

# VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

The bimonthly publication of the  
Virginia Chess Federation

2024 - #5



*Moira Geoffrion*

Our Big State Championship Issue

*(Spoiler Alert: Jason Morefield won!)*

# VIRGINIA CHESS

## Newsletter

2024 - Issue #5

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## 2024 Virginia State Championship

**T**HE 2024 VIRGINIA "CLOSED" ATTRACTED 110 PLAYERS over three sections to Glen Allen, outside Richmond, over Labor Day weekend. **Jason Morefield** prevailed on tiebreaks over Tyson Brady after they topped the Championship (open) section together with 5-1 scores. The Amateur (under 1800) section saw a 3-way tie for 1<sup>st</sup> with 5-1 between Parsa Motaharinezhad, Tripp Southerland & **Sebastian Krushkal**, with the latter taking the title on tiebreak. Shiven Dawda won the Novice section outright, also with 5-1.

The Blitz tournament was played Friday night prior to the main event. Defending state champion GM Sergey Erenburg, soon-to-be new/repeat champion Jason Morefield, Trung Nguyen & Will Moorhouse all tied for 1<sup>st</sup> scoring 6-2 apiece.

Mike Hoffpauir organized the event on behalf of the VCF and served as an assistant TD. Cheryl Havens was Chief TD, assisted by Venkata Krishnan Jayaraman.

VIRGINIA CHESS and Virginia chess players have been very fortunate in recent years that our state champions have regularly agreed to share first-hand accounts of their title runs with our readers. The Editor will take this opportunity to gratefully acknowledge contributions to these pages over recent years from state champions Jennifer Yu, Qindong Yang, Praveen Balakrishnan, Daniel Miller & Sergey Erenburg. The new, and now 3-time champion Jason Morefield has continued that happy tradition. Reviewing our archives, I note that Jason even contributed material when he won the *Amateur* state championship way back in 2014. His personal account of first winning the main title in 2021 concluded with the words *"It was a blast, and I look forward to defending my title next year!"* And indeed, he did. If anyone else has games from the tournament they'd like to share for next issue, please send them! But for now, we turn it over to your 2024 Virginia State Champion, Jason Morefield...

### Three Titles in Four Years

*by Jason Morefield*

**I**'ve played in the Championship section of the Virginia 'Closed' seven times now. As the only in-person tournament I don't have to travel for hours to reach, it provides a nice opportunity to catch up with players from all over the state and compete for the coveted title of State Champion. This fall marks the beginning of the last year of my undergraduate degree at the University of Virginia, so I was very motivated to win this year's championship - after all, it might be my last!

One thing I've learned from playing in this event since 2016 is that for those eyeing the title, this tournament is a sprint. To win one must either finish a clear half-point ahead of everyone else, or have the best cumulative tiebreaks — which



means winning as many games as you can, and early. However, the more early games you win, the stronger your later opponents are going to be! You can't afford to drop a single half-point early on, so every game is important.

Going into the tournament, GM Sergey Erenburg, the defending champion, was the clear favorite. He outrated the second highest rated participant — me — by over 200 points. If I wanted any chance of winning the event, it would be necessary for me to keep pace with him and score at least a draw in our head-to-head match. Even if I managed all that, I would still have to compete with multiple other strong masters, including Tyson Brady, Andrew Samuelson and Macon Shibus. The only thing I was sure of going in was that this tournament wouldn't be easy!

Rounds 1 and 2 went relatively smoothly, with myself and many of my main rivals winning both games. It was in round 3 that the tournament situation changed dramatically. Going into this game, I anticipated that I would play Erenburg in the evening unless I lost, so I figured I needed every half-point I could get. As such, I treated this as a must-win game.

