

VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

The bimonthly publication of the
Virginia Chess Federation

2022 - #3



Fernand Léger, <http://deludoscachorum.blogspot.com/2022/08/fernand-leger.html>

VIRGINIA CHESS

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2022 - Issue #3

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Cherry Blossom Classic

THE 9th Cherry Blossom Classic drew 266 entrants across five sections, May 26-30 in Dulles. The Open section was dominated by Columbian GM Joshua Ruiz Castillo whose 8-1 tally set him a point and a half ahead of the field. Hedinn Steingrimsson, Sahil Sinha & Justin Paul scored 6½ apiece to share the runners-up position. Next at 6-3 came Aleksandr Lenderman, Olivier Chikuratte and Virginia state champion Jason Morefield. The only 5½ score was Bijan Tahmassebi, and a large group at 5-4 rounded out the prizewinners: Carlos Hevia Alejano, Daniel Girsh, Andrew Samuelson, Sudarshan Sriniaiyer, Naveen Prabhu, Alex Jian, Mikhail Zlotnikov, Ellen Wang & Eric Kurtz.

The Under 2300 section also saw a clear winner in the person of Sam Schenk, who scored 6-1. David Siamon, Chen-Chen Ye & Zachary Martin were each half a point less. Other prizewinners were Daniel Lowinger, James Nguyen, Roman Rychkov, Larry Larkins, Aasa Dommalapati & Ronen Wilson.

Kyle Zhuang, Devesh Cherukuri, Jo Patino Niebles & Ryan Zhou tied for 1st in the Under 2000 section with 5½-1½. Other prizewinners in the section were Naveen Balakrishnan, Daniel Wang & Matthew Diao.

The Under 1700 group also saw a 4-way tie for 1st with 5½ points between Enkhchimeg Galsandorj, Sunmay Padiyar, Jordan Vespa & Yue Cao. Ved Vanga, Samanyu Thandra, Aaron Zhou, Benjamin Soyka & Kevin Fang all won class prizes.

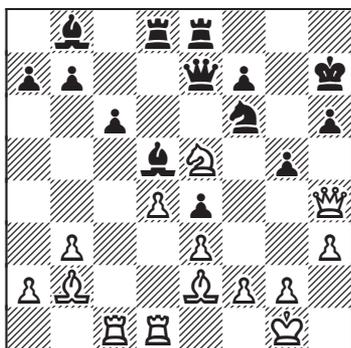
Dr Katherine King came from West Virginia to score 6-1 and capture clear 1st in the Under 1400 section. John McAdams & Alex Kim followed at 5½. Everitt Clark, Vaahini Vijjaeepay, Nathan Zeigler, Andrew Huang & Peter Harmatuk also won prizes.

Finally, the 74 player, 6-round Under 1100 group was topped by Ryan Yang with 5½. Daniela Fitzsimmons, Timothy Stevens Jr, Garion Cheng, George Miller, & Brian Graves all shared runners-up honors. Luke Huppert was the Top Unrated.

THE PERFORMANCE OF JUSTIN PAUL deserves special note. En route to tying for 2nd place in the Open group, Justin inflicted the only defeat on the tournament winner—and he earned an IM norm!

Joshua Ruiz Castillo - Justin Paul Semi-Slav

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 d5 4 e3 e6 5 Nc3 Nbd7 6 Be2 Bd6 7 b3 O-O 8 Bb2 dxc4 9 Bxc4 e5 10 h3 Qe7 11 Qc2 h6 12 O-O Re8 13 Ne4 Nxe4 14 Qxe4 Nf6 15 Qh4 e4 16 Ne5 Be6 17 Be2 Rad8 18 Rac1 Bd5 19 Nc4 Bb8 20 Rfd1 Kh7 21 Ne5 g5! (diagram next page)

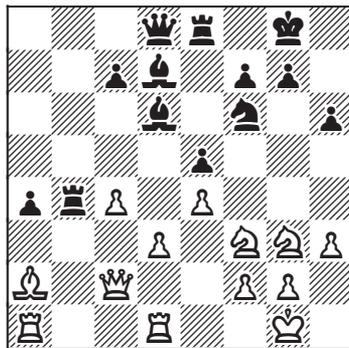


[This turns out to be very double edged.] **22 Qg3 Nd7 23 f4 exf3 24 Bd3+ Kg8 25 e4 Be6 26 Qxf3 Nxe5 27 dxe5** [The doubled pawns are inert and they block the activity of White's own bishops, but on the other hand they do control a lot of central squares.] **27...Rd7 28 Be2 Red8 29 Qf6 Rxd1+ 30 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 31 Bxd1 Qd7 32 Bh5 Qd2** [The preparatory 32...Bc7 might be even stronger.] **33 Qf2 Qd3 34 Qd4 Qb1+ 35 Kh2 Bc7 36 Ba3 Qxa2 37 Be7 Bb6 38 Bc5** [if 38 Qd6 Qf2 Black's attack is the more compelling] **38...Qxb3 39 Bxb6 Qxb6 40 Qd6 c5 41 Qe7 c4 42 h4 Qf2 43 Bg6** [A typical swindle try, but in this case its visual impact is greater than its effects on the board. Most anything wins for Black: 43...Qxh4+; 43...c3; or the move that was actually played. He could even take the bishop, although it's easy to see ghosts calculating 43...fxg6 44 Qxe6+ Qf7 45 Qc8+ Kg7 46 e6...] **43...Kg7 44 h5 g4! 0-1** Attack is the best defense!

