1600 sections playing in the beautiful Hyatt Place hotel in Virginia Beach Town Center, as well as a one-day U1000 section held across the parking lot at the new Mid-Atlantic Chess Center in the Pembroke office park.

Six-time state champion Daniel Miller swept the Open section with a perfect score of 5 points to take clear 1st place. Larry Larkins & Christopher Williams shared 2nd/3rd with 4 points each. Mark Dunn & Jason Romsak tied for Top U1800 in Open with 3½ points apiece. Many young players chose to play up in the Open section with great results. Timothy McCall & Joshua Nichols, both juniors rated below 1500 at the start of the event, scored Top Upset for rounds 1 and 2 and both players finished with 3 points.

In the U1600 section, Lee Bennett & Durai Murugesan tied for 1st with 4½ points each. James Davis, an unrated player, took clear 3rd with 4. Maddox Jackson & Liam Cowell, both junior players, tied for Top U1200; Liam also won the Round 2 upset prize in this section after Joshua Foster had notched the biggest upset in Round 1. Kemal Erdikbas took home the Top Unrated prize.





The U1000 section awarded trophies. Clear 1st place went to Nathan Pierre with a perfect 5-0. A four-way tie for 2nd included, in tiebreak order, Ted Ambrose, Shrihan Mishra, Walker Wade Gilbert & Lenny Buelmann-Prok. Alikhan Karim took home the Top U600 trophy, Jason Lloyd Top Unrated, and Chase Behrens Top U800.

About half the players in U1000, and a third in U1600, only started playing over-the-board chess during the pandemic. Almost 12% of the total field consisted of new players in their first rated event. We also processed USCF renewals for some members returning to tournament play after a decade or more away. It's great to see passion for the game exploding!

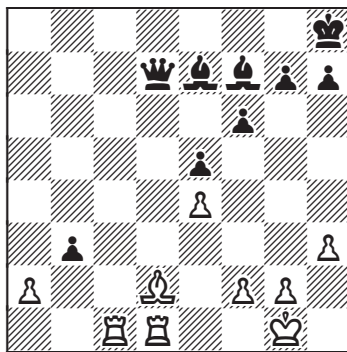
The event ran very smoothly with great feedback from players and parents. HRCA made the deliberate decision to increase the entry fees and the prize money from previous Zofchak memorials in order to attract more players. With the record turnout, a total of \$3,776 in prize money was awarded, along with chess store certificates for our upset winners.

Cayden Jackson - Darsh Shetty Two Knights

Notes by Cayden Jackson

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 d3 Be7 5 c3 d6 6 b4 O-O 7 O-O Bg4 8 h3 Bh5 9 Nbd2 a6 10 Re1 b5! [This is strong because then there's ...a5, which I completely missed.] 11 Bb3 a5 12 bxa5 Nxa5 13 d4 Nd7 14 Qc2 c5 15 Bd5 Rb8 16 dxe5 [16 dxc5 dxc5 ♣] 16...Nxe5 17 Nxe5 dxe5 18 c4 Kh8 19 Bb2 Qc7 20 Nb3 Nxc4 21 Bxc4 bxc4 22 Qxc4 Rb4 23 Qd5 f6 24 Ba3 Bf7 25 Qd2 Rd8 26 Bxb4 Rxd2 27 Bxd2 c4 28 Rac1?? Qd7 29 Red1 cxb3

30 Bb4 b2 [I missed this.] 31 Rb1 Qe8 32 Rxb2 Bxb4 33 Rxb4 Bxa2 34 Rd2 Be6 35 Rdb2 Qg6? [35...Qc6! wins, with the same idea to attack the pawn but without trapping his own king.] 36 Rb8+ Bg8 37 f3 h5 38 Rc2 Kh7 39 Rcc8 Kh6? [He had to go for the draw with 39...Qf7 or else he loses a pawn.] 40 Rxg8 Qg5 41 Rbc8 Qe3+ 42 Kh2 Qf4+ 43 Kh1 Qg3 44 Rc7 Qe1+ 45 Kh2 Qe3 46 Rgxg7 Qf2 47 Rg3 Qd2 48 Rcg7 Qf4 49 h4 f5 50 Kh3 Qg4+ 51 fxg4 fxg4+ 52 R3xg4 hxg4+ 53 Rxg4 Kh5 54 Rg5+ Kh6 55 Kg4 Kh7 56 Kf5 Kh6 57 Kf6 Kh7 58 Rg6 Kh8 59 Kf7 Kh7 60 h5 Kh8 61 Rh6mate 1-0

