

VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

The bimonthly publication of the
Virginia Chess Federation

2023 - #6



VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

2023 - Issue #6

Editor:

Macon Shibut
1572 Lee Hwy
Fort Defiance VA 24437
editorvcf@gmail.com

Circulation:

Georgina Chin
2851 Cherry Branch Lane
Herndon VA 20171
membership@vachess.org



Virginia Chess is published six times per year by the Virginia Chess Federation. Membership benefits include a subscription to *Virginia Chess*. Send material for publication to the editor. Send dues, address changes, etc to Circulation.

The **Virginia Chess Federation (VCF)** is a



non-profit organization for the use of its members.

Dues for regular adult membership are \$15/yr.

Junior memberships (under age 18 at expiration)

are \$8/yr. President: Adam Chrisney,

PO Box 151122, Alexandria, VA 22315

chrisney2@gmail.com Vice President: Michael Callaham, 607 Wickham

Street #2, Richmond, VA 23222 waterman2010kir@aol.com Membership

Secretary: Georgina Chin, 2851 Cherry Branch Lane, Herndon VA 20171,

membership@vachess.org Treasurer Mike Hoffpauir, 405 Hounds Chase,

Yorktown VA 23693, mhoffpauir@aol.com

VCF Inc Directors: Adam Chrisney, Michael Callaham,

Mike Hoffpauir, Robby Jackson, Todd Hammer





Skyline Open

by Rob Getty

COLUMBUS DAY WEEKEND saw the Skyline Open held at the Washington Dulles Airport Marriott. The Dulles Marriott has held several Capital Area Chess and Virginia Chess Federation events over the last few years, and always provides a superior venue for chess tournaments.

Former state champion Andrew Samuelson came out on top of the 56 players who competed in the 9 round FIDE-rated Open section with a 7-2 score. Pardhav Chakka, Lang Leo Xiong & Tyson Brady tied for 2nd thru 4th with 6½ points each. Five players scored 6 to share 5th-7th places as well as top Under 2250.

37 players participated in the 7-round FIDE-rated Under 2100 section. Thanh Chi Can came out on top with 5½-1½. No fewer than five players followed a half point back, with three more following at 4½-2½.

In the non-FIDE rated sections, Parv Jani & Steven Liu tied for 1st in the 24-player Under 1800 section. Brandon Chen was 3rd place and Shaurya Jeevagan 4th. Pinhang Gao & Lukas Lebakken shared top U1650.

16 players competed in the U1500 section. Diya Deepak took top honors with a perfect 7-0. Hrishi Bhooma was alone in 2nd at 4½. Four players finished at 4, with Yong Chang & Nijat Mammadov splitting 3rd place money and Anirudh Ghodgaonkar & Brandon Rowland taking 1st/2nd U1350.

20 players competed in The U1200 section drew 20 players. Ian Graham proved to be the strongest with 5½-1½, clear 1st place. Raj Gadge was 2nd while Isabel Incontrera & Aarnav Sathu split 3rd. Nayan Balebail won \$100 the U1050 prize.

While some of us crashed in our rooms and went to sleep after a long day of classical chess, 36 rugged players added 6 rounds of blitz on Saturday evening to their chess activities. Shelev Oberoi put up a perfect 6-0 up in the Open Blitz section. Will Moorhouse's 5-1 was good for 2nd place. The 11 player U1800 Blitz was swept by Angelina Verma's perfect 6-0. Runner-up Leonard Chang finished a point behind.

There was also a 4-round scholastic side event on Monday. In the K-12 U1200, Adan Lo & Gauri Gaddamaugu tied for 1st with 3½ apiece. In the K-5 U800, Harrison Hui took clear 1st with 4-0. In the K-3 U600, Kartik Angal also scored a perfect 4-0.

The Skyline Open was organized by Anand Dommalapati. Robert Getty served as chief TD of the FIDE sections. Chief TD of the USCF Sections was Robert Jackson. Greg Vaserstein & Jeff Forbes assisted.



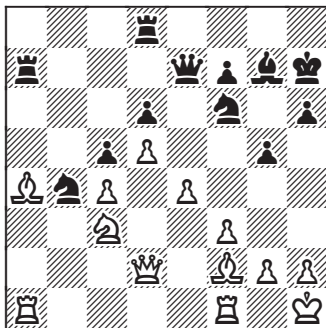
After winning his first three games, Samuelson ran into WGM Maili-Jade Ouellet.

Maili-Jade Ouellet - Andrew Samuelson Benoni

Notes by Maili-Jade Ouellet

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 Nf3 g6 7 Nd2 Bg7 8 e4 O-O 9 Be2 Re8 10 O-O Na6 [I prepared a bit for my opponent and I knew that he played Benoni most of the time. However, from the games I had looked at, he always played ...Nbd7 instead of ...Na6. As a result, I was slightly caught off guard and thought that my opponent may have prepared something to surprise me.] **11 f3 Nc7 12 a4 b6 13 Kh1 Rb8 14 Nc4 Ba6 15 Bg5 h6 16 Bh4 Qd7** [I was quite confused by the opening choice of my opponent since this line with N-d2-c4 is excellent for White, leading to a superior position due to White's space and good piece coordination. Moreover, I had played this exact line a few months back and so I was wondering why my opponent would willingly choose to play this, knowing that Black is worse. In any case 16...Bxc4 was best since White's plan is to play Ne3 and keep the powerful knight on the board. Then 17 Bxc4 a6 and the game continues.] **17 Qd2** [With the intention of playing b3 next. White is also threatening to take on f6 and win the h6 pawn. But 17 Ne3 is actually the best move, planning simply to consolidate the center. If Black attempts to play ...a6, ...b5, the plan can be met with a5, which dampers Black's queenside attack. So then 17...Bxe2 18 Qxe2 a6 19 Qc2 b5 20 a5 ±] **17...Kh7** [protecting the h6 pawn] **18 b3 Bxc4 19 bxc4** [I decided to capture with the pawn rather than the bishop