It seems wrong somehow to feature the only loss by a player who otherwise steamrolled the tournament. Let's make amends with a fine win over a fellow grandmaster.

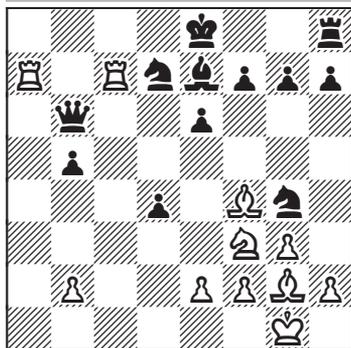
Joshua Ruiz Castillo - Hedinn Steingrimsson Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 Qe2 Bd6 5 c3 O-O 6 O-O Re8 7 Rd1 h6 8 d3 Bf8 9 Nbd2 d5 10 Nf1 a6 11 Ba4 b5 12 Bc2 d4 13 Ng3 Rb8 14 h3 Be6 15 Bb3 Bd7 16 Qc2 Rb6 17 Bd2 a5 18 a3 a4 19 Ba2 dxc3 20 bxc3 Bd6 21 c4 b4 22 axb4 Nxb4 23 Bxb4 Rxb4 (diagram)
24 c5 Bf8 25 Qc3 Rb5 26 Nxe5 Rxc5 27 Bxf7+ Kh7 28 Bg6+ Kg8 29 Nc4 Re7 30 d4 Rg5 31 Ne5 c5 32 Bf5 Bxf5 33 Nc6 Rxcg3 34 fxg3 cxd4 35 Rxd4 Qb6 36 Nxe7+ Bxe7 37 exf5 a3 38 Kh2 Kh7 39 Ra4 Bd6 40 R1xa3



Carlos Hevia Alejandro - Alex Jian Catalan

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 Bg2 dxc4 5 Qa4+ Nbd7 6 Qxc4 a6 7 O-O b5 8 Qb3 Bb7 9 d4 c5 10 Rd1 Qb6 11 a4 Bd5 12 Qc2 Rc8 13 axb5 axb5 14 Be3 Ng4 15 Bf4 Qb7 16 Rc1 Be7 17 Nc3?!! [with the ensuing queen sacrifice in mind] **17... cxd4 18 Nxd5 Rxc2 19 Nc7+ Rxc7 20 Rxc7 Qb6 21 Raa7** (diagram)



21...d3! [As noted before, attack is the best defense!] **22 e3 Ngf6 23 Ne5 d2 24 Bf3 O-O 25 Nxd7 Nxd7 26 Rxd7 Bf6 27 Bd6 Rd8 28 Bb4 Rxd7 29 Rxd7 Bxb2 30 Rxd2** [Finally the d-pawn dies, but while it lived it diverted White enough for Black to get his position in order.] **30...Be5 31 Rd7 g6 32 g4 h6 33 Kg2 Kg7 34 h4 Qa6 35 g5 hxg5 36 hxg5 Qa4 37 Be7 Qh4** [This turns out to be a blank shot, so maybe take the opportunity for 37...b4 and it appears the pawn will run all the way to b2.] **38 Rb7 Qc4 39 Rb6**

Bc3? [A colossal blunder...] **40 Rb8?** [...that goes unpunished! 40 Rc6 Δ 40...Qd3 41 Rxc3 Qxc3 42 Bf6+] **40...b4 41 Rb6** [White noticed what had happened and circled around for another bite at the apple.] **41...b3?** [41...Kh7!] **42 Rc6! Qb5** [Black was understandably rattled. As his pawn was farther advanced, 42...Qd3 43 Rxc3 Qxc3 44 Bf6+ Qxf6 45 gxf6+ Kxf6 46 Be4 Ke5 might now have offered some drawing chances.] **43 Rxc3 Qb8** [On 43...b2 he doubtless feared 44 Bf6+ Kh7 45 Rc8 but then 45...Qxg5+ 46 Bxg5 b1Q 47 Bf6 g5 avoids the mate for the time being. Still, White should win eventually.] 44 Bf6+ Kf8 45 Rc1 b2 1-0 It's mate after 46 Rh1



Colonial ♠pen

The 3rd Colonial Open attracted 231 players to the Dulles Airport Marriott April 13-17. It was a tournament of big-scoring winners. In the Open section, Ukrainian GM Illia Nyzhnyk registered an amazing 9-0 sweep to take clear 1st place! Lithuanian GM Titas Stremavicius placed 2nd a point-and-a-half behind. A further point-and-a-half back at 6-3, local master and former Virginia state champion Andrew Samuelson was clear 3rd place.

Three other sections were five rounds long. In the Under 2200 group, Larry Larkins scored a sweep of his own, 5-0 to win the top prize. Arjun Srinivasan went "merely" 4½-½ to pace the Under 1900 section. Under 1300 also saw a clear winner at 4½ in the person of South Carolinian Luke Zimmer, who might have had a perfect score had he not signed up for a final round ½ point bye. Finally, the 6-round Under 1300 was won by Sunmay Padiyar with... yes, 6-0.

This was the first open event at the Dulles Marriott with mask restrictions lifted. Attendance was up markedly from the 130+ who played in in 2019 and 2021. Anand Dommalapati organized and directed, with assistance from Robert Getty, Gregory Vaserstein, Grishmeshwar Sinha, Aniket Sinkar & Robert Jackson.