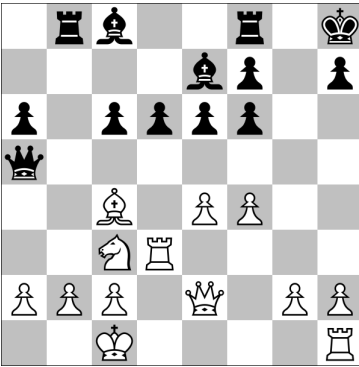
### Kent Slate - Jason Morefield Sicilian

**1 e4 c5** [In 2021 and 2022, I dropped draws with Black in round 3. I wanted to get every half-point possible this year, so my number one priority was keeping the position complicated — until I stood better, of course!] **2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 e6 7 Qd2 a6 8 Nxc6!** [I was pretty happy to see this move. Although it is perfectly reasonable, I get a pretty robust position and the structure will be unbalanced shortly, which are both very good when you're playing for a win with Black. I would have been more concerned if he went into one of the main lines by castling queenside, where I would be required to remember a lot more theory. Such a main line variation may go as follows: 8 O-O-O Bd7 9 f4 Be7 10 Nf3 b5 11 Bxf6 gxf6 12 f5 This is similar to the game in that White is playing against light square and kingside weaknesses, while Black is strong on the dark squares. However, there are some key differences. Black's pawn is on b5 instead of c6 and there

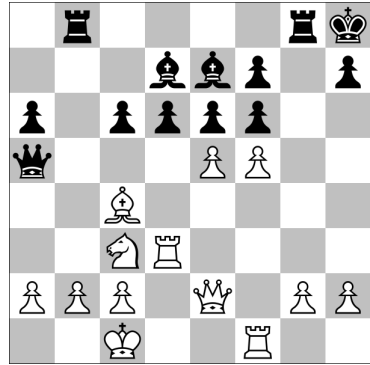
are an extra pair of knights. I personally find this more challenging to face than the game variation, though I suppose it is a matter of taste.] **8...bxc6 9 O-O-O Be7 10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 Bc4** [So I have the bishop pair and a central pawn armada, but the bishop on c8 isn't very good and the kingside is potentially quite weak. Nonetheless, I was happy with my position: compared with the mainline mentioned earlier, pushing...d5 is actually reasonable, which will blunt White's light square control.] **11...Qa5?!** [Admittedly, this isn't the most precise, and White scores very well from here. Perhaps Slate's opening was a great practical choice after all! 11...Bb7 is the most accurate move. Black's plan is to play Qc7 and castle Queenside before pushing...d5, which leaves chances approximately even, though White may have a tiny objective advantage.] **12 f4! O-O!** [Castling kingside may look crazy, but it is actually the best move! With...Kh8 and...Rg8 next, my king isn't in any real danger,



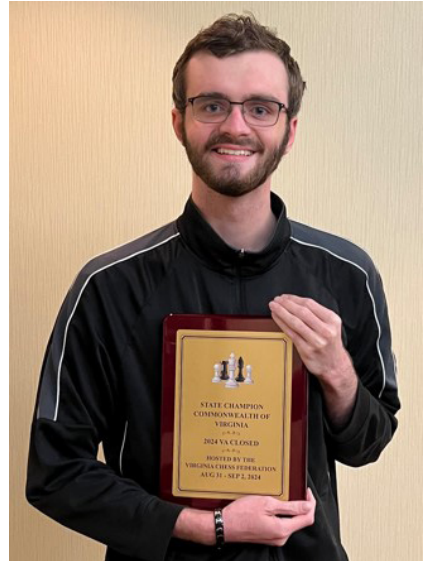
and once I stabilize I can focus on generating counterplay in the center and queenside.] **13 Qe2** [White decides to attack with pieces. With this move he eyes the h5 and clears d3 for the rook to maneuver to the kingside.] **13...Rb8** [13...Kh8 may have been more accurate, as I can always play Rb8 later but my king position should be stabilized as soon as possible.] **14 Rd3 Kh8**



**15 f5?!** [This gives me a very nice square on e5 for my queen and doesn't do much to further White's attack. 15 e5!? is by far the most challenging move. During the game I was unsure about how to respond, but in the post-mortem I learned that my opponent was concerned about 15...Qb4. This does indeed look scary until you realize that Black won't actually take on b2 since it loses too much time: 16 Rh3! Rg8! (16...Qxb2+? 17 Kd2 cost Black material as White's dual threats of Qh5 and Rb1 cannot both be prevented) 17 Nd1! White just generally stands better here, with Bd3 and Qh5 ready to pile on the pressure, although this can be hard to assess from afar.] **15...Rg8!** [So I can respond to Qh5 with ...Rg7. White no longer stands better and my position is very stable.] **16 Rf1 Bd7 17 e5?!** [Now the advantage passes to me.]