to solidify my control over the center.] **19...Na6 20 a5** [The point is to possibly open the a-file, but mostly to clear the a4 square and bring my light square bishop into the game via d1.] **20...Nb4 21 Bd1** [Threatening to win the exchange with ♔a4 forces Black to move his queen and rook off the diagonal. I believe my idea was quite good since the rook on e8 is well placed.] **21...Qe7 22 Ba4 Red8 23 axb6 g5?** [Although we both made some imprecisions throughout the game so far, I believe this was the first actual mistake. 23...axb6 first, and only then ...g5 and ...h5 to generate a kingside attack, was a better alternative.] **24 bxa7 Ra8 25 Bf2 Rxa7?**



26 e5! [Opening up the b1-h7 diagonal and creating some threats.] **26...dxe5** [Forced, since 26...Qxe5? fails to 27 Bc2+ and Rxa7] **27 Nb5** [Attacking the rook on a7 and threatening d6!] **27...Raa8 28 d6** [Attacking the queen and also cutting off Black's protection of the important c5 pawn.] **28...Qb7 29 Bxc5 Na6 30 Ba3?** [30 Be3 would have



been much better because although the bishops on a3 and a4 are strongly supporting the two passed pawns, they are also vulnerable to the a8 rook.] **30... Kg8** [avoiding potential checks] **31 Rab1 Qc8 32 Qe2 Nc5 33 Bc2 Nh5 34 Qe3 Ne6 35 Be4 Ra4 36 c5 Nd4 37 c6** [37 Nxd4 exd4 38 Qb3 was only slightly better according to the engine evaluation, but much more practical in terms of conversion.] **37...Nxc6 38 Rfc1 Ra6 39 Nc7 Rxa3 40 Qxa3 Nd4**

41 Nb5 [41 Nd5 Qe6 42 Ne7+ Kh8 43 Bd5 Qxd6 44 Qxd6 Rxd6 45 Rc8+ Kh7 46 Be4+ would have been more or less forced and completely winning.] **41... Qe6 42 Rd1 Nf4 43 Qa5 Qd7** [43... Bf6 44 Nxd4 exd4 45 Rxd4 (and if 45... Bxd4 46 Qxd8+) was the idea behind 42 Rd1] **44 Nxd4 exd4 45 Rb6 Qe6 46 Rc6 Rxd6? 47 Qa8+ Bf8 48 Rc8 Qe7 49 Re8! Ra6 50 Rxf8+ Qxf8 51 Qxa6 1-0** Black resigned since White is up a rook.

After another loss to Lang Xiong in the following round, Samuelson pulled back into contention with three straight wins. This set up an exciting final round with Samuelson facing Pardhav Chakka, who already had 6½ and so could have clinched sole first with just a draw. Samuelson with 6 needed a win to jump ahead.

Pardhav Chakka - Andrew Samuelson Benoni

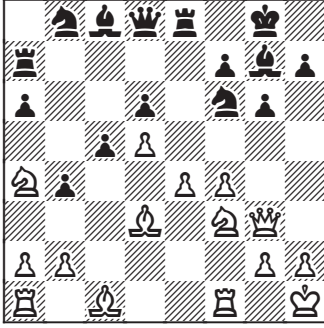
Notes by Andrew Samuelson

I had an up and down Skyline Open, as I started 3-0 and then lost both games on Saturday before winning the last four. This game was played on board 1 in round 9. My opponent had done very well and led the tournament with 6½ out of 8. I had 6 and only one other player with 6 was playing the last round, so a win would give me at least tie for 1st place while a draw would favor my opponent. **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 Bg7 8 Bb5+** [This line is probably objectively better for White, but it's sharp and double-edged without too much risk that White can quickly force a draw. I wasn't too unhappy to see this as I figured at least I would get a chance to fight for first.] **8... Nfd7 9 Nf3** [I wasn't unhappy to see this either, as it more or less commits White

to attacking the kingside and gives me the chance for queenside expansion. I also have a happy memory of winning against a tough opponent in this line to get clear 2nd in the Cherry Blossom Classic a few years ago.] **9...a6 10 Bd3 b5 11 O-O O-O 12 Kh1 Ra7** [This probably isn't the best move, but I'd run into opening preparation in the previous round and feared a repeat of that unpleasant experience.] **13 Qe1** White has a few choices here, but the general idea is to play f5 and attack the kingside. During some post-game discussion, my opponent said that maybe this idea was too slow and he should have waited for ...Nb6 or played 13 f5. White does have other moves here, but 13 Qe1 seems okay.] **13... Re8 14 Qg3 b4 15 Na4** [I thought this move was a bit odd as it left the knight



out of play. My opponent indicated he'd seen the computer like this idea, but in this exact position it seems like I was probably right.] **15...Nf6**