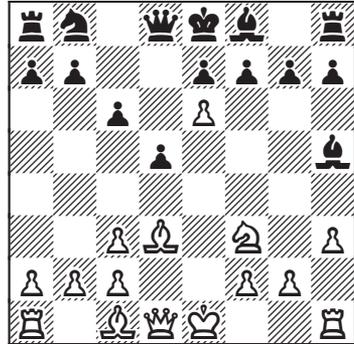
Virginia Senior Open

The 2022 Virginia Senior Open attracted twenty five players (age 50+) to Dulles, Va June 3-5. Gregory Nolan (Pennsylvania), Sal Rosario (DC) and Larry Larkins each scored 4-1 to finish in a 3-way tie for 1st place. Four players followed a half point behind: former state champion Daniel Miller, Robert Fischer, Cristinel Leaua and the defending senior champion John Farrell.

As the sole Virginian among the winners, Larkins becomes the new state Senior Champion and will represent our state in the Irwin Tournament of Senior State Champions, to be held in conjunction with the US Open (in Rancho Mirage, California) this July/August. Larry was also the 'moral winner' of the tournament inasmuch as he scored 1½-½ in head-to-head games against his co-winners.

Larry Larkins - Gregory Nolan Caro Kann

1 e4 c6 2 Nf3 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e5 Ne4 5 Bd3
Nxc3 6 dxc3 Bg4 7 h3 Bh5 8 e6!? (diagram)
8...Qd6 9 exf7+ Bxf7 10 Qe2 Nd7 11 Bg5
Qe6 12 Qxe6 Bxe6 13 O-O-O O-O-O 14
Rhe1 Nc5? 15 Rxe6 Nxe6 16 Bf5 Kc7 17
Bxe6 g6 18 Bf4+ Kb6 19 Be3+ Ka6 20 Nd4
Bg7 21 Nb3 b6 22 c4 dxc4 23 Bxc4+ Kb7
24 Re1 e5 25 Nd2 Rd7 26 Ne4 h6 27 Be6
Re7 28 Bg4 Rd8 29 h4 Rf7 30 h5 g5 31 a3
Kc7 32 Kb1 Bf8 33 Ka2 Bg7 34 Kb3 Kb7 35
Rh1 Kc7 36 Be6 Re7 37 Bf5 Rf8 38 g4 Rd8



39 Rc1 Ree8 40 Ka2 Re7 41 c4 Rf7 42 c5 Bf8 43 cxb6+ axb6 44 Ng3 Rf6 45
Be4 Ra8 46 Kb3 Ra5 47 Nf5 Rb5+ 48 Ka2 Ra5 49 f3 Ra8 50 Bd2 Bc5 51 Bc3
Re8 52 b4 Bd6 53 Bb2 Bf8 54 Kb3 c5 55 Ne3 Kb8 56 Nc4 Rfe6 57 Bd5 R6e7
58 Nxb6 cxb4 59 axb4 Rc7 60 Ra1 Ra7 61 Re1 Bg7 62 Nc4 Rae7 63 Be4 Rc7
64 Nd6 Re6 65 Nb5 Rb7 66 Kc4 Rbb6 67 Ra1 Ra6 68 Rd1 Bf6 69 Rd7 1-0

2022 Virginia Open June 24-26



Washington Dulles Marriott, 45020 Aviation Drive, Dulles, Va
\$5,000 - Blitz on Friday evening!! 3 Sections, 5 rds. Championship and Amateur
(U1800) both FIDE & USCF rated, rd 1 at 7:30 pm on Friday June 24. Novice Section
(Under 1200) USCF rated with games on Saturday and Sunday only. Full details:

vachess.org/tournaments/vaopen/2022/2022_VA-Open_HomePage.



The Apotheosis of Putin in Pančevo

by Aleksey Bashtavenko

“Stupidity is caused by a wicked heart,” a statement with this form is not true. Inability to think is not stupidity; be found in highly intelligent people, and wickedness is its cause, if only because thoughtlessness as well as stupid much more frequent phenomena than wickedness. —Hannah Arendt

BELGRADE, Serbia. In the Museum of Pančevo, minutes before my opening round, I saw a disheveled, pale, and grey-haired Serbian standing in front of the building. A grisly-looking man of about sixty-five, his posture was crouchy, his two front teeth missing, and he stuttered with a lisp. I can hardly imagine why, but throughout my travels in seven different countries I have never taken such an immediate liking to a complete stranger.

His face lit up with almost childlike joy when he learned that I was from Russia. He hung on my every word as if it were a solemn duty to listen to me with utmost diligence. Alas, my critical attitude toward Putin dismayed him. He even less appreciated my opinion of *his* president, and he exclaimed “Vucic is a pile of crap, and a traitor!”

Still, I thoroughly enjoyed the conversation, not despite our disagreements but because of them. The Yugoslav civil war had taught him the importance of civil discussion, and his amiability stood in sharp contrast with his retrograde politics. As far as the old man was concerned, Vucic’s problem is not that he’s authoritarian, but that he isn’t firm enough. This attitude illustrates the precarious times in Serbia. When I bemusedly pressed for whether Vucic’s “treason” consisted in his collaboration with the EU, the man retorted: “Look, I don’t like Vucic either, but he is my president, and who is yours?!” I nonchalantly replied, “Russia had one legitimately elected president, *my* president: Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin!”

We discussed a broad range of topics over the next few days, including the volatile politics of the Balkans and the disturbing aftermath of Putin’s invasion of Ukraine. My new friend followed my chess games as well...