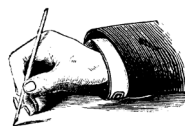




Jonathan Ngo - David Rasmussen Petroff

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Qe2 Qe7 6 Nc3 Nxc3 7 dxc3 Nc6 8 Bf4 Bg4 9 Qxe7+ Bxe7 10 Be2 O-O 11 O-O-O a6 12 h3 Be6 13 Nd4 Nxd4 14 cxd4 b5 15 Bf3 Rab8 16 Rde1 Bf6 17 d5 Bd7 18 g4 Rfe8 19 Bg3 Be5 20 Bxe5 Rxe5 21 Rxe5 dxe5 22 Re1 Re8 23 Kd2 f6 24 b3 Rc8 25 c4 Kf7 26 c5 Ke7 27 Kc3 g5 28 Be4 h6 29 Rd1 Be8 30 Kb4 a5+ 31 Kc3 h5 32 Bf5 Rd8 33 b4 a4 34 Rd3 h4 35 Kd2 Bf7 36 Be4 Kf8 37 Ke3 Kg7 38 a3 Bg6 39 Bxg6 Kxg6 40 Ke4 Rd7 41 d6 c6 42 f3 Kf7 43 Kf5 Rd8 44 d7 Ke7 45 Rd6 Rf8 46 d8Q+ Rxd8 47 Rxd8 Kxd8 48 Kxf6 Kd7 49 Kxe5 1-0

From the Editor...



1989 VIRGINIA OPEN

John McCarthy won clear first at the **1989 Virginia Open**, beating *inter al* state champions Eugene Meyer, Geoff McKenna, and drawing Richard Delaune. But 1989 predates the tournament histories that the USCF serves up online. John wrote in hoping to find a crosstable or other records of the event. Unfortunately, VCF newsletter publication was irregular during some of the late 1980s. My search of what archives I have turned up nothing. If, on the off chance, anyone has old newsletters or other records about that event, please contact the Editor.

TIME CAPSULE

While I couldn't find anything to help with John's request, my rummaging through old batches of documents was not entirely in vain. I came across an envelope I'd

Tyson's Corner Weekly Action and Blitz Every Sunday at 3 pm (Action) and 12:30 pm (Blitz)

The Westin Tyson's Corner

7801 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church Va

3 pm Action: 4-SS, Game/30 delay 5. EF \$30 on or before Wednesday, \$35 on or before Saturday, \$40 on Sunday (on-site registration is allowed, registration for round one closes at 2:45 pm). Two Sections: Open and Under 1500. \$\$: \$100 for 1st in Open, \$50 for 1st in U1500. Sets provided but bring your own clock. *12:30 pm Blitz:* 5-double SS, Game/5 minutes. EF \$20 if also signed up for action. If only playing blitz, \$30 on or before Wednesday, \$35 on or before Saturday, \$40 on Sunday (on-site registration is allowed, registration for round one closes at 12:15 pm). \$\$ \$100 for 1st place. Sets provided but bring your own clock. *Both:* Registration links are posted online at <https://www.dmvchess.com/inpersonournaments>. For questions, email josh@dmvchess.com or call 703-609-0499.



never noticed before buried among a bunch of uninteresting old VCF business papers. It contained a series of wonderful photographs, many depicting old friends! There was nothing to indicate the identity of the photographer. But I enjoyed them, I'm guessing other longtime Virginia chess players might also appreciate seeing them. Here's a small sample (by no means all) with a few comments by me.



That's master and tournament organizer Vince Moore! He lives in Florida now and I saw him when I was at the 2019 US Open in Orlando - see VIRGINIA CHESS 2019/6, p 11.





The picture at the bottom of the opposite page is the late David Eisen. He was a regular at Virginia tournaments and also one of the strongest correspondence chess players in the country. Pictured above is Maryland GM Larry Kaufman! Note the Chess Informant on the table beside him—the ChessBase of a bygone pre-digital era. (And check out the big analog clock!)



Seven-time state champion Charles Powell and GM Lubomir Kavalek playing for the Washington Plumbers in the National Chess League. The NCL was a play-by-telephone league. The cards indicate their opponents, Larry Kaufman and Arnold Denker, who I believe would have been playing from Florida—perhaps Larry can confirm that?



Charlie Powell again. I believe the shirt he's wearing is one of mine that I gave him!—but that's a story for another day.



Former World Champion Tigran Petrosian giving a simultaneous exhibition. He did give one in Washington DC and presumably this was it, but I don't know the exact date or venue, nor do I recognize anyone else in the photo. Can anybody provide more details?



That's Phil Collier! Eating a donut, it appears. No way to know exactly when or where.



That may be IM Steve Odendahl holding the trophy. I'm more certain that the guy in the lower right behind the trophy is the late Homer Jones.



