

# VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

The bimonthly publication of the  
Virginia Chess Federation

2024 - #4

eastern chess association  
making chess happen



Photo by Bryanna Bahel

# VIRGINIA CHESS

## Newsletter

2024 - Issue #4

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# Eastern Chess Association June Tournament

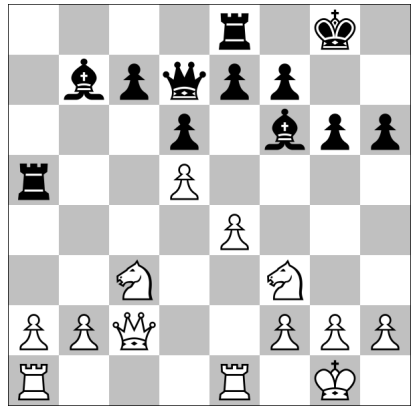
by Mike Callaham

The Eastern Chess Association (ECA) is making every attempt to bring great tournaments to central Virginia. ECA events feature an Associate National Tournament Director, a Level III Certified Team Coach providing free analysis & instruction, and competition at every level: Scholastic, Under 1600, and Open sections. The most recent ECA event took place June 29 at Brightpoint Community College in beautiful Chester, Va, and the talk of the tournament was Alan Plaskey! He made a clean sweep of the Under 1600 with a perfect 5-0.

ECA venues have been knocking it out of the park. Brightpoint offers ample room for more play, for more skittles, and more analysis without having to crawl over anyone! We can thank Scott Meredith for arranging the use of the facility, and we hope we can use it again soon. Professional photography for this article was provided by Chess Mom Brenna Behel!

## Alan Plaskey - Eshwar Bejugam King's Indian

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 d4 b6 4 Bg5 Bg7 5 e3 Bb7 6 Nc3 O-O 7 Bd3 d6 8 O-O Nbd7 9 d5?! [The right move here is 9 e4. Most players don't get good at enforcing 1 d4, 2 c4, 3 Nc3, and 4 e4 until they are Category 1. The fastest road is playing up, analyzing, and/or studying.] 9...h6 10 Bh4 a6 11 Re1 b5! [If e4 had been played, this would lose a pawn! Eshwar couldn't explain how he found this move. I think he got a taste of what intuition is like. All fianchetto players must be acquainted with ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5 wing progression even if they are not yet 'proficient!'] 12 e4 Re8? [Now that moves drops a pawn! 12...bxc4!? and 12... b4 are both better.] 13 cxb5 axb5 14 Bxb5 Ra5 15 Bxf6!? [Not the best, but in the computer's top 5.] {15 Nd4—ed} 15...Bxf6 16 Bxd7 Qxd7 17 Qc2 {diagram}



During the post round, I wanted to put this position on an engine! Why? I wanted to know which thematics/whole games concepts could be applied to this situation. Four popular schemes are available!

i) 17...Bf6-g7. Maintain pressure on the diagonal, protect the castled position, prepare f7-f5. The continuation might go something like 18 a4 e6 19 b4 Raa8 20 a5 exd5 21 exd5 c5 22 bxc5 dxc5 ∞



ii) 17...c7-c6. GMs play this and wait, hoping White will take and at the same time knowing that if he doesn't they will eventually take on d5 or push past. The game may have continued 18 Qd2 Bg7 19 a4 cxd5 20 Nxd5 Ra6 ∞

iii) 17...e7-e6. GM's play this if they're able to play ...e6xd5 advantageously on the very next move, or they forsee a well-timed ...e6-e5 moves later. Unless he takes on e6, White will have to examine those two possibilities on every turn! Here the game may have continued 17...e6 18 Qd2 Bg7 19 Rac1 Rc5 20 h3 Kh7 21 Red1 ±

iv) 17...Ra6 *à la* a Benko, Benoni or King's Indian when the a- and b-files are

open and White is up a pawn. 17...Ra6 18 Qd2 Bg7 19 Nd4 c5 20 dxc6 Bxc6 ∞

The move that was actually played is the engine's 5th choice.

**17...Rc5 18 Qb3 c6 19 Rad1 cxd5 20 Nxd5 Rb5?! [Blacks last chance to keep it level or better was 20...Bxd5! 21 Rxd5 Rxd5 22 Qxd5 Bxb2] 21 Nxf6+ exf6 22 Qa4 Bc6 23 Qd4 Re6 24 Nd2 f5 25 a4 Ra5 26 exf5 Rxe1+ 27 Rxe1 Rd5 28 Qc3 Rxf5 29 Ne4 Bxe4 30 Rxe4 Qxa4? [Some kind of hallucination about White's back rank. 30...Rc5 31 Rc4 Rxc4 32 Qxc4 Qf5 was the way to play on, but White's a-pawn should win.] 31 Rxa4 Rc5 and 1-0 in view of 32 Ra8+ Kh7 33 Rh8mate**

## Christopher Alan McCollum - Andrew Neal King's Indian

**1 d4 d6 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e3 g6 4 c4 Bg7 5 Nc3 O-O 6 Be2 c6 7 O-O** [Whether you play it as White or Black, you are duty bound to know this position when you venture the Pirc, Modern, Kings Indian, Dragon, Benoni, or Benko. The e-pawn being on e3 changes a lot, and nothing at the same time! ] **7...Re8** [Other moves should be get first consideration.] **8 e4** [Whenever you allow your opponent a pawn move, you need to know when the next time it might move, even though he can't play two turns in a row! In other words, Black's calculations for what to do about a possible e4-e5 must include accounting for the further moves e5-e6, e5xf6, and e5xd6. Only then decide whether to permit e4-e5!] **Nbd7?! 9 h3?** [He doesn't take the opportunity for 9 e5! Black's last move took away the best retreat square for Nf6 and also blocked the diagonal of Bc8, which give the pawn move force! 9...dxe5 10 dxe5 Ng4 11 e6! fxe6? 12 Ng5! hitting Ng4 and e6, White would be winning. 11...Nde5 is better defense but 12 Nxe5 Nxe5 13 f4! istill isn't what Black would choose if he could play his 8th move over again.] **9...c5?! [9...e5] 10 d5 Qc7 11 Bf4 Nh5 12 Bd2 Nhf6 13 Qc2 Nb6 14 Bf4 Nh5 15 Bh2 Bf6 16 Rfe1 Bh8 17 Bd3 e5**