Aleksey Bashtavenko - Novica Zlatkovic Benoni

1 d4 c5 2 d5 d6 3 c4 Bf5 [3...Nf6 would have been far better with the intention of undermining White’s pawn chain with ...e6. 3...e5 would also have been playable, taking the position into the Czech Benoni.] **4 Nc3 a6 5 e4 Bg6 6 Bf4 e5 7 Be3 Be7 8 a4** [Since Black was nowhere near ready to push b5, instead of playing the prophylactic a4 I could have developed my knight to h3, preparing the f4 break and keeping open the diagonal for the bishop on f1. In most Czech Benoni positions White can only play Nh3 at the risk of having his pawns doubled by ...Bxh3, but here there was no such risk because Black’s queen bishop was awkwardly misplaced.] **8...Nf6 9 Bd3 Nbd7**



10 f3 h6 11 Nge2 Nh7 12 O-O O-O 13 f4 f5 14 Qd2 [Admittedly, I did not have enough confidence in my ability to calculate, as I knew that positions with four pawns attacking each other tend to be volatile. Although 14 fxe5 seemed quite promising, I opted for a safer move connecting the rooks and placing my queen on a more active square.] 14...Qc8 15 b3 Ndf6 16 fxe5 [Finally, I mustered up the courage to break in the center—and the position opened up in my favor!] 16...Ng4 17 e6 f4 18 Bxf4 Bg5 19 Bxg5 Nxg5 20 h3 Nf6 21 e5 Bxd3 22 Qxd3 dxe5 23 e7 1-0

Anton Zlakov - Aleksey Bashtavenko Caro Kann

1 e4 c6 2 d3 c5!? [When I played 1...c6 my opponent sank deep in thought before opting for 2 d3. Working with the assumption that he was well prepared to play the King's Indian Attack, I thought to thwart his preparation by transposing into the Sicilian Defense. I understood he could still play the King's Indian Attack, and in this case I would have been down a tempo, but to mitigate this I planned on pushing ...e5, aiming for the slow, closed Botvinnik set-up where the lost time might not matter.] 3 Nf3 Nc6 4 g3 e5 5 Bg2 d6 6 O-O Nge7 7 c3 g6 8 d4 Bg7 9 Be3 b6 [I could have obtained good pressure on the center by 9...exd4 10 cxd4 Bg4. My suboptimal move at least had a plan: reinforce c5, develop the bishop to a6, and play for the light squares.] 10 a4 Ba6 11 Re1 O-O 12 Na3 Na5 13 b4 cxb4 14 cxb4 Nc4 15 Nxc4 Bxc4 16 Rc1 Be6 17 Ng5 Bd7 [I considered giving up the bishop pair with 17...Qd7 but opted for this more pragmatic retreat.] 18 f4 Rc8 19 Rxc8 Qxc8 20 Nf3 Bg4 [It's unclear why he played 20 Nf3, but I was happy to see it and immediately eliminated his knight.] 21 Qd2 Bxf3 22 Bxf3 Nc6 [Suddenly my position was looking up.] 23 d5 Ne7 24 Rc1 Qd7 25 b5 f5 26 Qb4 Rc8 27 Rxc8+ Nxc8 28 Qc4 Ne7 29 Kg2 Kf7 30 h3 Qc8 31 Qxc8 Nxc8 [In *Endgame Strategy* Shereshevksy has a chapter where he discussed the importance of gaining space on the flanks when one has a bishop pair. I now understand that earlier I should have played ...h5 as that would have halted White's expansionary efforts.] 32 g4 fxe4 33 Bxe4 exf4 34 Bxf4 Bd4 35 h4 Bc5 36 Bg5 Ne7 37 h5 Nc8 [I thought to play 37...Ng8 with the intention of going to f6, as that would have activated my knight. Unfortunately, in the end I was guided by a mistaken assumption that my knight had to be on c8 in order to defend my pawns.]

2022 Charlottesville Open

July 16-17

Comfort Inn Monticello

2097 Inn Drive, Charlottesville, Va

Blitz on Friday 7/17, Main tournament on Sat/Sun 7/16-17. \$3170 prize fund based on 70 paid entries. Two Sections: Open and Under 1600.

<https://new.uschess.org/2022-charlottesville-open-chess-championships>



I failed to notice that if his dark-squared bishop went after the queenside pawns, my king could go across to trap it; for example, 38 Bd8 Nf6 39 Bf3 Bd4 40 Bc7 Ke7 41 Bb8 gxh5 42 gxh5 Kd7 43 Bxa7 Kc7.] **38 Kf3 Ba3** [With less than five seconds on my clock, I set a trap, hoping White might step on the “mined square” f4 losing a piece.] **39 Ke2 Bb2 40 Kd3 Ba1 1-0** The better move would have been to play the bishop back to a3, alternating between a3 and c5, but no matter—I ended up flagging.

Mine was the last game to finish, at around 10pm. The tournament director escorted me to the bus stop and made sure that I caught the correct bus. The next day I made my way back to the station and couldn’t believe my luck: a bus arrived within 30 seconds. It was marked “Belgrade”, so I assumed everything was fine. The conductor attempted to explain something but I had no idea what—Serbian and Russian are too dissimilar.

Well, it turned out that the bus was just passing through Belgrade. I got off in some neighborhood a few miles from the city center. From there I took a local bus assuming that it would bring me ‘downtown’ but on the contrary, I wound up in some rundown area in the middle of nowhere.