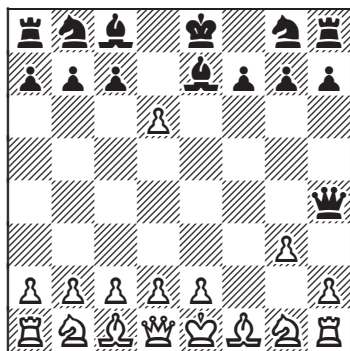
IM Mark Ginsburg has a website presenting his "personal chess history". (<https://nezhmet.wordpress.com>). It hasn't been updated in a long time (we're not talking just month but years, a decade...) but it's got tons of pictures, stories and otherwise lost games from the 1970s and 80s. Maybe he will want to add this picture if he doesn't already have it?



ROBINSON PUZZLE CHALLENGE

Finally, the solution to last issue's puzzle by Gary Robinson! I received no correct answers from readers so, alas, no prize will be awarded. The puzzle, briefly, was: after White's third move in a 'book' opening (*Modern Chess Openings 14* calls it "entertaining") Black plays a forcing move after which, on his 4th turn, he then has the option to set an unsound trap. If he does so, White (already ahead in material) can reply by... 1) capturing a pawn; 2) capturing a piece; 3) capturing Black's queen; or 4) checking Black's king. Question: which one of White's 5th-move options is a blunder?

The opening in question is From's Gambit, a counter to Bird's opening. The introductory moves are **1 f4 e5 2 fxe5 d6 3 exd6** and now instead of the normal (and best!) **3...Bxd6**, have Black play the "forcing" **Qh4+** and then after **4 g3** lay the "unsound trap" **4...Be7?**



The answer to the riddle is thus choice #3 — capturing the queen would be a blunder: **5 gxh4?? Bxh4mate**. (Choice #2, taking the piece, **5 dxe7**, would be best play of course.)



Jesse Kraai – Andrew Samuelson Maryland Open (ICC) 2021 London System

Notes by Andrew Samuelson

This game was played in round 2 of the 2021 Maryland Open. I'd recently lost to the same opponent with Black in the last round of the Atlantic Open. In that game I walked into some analysis from one of his other recent games, dropping a pawn by move 15 and eventually the game as well. I expected to see the London System again, but this time I decided to switch lines. **1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 c5 3 c3** [In a later round, Kraai played d5 instead. This would have led to a much different position than the game.] **3...d5** [This isn't really my typical type of setup for Black in d4 openings. I worried a little about dxc5 in the opening. Even if it's not the best move, it might have gotten me out of my comfort zone.] **4 Bf4** [4 dxc5 is basically a reversed Slav.] **4...Nc6 5 e3 Qb6** [Now at least dxc5 is not much of a threat. London System players often prefer the move order with 2 Bf4 and then Nd2 rather than Nf3, apparently to avoid precisely the line I played here.] **6 Qb3 c4 7 Qc2** [7 Qxb6 axb6 8 Na3 Na7 9 Nd2 Bf5 10 f3 b5 is another way to handle the tension.] **7...Bf5** [This doesn't work without Nc6 on the board as then there will be a mate on c8.] **8 Qc1 e6** [It may have been better to play 8...Nh5 9 Bg3 Nxg3 10 hxg3 g6.] **9 Be2 Be7 10 h3 O-O 11 O-O h6 12 Nbd2 Qd8?!** [This may not be best, but I wasn't entirely sure what to do. White can try to play for the e4 pawn break, so I wanted to push my queenside pawns to get some counterplay. 12... Rfc8 13 Bd1 Qd8 may have been a better way to reorganize.] **13 Bd1** [In principle, White is trading his good bishop for Black's bad bishop. However, the f5 bishop controls some key squares while the e2 bishop didn't really have anything to do. My opponent was still playing quickly, so it's possible we were still within the bounds of his preparation. 13 b3 b5 14 a4 a6 15 Qb2 Qd7 seems roughly equal.] **13...b5 14 Bc2** [I thought for a while here. I may want White to take on f5, as after ...exf5 my control over e4 increases. However, with Bf4 and h6 having been played, it's harder to protect the f5 pawn with ...g6. Eventually, I decided not to change the pawn structure and traded on c2 instead of f5.] **14...Bxc2 15 Qxc2 a5 16 b3 cxb3 17 Qxb3 b4 18 Rfc1 a4** [18...Qb6 might be better as Black keeps some queenside initiative.] **19 Qb1 Rc8 20 cxb4 Nxb4 21 Ne5 Rxc1+** [I looked at 21...a3 but thought my a3 pawn might be a liability.] **22 Qxc1 Qc8** [22...a3 23 Nc6 Nxc6 24 Qxc6 Bb4 25 Nb3 Ne4 might have been better.] **23 a3 Qxc1+** [I originally intended 23...Nc2 but there are some tactical issues. 24 Ra2 Nxa3 25