# 2024 (86<sup>th</sup>) Virginia Closed Chess Championships



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**AUG 31 – SEPT 2**

**\$5,000 in prizes based on 90 paid players,  
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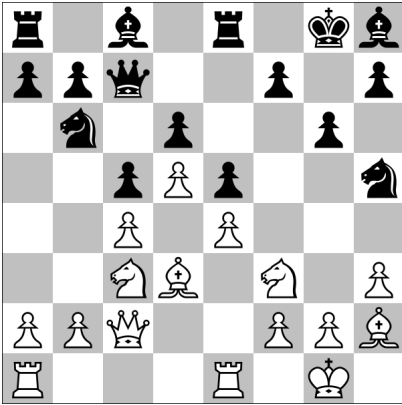
**BLITZ TOURNAMENT ON FRIDAY EVENING, AUG 30, AT 7:30 PM**  
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*Hotel & Playing Site:* Hilton Garden Inn Innsbrook, 4050 Cox Road, Glen Allen, Va. Call the hotel at (804)521-2901 *by Friday August 16* and request the “Virginia Chess Federation” rate. The chess tournament rates are \$116/night-King and \$126/night-Double Queen, plus taxes. You also can reserve your room online as advertised on the VCF home page (<https://www.vachess.org>).

*Main Event Format:* Swiss System, all sections US chess rated.  
**Championship and Amateur Sections:** 6 rounds with *two event Schedules*, a Long Schedule for players who start playing at 1 pm on Saturday, and a Short Schedule starts at 5 pm on Saturday.  
**Novice Section:** 5 rounds, with *all games on Saturday and Sunday only*.

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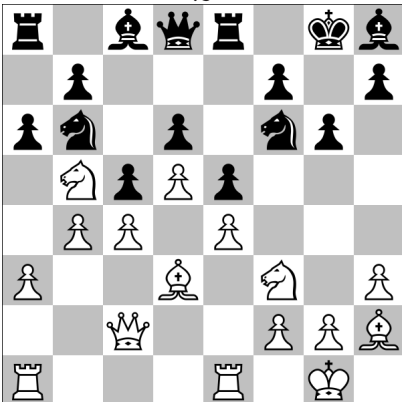
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18 a3?

Playing 25-50 games in an opening gives you the thematics needed to capitalize on these types of known maneuvers with less errors and less calculations! Here White gets a big advantage by capturing *en passant*. 18 dxe6 Bxe6 (or 18...Rxe6 19 Ng5 Re8 20 Nb5) 19 Nb5 etc. If you are White and play d4-d5, or you are Black and face d4-d5 by White, you will need to play ...e7-e5 or ...c7-c5. This position teaches both sides how a backward d-pawn can fall under attack!! I will be using this position with my students!

18...Nf6 19 Nb5 Qd8 20 b4! a6!



We didn't have time to fully assess this position during the post round. Is anyone else tempted to take on c5!? How about the capture on d6!?

i) 21 bxc5 axb5 22 cxb6 bxc4 23 Qxc4 Qxb6 24 Reb1 Qa5 25 Rb5 Qa6 26 Qb3 Nd7 27 Nd2 Bf6 28 Nc4 Bd8 29 Bf1 White has a comfortable lead.

ii) 21 Nxd6!? Qxd6 22 Nxe5 and now 22...Rxe5?! (the materialistic approach but Black has at least four unclear alternatives in 22...Qf8, 22...Nfd5!, 22...Qd8, and 22...Qe7) 23 bxc5! Qe7 24 Bxe5 Qxe5 25 cxb6 Nh5!

Instead of taking on e5 with the rook, I recommend you put the other four responses to the test! Take each one and see if you can promote a pawn or two against a friend, parent, coach, or bot! It's bound to provide hours of fun and instruction. There will always be a time in a game where you have three, four, and even five good choices. The fastest way to learn how to defend and determine your style in chess is to analyze your whole game, diving deep into positions where you had multiple options!

21 Nc3 Qc7 22 Qb3 Bd7 23 Rac1?!

[Black's weaknesses are on the b-file, not the c-file, and 23 Rab1! would point a finger at them: 23...cxb4 24 Qxb4 Nxc4 25 Bxc4 Rac8 26 Bf1 a5 27 Qb6 Qxb6 28 Rxb6 Rxc3 29 Rxd6 ±] 23...Rac8 24 Ne2 Ba4 25 Qc3 From here the score sheet was not usable to construct the rest of the game. The position is about equal... but Black went on to win a 367 point upset!

In closing I want to mention that ECA has also made the Glan Allen Hilton Garden Inn home of the Virginia Closed a frequent place to play. Please support the ECA and other



real world tournaments as often as you can. Shout out to DMV Chess for the brilliant idea of 8-round weekend tournaments with up to four byes. That means you can make it a one-day tournament of your choice. If you have other activities on your calendar (work, another child's event, the player

has another activity...) you can arrange the weekend around your schedule and get in four or more chess games! If we all beg and plead with them to make it 30/5 instead of 25/5, it would be perfect. It is a boss move for sure and we should support them as much as we can!

{Advertisement}

Dear players, parents and organizers,

I work to impart this life lesson: *Find something that is interesting enough to pursue, commit to pursuing that interest even though the road to success is sometimes unclear!* As long as there is the hope and probability for tangible or intangible compensation, keep going, keep going, keep going...!!!

If things are going to improve rapidly instead of eventually, it's up to us, the affiliates, players, and parents to pull the new players and parents from the internet aside, and inform them about grandmaster methodologies for improvement and how to accurately measure online and real world chess performances!

To make chess events fun again, (74% of the tournament participants and more than half of US Chess membership are under 18), every event should have costumes, books, sets, and gear that are for sale, handouts for parents, and seminars on efficiently getting the most from chess. There should be a demo board with prizes, somebody responsible for collecting games, live post-round analysis, and finally, publish an event summary within 7-14 days and send it to everyone everywhere!!

We — the Scholarship Chess Business Center — provide this service to any type of chess event for as little as \$1 per mile!!! For more info, visit [www.scholarshipchessbusinesscenter.com](http://www.scholarshipchessbusinesscenter.com) Go to the "Dear players, parents, and organizers" page on the main menu. Want immediate answers? Call 804-426-6058 and ask for Coach Mike.