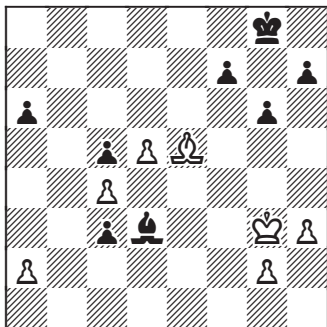


16 Qh4? [16 e5 This is the most critical move, and probably the best. 16...Nxd5 17 f5 dxe5 18 fxg6 hxg6 19 Ng5 Nf6 20 Nxc5 Bf5 21 Bc4 Nc6 The Na4 has gotten back into the game and the position is unclear with any result possible. The text gives me an opportunity that I considered but didn't play...] **16...Rae7?** [This doesn't take advantage of the knight on a4, and the opportunity passes. 16...Bd7 17 Bc2 (17 e5 Bxa4 18 exf6 Qxf6 19 Ng5 h6) Nxe4 18 Qxd8 Rxd8 19 Re1 Nf6 is quite good for Black as the e4 pawn was lost.] **17 f5?!** [This typical idea doesn't work out well with e4 attacked so many times. 17 e5 is the right idea here. 17...Nxd5 18 Bc4 Nc7 19 Be3 d5 20 Bb3 c4 21 Bc2 Black won a pawn but lacks development and faces a slight disadvantage.] **17...Rxe4!** [This nice exchange sacrifice demolishes White's center and picks up the bishop pair plus a couple pawns. And there's no need to worry about White playing e5 anymore! That pawn break caused me problems in two previous games in this tournament.] **18 Bxe4**

Rxe4 19 Bf4 Bxf5 [Black is doing well materially with two pawns and the bishop pair for the exchange so White needs to keep trying to attack the Black king.] **20 Rae1** [Correctly going for a rook trade to limit Black's advantage.] **20...Re8?** [Giving away the advantage. Black had to allow the rook trade, but there were better ways to do it. 20...Qa5 21 b3 Nbd7 22 Rxe4 Bxe4 23 Nd2 Bxd5 24 Bxd6 Qb5 leaves Black with way more than enough compensation.] **21 Bg5?** [White should take on e8 to misplace Black's pieces. For example 21 Rxe8+ Qxe8 22 b3 Ne4 23 Ng5 Nxc5 24 Qxc5 Qe2 25 Qd8+ Bf8 26 Rg1 Be4 27 Bxd6 Bxg2+ 28 Rxc2 Qd1+ 29 Rg1 Qf3+ forces Black to take the perpetual.] **21...Nbd7 22 b3 Qa8 23 Rxe8+ Qxe8 24 Qc4 Qa8 25 Rd1** [25 Bxf6 Nxf6 26 Nh4 Bd7 27 Nb6 Qb7 28 Nxd7 Nxd7 29 Qe2 Qxd5 30 Nf3 h6 31 Qe8+ Nf8 32 Qe2 Black gets a third pawn but White's piece coordination is better than in the game.] **25...Ne4 26 Be3 Ndf6 27 h3 Qe8** [27...Qb7 28 Kg1 h5 29 Bc1 Bd7 30 Qd3 Bb5 31 Qe3 a5 leaves White in trouble as his knight is out of play and Black is ahead in both material and coordination.] **28 Re1 Qb5** [If 28...Bd7 one continuation is 29 Qc2 Bb5 30 Nb6 Qd8 31 Nc4 Qa8 32 a3 bxa3 33 Nxa3 Qxd5 34 Nxb5 axb5 White traded his knight for a bishop at the cost of a pawn. Black should be winning but it might have been better chances for White than the game.] **29 Bf4 Nf2+!** [This tactic wins the exchange back and leaves Black with a winning advantage.] **30 Kg1 Nd3 31 Bxd6 Nxe1 32 Nxe1 Ne4 33 Bf4** [if 33 Bxc5 Nxc5 34 Qxc5 Qxc5+ 35 Nxc5 Bd4+ is game over] **33...Bd4+ 34**



Kh2 Nc3 35 Nxc3 [35 Qxb5 axb5 36 Nxc3 bxc3 37 Kg3 b4 should be a pretty easy win for Black with extra material, better pieces, a protected passed pawn, and better pawn structure.] **35...bxc3 36 Nf3 Qxc4 37 bxc4 Bf6 38 Kg3 Bd3 39 Ne5 Bxe5 40 Bxe5**



Black is winning, although a bishops of opposite colors ending entails some practical risk of misevaluation. The drawing margin can be surprising. In fact, the other critical game on board 2 also reached a bishops of opposite colors ending

and Black was unable to win despite having two extra pawns. It was thanks to this that I ended up with clear first place!