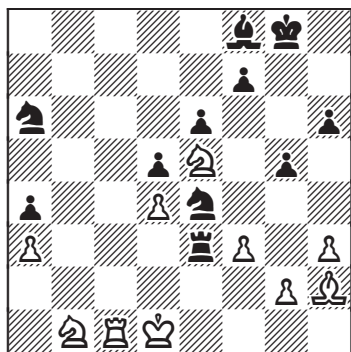
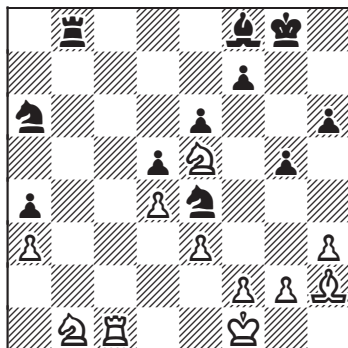


Nc6 and White wins.] **24 Rxc1 Na6** [Here I was thinking my position wasn't so bad. The knight on a6 seems out of play, but it guards c7 and I have a fairly clear plan to improve my position with ...Ra8 and then target the a3 pawn. In any event, White needs to move quickly to exploit the c-file and active pieces.] **25 Nb1 Ra8 26 Nc6** [Probably a step in the wrong direction as it spends a tempo and only encourages Bf8] **26...Bf8 27 Kf1 Ne4** [I was aiming to bring my knight to c4 or b5 to attack a3] **28 Ne5** [Perhaps this retreat is an admission that things aren't going entirely according to plan.] **28...g5 29 Bh2 Rb8!** [A nice way to improve my position, using a tactical trick to take the b-file. The point is that any move by the e5 knight can be met by Rxb1, winning a piece. Ke2 doesn't help either, as Rxb1 still wins.]

(diagram)

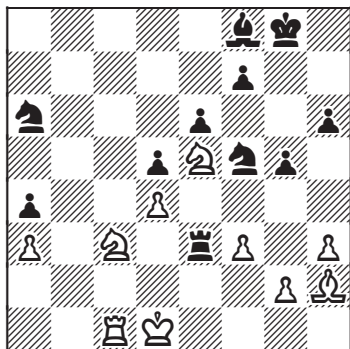
30 Ke1? [30 Kg1 is apparently a better try, but to undo a move this way is psychologically difficult. Black is probably slightly better after 30...Rb3 31 Nd7 Bxa3 32 Nxa3 Rxa3 33 Rc8+ Kg7 34 Be5+ f6 35 Nxf6 Ra1+ 36 Kh2 Nxf6 37 Rc6 Nb8 38 Bxb8 Ne4, but it isn't much.]

30...Rb3 [I also looked at 30...Rb2 but wasn't sure about 31 Nd3 although 31...Rb3 is probably still good for Black.] **31 f3 Rxe3+** [While it was nice to take a pawn, this may not have been the most accurate move. 31...Bxa3 32 Nxa3 Rxe3+ 33 Kd1 Nf2+ 34 Kd2 Rxa3 was stronger and simpler, but I was worried that my knight would be trapped on f2] **32 Kd1** (diagram)



32...Nd6? [I also examined 32...Nf6 33 Rc6 Nb8 34 Rb6 Rb3 35 Rxb3 axb3 36 Nxf7 Nc6 37 Ne5 Nxd4, which is about equal. Meanwhile, the best move was 32...Nf2+ but 33 Kd2 Rb3 34 Bg1 f6 35 Nd7 Nd3 36 Rc8 Kf7 37 Rxf8+ Ke7 38 Ra8 Kxd7 is a lot to calculate! There are quite a few hanging pieces in this line.] **33 Nc3?** [The rook is temporarily trapped but White can't win it. Apparently 33 Ng4 Rd3+ 34 Ke2 Rb3 35 Nd2 Rxa3 36 Nf6+ Kh8 37 Bxd6 Bxd6 38 Rc8+ Bf8 39 Rxf8+ Kg7 40 Ra8 Nb4 41 Nh5+ Kh7 42 Rf8 Nc6 43 Rxf7+ Kg6

44 Rf6+ Kh7 would be equal, but I didn't really consider it.] **33...Nf5!** [I also looked at 33...Nc4 34 Nxc4 dxc4 35 Nxa4 Rxa3 36 Rxc4 but I'm probably only a little better there.] (see diagram top of next page)

**34 Ne2**

I calculated the following attempts to take the rook:

i) 34 Bg1 Bxa3 35 Bxe3 Nxe3+ 36 Kd2 Bxc1+ 37 Kxc1; 34 Ng4 Bxa3 35 Nxe3 Nxe3+ 36 Kd2 Bxc1+ 37 Kxc1;

ii) 34 g4 Bxa3 35 gxf5 Bxc1 36 Kxc1 Rxc3+;

iii) 34 Kd2 Bxa3 35 Rb1 Bb4

All these lines work out well for Black.