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Using engines and databases to find surprise moves and variations! 8/18 and 9/16

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How to use the ratings system, the top 100, and incentives to motivate kids! 9/8 & 9/30

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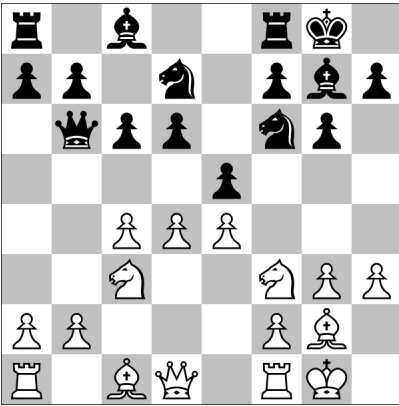
## Around the World

by Macon Shibut

The 2024 World Open was not much of a success for me competitively, but for enjoyment and aesthetics, if I can put it that way, I was happy enough with my play. Every single one of my games was interesting and hard fought. Here I will share four of them—a win, a loss, and a pair of full-blooded draws. To begin, let's get the loss out the way. This was from round 3 and it was already my second defeat, both against grandmasters.

### Macon Shibut - Harshit Raja 2024 World Open King's Indian Attack

My play was informed by knowing two classic games. By one move order or another they both reached the same position at move 9: 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 O-O 5 Nf3 d6 6 O-O Nbd7 7 Nc3 e5 8 h3 c6 9 e4 Qb6 {diagram}



In the 9<sup>th</sup> game of the 1960 World Championship, Mikhail Botvinnik played 10 d5. Challenger Mikhail Tal's book about that match was among my sacred texts when I was a kid, so naturally I came to know this game very well. Tal exchanged pawns and gained control of the c-file, then returned to traditional King's Indian play based on ...f5. An almost Shakespearean gravity pulled both players towards a climax where Tal delivered a speculative piece sacrifice 21...Nf4. At that point anything could still happen, but in fact Botvinnik faltered and

Tal won one of the most famous world championship games ever played. 10...cxd5 11 cxd5 Nc5 12 Ne1 Bd7 13 Nd3 Nxd3 14 Qxd3 Rfc8 15 Rb1 Nh5 16 Be3 Qb4 17 Qe2 Rc4 18 Rfc1 Rac8 19 Kh2 f5 20 exf5 Bxf5 21 Ra1 Nf4 22 gxf4 exf4 23 Bd2 Qxb2 24 Rab1 f3 25 Rxb2 fxe2 26 Rb3 Rd4 27 Be1 Be5+ 28 Kg1 Bf4 29 Nxe2 Rxc1 30 Nxd4 Rxe1+ 31 Bf1 Be4 cut here 32 Ne2 Be5 33 f4 Bf6 34 Rxb7 Bxd5 35 Rc7 Bxa2 36 Rxa7 Bc4 37 Ra8+ Kf7 38 Ra7+ Ke6 39 Ra3 d5 40 Kf2 Bh4+ 41 Kg2 Kd6 42 Ng3 Bxg3 43 Bxc4 dxc4 44 Kxg3 Kd5 45 Ra7 c3 46 Rc7 Kd4 47 Rd7+ 0-1

Thirty years later - now I was an adult having kids of my own, but fortunately still able to retain chess information in my memory. Arthur Yusupov and Garry Kasparov reached the diagram position at Linares 1990 and Yusupov chose a radically different approach, 10 c5!? I don't recall Tal having mentioned this at all. 10...dxc5 (forced) 11 dxe5 Ne8 I remember my reaction to Black's position was skeptical when I first saw the game. Things did not look any better after 12 Na4 Qa6 13 Bf4 Nc7 14 Qc2 Ne6 15 Rfd1 Re8 16 Rd6 Qa5 17





Rad1 but not to worry! From this point the play went all in one direction. Kasparov deftly maneuvered his seemingly cramped army. White's development, control of the d-file, and big kingside never delivered anything, whereas Black's 4-2 queenside pawn majority marched up the board with a sense of entitlement. 17...N**b6** 18 N**x**b6 a**x**b6 19 a3 Q**a4** 20 Q**e2** b5 21 Q**e3** b4 22 a**x**b4 Q**x**b4 23 R**6d2** R**a2** 24 R**b1** c4 25 R**c2** b5 26 B**h6** Q**c5** 27 Q**c1** N**d4** 28 B**xg7** K**xg7** 29 N**d4** Q**x**d4 30 b3 R**xc2** 31 Q**xc2** c3 32 R**d1** Q**c5** 33 b4 Q**x**b4 34 R**d3** c5 35 R**xc3** c4 the pawns ultimately cost White his bishop and the game.

One more thing... In 1977 I reached the diagram position myself as White! Naturally I followed Botvinnik, 10 d5, and my opponent replied 10...c5. In the moment I presumed this must be a mistake because Tal had certainly been able to utilize the c-file, and I wouldn't have to worry about that. I don't know if this was a correct evaluation, but confidence is everything in chess. I won that game in what felt like very Botvinnikian style at the time. 11 N**e1** N**e8** 12 f4 f5 13 N**d3** N**f6** 14 f**x**e5 N**x**e5 15 N**x**e5 d**x**e5 16 Q**e2** B**d7** 17 K**h2** N**x**e4 18 N**x**e4 f**x**e4 19 B**e3** Q**d6** 20 B**x**e4 B**f5** 21 Q**d3** B**x**e4 22 Q**x**e4 b6 23 K**g2** R**a**e8 24 R**a**e1 R**x**f1 25 R**x**f1 R**f8** 26 R**x**f8+ Q**x**f8 27 g4 Q**f6** 28 B**d2** h6 29 a3 B**f8** 30 b4 K**g7** 31 h4 B**d6** 32 B**x**h6+ K**h7** 33 B**g5** Q**g7** 34 b5 K**g8** 35 Q**f3** Q**f7** 36 Q**x**f7+ K**x**f7 37 K**f3** K**g7** 38 K**e4** K**f7** 39 B**e3** K**g7** 40 g5 K**f7** 41 B**g1** 1-0, Shibut - Olsher, Fairfax 1977.