40...c2 41 Bf4 Bxc4 42 d6 Kf8 43 a3 Ke8 44 Kf2 Kd7 45 Ke1 c1Q+ [giving up the advanced c-pawn for the d-pawn before White can block with his king.] **46 Bxc1 Kxd6 47 g3 Kd5 48 Kd2 Ke4** [My king is very active and the bishop and c-pawn keep White's king at bay. The next step is to create another passed pawn using the kingside majority.] **49 Kc3 Be6 50 h4 Kf3 51 Bf4 f6 52 Bd6 h5 53 Be7** [My opponent offered a draw, but I have a breakthrough to create a second passed pawn.] **53...f5 54 Bd6** [After 54 Bxc5 Kxg3 the f-pawn will cost White more material.] **54...Kg4 55 Bf4 g5!** [A typical idea to create a second passed pawn. The rest is pretty simple.] **56 Bxg5** [56 hxg5 h4 57 Bd6 hxg3 58 Bxc5 f4 also wins.] **56...Kxg3 57 Be7 f4 58 Bd6 Kg4 59 Bxc5 Kxh4 60 Kd3 Kg3 61 Bd6 Bd5 62 Kd4 Bb7 63 Ke5 f3 64 Kf5+ Kg2 65 Bc5 h4 66 Kg4 h3 0-1**



David Zofchak Memorial

by *Christina M Schweiss*

THE 31ST DAVID ZOFCHAK MEMORIAL OPEN, a VCF Cup event, was held September 22-24 in Norfolk. The threat of a freak pop-up tropical storm that formed days prior to the event along the coast of our Carolina neighbors to the south caused numerous withdrawals due to travel fears. With the weather taking a turn for the better overnight Friday into Saturday as the storm tracked further west, the tournament still drew almost 140 players across all sections and side events.

The event began on a rainy, windblown Friday evening with 24 players in the Blitz side event. Youth dominated, taking all but one of the top prizes. Timothy McCall won 1st place with 7 out of 8 points, followed by Tyson Brady with 6½. New USCF member

2024 Virginia Open - January 5-7, 2024, Dulles, Va

\$6,050 prize fund. 3 sections: Open, U1800, and U1200. Open & U1800 are FIDE-rated. Enter & full details at www.vachess.org



(but FIDE experienced) Veniamin Neofitidis clinched 3rd with 6 points. Rounding out the Blitz prizes were Jackson Twilley (top U1200) & Paul Tagger (top Unrated).

Drizzly gray Saturday featured a Scholastic U800 side event with 35 players and trophy prizes. Darshan Parameswaran won 1st prize with a perfect 5-0 score, followed by Nicholas Granata in 2nd, Griffon Cook in 3rd, Abhinav Chokkalingam in 4th & Mateo Pelaez in 5th. Callen Moore was top Unrated, Shripaad Boggarapu top U500, and Alisa Rassokhina top U300.

Sunny Sunday welcomed a Scholastic Rookie side event with 32 players and trophy prizes. Jet Pham took home the 1st place trophy with a perfect score of 5 points, while four players tied at 4-1, each taking home trophies in tiebreak order: Jack Hill, Alyssa DiNicola, Leon Bland & Ridhun Dhiwakaran. As most of the top finishers were middle and high school students, we also awarded class trophies to younger players. Windsor Gordon was top K-5, Foster Harkins 2nd K-5, and Jayden Yang 3rd K-5. Agam Jaitely was Top K-3 & Ishika Parimi 2nd K-3. The Top K-1 trophy went to Elijah Solano.

Including scholastic side events serves a dual purpose for open tournaments. It helps increase revenue as costs soar for facilities and supplies, and it exposes kids to the culture of an open tournament, as opposed to playing in isolation at scholastic-only events. Playing nearby advanced players provides inspiration for kids to continue to work hard to join them.

The main Zofchack Memorial was held on Saturday and Sunday, featuring U1200, U1600, and Open sections. The U1200 section was new this year. The 2022 Zofchack did not have scholastic side events and featured a U1000 section. The organizers felt that including a U1200 section would encourage more kids to move above scholastic sections to experience an open tournament. This goal was accomplished, with 20 players registering for U1200 section—all but two rated under 1000. Continuing the trend of strong self-/streamer-taught new members joining US Chess, the section featured seven unrated adults and teens, two of whom finished in the top five. Returning member John Hill took home the clear 1st place prize money with a score of 4½ out of 5. Mike Anliker was clear 2nd while Reginald Lipscomb, Mikhail Wilson & Philip Pound split the 3rd place money.

With many entrants 'playing up' for the stronger challenge in Open, the U1600 section was the smallest of the weekend with just 18 players. Three of them tied at the top with 4-1 scores: Siddhant Yambem, Scott Horne & Mauri Miettinen. Scott, a no-longer U1000 player who reported "studying hard" as the secret to his success had a breakthrough tournament. He won both Top Upset prizes! Aidan Viar, an up-and-coming new teen we discovered just weeks prior at an unrated event, took the Top Unrated prize.

The Open section featured 26 players. Strong Class A player (who has since achieved an Expert rating) Aneesh Desai upset the field by beating an Expert and drawing a Master to take clear 1st place with 4½ points. Trung Nguyen & Tyson Brady split



the 2nd/3rd with 4 points each. Timothy McCall took the 4th place prize. Top upsets in the Open section went to Prasanna Chokkalingam & Ilya Kremenchugskiy, who recently returned to playing at over 90 years old and is still above his rating floor! Ilya is an inspiration to all our local players to keep our minds sharp!

The next HRCA-hosted VCF Cup event is the Coastal Virginia Open, February 2-4. Stay tuned for a potential venue change within Hampton Roads!