34...Rxa3 35 Nd7 [Threatening Rc8 as well as Nxf8 followed by Bd6+, but thankfully it's my move!] **35...Ne3+ 36 Ke1 Bb4+ 37 Kf2 Nc4 38 Ne5**

38 Nf6+ White can't really follow this move up with his rook and other knight out of the game. **38...Bd2 39 Rd1 39 Nxc4** [My bailout line, just in case I miscalculated was 39...Bxc1 40 Nxa3 Bxa3] **39...Be3+ 40 Kf1 Nxe5** [We reached the time control, but the clock didn't really matter at this point.] **41 Bxe5 Nb4 42 Ng3 Ra2 0-1** I'd calculated two nice checkmates—43 Nh5 Rf2+ 44 Ke1 Nc2mate; and 43 Rb1 Rf2+ 44 Ke1 Nd3+ 45 Kd1 Rd2mate—but my opponent resigned.

Corrosive Tolerance

BRAZILIAN TOURNAMENT ENDS IN PIZZA

by Aleksey Bashtavenko

"As for the Brazilian malandro, or trickster, there is no higher commandment today than to respect the hustle."

-Alex Hochuli, THE BRAZILIANIZATION OF THE WORLD

ON A WARM WINTER DAY, I stood outside the tournament hall observing an elderly fellow speak to a group of chess players. I could not understand much of what was discussed, but I heard someone mutter, "*Saccanagem! Mike Ramos, filho da puta!*". I tried to get clarity on the situation, but I saw only more disgruntled faces of men too livid to explain what was going on. Fighting my way through the irate crowd, I reached the bearer of the bad news and he explained to me that the first round had to be postponed because the chairs had not arrived.

Still flummoxed and struggling to make sense of the situation because of the language barrier, I found someone who speaks Spanish. I learned that he drove all the way from Curitiba—over 16 hours! If the commute itself wasn't daunting enough, this was the young man's first tournament. What brought him all the



way to Marica? He told me that Mike Ramos previously hosted a couple of tournaments that were enormously successful, and moreover Grandmaster Darcy Lima was scheduled to give a simultaneous exhibition here.

A glimmer of hope—rumor spread that a pickup truck arrived carrying tables and chairs. We returned to our hotels heaving sighs of relief, presuming that the worst was over. Yet I could not help but wonder: who was Mike Ramos? And who was the grey-haired spokesman delivering the bad news? How on earth could round one have been cancelled at the last minute? Why have we not heard about these logistical issues earlier?

Hours later, we returned to the tournament hall but Mike Ramos was nowhere to be found. Instead of showing up to inform us the event was altogether cancelled, he sent a text message about problems with sponsors, and the venue being no longer available. But then what on earth could the previous excuse about the missing chairs have been about?

Pressured by a flurry of hostile messages, Mike Ramos finally agreed to meet with the players at a nearby hotel. But the meeting left us with more questions than answers. It turned out that the sponsors had withdrawn their support weeks ago—why were we learning about this just now? The venue was indeed no longer available—but why was Ramos offering only a partial refund? Why could he not have restructured the tournament and hosted it in the very hotel where we were having this meeting?

Players had come from all over the country, they would much rather have played in some kind of event even if it had a faster time control. Yet Ramos offered little by way of convincing answers. Numerous players vowed to sue him. However, the CBX (Brazilian Chess Federation) have yet to investigate this case, and they offered no indication that Ramos would be penalized.

DESPERATE TO MAKE LEMONADE OUT OF THE LEMONS, I ordered an Uber to take me to a nearby beach. Upon arrival the driver requested additional payment, complaining that Uber wasn't paying him enough. Would he have made the same proposal to a Brazilian local? I refused the thinly-veiled guilt-tripping ploy and began wandering the beaches of Arraial do Cabo and Búzios

A marked cultural peculiarity divided the local businesses. The more respectable of them mostly shied away from Samba. They had a low opinion of this genre of music. By contrast, the tawdry beach bars played nothing but Samba, and had no problem allowing street musicians to barge in.

Reflecting upon what had happened at the tournament, I couldn't help but see a connection between the Samba at the beach bars and Ramos' classless handling of the chess event. *Jeitinho Brasileiro* literally translates from Portuguese as "the Brazilian way of life", but there is a slight play on words involved. *Jeito* means ways but the diminutive conjugation *jeitinho* carries a sardonic undertone. In other words, *Jeitinho*



Brasileiro can be taken to mean “the mischievous little Brazilian way of life”. Still, *jeitinho brasileiro* seemed too soft for an allegedly incorrigible miscreant like Ramos. As one player put it to me: “I’d understand you calling it *jeitinho brasileiro* if he had cut in line at a grocery store or bribed his way through some maze of bureaucratic government procedures. No, no, we’re past *jeitinho* here, he is a *malandro*!”