**1 Nf3 d5 2 g3 g6 3 Bg2 Bg7 4 O-O Nf6 5 d3 O-O 6 Nbd2 c5 7 e4 Nc6 8 c3 e5 9 Qb3** [By no means the only move, but you better believe I was aware of the precedents! We have the exact Botvinnik-Tal and Yusupov-Kasparov position except with colors reversed; which is to say, I'm a tempo ahead of Tal and Kasparov, my opponent a tempo behind Botvinnik and Yusupov. The lost tempo is his king rook pawn — it's still at h7, not h6.] **9...c4** [He thought for about 20 minutes before playing this.] **10 dxc4 dxe4** [The first critical moment. Should I play 11 Ne1 *à la* Kasparov or 'exploit' the missing h-pawn move by playing my knight to a more active square?] **11 Ng5!?**

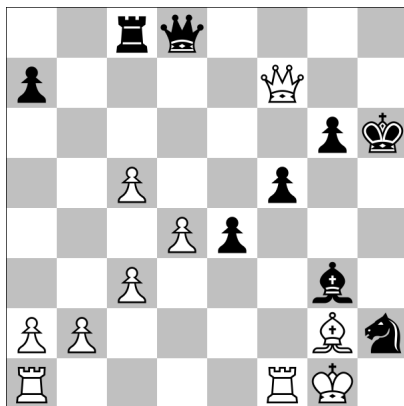
I decided to try to exploit the extra tempo. Ng5 is certainly more attractive provided White can get away with it, and I didn't see a clear reason I couldn't. Also factoring into my decision was that I didn't remember any more of how Yusupov-Kasparov went, so I wouldn't be able to milk that 'preparation' further anyway.

My opponent (who finished in a tie for 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the Open section at this World Open, incidentally) endorsed my decision in the post mortem. When I remarked that 11 Ne1 was "also possible", his response was immediate: "Oh, but you can't!" which suggests he didn't know of Yusupov-Kasparov.

**11...Na5 12 Qb4 Nc6 13 Qb3 e3** [Correct, and also the move that worried me most. If there is a reason 11 Ng5 is wrong, it will here. Compared to Ne1, my Ng5 is cut off and exposed to ...Qxg5 and also it cannot go to c2 to defend the weak pawn I'm about to get at e3.] **14 fxe3 Ng4 15 Ndf3 Na5 16 Qb4 h6 17 Ne4 f5** [The position is a tinder box and I was kind of relieved when he played this, reckoning at least I wasn't just losing a piece somehow.] **18 Nd6 Nc6 19 Qa3 e4 20 Nd4 Be5!** [But his



last couple moves (played quickly after a longish though over 17...f5) were unsettling. Black gave my knight the wonderful d4, but attacking Nd6 gains a tempo to introduce a new and terrifying motif: ...Nxb2! Δ Kxh2 Qh4+ etc] **21 c5 Nxb2 22 Qb3+ Kg7 23 Nxc8!** [Threatening Ne6+. If he recaptures 23...Qxc8 to avoid that, his queen is diverted from h4 and I'll be able to take Nh2. To avoid remaining a piece down, Black must play...] **23...Nxd4! 24 exd4** [this way, in order to release Bc1] **24...Bxg3!** [preparing to go for it: ...Qh4 and ...Ng4] **25 Qxb7+ Rf7 26 Bxh6+! Kxh6** [If 26...Kg8 27 Qxa8 and then on 27...Qh4 there's 28 Ne7+! 27 Qxf7 Rxc8]



The time control was move 40, an eternity away! Not surprisingly after what has happened, just a few minutes remained on my clock. I had a significant material advantage, plus Black's king at least appears 'exposed'. However, my own king is history if Black manages to bring the queen in. If no mate or perpetual check happens in the next few moves, all kinds of weird endgames are in prospect with crazy unopposed pawn majorities.

I burned most of my remaining time calculating feverishly. The fundamental danger is always ...Qh4 and ...Ng4. My first thought was 28 Bh3 Qh4 29 Kg2 but upon examination it doesn't defend at all! Simply 29...Ng4 threatening Ne3+, White has no reply. I decided I must sacrifice material back to break open Black's king. The choice boiled down to 28 Rxf5 and 28 Bxe4.

28 Rxf5!? gives up greater material but completely denudes Black's king. I looked at 28...gxf5 (if 28...Qh4 29 Rf6) 29 Qxf5 Qh4 30 Bxe4 (but not 30 Qxc8 Bf2+ 31 Kh1 Ng4+; nor 30 Qe6+ which runs out of checks after 30...Kg7 31 Qd7+ Kf6) and it seems it's okay for White. But then I stepped back a turn and wasn't so sure about 29...Nf3+ (instead of 29...Qh4) 30 Bxf3 exf3 31 Qxf3 Qg5. Struggling to visualize this position clearly, I thought if I survive I might be winning even a piece down. But I have to survive! I have no checks and I'm staring down various discovered checks by Black. Black's rook can potentially deploy on either the f-, g- or h-files. That plus my own sad Ra1 made me worry I'd lose ignominiously somehow if I played this, and that is why I chose the bishop sacrifice instead



of 28 Rxf5. For what it's worth, in the post mortem we examined this final position after 31...Qg5 could not find anything convincing for Black after the cold-blooded 32 Rf1!

**28 Bxe4!? Rc7** [certainly not 28...fxe4 29 Rf6 Qg8 30 Kg2] **29 Qd5?**

Alas, a losing move. I had to choose between this and 29 Qe6 and I'd made my choice already when playing 28 Bxe4. I didn't see anything clearly wrong with either move, but neither did either of them promise complete safety. It was essentially a coin toss, and I guessed wrong. 29 Qe6! would have been fine for me, as we established during the post mortem. The main point is after 29...Qh4 - always the first worry - there is 30 Bxf5: his g-pawn is pinned, mate is threatened, Black doesn't get the tempo he needs to deliver a death blow.

The main continuation after 29 Qe6! is 29...Re7 but this blocks his queen's run to h4. Only now should White go 30 Qd5 and if 30...Rd7 (to re-open the diagonal) 31 Qa8! setting up a latent check at h8. Raja said that he'd overlooked this point during the game. I actually did see it, but nothing feels certain at the board.

**29...Qh4 30 Bg2 Ng4 31 Rf3** [I'd relied on this. I didn't see a knockout and I'm ready to go Rxf3 and Qf3 to beat back the attack. Unfortunately...] **31...Re7** [This simple move closes the coffin. I noticed his intermezzo check on the next turn too late to do anything about it.] **32 Rxf3 Qh2+!** [To be fair, 32...Qxf3 also wins. I hadn't appreciated 33 Qf3 Qh2+ 34 Kf1 Re3 eg 35 Qd1 Qf4+ 36 Kg1 Qf2+ 37 Kh1 Rh3+ 38 Bxh3 Qh2mate. But the move he played is more elegant, especially in tandem with the echo intermezzo a couple turns later.] **33 Kf1 Qxf3 34 Kg1 Re1+ 35 Rxe1 Qf2+! 0-1**

Now here's a win, which occurred in round 2 in between my pair of losses. As I write this I note that my opponent is at the St Louis Chess Club playing in the US Girls Invitational.