**17...Qxe5** [17...d5!? is a reasonable alternative, though play is approximately even: 18 exf6! Bxf6 (18...dxc4!? is a wild alternative: 19 Rxd7 Ba3! 20 bxa3 Qxc3 21 fxe6! and although Black's attack looks very scary, objectively he doesn't have more than a draw, eg 21...Qxa3+ 22 Kd2 Qa5+ 23 Ke3 Qe5+ 24 Kd2 However, this could certainly pose some practical problems to both sides.) 19 fxe6! Bg5+ 20 Kd1! (20 Kb1? dxc4 21 Rxd7 Rxb2+! and



2024 State Champion Jason Morefield



mate is coming) 20...Bxe6 21 Qe5+! (Black cannot block with the rook on g7 as b8 hangs) 21...f6 22 Qxe6 dxc4 23 Qxc4 Rxb2 24 h4! The last only move in a surprisingly forced variation. Apparently this is "0.00", but it just looks like a mess to me. Did I see this whole line? Absolutely not. I saw that I could go up a clean pawn and didn't look too far into anything else.] **18 Re3** [White hopes to generate counterplay in the center.] **18...Qxh2** [The most greedy approach. 18...Qc5 is an alternative I considered. 19 fxe6 Rxc2! 20 Qd3 fxe6 21 Bxe6 Be8 Black is up a pawn but White has a lot of activity and the bishop on f5 will be annoying. Nonetheless, a pawn is a pawn, so Black stands slightly better.] **19 fxe6** [19 Rh3! launches a sequence of 'only' moves that the computer offers as a way for White to retain approximate equality. 19...Qe5 20 Qd3! Rg7 21 Re3! Qh2 22 fxe6! fxe6 23 Bxe6 Bxe6 24 Rxe6 Qxg2 leading to a position very similar to the main game while denying me the

additional options I had on move 22. This subtlety evaded both players during the game.] **19...fxe6 20 Bxe6 Rxc2 21 Qd3 Bxe6 22 Rxe6** [Black is up two pawns, so I figured all I needed to do was consolidate and I would stand better. However, White's activity should not be underestimated!] **22...Rb7?!** [I missed that 22...Rg1! was possible because, even though White's rook on f1 was defended, I am still threatening it! 23 Nd1! (23 Rxe7? Qf4+! is the point) 23...Rxf1 24 Qxf1 Bf8! Black will lose the f6 pawn but keep all the rest. The conversion process will be very difficult but Black is playing for two results.] **23 Ree1?!** [Missed opportunity. 23 Nd1! If White can bring this knight to f5 without trading queens, my advantage will completely evaporate, as it will be impossible for me to push the passed pawns without fatally endangering my own king. And unfortunately, I lack the resources to prevent White from getting the knight there.] **23...Qh6+ 24 Kb1**



Capital Area Chess invites Youth (Under 18) players born on or after Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 and from the North American Federations (USA, Canada and Mexico) to the **2024 North American Youth Chess Championships** Dec 18–Dec 23 2024 Washington Dulles Airport Marriott Dulles, Virginia



**Qg6!** [Now White must retreat to avoid the queen exchange.] **25 Ne4?!** [This isn't a bad move against most of Black's options, in part because the knight is quite active here. However, it takes the pressure off my bishop for just one move - and that is all I need.] **25...Rb5!** [Now the rook is coming to e5 and White's e-file pressure is completely gone.] **26 Rc1 d5** [With his rook off the e-file, I decided the simplest thing to do was just exchange queens, though perhaps...Re5 would have been more accurate anyway.] **27 Nf2 Qxd3 28 Nxd3 Kg7 29 Rce1 Rb7 30 Nf4 Rg4?!** [I thought I would be winning no matter what I did, but White managed to cause me a lot of practical problems. 30...Rh2! is the most accurate according to the computer. It prevents White from using the h-file unless he exchanges rooks, which would help me greatly.] **31 Re6! Rc7 32 Re3 Kg8** [Although White's activity ensures he can put up significant resistance, I was very confident during the game that my two extra pawns would be enough to win. It is very hard in practice to prevent Black from making progress.] **33 a3** [It was around this point that Erenburg-Samuelson on the neighboring board took a dramatic turn. In a blink of an eye, what had appeared to be a clean win for Erenburg became an upset win for Samuelson! I was already playing for a win, of course, but I took a few minutes to process the ramifications. The benefits from winning were far greater now, as it would place me a full point ahead of the top seed of the event!] {*The Erenburg-Samuelson game appears on page 14 with notes by the winner.*} **33...Rb7 34 Nh5?!** [While