In Serbia, there is no Uber. There is an app called “Yandex Taxi”—*eeek*, it reeks of Putinism—that can seldom pinpoint your location with any degree of accuracy. Anyway, I shambled into a shanty looking bar and the cheerful attendant greeted me in English. I expected to be waiting for Yandex Taxi for a while, so I ordered a beer. The bartender asked where I was from, and his face lit up when he got my answer.

“I love Russians!” he exclaimed delightedly, and proceeded to regale me with the collection of Russian folk songs on his phone. “At first, I thought that you were from Germany or America, I almost didn’t want to serve you!” Then he smirked and corrected himself. “Okay, okay! We love everyone here, even the Ukrainians!” When my taxi finally arrived, he insisted I take another beer, on the house. He continued to sermonize as he brought the drink. “There are some terrible people in Ukraine! They are Nazis!”

I finally boarded my taxi, only to hear the driver gleefully declare, “Ukraine kaput!”—echoing the Stalinist slogan, “Hitler kaput!”

Aleksey Bashtavenko - Aljosa Kanacki Nimzoindian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 Nc6 5 Nf3 O-O 6 Bg5 h6 7 Bh4 d5 8 e3 Bd7 9 cxd5 exd5 10 Bd3 Bg4 11 O-O Bxf3 12 gxf3 Bxc3 13 Qxc3 Qe7 14 a3 Qe6 15 b4 Kh8 16 Rac1 Qh3 17 Bg3 Rac8 18 Rfd1 Nh5 19 Bf1 Qf5 20 Bg2 Nxg3 21 fxg3 [Black repairs my pawn structure for me! The pawns on f3 and e3 appear to be

Virginia Commonwealth Games

Online chess tournament (LiChess) - July 23-24

<https://www.commonwealthgames.org/sports-listing/chess>



slightly vulnerable, but White also has the potential of achieving a pawn break e3-e4.] **21...Rfe8 22 b5 Ne7 23 Qd3 Qxd3 24 Rxd3 Nf5 25 e4 dxe4** [At last, White achieves the critical e4 break.] **26 fxe4 Nd6 27 e5 Nxb5** [Black looks for counterplay but White is about to demonstrate control of the light squares.] **28 Bxb7 Rcd8 29 Bc6 Rxd4** [My opponent may have been relying on this, with something like 30 Rxd4 Nxd4 31 Bxe8 Ne2+ in mind, but his incorrect calculation results in a massive loss of material.] **30 Bxe8 Rxd3 31 Bxb5 Rxa3 32 Rxc7 Ra5 33 Bd3 Rxe5? 34 Rc8+ 1-0**

While that round resulted in a convincing victory against a much lower rated player, a welcome relief from the previous night's ordeal, I had a more challenging contest in the next round.

Aleksey Bashtavenko - Nenad Tomin King's Indian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 O-O 6 Be2 c5 [I was hoping that my opponent would go into the standard King's Indian Defense with ...e5, but he opted for ...c5, which is more akin to the Benoni.] **7 Be3 Ng4 8 Bg5 Qb6?** [a blunder] **9 Nd5 Qa5+ 10 Bd2** [Either 10 b4 or 10 Nd2 would have seized an advantage.] **10... Qd8 11 h3 Nf6** [Regrettably, 10 Bd2 allowed Black to gain full equality, and after 11 h3 his knight returned to f6, ready to challenge my control of the center.] **12 Nxf6+ Bxf6 13 Bh6 Qa5+** [It would have been better to play 13. Bc3 as that allows White to control the center and the critical square d4.] **14 Bd2 Qb6 15 Bc3 Nc6** [Black's plan of moving the queen to a5 seems to have been misguided. It allowed White to rectify the situation by returning his bishop to c3, where it should have been posted two moves ago.] **16 e5** [The straightforward 16 d5 lays claim to a spatial advantage, but I was not willing to play that move because I did not want to allow 16...Nd4] **16... cxd4 17 exf6 dxc3 18 fxe7 Nxe7** [Black would have been better off playing 18...Re8 with a possible continuation 19 bxc3 Qb2 20 O-O Rxe7] **19 bxc3 Nf5 20 O-O Ng3** [Attractive looking, but the threat posed by this move is superficial. Is exchanging the knight for the bishop e2 actually advantageous?] **21 Re1 Nxe2+ 22 Rxe2 Be6 23 Rd2 Rfd8 24 Rb1 Qc7 25 Qb3 b6 26 Rd4 Rac8 27 Nd2 d5 28 cxd5 Qxc3 29 Qxc3 Rxc3 30 Ne4 Rc2 31 Ra4** [White seeks counterplay by attacking a7, but 31 Nf6+ would have been better. In that case the natural looking 31...Kg7? would lose a piece to 32 dxe6 Rxd4 33 e7 Rc8 34 e8Q Rxe8 35 Nxe8+. Instead, 31...Kf8 32 Re1 Bc8 would have led to a sharp position with mutual chances.] **31...Bf5 32 f3 Kg7 33 Rxa7 Rxd5 34 Rf1 Ra5 35 Rxa5 bxa5 36 Rf2 Bxe4 37 fxe4 Rxf2** [37...Rc1+ would have achieved a superior rook endgame. Instead, he opted to go into a king and pawn endgame, most likely expecting to have an advantage because I had an isolated pawn.] **38 Kxf2 Kf6 39 Ke2** [39 Ke3 would have been fine but I didn't have enough time to calculate all of the possible variations. I instinctively maneuvered to avoid occupying e3 until Black played ...Ke5] **39...h5 40 g3 g5 41 Kf3 Ke5** [Somehow the position seems to have become dead lost.] **42 Ke3 a4 43 a3 f6?** [This tempo move



should be preserved. 43...h4! 44 g4 f6, or 44 gxh4 gxh4, puts White in zugzwang.]
44 Kd3 [Now I'm safe.] **44...h4 45 gxh4 gxh4 46 Ke3** ½-½