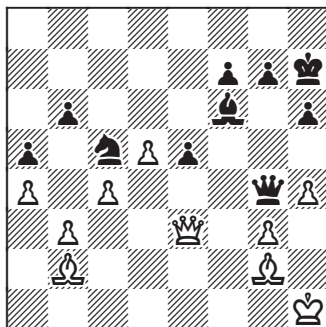
Aneesh Desai - Nick Failon Modern

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Bc4 d6 4 Nf3 a6 5 Nc3 e6 6 O-O b5 7 Be2 Bb7 8 e5 d5 9 b4 Nd7 10 a4 bxa4 11 Nxa4 Bc6 12 Nd2 Ne7 13 Nb3 Bb5 14 Nac5 Qc8 15 Nxd7 Bxd7 16 Nc5 Bb5 17 c3 c6 18 Bg5 h6 19 Bxe7 Kxe7 20 Ra5 Re8 21 Qc2 Kf8 22 Rfa1 Kg8 23 Bxb5 cxb5 24 Rxa6 Rxa6 25 Rxa6 Bf8 26 Qa2 f6 27 exf6 Qd8 28 Qe2 Qxf6 29 Qxb5 Qf4 30 g3 Qc1+ 31 Kg2 Re7 32 Rxe6 Rxe6 33 Nxe6 1-0

Trung Nguyen - Aneesh Desai Queen's Indian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 g3 Ba6 5 b3 Bb4+ 6 Bd2 Be7 7 Bg2 Bb7 8 O-O c5 9 Bc3 cxd4 10 Bxd4 Nc6 11 Bb2 Qc7 12 Nc3 a6 13 e4 O-O 14 Qe2 d6 15 Rac1 Ne5 16 Nd4 Rab8 17 f4 Nc6 18 Nf3 Na7

19 Kh1 Bc6 20 Nd4 Bb7 21 Rfd1 Rbd8 22 Rd2 Ba8 23 f5 e5 24 Nc2 Qb7 25 a4 Nc6 26 Nd5 Nxd5 27 Rxd5 Qc7 28 Rdd1 Na5 29 Qd3 Nb7 30 Nb4 Nc5 31 Qe3 a5 32 Nd5 Bxd5 33 Rxd5 h6 34 h4 Kh7 35 Rcd1 Qc8 36 f6 Bxf6 37 Rxd6 Rxd6 38 Rxd6 Rd8 39 Rd5 Rxd5 40 exd5 Qg4



41 Bxe5 Bxe5 42 Qxe5 Qd1+ 43 Kh2 Qxb3 44 Qf5+ Kg8 45 Qc8+ Kh7 46 Qf5+ Kg8 47 Qc8+ ½-½

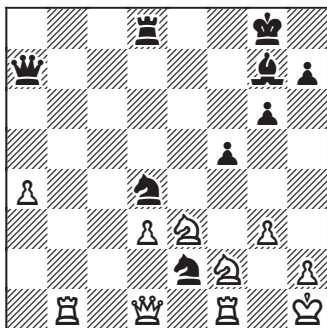
Nick Failon - Cayden Jackson English

Notes by Cayden Jackson

1 Nf3 c5 2 c4 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 Nc3 e6 6 e4?! [I think this isn't normal here. If I remember correctly, this is usually played in positions without the knight on f3. In general, I'm not too fond of e4 in most lines of the Symmetrical English, but sometimes it's technically okay. Here I don't think it's good.] 6...Nge7 7 O-O O-O 8 Ne1 b6 9 d3 Bb7 10 f4 Nd4 11 e5? [11 Be3 d5 12 cxd5 exd5 13 e5 and Black is better, but not by much.] 11...Bxg2 12 Nxg2 d6 13 exd6 Qxd6 14 Ne4 Qc7 15 Rb1 Rad8 16 b4 cxb4 17 Rxb4 f5?! [A minor inaccuracy. For some reason I thought I was winning material, completely forgetting the knight could go to f2. 17...Rd7 with the plan of ...Rfd8 is better, to start putting pressure on White's backwards d-pawn.] 18

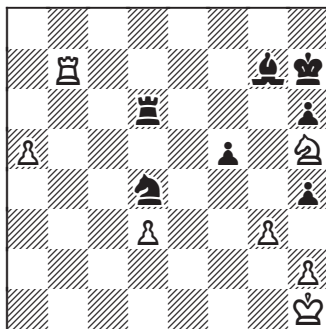


Nf2 Nec6 19 Rb1 Rfe8 20 Kh1 Qb7 21 a4 e5 22 c5 exf4 23 Bxf4 Ne2?! [23... Re2 24 cxb6 axb6 and there's nothing White can really do about my rook being there] 24 cxb6 Ncd4 25 bxa7 Qxa7 26 Be3? Rxe3! 27 Nxe3



27...Qa8+? [I wanted to force the knight back to g2 and then play 28...Nc3, but playing 27...Nc3 right away was the only winning move: 28 Qc1 Nde2! 29 Qd2 Bh6! Black gets his material back with a far better position.] **28 Ng2 Nc3** [I offered a draw here, and he declined.] **29 Qc1 Nxb1 30 Qc4+!** [I missed this in my analysis during the game. The engine still prefers me slightly, but I certainly thought I was worse now, being down a pawn.] **30...Kh8 31 Rxb1 Qf3?** [31... Rc8 32 Qb4 (32 Qf7 Rc2) h6 33 Nh3 Rc2 34 Qb8+ Qxb8 35 Rxb8+ Kh7 and I should be getting a pawn back soon, when I'll be perfectly fine.] **32 Nh3 h6 33 Nf4 Kh7 34 Qa6 Qc6?** [34...Nc6 and with best play I can hold a draw] **35**