## Chloe Gaw – Macon Shibut 2024 World Open Benoni

**1 d4 c5 2 d5 Nf6 3 c4 e5 4 Nc3 d6 5 e4 Be7 6 Bd3 Nbd7 7 Nge2 h5 8 h3 h4 9 g3 hxg3 10 Nxg3 g6 11 h4 Nh5 12 Be2 Ndf6** [12...Bxh4 13 Nxh5 gxh5 14 Be3 would not be to Black's liking] **13 Bg5 Nxg3** [Introducing tactics based on the undefended Rh1] **14 fxg3 Nxd5!?** [There was also the simpler (and safer!) 14...Nh5 15 Bxe7 Qxe7 16 Bxh5 Rxh5] **15 Qxd5** [If 15 Nxd5 Bxg5 16 O-O Bxh4! 17 gxh4 Qxh4 18 Rf3 f5! with a dangerous attack.] **15...Bxg5 16 Rf1 Be6 17 Qxb7 Be3 18 Qc6+** [If 18 Nd5 Qa5+! (although I had not worked this out when I played 13...Nxg3, thinking 18...Bxd5 19 Qxd5 O-O ∞) 19 b4 Bxd5! 20 Qxa8+ Bxa8 21 bxa5 Bxe4 ♯] **18...Kf8 19 Rf3** [or 19 Nd5 Bd4 20 O-O-O Kg7] **19...Rc8 20 Qa6 Bd4 21 Nb5 Qb6 22 Qxb6 axb6 23 Nxd6 Rc6** [on 23...Rd8 24 Nb5 I did not notice 24...g5! (considering only 24...Kg7) 25 hxg5 Rh2 26 Nxd4 Rxd4] **24 Nb5 Bxb2** [24...Kg7!?] **25 Rb1 Bd4 26 Na7 Rd6 27 Nb5 Rd7 28 Nxd4 Rxd4 29 Rxb6 Kg7 30 Rc6?** [She should play 30 Re3] **30...Rxe4 31 Rxc5? Ra8 ♯ 32 Kf2** [This loses in a cute way. White had to suffer 32



Rd3 Bxc4 33 Rd2 Rxe2+ 34 Rxe2 Bxe2 35 Kxe2 Rxa2+] **32...Rxe2+!** **33 Kxe2 Bg4** [White's pieces are so uncoordinated that the whole rook is lost.] **34 Rxe5 Rxa2+** **35 Ke3 Ra3+** **36 Kf4 Bxf3** **37 c5 Rc3** **38 Re7 Bc6** **39 Re5 Kf6** **40 Re1 Rc4+** **41 Ke3 Re4+** **42 Kf2 Rxe1** **43 Kxe1 Kf5** **44 Ke2 Kg4** **45 Kf2 f5 0-1**

Finally two draws: one where I was pushing, the other where I survived miraculously.

### Macon Shibut - Vihaan Sexina 2024 World Open King's Indian Attack

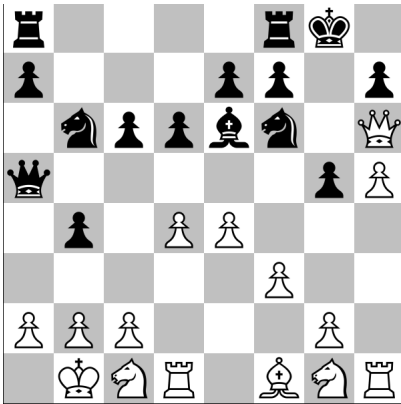
**1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 g6 3 Bg2 d5 4 O-O Bg7 5 d3 O-O 6 Nbd2 c5 7 e4 Nc6 8 c3 dxe4 9 dxe4 Qc7 10 Qc2 e5 11 Nc4 Be6 12 Ne3 h6 13 Nh4 Rad8 14 f4!? Ne7 15 f5 Bc8 16 fxg6 fxg6 17 c4! Kh7 18 Nd5 Nfxd5 19 cxd5** [Playing to constrain the lame Ne7. If 19 exd5?! Rxf1+ 20 Bxf1 Bf6] **19...b6 20 Be3 Ba6 21 Rxf8 Rxf8 22 Bf1 Bxf1 23 Rxf1 Rxf1+ 24 Kxf1 Nc8 25 Nf3 Nd6 26 Nd2 Qd7 27 Nc4 Nxc4 28 Qxc4 Bf8** [28...Qg4 and if 29 Kg2 Qd1 ∞ would have been more annoying] **29 Kg2 Bd6 30 h3** [To exclude Black's queen from bothering my king "once and for all". Or so I thought. Let's see how that works out... I felt my winning chances were decent. I had a protected passed pawn, a 'good' bishop versus 'bad', and e5 can be a target. One can imagine my king walking all the way through on the light squares, or my queen penetrating to the back rank and causing trouble.] **30... h5** [Not bad as it turns out, but I was happy to see this move because it gave me a new idea to work with: put my queen in front of the bishop on the c1-h6 diagonal and penetrate with her to h6] **31 a4 Kg7 32 b3 Be7 33 Qe2** [If I had it to do again I'd go straight for 33 Qa6 Δ a5 but I wanted to defer big decisions until after time control at move 40. So I dithered around with ideas like I mentioned in the previous note.] **33...Qd8 34 Qa6 Qd7 35 Bd2** [Again I didn't want to commit, but I should have gone for 35 a5 Bd8 36 Bd2. My opponent used my hesitation to achieve something real on the kingside .] **35...g5! 36 a5 g4** [I can't allow his queen to g4 one way or another. But now there is an entry check at f3 that I'll have to take into account.] **37 h4 Bd8 38 axb6 axb6 39 Qa1 Bc7 40 Bc3 Qe7** [In the last seconds before move 40 neither of us noticed 40...Qb5! and if 41 Bxe5+ Kf7! Black's counterplay suffices: 42 Bxc7 Qe2+ 43 Kg1 Qe3+ 44 Kf1 Qf3+ 45 Kg1 Qe3+] **41 Kg1** [My plan was to go in with my queen on the a-file with various zugzwangs in view. First I had to put my king here so Black's queen can't come to f3 with check.] **41...Qf6** [It turns out he just holds this way, but again there was a chance for immediate counterplay thanks to my last move. 41...c4! 42 bxc4 Qc5+ 43 Kg2 Qxc4 44 Bxe5+ Kg8! =] **42 Qa7 Qf7** [The point of Kg1 is seen in lines like 42...Qf3 43 Qxc7+ Kf8 44 Qxe5 (44 Qd6+ is even more clear; eventually White will either take e5 with check or trade queens by a check on f5) Qe3+ 45 Kf1 Qf3+ 46 Ke1 Qe3+ 47 Kd1 Qd3+ 48 Kc1 Qe3+ 49 Kc2 Qe2+ 50 Bd2] **43 Qb7 Bd6 44 Qc6!** [Black's previous move relied on 44 Qxb6 Qf3, but what now?] **44...Qf3!**