this misses White's last objective chance, the variation the computer suggests requires nerves of steel. Apparently 34 Re6 keeps things under control: 34...Bxa3 35 Nd3! Bxb2! 36 Nxb2 Rgb4 37 Rxfx6 Rxb2+ 38 Kc1 While Black is up three pawns, it will be very difficult to retain them and White should be able to hold the draw. From a practical standpoint, it would be incredibly difficult for White to go for such a position!] **34...Kf7 35 Ref3 Rg6 36 Nf4 Rh6!** [This is a surprisingly effective position for the rook. White can no longer attack the h-pawn without trading pieces, and this is enough to grow Black's advantage to nearly winning.] **37 Rg3 Bd6!** [This utilizes a nice tactic to force further trades.] **38 Rfg1** [White hopes to force me to retreat by threatening to skewer the king on f7 and rook on b7, but I can stop this threat and force the trade of pieces.] **38...Rg6! 39 Rxc6** [39 Nxc6 is also losing for White: 39...Bxg3! 40 Nh8+ Kg8 41 Rxc3+ Kxh8 and White will not hold the rook endgame two pawns down] **39...hxc6 40 Nxc6 Bxa3** [My point - I am still up two pawns.] **41 Ka2** [Relying on a tactic to prevent me from taking on b2. Unfortunately for him, it doesn't work!] **41...Bxb2 42 Nh8+** [freeing up the rook on g1] **42...Ke6 43 Rb1 Rb8!** [gaining a tempo on the knight on h8] **44 Rxb2** [if 44 Ng6 Be5! I escape with three extra pawns] **44...Rxb2 45 Rb6 Kd6 46 Rxa6 f5 47 Ra7 Rb8 0-1** With White's king completely cut off from everything important, he will not be able to stop me from promoting the f5-pawn, so Slate resigned. Overall, this was a very hard-fought game!



Since Erenburg had lost his game, I was the highest-rated player on 3-0. Only then did it began to sink in that I had serious chances to win the tournament. In particular, I did some math on likely upcoming pairings and realized that if I won in round 4, I wouldn't face Erenburg until round 6; and if I won both rounds 4 and 5, I could lose to Erenburg in round 6 and still win the tournament. However, in round 4 I was to play Tyson Brady, a strong master—then on the verge of 2300—and then some other main rival in round 5. Winning on demand isn't easy, and winning against masters on demand is even less so... but I had to give it a shot.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Piedmont Open November 1-3, 2024