Qxc6 Nxc6 36 Rb7 Nd4 37 Nh4 Rd6? [This gives him a winning opportunity, which, luckily for me, he also missed.] **38 a5?** [38 Nfxg6! and if Black trades on g6, White's a-pawn will be too fast.] **38...g5?** [I decided to go into this not seeing anything better and finally realizing Nxc6 was a threat. 38...Ra6 is a fairly obvious move, and I don't know why I didn't think of it.] **39 Nh5 gxh4**



40 Nxc7? [After 40 Rxg7+ Kh8 41 Rf7 White is threatening Nf6 when Black's king would be completely trapped and he'd have to give up his rook for White's knight. 41...Kg8 is the only way to prevent this, but then 42 Rf6 wins as well, just not as quickly.] **40...Kg8 41 Ne8?!** [I'm perfectly fine now.] **41...Re6 42 Rd7 Nf3 43 Nc7?** [Really low on time, my opponent blunders into a forced mate.] **43...Re2 44 Rd8+** [There's nothing he can do besides throw in some checks.] **44...Kh7 45 Rd7+ Kg6 46 Rd6+ Kh5 47 g4+ Kxg4 0-1**

2024 Virginia Scholastic & College Championships

March 9-10, 2024

William Fleming High School, 3649 Ferncliff Ave NW, Roanoke, Va 24017

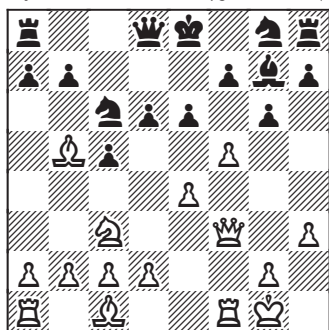
Details and Registration at www.vachess.org



Scott Horne - David Rourke Sicilian

Notes by Scott Horne

1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 d6 3 f4 Nc6 4 Nf3 Bg4 5 Bb5 g6 [Black equalized in some games after 5...Rc8 but more often he lost after 6 O-O a6 7 Bxc6+ Rxc6] **6 O-O Bg7 7 h3 Bxf3** [After 7...Bd7 8 d3 a6 9 Bxc6 Bxc6 10 Bd2 *Nh6* developing, defending the kingside and preparing to castle while preventing the e5 push opening the center, the continuation might be 11 Kh1 O-O 12 Qe1. In this variation *10...Nf6?* is weaker, letting White take more center space and win tempi after 11 e5 dxe5 12 fxe5 Nd7 13 Qe2; However, *10...Qd7* preparing to castle queenside was possible, eg 11 Rb1 Nh6 12 b3 with mutual chance—both kings are compromised.] **8 Qxf3 e6?** [Loss of tempi, delays castling, and allows White to open the center. In the post mortem my opponent told me he intended to queenside castle. 8...Qb6 was a move, to prepare to castle and set up a discovered check. Then 9 Kh1 gets out of discovery and 9...O-O-O 10 Bxc6 trades bad bishop for good knight and prevents it from getting trapped or in the way of an attack. 10...Qxc6 11 d3] **9 f5**



[I noted here I have latent dual threats on f7 and c6.] **9...exf5 10 exf5 Nf6 11 Bxc6+**

bxc6 12 Qxc6+ Nd7 [12...Qd7? 13 Qxa8+; I considered 12...Kf8 and decided that all of Black's pieces are stuck so my position should be strong after 13 d3 (but not 13 fxg6? which frees Black's rook] **13 Qxd6** [Preventing castling. But I missed 13 f6 until after the game: 13...Bxf6 (13...Bf8 14 Re1+ Be7 15 Nd5 O-O 16 fxe7 Qb8 17 exf8Q+ Kxf8 18 Qxd7) 14 Rxf6 Qxf6 15 Qxa8+ Qd8 16 Qxa7] **13...Be5** [I missed this resource] **14 Re1** [The idea being I might be able to trade rook for two minor pieces.] **14...Qh4** [I wasn't sure about 14...f6? but assumed Black must be worse. I see now obviously that is so. Black loses a piece: 15 Qe6+ Qe7 16 Nd5 Qxe6 17 fxe6 Bd4+ 18 Kh1 Rd8 19 exd7+] **15 Rxe5+ Nxe5 16 Qxe5+** [16 f6? was suggested after game but it leads to a perpetual after 16...Qe1+ 17 Kh2 Nf3+ 18 gxf3 Qf2+ 19 Kh1 Qf1+] **16...Kf8 17 Qxh8+ Ke7 18 Qe5+** [I calculated 18 Qxa8 Qe1+ 19 Kh2 Qe5+ 20 g3 but then Dan Heisman's advice came to mind, paraphrasing, "*Once you're ahead sufficient material play extremely safe.*" I decided to choose a simpler path that prevented any potential counter play. I didn't notice 18 f6+ and find it impractical, but 18...Kd7 (18...Ke6 19 Qxa8 Qe1+ 20 Kh2 Qe5+ 21 g3 Qd4 22 Ne4) 19 Qxa8 Qd4+ 20 Kh1] **18...Kf8 19 Qxc5+** [take one more pawn and dislodge the king from covering e8 before coming back to a square that prevents perpetual] **19...Kg7 20 Qf2** [offer a trade to simplify] **20...Qd8 21 d3** [get all my pieces in the game] **21...Rb8 22 b3 Rb6 23 Bb2 Qf6?? 24 Na4 Qxb2 25 Nxb2 1-0**