Jeitinho Brasileiro is a cultural behavior that can be broadly described as cutting corners—a practice that seems tempting in light of the challenging local institutions. Brazil was once a Portuguese colony, but in particular it was a resource-extraction colony. In other words, Portuguese colonists seldom intended to *live* in Brazil; hence they had little interest in turning it into a livable country. This created a cultural foundation for “corrosive tolerance” as an eminent Brazilian literary critic Roberto Schwarz has described the Brazilian way of life. “The only people satisfied with their situation are financial elites and venal politicians. Everyone complains, but everyone shrugs their shoulders. This slow degradation of society is not so much a runaway train, but more of a jittery rollercoaster, occasionally holding out promise of ascent, yet never breaking free from the tracks. We always come back to where we started, shaken and disoriented, haunted by what might have been.”

The casual acceptance of *jeitinho brasileiro* can easily escalate the next level, the “dialectic of the malandro” (“trickster”). Schwartz writes of a “very Brazilian attitude of ‘corrosive tolerance,’ which originates in the Colony and lasts through the 20th century, and which becomes a main thread in our culture.” For a people who must make do with their unworkable institutions, last minute cancellations are entirely acceptable. Confusion and erratic change are the norm, and no reasonable person can expect plans to go as expected. Or, in the Brazilian idiom, *Tudo acaba em pizza*—“It all ends in pizza.” Mike Ramos took off with the players’ money; they were left to digest his pizza.

Deeply vexed by this situation, I resolved to play only in tournaments run by reputable organizers with long-standing records of excellence. I scarcely could have done better than by signing up for the Floripa Spring Chess Open headed by Kaiser Luis Mafra, a tournament director with the sobriquet “the German”. (Brazil is the opposite of Germany in every conceivable way.)

The tournament directors at the Floripa Spring Chess Open were professional and multilingual. The event was held at an opulent five-star hotel with the rates of roughly \$50 per night. Yet again, some things cannot be changed. One round had to be interrupted when construction workers outside got into a loud argument. (The TDs were reluctant to close windows because of COVID concerns.) And before the first round, an improvised prayer meeting materialized just down the hallway. They were asked to keep their noise level down, but of course no one was in a position to enforce this demand.



Aleksey Bashtavenko - Derlei Florianovitz Nimzoindian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 a3 Bxc3+ 5 bxc3 d5 6 cxd5 exd5 7 Nf3 O-O 8 Bg5 h6 9 Bh4 Nbd7 10 e3 c6 11 Bd3 Re8 12 O-O Qa5 13 Qc2 Ne4 14 c4 g5 15 Bg3 Ndf6 16 cxd5 Nxc3 17 hxc3 cxd5 18 Ne5 Bd7 19 Rfc1 Rac8 20 Qb2 Bc6 21 Rc5 Qb6 22 Qb4 Ne4 23 Bxe4 dxe4 24 Rac1 Re6 25 Qc4 Kg7 26 a4 a6 27 Qa2 Qd8 28 R1c3 Qe8 29 a5 f6 30 Nxc6 Rxc6 31 Qc2 h5 32 d5 Rxc5 33 Rxc5 Rxc5 34 Qxc5 Qe5 35 Kf1 g4 36 Ke2 Kf7 37 Kd2 Qb2+ 38 Ke1 Qb1+ 1/2-1/2

For the opening round I sat right by the door, exposed to the intrusive noise carrying from the prayer meeting. I moved rapidly, hardly taking time to contemplate. Instead of 4 Qc2, the Capablanca variation, I reflexively grabbed my a-pawn. By the time I had realized what I had done it was too late, I had committed to the Saemisch variation, an opening I knew next to nothing about.

Instead of the timid 10...c6 my opponent would have done better to actively challenge the center with 10...c5. Although Black managed to plant a knight on e4, I was able to push my backwards pawn, liquidating the structural liabilities in my pawn chain and preparing to control the c-file. After 18 Ne5, the position began to heavily favor White: the c-file was firmly under my control and my minor pieces outperformed his.

Unfortunately, my thinking at that point was guided by the logic that since I controlled the queenside, my opponent must have been stronger on the other flank (?!). Thus I arrived at the erroneous conviction that I must press my attack on the queenside, rather than avail myself of opportunities in the center or on the kingside. Instead of 27 Qa2, the move was 27 Ng4! with an immediate threat of a fork d5.

Despite the missed opportunity, 32 Rxc6 Rxc6 33 d5 would have obligated Black to exchange rooks, leaving White in a much more desirable queen and pawn endgame. Far from 'won' to be certain, but White clearly has the upper hand. Instead, I pushed the d-pawn on move 32, forfeiting my advantage.