Hilton Garden Inn, 4050 Cox Road, Glen Allen, Va 23060

\$8000.00 guaranteed prizes!! In four sections: *Open*: FIDE rules, FIDE & USChess rated. 5-SS, G/90+30. \$\$ \$2000-1500-1000, U2000(USCF) \$250-150, Upset- \$100. To enter this section you must have a peak post-tournament rating of 1600 USCF within the last 2 years to play in this section; no unrateds in this section. Rds 7, 11-4:30, 10-3:30. 60 minute default/no-show rule. FIDE ID req'd; if you do not have one please fill out the following form at <https://forms.gle/fCCTis7WgtJEB2rv6>. *Under 1700*: US Chess rules and US Chess rated only. Unrateds welcome in this section. \$\$ \$1000-500-200, Upset \$75. All other info (schedules, time controls, etc.) same as Open. *U1100*: Saturday & Sunday only, US Chess rules and US Chess rated only. 5-SS, G/60+10. Rds 11-3-6, 10-2. \$\$ \$700-325-200, Upset \$50, unrateds limited to \$150 in prize winnings. Default/no show rule same as other sections. *Scholastic*: Saturday only, with subsections U800 (USCF membership required) and Non-Rated (USCF membership not required) 4-SS, G/25, d5. ASAP Pairings with rd 1 starting at 11 am. Trophies to Top 3 in each section. Medals to even scores. *All*: One ½ pt bye by request 1 hour prior to start of rd 2. Players who lose rd 1 can re-enter for \$40 and use a ½ pt bye point bye for rd 1. EF free entries to GM, IM,FM,WGM,WIM,WFM if registered by 10/18 (entry deducted from prize winnings), Open, U1700, U1100: \$105 through 10/25, \$120 through 10/28, \$135 after and onsite. Scholastic \$30 through 10/25, \$35 through 10/28, \$40 after and onsite. Onsite payments Cash, Credit, Venmo, PayPal. Online registration closes 10/31/2024 at midnight. No refunds after start of round 1. Onsite registration closes 30 minutes prior to Round 1 in order to be paired for round 1. First 5 GM'S/IM'S to signup receive free room in addition to free entry (EF deducted from prize winnings). *Must be signed up by october 1. Must reach out via email for full details* - [easternchessdirector@gmail.com](mailto:easternchessdirector@gmail.com). US Chess Membership required for all sections except Scholastic non rated. VCF membership required for Virginia players. Hotel chess rate \$116+taxes for King room, \$126+taxes for 2 Queens, call 1-804-521-2900 by October 11. *Boards and pieces provided, but please bring your own clock!!* Blitz Side Event: Saturday night: approximate start time is 9 pm. Register separately at <https://www.kingregistration.com/event/Piedmontblitz>. Contact/Info: Associate National Tournament Director/Fide National Arbiter Robbie Jackson, [easternchessdirector@gmail.com](mailto:easternchessdirector@gmail.com), 757-416-2075

*A VCF Cup Event*





## Jason Morefield - Tyson Brady

### Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 c4 Nf6 6 Nc3 d6 7 Be2 Nxd4 8 Qxd4 Bg7 9 Be3 O-O 10 Qd3 [A lesser known line of the Maroczy (the main line is Qd2), but not without merits. The queen looks strange here, and one may worry about Nd7-c5 or Nd7-e5. But it's rarely useful for Black to do that maneuver anyway, and the additional protection of the e4- and c4-pawns sometimes prove useful.] 10...Be6 11 Bd4 Nd7 12 Bxg7 Kxg7 13 O-O [I used to find it confusing how this type of position was considered better for White. After all, White has a bad bishop and Black seems to have pretty good squares for their pieces! Nonetheless, White does have a typical opening edge here thanks to his freedom of movement. Although Black isn't in any immediate danger, the bishop on e6 is rather awkward in the long run, and White doesn't have any weaknesses. As such it is very difficult for Black to find something to attack, while White can try a kingside attack with h4-h5 or f4-f5, or a central push with Nd5, exd5, and attacking the pawn on e7.] 13...Qb6 14 b3 Kg8 15 Rab1 [It's not necessary to immediately choose one of the plans mentioned above, so I start by improving the position of my rook. Now I am better positioned to defend against an attack on the Queenside.] 15...Ra8 [Black prepares for central activity. He could also try to set up a bind of his own on the queenside beginning 15...Nc5 eg. 16 Qc2 Qb4 Δ ...a5-a4. It may look like Black is doing well, but precisely here the position of the rook on b1 comes in handy: 17 Qc1! With the pawn on b3 defended, Black can never push all the way to a4: 17...a5 18 Rd1

a4 19 a3! Qb6 20 b4! is an illustrative line.] 16 Qd2 [The queen's job was done, so now it eyes kingside dark squares that Black has weakened. 16 Rfe1 was an alternative. With the rooks on e8 and f8 I was primarily concerned about the reply 16...f5!? and if I take on f5, the position of my rook on b1 turns out to be quite bad, but fortunately I could still play 17 Qd2 and after 17...fxe4 (17...f4 is the line I was concerned about, with Ne5 and possibly...f3 to follow, but Stockfish cares not for such frivolous ideas: 18 Nd5! Bxd5 19 exd5 Ne5 20 Bf1! when pushing...f3 is just met by g3, and Black's position is extremely unpleasant in the long run as he cannot do anything without creating more weaknesses) 18 Nxe4 Bf5 19 Bf1 and White remains slightly better.] 16...a5 [A sensible move; just because queenside counterplay isn't an option now doesn't mean it will never be.] 17 Kh1 Nc5 18 Qe3 Nd7 [offering a repetition] 19 Qg3!? [It's possible that retreating back to d2 was objectively stronger, but I wanted to provoke the following maneuver:] 19...Qd4!? 20 Rbd1 Qg7 [This is aesthetically pleasing, but I evaluated it to worsen Black's position. As most forms of kingside counterplay create weaknesses, I believed the queen might not prove useful on g7, while the weaknesses on Black's queenside might soon find themselves sorely missing the queen's defense!] 21 Qe3 Nc5 22 f4 f6! [Only move, as the positional threat of e5 was very strong. Now begin my efforts to invade the open queenside.] 23 Nb5!? Bd7 24 Nc7 [24 a3 is perhaps the most effective execution of my idea: 24...Bc6 25 b4! Nxe4 26 Nc7! is the point I missed, where Black must give up material due to