National Tournament of Girls State Champions

by *Chance Ngyue*

THIS PAST SUMMER I was fortunate to represent Virginia in the 11th annual Ruth Haring National Tournament of Girls State Champions in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I received an invitation after winning the Top Girl award in the K-12 section at the Virginia Scholastic Championship. I wish I could say that the competition had been fierce, but in truth th only a few females were vying for the honor this year. Because most girls drop chess by the time they are in middle school, winning “Top Girl” in high school is like winning the Hunger Games—all you have to do is not die. I firmly believe girls can still have fun and compete in chess without being ‘all in’. Because there are not as many female players, it may be easier for females to distinguish themselves in chess if they are willing to put in the time and effort. The Ruth Haring tournament, in particular, offers a wonderful opportunity and incentive for girls to continue with chess.

All participants of the Haring tournament (along with the other national invitationals concurrently) had the option of playing in the Weeramantry National Blitz Tournament of State Champs. After eight years in chess, this was my first blitz tournament! Some readers may express shock at this, but my blitz inexperience is not due to lack of opportunities. Rather, I simply do not enjoy time controls under 30 minutes and thus have avoided playing blitz like the plague.

Based on my regular chess rating, I was placed in the 1800-2199 section. With a Game/3, +2 time control, I surmised that my playing level was sub-1300 at best. I am far from being a chess master, but I have mastered the art of losing on time in blitz. Surprisingly, my nerves did not make an appearance on the morning of the event. Any jitteriness could be blamed on the Starbucks Frappuccino I drank for breakfast.

I played a total of eight blitz games against four opponents and ended with a score of 3-5. I could hardly keep track of what was going on in any given position. For me, blitz is the mental equivalent of taking a test while on fire, but not a terrible fire. To me, the Weeramantry tournament didn’t feel like a tournament at all, but more like a painless fever dream. Upon completing my last round, I accepted the subpar performance and moved on to preparing for the main event.

The top K-12 female chess players representing 43 states had gathered in Michigan to compete in this year’s Ruth Haring tournament. At the opening ceremony, the organizers delivered heartfelt speeches about the importance of this tournament. We (ie, the players) are the future of chess and the leaders of our generation. We should be proud of ourselves. It felt surreal. I felt like an imposter among all the hard core chess players. I like chess, but my life does not center around chess. I sense that other players do not share that outlook, and certainly not the players in the Ruth Haring tournament.



THE FIRST ROUND started in the evening, after an opening ceremony. The tournament hall layout was endless rows of tables and chess boards, each outfitted with a little disc to insert our state flags. I did not know the section divisions by board, but it was relatively easy to guess. There were concentrated areas of elementary school kids, middle schoolers, high schoolers, and senior players. The girls were placed in the middle of the ballroom-turned-playing-room, ranging from those who still clung to their parents to determined looking high school seniors. Being surrounded by other females in what is usually a male-dominated activity was a welcome change.

The director made a few announcements and then instructed parents to leave the room. That is when nerves set in. Suddenly, everyone's knees started bouncing. The water in the plastic cups and clear bottles on the table trembled. With the parents gone, the tournament hall became startlingly quiet. As the double doors swung closed, I waited for the moment when I could stop sitting idly, the moment when potential energy turns kinetic. The time control was G/90, +30, which I find less stressful. If I forget an opening variation, I can try to muddle my way to a decent middle game. What I lack in tactics can be offset by over-the-board calculations, and I am less likely to choke under time pressure.

Coming into this event, I had 113 tournaments under my belt. That's nothing special compared to most high-rated chess players, but more than enough for me to have learned how these things operate. The bigger the tournament, the bigger the venue, and the bigger the pre-game anxiety. But once the clock starts, every tournament is the same for me. I never leave my seat and I hardly take my eyes off the board. The only things that exist for me are my game, myself, and whatever song is running in my head on loop.

"You may now start the clocks," the director said, the microphone distorting his voice into something unsettling and powerful. His words were like the starting gun of a race. But instead of runners bursting from a line, hundreds of hands emerged from under the tablecloth. We shook hands or bumped fists, then started the clocks. The first move ended with a gentle tap of the clock, and with that the butterfly swarm dissolved in my stomach.

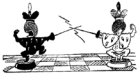
At the end of the day, chess is chess. With that mindset, I don't feel pressure to be the best at any tournament, even when the stakes are high. I am content progressing at my own pace regardless of who surpasses me. I'm my own competitor and I do not let my rating define me. As such, one tournament often blends into the next for me. This tournament, however, was different in that all players were required to attend a social gathering without their parents. I dreaded this and would have opted out if possible. But after the fact, I'm glad they forced me outside of my comfort zone. I was able to meet some of the top female players in the nation in a non-competitive situation.