[just works!] 45 Qd7+ Kg8 46 Qe8+ Bf8 47 Qe6+ Kh7 48 Qxe5 [Eh! He moves between h7 and g8, I can't force Qxe5 with check, and in the event of 48 Qf5+ Qxf5 49 exf5 Bd6 both of my passed pawns are under control and there's this weakness at g3] 48...Qd1+ 49 Kf2 Qf3+ 50 Ke1 Qh1+ 51 Ke2 [If I ever try 51 Kd2?! then 51...Bh6+ comes, so there is no escaping the checks] 51...Qf3+ 1/2-1/2

## John Michael Britanico Silvedario – Macon Shibut 2024 World Open Pirc/Modern

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nc3 d6 3 Bf4 g6 4 e4 Bg7 5 Qd2 c6 6 Bh6 O-O 7 O-O-O b5 8 f3 [Without going into details, I got out-finessed with the move order and wound up defending the same difficult scheme in which I lost against Isaac Spence at last year's state championship.] 8...Qa5 9 Kb1 b4 [A normal move but evidently a mistake for reasons that boil down to straight calculation. This was a moment to insert 9...Bxh6 and then 10 Qxh6 Be6 is close to equal. The defense is so perilous because a mistake by White can lose the initiative, but even a small slip by Black can lose the game.] 10 Nce2 Nbd7 11 h4 Nb6 12 Nc1 Be6 13 h5? [Neither of us recognized the strength of 13 Bxg7 Kxg7 14 h5 Nxh5 15 g4 Nf6 16 Qh6+ Kg8 17 Nh3. That



said, those are all plausible moves a player might choose even without appreciating their worth.] 13...Bxh6 14 Qxh6 g5

*{diagram}*

This ...Qa5 + ...g5 is a known defensive resource, although rare in practice. In principle Black's king position is fatally compromised. But note: White's pieces besides the queen are still on the back rank, and moreover there is a queen trap threat ...Kh8 and ...Ng8. Both sides are stressed now, these positions are hard to play with either color, even if White is actually still winning

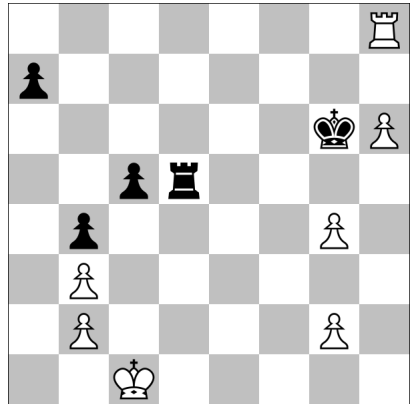
Ironically, the key idea is indeed encircling the queen... Black's queen! My opponent 'merely' needed to find 15 Nh3! whose main point is to deflect Black's bishop: 15...Bxh3 16 Nb3! Qa4 17 e5! Nfd7 18 Bd3 15 e5 [wins a pawn but loses the initiative] 15...dxe5 16 Qxg5+ Kh8 17 Qxe5 [17 dxe5 Rg8 18 Qe3 Nfd7 19 f4 Nd5 20 Qf2 Nc3+! 21 bxc3 bxc3 22 Rd3 Nc5] 17...Qxe5 18 dxe5 Nfd5 [The difference in development compensates for the pawn. During the next phase there were various alternatives for both sides, but my commentary will more or less skip ahead towards the miracle endgame. In summary, Black exerted some pressure, White returned the pawn to complete his development, and in the resulting position he retained maybe a slight edge.] 19 Nb3 Rfd8 20 Re1 Ne3! 21 Kc1 Nxf1 22 Rxf1 Nc4 23 Ne2 Nxe5 24 Re1 Bxb3 25 axb3 c5 26 Ng3 Nc6 27 Nf5 [The wrong direction.



I expected 27 Ne4 and that was actually superior, but I was also inattentive...] **27...e6 28 Nh6 Kg7 29 Ng4 Rd5 30 h6+ Kg6 31 Rh3** [The idea R-h3-g3 had totally eluded me until it hit the board. Black is actually fine in several ways, but I got flustered.] **31...f5?** [The best thing I can say about this is that it 'worked' exactly the way I planned. Meanwhile 31...Nd4 ( $\Delta$  32 Rg3 Nf5) 32 Ne5+ Kf6 33 Ng4+ Ke7 was perfectly safe. I calculated that too, but abandoned it in favor of the panicky text move because of some phantom.] **32 Rxe6+ Kf7 33 Rf6+ Ke7 34 Rxc6 fxe4 35 fxe4 Rad8** [threatens mate!] **36 Rd3 Rxd3 37 cxd3 Rxd3 38 Rc7+** [The finesse 38 g5! was really better, but my opponent was hurrying to time control. Besides, winning the h-pawn had been his point in checking my king to e-file back on move 33] **38...Kf6 39 Rxb7 Kg6 40 Rh8?** [The last move before time control makes the win much harder. 40 Rc7! Kxb6 41 Rxc5 Rg3 42 Rc4 a5 43 Rc5 Rxe4 44 Rxa5 Rxe2 45 Rc5 Kg6 46 Rc4 Kf6 47 Rxb4 Ke5 48 Rc4 should do the trick.] **40...Rd5** {diagram}

Having reached move 40, I took a short stroll to shake off time pressure nerves. I understood that I might be just lost, but I also realized I had a bothersome defensive construction. White's problem is that his king is boxed in. While my king stays in contact with the h-pawn, White also can't free his rook without surrendering the pawn.