the triple threats of Ne6, Nxe8, and b5] **24... Rd8 25 a3 Bc6 26 b4!** [This allows Black to escape to a position that should be held. 26 Bg4! was the way to retain a slight advantage according to Stockfish. I thought I stood far better than that, but Black's position is resilient! 26...f5 (26...e5 27 Ne6! is the idea - Black's structural weaknesses will be very annoying to defend) 27 exf5 gxf5 28 Bf3 and Black's center remains weak.] **26...axb4 27 axb4 e5! 28 fxe5 fxe5?** [A blunder, right before the time control! With just under ten minutes to reach move 30, Brady misses a key detail. 28...Qxc7! would have allowed

him to escape into a pawn-down endgame that I nonetheless believed I had good chances to play for a win: 29 exd6 Rxd6 30 Qxc5 Rxd1 31 Rxd1. However, Black should win the pawn back with accurate play, after which I can only apply practical pressure.] **29 Rxf8+ Kxf8 30 bxc5 Qxc7 31 cxd6** [Only once this position was on the board did Brady realize that the pawn cannot be captured (31...Rxd6 32. Qc5 Ke7 33 Qxe5+ Kd7 34 Bg4+ wins the rook. So, though he is only a pawn down, it will be impossible to stop the d-pawn while defending his king from attack.] **1-0**

Samuelson also won his round 4 matchup, so with both of us I tied for first place with 4-0, a full point ahead of the rest of the field. Our round 5 game was therefore critical—the winner would secure the title of State Champion with a round to spare! The tension going into this game made it difficult to sleep, but 10am Monday rolls around anyway, and we are off to the races.

## Andrew Samuelson - Jason Morefield

### Sicilian

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5!** [The exclamation point is for practical value. Going into the game, I believed a draw strongly favored Samuelson's chances, simply because he had already played Erenburg and I had not! Additionally, before round 5, Samuelson had better tiebreaks than I did. If that remained the case, all he would have to do is keep pace with me (and not lose) in round 6 to win the title. As such, a lot of my pre-game preparation was spent finding ways to get a game with Black and make sure I didn't allow any forced draws. However, this meant neglecting some of the more combative variations. By going for a main line, Samuelson takes full advantage of this! I prepared primarily for f3, which often leads to an endgame:

6...e5 7 Nb3 Be6 8 Be3 d5 9 exd5 Nxd5 10 Nxd5 Qxd5 11 Qxd5 Bxd5 12 O-O-O O-O-O This is perfectly fine for Black, but it is very difficult to play for a win, so I prepared something else along the line — which shall remain unmentioned, so that I can use it later!] **6...e6 7 Qd2 a6 8 O-O-O Bd7 9 f4 Be7 10 Nf3 b5 11 e5!?** [This is a very good way to play for a win. White opens up the position immediately and Black must already be careful.] **11...b4! 12 exf6 bxc3 13 Qxc3 gxf6 14 Kb1 Rg8 15 Bh4** [I was aware that the variation continued further, but I forgot some of the details and was mostly on my own here, while Samuelson was still blitzing out his moves. Objectively, White is slightly better, with pressure on f6 and the safer king. However, Black has good