I ended the 4-day tournament with a score of 4½ out of 6, tying for 4th place and winning \$250. My games were not as sharp as they could have been and I did not do as well as I had hoped (so I will spare you the analysis of my games), but considering my slow start (1½ out of 3) I was thankful I did not do worse.



At the awards giving, prizes were claimed by either the reluctant or the ecstatic. Many of the winners will likely be back next year. In my case next year will be close to home – Norfolk, Virginia. I don't know if I will be good enough to get invited back, but regardless, I am grateful to have been able to compete in this tournament at least once.

For any girls out there who are debating about whether to pick up, continue with, or quit chess, I encourage you to stick with it if you enjoy the game. The journey itself can be rewarding if you put everything into perspective and take setbacks in strides.



“That’s Rude..”^{*}

A Counter-Argument from a Below Average Chess Player, an Average Chess Dad and an Above Average Tournament Director (self proclaimed)

by *Robert Jackson*

In 2020 I nervously took over as director of the Hampton Roads Chess Club from veteran TD and player Dr Tom Belke. However, most people knew HRCC as the institutional legacy of the great Ernie Schlich.

At that time my TD experience mostly involved arguments in the form of “yeah huh”, “nu uh”, “yeah huh” and “nu uh” so obviously I was nervous about the transition from directing kids to adults at ‘Ernie’s club’. But I was nervous about something else as well. I knew the kids were coming. At the time we still called HRCC “The Adult Club”. Indeed, it was almost all adults, with maybe one or two advanced kids playing on occasion. But under the great leadership of Tina Schweiss, “The Kids’ Club”—the Hampton Roads Scholastic Chess Club—was starting to produce players who needed more of a challenge than the local Scholastic tournaments were giving them. I was concerned that our adults would either stop showing up or not be very welcoming to the kids. My own son had encountered an adult who prior to starting of their game asked if he was “one of those annoying kids who slams their pieces and crap”.

Fast forward three years: not only was I accepted graciously by the HRCC’s long time members, but they have been absolutely amazing with the kids. I have watched them win and then take the time going over the game to show youngsters how things might have turned out differently. I watch them lose with grace as the kids are now more times than not the top boards in our tournaments. As a result, the now deemed “Advanced Club” has seen record turnouts. This would not have happened without merging the age groups.

Record turnouts are now everywhere. From local events to nationals, chess is seeing record attendance. Returning to separate sections by age would be a backwards step.

Now, with respect to Mr Bennett’s cited complaints... they are well warranted. He points out conditions that neither he nor any chess player wants to deal with.

* - *Senior Tournament Director Robert Jackson responds to Lee Bennett’s editorial “from VIRGINIA `CHESS #2023/5*



However, I would like to point out my own examples from what I have seen in my time as a Tournament Director:

1. I was called to a board of two adults. The loud complaint was *“he moved the piece with a pencil. I told him not to and he did it again.”*
2. A child had a triple occurrence of position claim. While he quietly waited for my TD determination, his adult opponent started loudly and repeatedly yelling in the middle of the playing room *“he’s just mad because he’s losing”*.
3. I recently witnessed an adult berating a child for asking if he was keeping notation. The child listened quietly and never responded, taking the high road.
4. I observed a 1900-rated player noticeably and intentionally slurping on an empty drink to bother his opponent.

I could give more, but I’ll leave it there. *“That’s Rude…”* specifically mentions the Virginia Closed State Championship, where I was the chief TD. Roughly 70 out of the 134 players in that event were kids. Citing three children (two of Bennett’s complaints were the same kid) does not seem to warrant age appropriate sections. I also worked the floor at the national event in Baltimore which Mr Bennett mentioned. It’s true that the children’s behavior there was beyond bad. What was not mentioned was that the damage done was between rounds in the skittles areas in front of parents in most cases. There were very few problems in the playing room with over 2000 kids.

Part of the problem is adult players trying to take situations into their own hands, reprimanding kids on their own. I am not hesitant to make an annoying behavior ruling. But if you call me to your board for the first time and tell me you’ve had four issues with a kid, you cannot expect me to rule as though he has four infractions. It’s my first warning to him.

99% of players, both adults and children, are not malicious. The main difference is that many children have not been taught etiquette, for whatever reasons. So they are more prone to annoying behavior, but the vast majority only have to be told once or twice before they understand how to conduct themselves in a chess tournament.

Everyone has the right to a fair game, no disputing on that. It is unfortunate when someone has to deal with an annoying opponent. But I am constantly impressed with the behavior of the vast majority of children at the tournaments I officiate. I would implore “old school” adult players to really observe the overall behavior of chess playing children. They may take on a different view. We should embrace the fact that all ages play in the same room. Children are the future of our chess community. As adults, we should nearby to help them learn time honored traditions so that they pass them on to the next round, the next opponent, and the next tournament.

Virginia Chess
2851 Cherry Branch Lane
Oak Hill, VA 20171-3843

Non-profit Org.
US Postage PAID
Orange VA
Permit No. 97

In This Issue:

Skyline Open	1
Zofchak Memorial	5
Rith Haring Invitational	10
Editorial (Jackson)	12
Upcoming Events	5, 8
VCF Info	<i>inside front cover</i>