DAY 2 HADN'T TURNED OUT WELL FOR ME, and I wasn't sure what was to blame for my dismal performance. Was I not thinking clearly because of the culture shock? Perhaps it was the intrusive noise? After all, who wants to play chess where you can hear a loud argument between construction workers outside? At another point the round was interrupted by a crying infant. I could have sworn it must have been in the tournament hall itself, yet from the window I noticed the hotel was surrounded by a massive wall that stretched for over 100 feet. Evidently the infant was right outside the wall.

I lost rounds 2 and 3, but won round 4 against a much weaker opponent. This was hardly consolation; I could not help but dwell on the two games I'd blundered away. Exhausted,



I returned to my hotel. But I could not sleep, both because of my restless mind, and also the festivities taking place in the room a floor above me. It was 3 am before I finally fell asleep. Shortly thereafter I was reawakened by a phone call urging me to stop making noise.

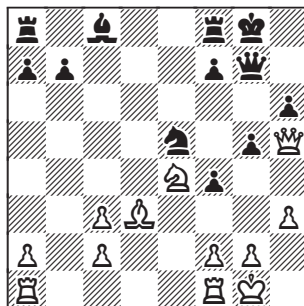
Southern Brazil has a great deal of cultural influence from its Spanish-speaking neighbors to the south. The local dialect is “Portañol”, or a portmanteau of Spanish and Portuguese. I was able to communicate with my Spanish but apparently not well enough, as the hotel staff either misunderstood my explanation or simply didn’t believe me. The misunderstanding continued for another 30-40 minutes. Hotel employees and other guests continued to knock on my door complaining about the noise. Eventually I abandoned verbal communication. By pointing my index finger straight up, they understood where the problem was coming from.

Lucas De Souza Mileski - Aleksey Bashtavenko Sicilian

1 Nf3 c5 2 e4 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Nb3 Bb4 7 Bd3 Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 O-O 9 Bg5 h6 10 Bh4 g5 11 Bg3 d5 12 exd5 Nxd5 13 Qh5 Qf6 14 O-O Nf4 15 Bxf4 exf4 16 Nc5 Ne5 17 Ne4 Qg7 18 h3

(diagram)

18...Be6 19 Nc5 Bd5 20 Rfe1 Rfe8 21 Be4 Bxe4 22 Nxe4 f5 23 Nd6 Re6 24 Nxf5 Qf6 25 Nxf6+ Qxf6 26 Qxf6 Rxf6 27 Rxe5 Rg6 28 Rb1 b6 29 Rbb5 Rc8 30 Rxcg5 1-0



The game had a promising start as my opponent played a weaker variation against the Sveshnikov. I felt confident after managing...d5 in one go, which is a thematic move for Black in this variation. Although the strategy of pushing the bishop away with ...h6 and ...g5 is part of a book line, it created weaknesses around my king that later contributed to my downfall.

After 14 moves, the position clearly favored Black: space advantage and prospects of attacking White’s king. However, I missed a critical chance (see diagram) for a timely 18...f3 break. Had he responded with 19 gxf3 his queen would have been at a risk of being trapped after 19...Ng6! But had he instead pushed past with 19 g3, the queen would once again have been at risk after 19...Bf5 Δ Bg6! Hence, White’s only sensible answer would have been 19 Ng3, opening an escape route for the queen but allowing me to undermine the security of White’s king with 19...fxg2!

Alas, I played the routine developing move with 18...Be6, which allowed my opponent to achieve a comfortable position. After he managed to exchange the light-squared bishops, I could sense that my advantage had evaporated. I thought carefully for a good five minutes as the construction workers outside began their argument. Another five minutes and finally



I succumbed to the “Kotov syndrome”, blundering the game away on the spot. Nikolai Krogius once said: “When you’re worse, you must defend, and defend your weakest point!”. I lost because I was not prepared to admit that I was worse. In light of the dynamic opening I’d selected, I wasn’t even willing to think about defending, let alone trying to identify my weakest point. 22...f5 lost material and gave White promising attacking chances.

Matheus Lopes Da Silva - Aleksey Bashtavenko Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Nd5 Nxd5 8 exd5 Nb8 9 c4 a6 10 Nc3 Be7 11 Be3 O-O 12 Bd3 f5 13 O-O f4 14 Bc1 f3 15 gxf3 Bh3 16 Re1 Nd7 17 f4 exf4 18 Qh5 Nf6 19 Qxh3 Rc8 20 Bxf4 1-0

Buoyed by misplaced confidence in the merits of my opening preparation, I pushed 13...f4 hoping to develop an initiative on the kingside. It would have been better to simply develop 13...Nbd7, followed by ...Bg5 to exchange my bad bishop. Haunted by the missed opportunity to play ...f3 in my previous game, I executed that move at the first chance this time but unfortunately that timing was far from ideal. Still, my position was only slightly worse after 17 f4. I could have played 17...Qe8 to defend the mating threat. Instead I grabbed a poisoned pawn with 17...exf4.