**41 Kc2 Kg5** [waiting] **42 Rf8** [The rook must activate. He heads to f5 hoping to break the king's quarantine.] **42...Kxb6 43 Rf5 Rd4 44 g5+ Kg6 45 Rxc5 Rg4 46 Kd3 a6!**



[Keeping his king cut off along the rank is more important than taking g2. Meanwhile my move had two purposes. First, I'm preparing Rxe2 so that if he answers Kc4 I'll play Rg4+ and he can no longer go Kb5. Second, there are scenarios where I take g5 and g2 while he captures b4 and the a-pawn, and it's useful that the a-pawn falls on a6 instead of a7 so that at the end White doesn't win my rook by Rg7+] **47 Re5 Kh5** [waiting!] **48 Ra5 Kg6 49 Rxa6+ Kxe5 50 Rd6 Kf5!** [now to the queenside as quickly as possible] **51 Rd4 Rxe2 52 Kc4 Ke5! 53 Rd5+ Ke6 54 Rd3 Rxb2 55 Kxb4 Rh2** [I executed my previous moves quickly and confidently; I knew exactly what I had to try. My sense is that my opponent got caught up in the pace and he threw away the win after just a very short think.] **56 Ka5?** [The winning process is the so-called Combined Method. White combines advancing his king with pushing Black's king. 56 Kc5! (or 56 Kb5!) Rh8 57 Kc6 so that on the move that draws in the game, 57...Rb8, there will be 58 Re3+] **56...Rh8!** [Now it's a forced draw, which I knew. My rook is on the first rank, where it ought to be when the pawn has not reached the 5<sup>th</sup> rank; my king is on the perfect square, as we shall see. It's also nice that in this case we're dealing with a



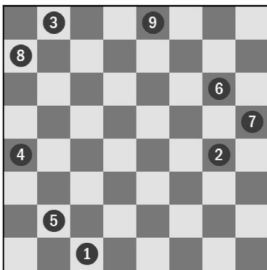
knight's pawn, which is the one where in the final resort Black doesn't need the Philidor position but can defend passively on the first rank.] **57 b4** [if 57 Kb6 Ke5! White has no constructive move. 58 Kc7!? Ke4 59 Rd6 Rh3 60 b4 Rb3] **57...Ra8+ 58 Kb5 Rb8+ 59 Ka4 Ra8+ 60 Kb3 Rb8** [For those with old school libraries, this is #310 in BASIC CHESS ENDINGS. I keep my rook on the first rank preventing the direct advance of the pawn and maintaining 'checking distance' for when White brings his king into the open to support the pawn advance. His only other idea is putting the rook on d4 to defend the pawn, hoping to advance his king towards my rook next. But then I immediately attack it ...Ke5, which is why my king must be on e6/e5 for this defense to hold.] **61 Rd1 Ke5!** [Ergo, the only move. A rook move off b-file would allow b5; a rook move off the first rank loses checking distance (eg 61...Rb7 62 Kc4 Rc7+ 63 Kb5 Rb7+ 64 Kc5 Rc7+ 65 Kb6 and b5); and any other king move either gets too far from e5 (then White goes Rd4) or allows my king to be cut off farther to the right (eg 61...Kf5? 62 Re1 bringing the Combined Method back into play and eventually winning).] **62 Rd2 Ke6 63 Rd3 Ke5 64 Kc3 Rc8+ 65 Kb2 Rb8 66 Kb3 Ke6 67 Rd4 Ke5 68 Kc3 Ke6** [68...Rc8+ 69 Rc4 Rb8 was also okay] **69 Kd3 Ke5 70 Ke3 Rb5** [A bunch of moves draw here. Mine threatened ...Rd5 etc] **71 Rc4 Kd5 72 Kd3 Rb8 73 Rc5+ Kd6 74 Kc4** [Finally 'progress' of a sort, but to do it he had to move his rook to the c-file which let my king get too close.] **74...Rh8 75 Kb3 Rb8 76 Kc3 Rb6 77 Kb3 Rc6 78 Rb5 Kc7 79 Ka4 Rc1 80 Rh5 Kb8 81 Ka5 Rc8** [making the point I mentioned at the end of the note to move 56] **82 Rh7 Rg8 83 b5 Rf8 84 Ka6 Rf6+** [to hurry things along] **85 b6 Rf8 86 Rc7 Rg8 87 Rc6 Rh8** 1/2-1/2

## Back to the Future

From our previous issue:

### CHESSearch

by Honaker and Keith



Find the square where a Queen can be placed to attack\* five digits.

Then put the *unattacked* digits in the right order to form a prime number.

Hint: At the time Magnus Carlsen achieved this rating, it was the highest in chess history.

\*Note that the Queen does not attack the square it sits on.

He might not have been the only one who solved the puzzle, but zillion-time state champion Dan Miller was the only one who wrote in to share his solution.

*“6821. Took about 3 minutes. Divided 2681, 8261, ect. by 7, 11, 13, and 17 in my head. 6821 isn't evenly divisible by those 4 but others were, so educated guess.”*



## Personal & General

*From the Editor*

### KENYA

*“In Paris I had my first opportunity of observing what I later found to be true in every foreign country I visited: A chess player is received with open arms at chess clubs everywhere. He won’t be lonely in any city in the world, even if he doesn’t know a soul, as long as there are chess players in that city.”*

- Edward Lasker, in CHESS SECRETS I LEARNED FROM THE MASTERS

I have found this to be true myself, most recently in Nairobi, Kenya. I had spoken with Nigerian IM Oladapo Adu at the Cherry Blossom tournament in May, and he put me in touch with Kenyan player/organizer/coach Winnie Thitu. She in turn rounded up former FIDE Delegate and Kenyan Olympiad team member Githinji Hinga. The two of them gave me a most gracious chess welcome to their country.

Winnie and Githinji (along with Githinji’s young daughter) met me at the Hotel Eke. After Githinji and I contested a series of blitz games, we all headed out to a local chess club. However, we arrived there rather early when there were no chess players yet. So Githinji treated us (my wife and my sister-in-law rode along) to a personalized driving tour of Nairobi, including a stop to see his own home. It was the sort of glimpse at ‘real life’ that tourists are rarely afforded when visiting a foreign land.

The plan was to return to the chess club later. But by the time our tour concluded, my non-chess-playing travel companions were more interested in dinner. We hosted Winnie and Githinji at a restaurant where they could guide us through the menu and make sure we properly sampled genuine local cuisine.







I will be forever grateful to Winnie and Githinji for their wonderful hospitality. Check out Githinji's chess academy Chess254 (254 is the international phone dialing prefix for Kenya). [www.facebook.com/githinji.hinga](https://www.facebook.com/githinji.hinga) has many photos and videos and other information.

## MADISON SENIORS CHESS CLUB

The Madison Community Center at 3829 N Stafford St, Arlington, Va 22207 hosts a variety of senior citizen programs, including a chess club that meets on Monday mornings. The club is not really limited to seniors, but the Monday morning time slot means that as a practical matter the majority of those who attend are retirees.