As I analyzed with my opponent afterward, old Scraggly Beard barged in, visibly inebriated. I could hardly understand what he was saying, but he was accusing someone of being a “fascist”. He proceeded to speculate as to why that person failed to show up. Then he switched to English: “Son of a bitch, he must have forgotten his *Srbrosjek!*”

Around the room, some people were laughing hysterically, others staring at him in utter bewilderment. “Mark my words,” he proclaimed, “war is glorious after all!” I softly retorted: “What are you talking about?” He then seized the opportunity to embark on yet another bombastic political tirade. “Putin is a very nice guy! Tell me, what was he supposed to do when NATO were about to put nukes in Ukraine and invade Russia a year from now?!”

Kostic Milutin - Aleksey Bashtavenko Queen's Indian

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 g3 b6 4 Bg2 Bb7 5 c4 Be7 6 Nc3 Ne4 7 Bd2 O-O 8 O-O d6 9 Rc1 Nd7 10 Nxe4 Bxe4 [It seemed my opening had turned out well: pieces developed, pawn structure solid and flexible, and I had the option of fighting for the center with ...c5, ...e5 or even ...d5. I controlled the light squares and my bishop remained active.] **11 Bc3 Qc8** [in order to reinforce my control of the light squares] **12 d5 e5?** [This is a crude tactical blunder. 12...Bxf3 and only then ...e5 would have been playable.] **13 Nxe5 Bxg2 14 Nc6! Bg5 15 Kxg2** [I can't take the exchange because of the fork and there was little sense in playing on.] **1-0**

The quick finish gave me an chance to kibitz with other players, Regarding the bizarre exchange that took place the day before, it was then explained to me that this elderly fellow was teasing a friend from Croatia. While his comments may have seemed in poor taste, it was in fact just a bit of dark humor. The gentleman who told me this was himself half Croatian, and he assured me that he took no umbrage at anything from the night before. “Serbs are very well-intentioned and hospitable people, it's just that they consume too much fake news!”

Dusan Arsenijevic - Aleksey Bashtavenko Caro Kann

1 e4 c6 2 Nf3 d5 3 Nc3 Bg4 4 exd5 cxd5 5 h3 Bxf3 6 Qxf3 Nf6 7 Bb5+ Nc6 8 d4 e6 9 O-O Be7 10 Bf4 Rc8 11 Rfe1 O-O 12 Bxc6 Rxc6 13 a3 a6 [Black could fork two pawns with 13...Qb6] **14 Rac1 Qa5** [Even here Qb6 was good. I was reluctant to play it because I had my mind set on aiming for a “minority attack” with ...b5 etc (although it never came to that!)] **15 Re3 Rfc8 16 Be5 Nd7 17 Rce1 Nxe5 18 dxe5?** [He missed an elementary tactic.] **18...d4 19 b4 Qc7 0-1**

So this game also ended early, and I took the liberty of conversing some more with the gentleman of Croatian heritage. I noted the apparent similarity between



Serbia and Cuba. Someone once said of Cuba that it is “an army that has a country.” Despite the geographic and cultural differences between Serbia and Cuba, they have both long relied on support from Russia and the ideology of Soviet communism. Also, they both have a history of conflict with neighbors. However, to me the most important similarity is that they seem to greatly value group loyalty, to the point of demanding absolute conformity to public opinion.

The fits disquietingly with Hannah Arendt’s definition of totalitarianism: *an ideology that calls for a “profound transformation of consciousness.”* Arendt contrasts totalitarianism with mere authoritarianism, which calls only for repression of political activism against the power of the ruling class. The one is satisfied if you don’t disagree; the other insists on enthusiastic agreement. It’s worth noting that the incumbent president of Serbia began his political career as enforcer of Milosevic’s tyranny, and one of his responsibilities was to levy fines against journalists who didn’t toe the party line.

Milosevic is now long gone, but the Vucic administration seems to be upholding the communist tradition of molding public opinion. My well-mannered interlocutor agreed: “Yes, Serbia is definitely a garrison state. Although the war is long over, the people are traumatized by it. It was painful for all republics of the former Yugoslavia, but Serbia continues to live in the past. Montenegro has seceded from Serbia and reinvented itself as a tax haven and tourist hotspot. Croatia is the most Westernized country in the Balkans, and they are now ready to join the Schengen Area. Bosnia is still reeling from the heavy casualties it took during the war, but they are moving on, slowly but surely. Yet, Serbia can’t quite move on. They still think that far from being a war criminal, Ratko Mladic is a national hero. That’s why you see his face painted on nearly every street corner, as if the Ustase are about to emerge from across the mountains, brandishing their Serb-cutters and hauling the Serbs off to the Jasenovac concentration camp!”

“*Serb-cutters*”—I finally understood the “*Srbosjek*” reference from two days before! *Srbosjek* were the infamous ‘Serb-cutters’ that Croatian ultranationalists wielded in the concentration camps during World War II.