Aleksey Bashtavenko - Francisco Evandro S Oliveira King’s Indian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 O-O 6 Be2 e6 7 O-O c6 8 Bg5 Nbd7 9 e5 h6 10 exf6 Bxf6 11 Bxh6 Re8 12 Be3 Kg7 13 Ne4 d5 14 Nxf6 Nxf6 15 Bg5 Rh8 16 Ne5 Qg8 17 Bxf6+ Kxf6 18 Qd2 Ke7 19 Qg5+ f6 20 Nxe6+ Kd6 21 Qg3+ e5 22 dxe5+ fxe5 23 Qxe5+ Kc5 24 Qe7+ Kb6 25 c5+ Ka5 26 b4+ Kxb4 27 Rfb1+ Ka5 28 Qc7+ Ka4 29 Bd1+ 1-0

Round 4 was disappointingly easy. My opponent went into the King’s Indian Defense but neglected to play 6...e5. His 6...e6 ran into trouble immediately. By move 10 he was already down a piece, and the rest of the game hardly merits discussion.

I went into round 5 thoroughly exhausted from the constant late night interruptions—the worst possible circumstances for me to have a 9am round. I rolled out of bed a few minutes after 9 and stumbled downstairs in a borderline comatose state, not entirely sure if I had been sleepwalking or if this was really happening. As I finally made my way to the board, a good 10–15 minutes were missing on my clock. Fortunately, the cafeteria nearby offered a complimentary breakfast, and the tournament directors had no qualms with me wandering back and forth between my table and the cafeteria.

Fabio Biasi Pavao - Aleksey Bashtavenko English

1 c4 Nf6 2 g3 c6 3 Bg2 d5 4 b3 e6 5 Bb2 Be7 6 Nf3 O-O 7 O-O Nbd7 8 d3 b6 9 Nc3 Bb7 10 Qc2 Rc8 11 Rfd1 Qc7 12 Rac1 Qb8 13 e3 Rfd8 14 Ne2 Nf8 15



Be5 Qa8 16 cxd5 Nxd5 17 Qb2 f6 18 Bc3 c5 19 e4 Nxc3 20 Qxc3 Rd6 21 Nd2 Kh8 22 Nc4 Rd7 23 f3 e5 24 Bh3 Rcd8 25 Bxd7 Nxd7 26 f4 exf4 1-0

My opponent played the English Opening, which allowed me a comfortable system I could play quickly and accurately. 2...c6 blunted his fianchettoed bishop and presaged a solid pawn structure e6-d5-c6. On move 10 I could have more actively fought for the center with 10...e5, but still I felt confident after 11...Qc7 allowed me to maneuver the queen back to a8 and fight for the light-squares in tandem with my fianchettoed bishop. 16...Nxd5 allowed me to further contest the center with subsequent ...f6 and ...c5. After 20...Rd6, the position seemed favorable for Black as I asserted my presence in the center and targeted White's backward d3 pawn.

I cannot explain why I then played 21...Kh8. Was I distracted by running back and forth between the cafeteria and my board? Should I also blame sleep deprivation? Such excuses are unconvincing; we all play inexplicably absurd moves from time to time. Perhaps I was looking to avoid a possible check on the light-squares? At any rate, a simple 21...Rcd8 would have been better. In short order I stepped into the skewer 24. Bh3.

Afterwards I ran into my opponent at the bar. He was a jolly and urbane fellow, open to discussing a broad range of topics with the utmost civility. He had with him his daughter, who'd circled his board like a satellite throughout our game. For Fabio, chess is a family affair. In the subsequent months I encountered several members of his family at other tournaments. "You didn't play badly, you played just one bad move," Fabio observed as he ran our game through an engine. Glossing over numerous positions, he pointed out how the opening gave me a slight edge. If I had only sat still, I could have comfortably targeted his d3 pawn...

I had little interest in analyzing the game. Instead, I preferred to discuss my recent experiences in Brazil. We pondered the underlying structural causes in Brazilian society, and we agreed that the stark inequality was a severe issue to be reckoned with. One would have to go to Africa to find a country with a higher score on the Gini Coefficient than Brazil. In a characteristically Brazilian fashion, my companion accommodated conflict by shrugging his shoulders and fatalistically accepting "the world without guilt".

I didn't know this at the time, but my jovial interlocutor had embodied the "corrosive tolerance". He stared at me blankly and lamented "all we can do is be blind to it". Be blind to it? Very well, my friend. Let it all end in pizza then!

Northern Virginia Open

The 2021 Northern Virginia Open attracted 139 players Nov 20-21, 2021. No less than five players scored 4½ points out of 5 to tie for 1st place: 6-time state champion master Daniel Miller, plus experts Francisco Colorado, David Siamon, Skyler Tunc & Andrew Feng. Alas, no report, games or photographs available as we go to press.

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