For many years Arlington CC stalwart John Campbell organized and ran the Madison Senior Chess Club. One of the regular features of their meetings was a weekly lecture. Usually a half hour or so of chess instruction and news precedes the onset of ladder, skittles and blitz games.

Master Steve Mayer lectured there for a time. After Steve's departure, club member Ralph Belter kept the tradition going by presenting a game each week drawn from the latest New York Times chess column. Some twenty years ago (how time flies!) my late friend and Madison club member Dr Sanda Costescu asked me if I would be willing to provide lectures for the club.

I admit that initially I was hesitant to make the commitment. I said I'd do it "now and then" but offered no firm promises. Well, you know what? I loved it. Preparing my talk and seeing the "Old People" (my kids' affectionate name for the Madison group; they would accompany me there and play chess during summer break from school) became one of the high points of my week. I think I got pretty good at it too, if I do say so myself. I think it may have benefitted my own chess in some way too. They say one of the best ways to learn something is to try teaching it to someone else.

In 2022 I moved from Northern Virginia to Staunton, which meant I had to bid the 'Old People' farewell. I tried to line up a replacement speaker before I left, but I was unsuccessful. Recently I had conversations with some club members on the occasion of the death of long-time Madison attendee Arnold Liebowitz (who always urged me to lecture more about David Bronstein). The club is still meeting, but there is no speaker now and membership has dwindled some. So, I'm using this forum to put out feelers: is there anyone in the NoVa area who might be willing and able to give a weekly lecture to the Seniors Chess Club? Reach out to me ([editorvcf@gmail.com](mailto:editorvcf@gmail.com)) if you think you might be interested. I can tell you more about what exactly is involved, who your audience will be, what I've found works and what doesn't, etc.



## Vocation Corner

by *Mike Callahan*

Yeah, it's that time of year. Schools have been unsure, no one knows who's in charge, who can make the decision, or if there can be a program at all. Doesn't matter! That just means that the scholastic season is already in full swing!

It's time to post flyers, send emails, and make phone calls. That requires an adult! US Chess has 77,579 active members and of them 57,545 are juniors! A child's perception and the internet have replaced books by grandmasters and informed adults as the primary source of parental information! Kids love it when there are no books or informed adults. Why? Because with rare exception, all they want to do is play, not study. Play, not coach. Play, not direct. Play, not organize. That's all any of us really wants, but someone must do the work that is good for chess.

The numbers used to suggest that we do everything we could to get more children to play chess. 74%+ is good work, but like with everything else there must be a balance! To balance the real, valuable, and documentable chess achievements for the applications and resumes of this generation, we must begin to do everything we can to get more adults playing, coaching, directing and organizing chess. Kids can't write their own laudatories!! Are we not smarter than a 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, or 8<sup>th</sup> grader?! lol

To most kids, being the best player in their family, class, or school is the first world they want to conquer. Imagine that your child has been taught how to play and they have just returned from their first tournament. Now picture a teacher saying, "Tell me all about it, I have never played in a chess tournament." There are no age, height, physical, or gender requirements. Chess is the only sport where adults and children competing in the same events is normal!

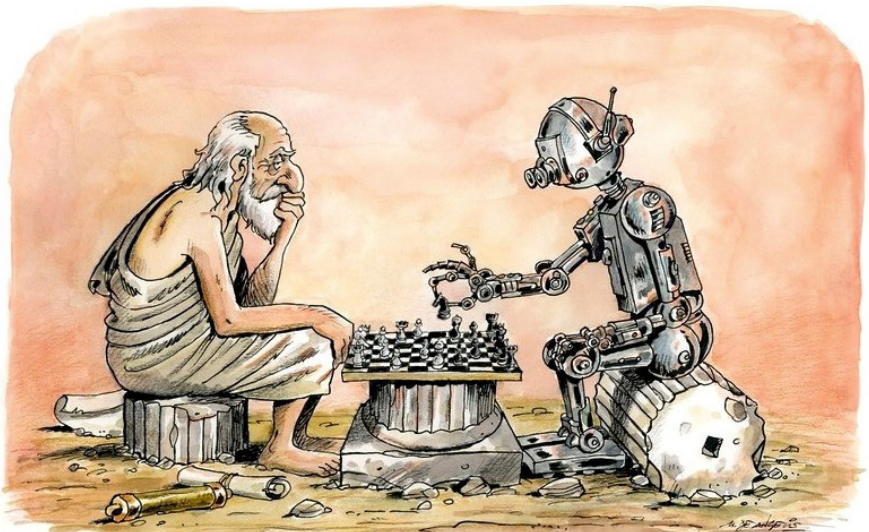
How are we taking advantage of that? Do the math... If *chess.com* has over 21,000,000 subscribers and the US, India, and Brazil have the highest number of subscribers, that means most of the advice our 58,000 youth players are getting for themselves, and then sharing with their parents, is coming from someone who has never played, coached, directed, and/or



organized a real world chess tournament! If we allow this to continue, we become no smarter than 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, or an 8<sup>th</sup> graders—or the internet!

The most active way to get an adult back in charge of our children's chess success is to put a rated tournament playing adult in as many homes, schools, and places of chess coaching/directing/organizing as possible. The shortcut and the easiest way we adults can outsmart the kids is to enter the toughest tournament we can as an unrated. If you play a 1700, a 1600, a 1500, and a 1400 and you lose all four games, your new rating would be 1150! Take the games home, analyze them, make a plan, and play in another tournament. Your kids will never figure out what you've done until they either come to understand the rating system or they start coaching, directing, or organizing themselves.

Even then, they will respect how cool it was that you could do this and your intent was just to do your best in each game! That's it. As an adult, you are 3-7 tournament games worth of experience from having better advice to offer than 21,000,000 internet players! You wanted and needed practical and doable advice... It's time to get to work. If you need help, call and talk to someone, anyone who is doing what you want to do or may know how to do what you want to do! You may be able to say you haven't asked for any help, but you'll never be able to say you couldn't find any! Let's rock!



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# In This Issue:

Eastern Chess Association.....	1
2024 State Championship announcement .....	3
Scholastic Chess Business Center.....	5
Around the World (The Editor at the World Open) .....	6
CHESearch Solution.....	13
Personal & General .....	14
Vocation Corner .....	16
Upcoming Events .....	2
VCF Info .....	<i>inside front cover</i>