Aleksey Bashtavenko – Mateja Mijuskovic King’s Indian

At last, I got to play my favorite opening in all of chess: the Mar Del Plata Variation of the King’s Indian Defense. **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 O-O 6 Be2 Nc6 7 O-O e5 8 d5 Ne7 9 Ne1 Ne8** [This is the main line, but Black typically opts for 9...Nd7 as that controls c5. White could have opted for the 13 c5 break immediately on his 13th turn.] **10 Be3 f5 11 f3 f4 12 Bf2 g5 13 a4** [Viktor Korchnoi developed the plan with a4 in the early 1980s. His main idea was to play a5, achieve the c5 break, and move the knight to b5 targeting a7. Also the knight might maneuver through c7 to e6. In order to thwart all this, Black often reacts with ...a5 before returning to his king’s side



attack.] **13...Nf6 14 a5 Ng6 15 c5 h5 16 cxd6 cxd6 17 Nb5 Rf7 18 Nxa7** [18 Bxa7 would have been better, to keep Nc7 at the ready.] **18...Bd7 19 Bb6 Qe8 20 Qb3 Rxa7** [Black should have gone for the critical breakthrough 20...g4. The game could have gone 21 Rc1 g3 22 Rc7 h4 Black's kingside initiative appears threatening, but White's queenside play must not be underestimated. He has full control of the c-file, and he is ready to play Bb5 exchanging his 'bad bishop' for Black's strongest minor piece.] **21 Bxa7 g4 22 Qxb7 g3** [Black's breakthrough falls short of its objective of exposing the king. White has no intention of playing h3, which would allow Black his thematic sacrifice ...Bxh3. Instead, White continues pressing on the queenside.] **23 Qb8 Bc8 24 Bb5 Qd8 25 Bb6 gxh2+ 26 Kh1** [White's king comfortably hides in front of the pawn and the kingside attack comes to a grinding halt.] **26...Rb7 27 Bxd8 Rxb8 28 Bxf6 Rxb5 29 Bxg7 Kxg7** [Now the queenside passed pawns are unstoppable.] **30 a6 Rb8 31 a7 Ra8 32 b4 Ne7 33 Kxh2 Bb7 34 Rf2 Nc8 35 Rc2 1-0**

My opponent was irate and complained to the tournament director about my supposedly disruptive behavior. Maybe I seemed too excited to have been able to play my favorite variation. The director monitored the game and observed no wrongdoing on my part, though he was rather curious as to why my opponent hadn't resigned sooner.

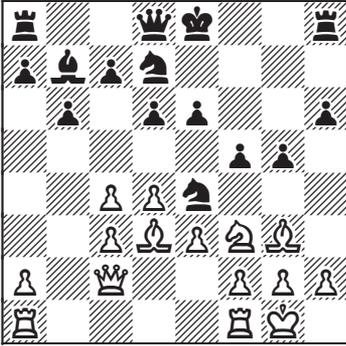
Milan Gagic - Aleksey Bashtavenko Caro Kann

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 Nf3 Nd7 7 Bd3 Bxd3 8 Qxd3 Nge6 9 O-O e6 10 b3 Be7 11 Bb2 O-O 12 c4 Nc5 [Played with the purpose of rerouting the knight to c7 in order to control d5. While I was correct in recognizing that d5 was a vital square, I spent two tempi moving the knight. It would have been better to continue the natural course of development with 12...Qc7 followed by ...Rad8 and ...Rfe8] **13 Qe2 Na6 14 Rfd1 Nc7 15 Ne5 Bd6 16 Rd3 Qe7** [Although I have completed my development, I had no way of contesting White's control of the center. The only idea that came to mind was exchanging minor pieces in order to alleviate my spatial disadvantage.] **17 Rad1 Ba3 18 Bxa3** [He could have retreated the bishop to a1] **18...Qxa3 19 Nh5 Nxh5 20 Qxh5 Qxa2 21 Nd7 Rfe8 22 Nf6+! gxf6 23 Qh6 Qc2 24 Rg3+ Qg6 25 Qf4 e5 26 Qxf6 Rad8 27 h4 Qxg3 28 fxg3 e4 29 Re1 Kf8 30 h5 Re7 31 Qh8 mate 1-0**

I took a drubbing. This is a clear example of a game where I was completely outmatched. It seems to me that this is youngster has talent, and I wouldn't be surprised to see him surpass 2200 in the coming years.

Aleksey Bashtavenko - Vukadin Nestic Queen's Indian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 b6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bh4 Bb7 7 Nf3 g5 8 Bg3 Ne4 9 e3 Bxc3+ 10 bxc3 d6 11 Bd3 f5 [At this point, the position seems advantageous for Black. His knight is remarkably well placed on e4, he seized a spatial advantage with f5, and he is in the process of mounting a kingside attack.] **12 O-O Nd7**



13 Nd2

I played Nd2 in order to contest the control of e4. However, it would have been better to concede that this square belonged to Black and seek counterplay on the other flank with 13 a4, eg 13...a5 14 Rab1 h5 15 h4 Rg8 16 c5 In this hypothetical variation, Black's king's side attack seems formidable but White can seek counterplay instead of passive defense. If Black were to continue 16...dxc5 17 Qb3 would have followed, targeting e6 and exploiting the

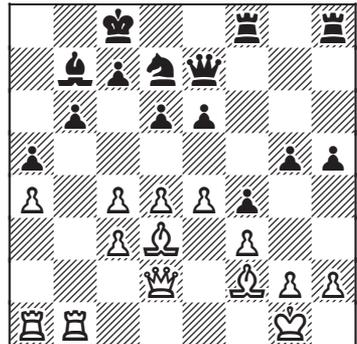
vulnerability of Black's king. White also would have been in position to strengthen his attack on e6 by Bc4. While the position may have been roughly equal, White's side of the board would have been easier to play.

Instead of 16...dxc5, Black could have opted for the surprising 16...Nexc5 If White then accepts the sacrifice, 17 dxc5, Black would open up the king's side with 17...Bxf3, White would continue 18 cxd6, which would have been met with 18...gxh4 trapping the bishop and preparing a king's side attack on the g-file.

Hence, instead of accepting Black's knight sacrifice it would have been preferable to play 17 Nxc5! which would have courted complications of its own. The game could have continued in the following manner: 17...Nxd3 18 Qxd3? (better 18 Nxe6 Qe7 19 Nxc7+ Kd8 20 Nxa8 Rxc3! 21 fxg3 Qxe3+ 22 Kh1 Bxa8 ♣) 18...Rxc3! 19 hxg5 Qxc3 with a formidable attack.

13...Nxd2 14 Qxd2 h5 15 f3 Qe7 16 e4? [I played this in order to seize space in the center and take the light-squared bishop out of play. However, this plan was ill-conceived. It gave Black the most important positional feature for mounting a flank attack: a closed center. It would have been better for me to keep the center in flux and even attempt to pry it open with 16 c5!] **16...f4 17 Bf2 O-O-O** [At this point, Black has achieved all of his strategic objectives: he closed the center, castled his king and launched a kingside attack.] **18 Rfb1 Rdf8 19 a4 a5** (diagram) **20 d5**

I only helped Black further lock up the center. 20 Rb5 was called for, followed by c5. (White could also have gone for the immediate 20 c5!? sacrificing a pawn.) Black could have thwarted c5 by playing 20...Bc6, in which case it would have been preferable to sacrifice the exchange in an attempt to open up lines toward Black's king: 21 e5 Bxb5 22 axb5 White is ready for the c5 break!





20...g4 21 Kh1 Ne5 22 Be2 Rhg8 23 Bd4 gxf3 24 gxf3 Nd7 25 Rg1 e5 26 Bf2 h4 27 Rg4 [This was my deeply misguided attempt to “lock up” the kingside; it would have been better to simply exchange rooks.] 27...Rxc4 28 fxg4 f3 [But here or next turn Black should have played 28...h3.] 29 Bd3 Rf4? 30 h3! Nf6 31 Qc2 Qd7? [This was a colossal blunder: Black’s knight had to be moved in order to create an escape for the rook.] 32 Be3 Nh5 [Black conceded the exchange, but I didn’t need to oblige him. On now 33 gxh5 I obviously feared 33...Qxh3+ but without adequate consideration as 34 Qh2 is a perfectly adequate defense that would have forced Black to exchange queens or lose a rook in addition to the knight he already dropped on h5. This would have ended the game on the spot.] 33 Bxf4?! Nxf4 34 Bf1 Ng6 35 Qd2 Qe7 36 Qe3 Qf6 37 Ra2 Qf8 38 Qg5 Ne7 39 Qxh4 Ba6 40 Rf2 c6 41 Qg3 cxd5 42 cxd5 Bxf1 43 Rxf1 Ng6 44 Rxf3 Nf4 45 h4 Qe8 46 Rxf4 [While I was tempted to simplify the position by the exchange sacrifice, for now it would have been better to play 46 g5. There will be other opportunities to play the exchange sacrifice.] 46...exf4 47 Qxf4 Qxa4 48 h5 Qd1+ 49 Kg2 Qe2+ 50 Kg3 Qe1+ 51 Kh3 Qh1+ 52 Kg3 Qe1+ 53 Kf3 Qf1+ 54 Kg3 Qe1+ 55 Qf2 Qxe4 56 Qf5+ Qxf5 57 gxf5 1-0 The h-pawn promotes with check.

I left Pancevo exhausted, and as I returned to my Belgrade apartment I noted a massive graffiti of Putin on a wall in the city center. Right on the corner of the street where I lived. Vladimir Putin, framed in the Russian flag, with a one-word caption: *brother*. In a local cafe, I was asked whether I liked Putin. Once again I could not help but think of Hannah Arendt’s “banality of evil”—how atrocities occur when decent people refuse to oppose malevolence. This is certainly true in the case of Putin’s invasion of Ukraine. It was true in the case of Mladic’s 48 month siege of Sarajevo. And it is true of Serbia’s passive acquiescence to Putinist onslaught that plagues Eastern Europe today.

It was time to leave; this ambiance had gotten under my skin. And Belgrade is a city with very thick skin.

Tournament Plan-Ahead Calendar

More detailed announcements online or in future issues of Virginia Chess

9th annual **Washington International** - Aug 13-17

Rockville Hilton, 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD.

Up to 9-rounds, some sections FIDE rated - <https://mdchess.com/>

54th **Atlantic Open** - Aug 26-28

Arlington, Va - 150 Grand Priz Points - <http://www.chesstour.com/ao22.htm>

Virginia Closed State Championship Sept 4-6, 2022 Details coming soon
– watch VCF web site or future issues of Virginia Chess

Fredericksburg Open, Fredricksburg, Oct 28-30

David Zofchak Memorial, Norfolk, Nov 4-6

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