opportunities for queenside counterplay, rendering this an unbalanced position that I was happy to play for a win.] **15... d5 16 h3** [Expanding on the kingside helps negate the impact of the rook on g8.] **16...a5 17 g4 Rc8 18 Qe3 Rb8 19 Rh2** [19 c4 may have been more pointed: 19...dxc4?! (19...Qb6 is objectively best. 20 Qxb6 Rxb6 21 cxd5 Nb4! and Black has reasonable counterplay, but White should have an objective edge.) 20 Bxc4 Qb6 21 Qc3! is unpleasant for Black thanks to all the open files.] **19...Qb6 20 Qxb6 Rxb6** [As it is, I have neutralized most of White's advantage and stand comfortably.] **21 c3 a4! 22 Bd3 h6** [Though I have two isolated pawns, a4 is performing the very useful task of holding back White's queenside pawn majority, and h6 isn't much of a drawback.] **23 Re2 Kf8** [hoping to activate my g8 rook] **24 Bf2 Rb8 25 Nd4 Na5 26 Bh4?!** [This gives Black the opportunity to improve his pawn structure.] **26...h5! 27 Rg1** [27 gxh5 Rh8 the pawn on h5 will soon be lost, with the h3 pawn remaining weak] **27... hxg4 28 hxg4 Rh8 29 Bg3 Bd6 30 Kc2 Kg7** [I now have a noticeable edge thanks to my more active pieces and central pawn majority finally playing a factor. White decides to generate some kingside play.] **31 g5!? f5!** [locking in the bishop on g3] **32 g6!? Nc6?!** [I got a bit too concerned about White's counterplay and bailed out before I had to. 32...Nb7! introduces a surprisingly strong maneuver I hadn't even considered. The knight will come to e4! 33 b4 axb3+ 34 axb3 Nc5 35 gxf7 Kxf7. I might also have consider taking on d3. Compared to the game, would be far more active, and my knight on c5 is more

useful than his knight on d4. As played, most of my advantage is gone.] **33 Nxc6 Bxc6 34 Bf2! Bd7 35 gxf7+ Kxf7 36 Bd4** [White's activity mostly compensates for the bad pawn on f4, but I can still try for an advantage.] **36...Rbg8 37 Reg2 Rxcg2+ 38 Rxc2 Rh7 39 Be3 Rh3 40 Kd2 Rh1** [I have a slight edge because White has confined himself entirely to passive defense. He should hold this, but I can try for quite some time.] **41 a3 e5 42 fxe5 Bxe5** [I hoped to make something useful of my passed f-pawn.] **43 Rf2** [For the rest of the game, the evaluation never goes more than a tenth of a pawn away from 0.00] **43... Kf6 44 Be2 Rh4 45 Bb6 Ke6 46 Rg2 Be8 47 Bf2 Rh3 48 Be3 Rh1 49 Rf2 Rh4 50 Bd3 f4 51 Bd4 Bxd4 52 cxd4 Kf6 53 Bc2 Kg5 54 Re2 Bc6 55 Re6 Rh2+ 56 Re2 Rh3 57 Re6 Bb5 58 Re5+ Kh4 59 Rxd5 Rh2+ 60 Kc3 Be2** [I thought I might have something (the f4 pawn is scary!), but it was merely an illusion.] **61 Rf5 f3 62 Bd3 Kg4 63 Rf8 Bxd3 64 Kxd3 Rxb2 65 d5 Kg3 66 d6 Rb1 67 Rg8+ Kf2 68 Ke4 Rd1 69 Rf8!** [only move, but it's enough] **69...Rxd6 70 Rxf3+ Ke2 71 Rc3** [This looks kind of scary as my king is far from being in front of White's a-pawn, and also I was down to about a minute on the clock, but I am well within the drawing margin.] **71...Ra6 72 Rc2+ Kd1 73 Rc8 Rd6 74 Rc4 Ra6 75 Kd4 Kd2 76 Rc8 Rd6+ 77 Kc4 Ke3 78 Kb5 Rd4 79 Re8+ Kd3 80 Ra8 Kc3 81 Rxa4 Rxa4 82 Kxa4 Kc4 83 Ka5 Kc5 84 a4 Kc6 85 Kb4 Kb6 ½-½** And with that, we both move to 4½ out of 5, with the tournament still undecided. We were both relatively happy with that game, as neither of us missed any major chances. But the final test was yet to come.

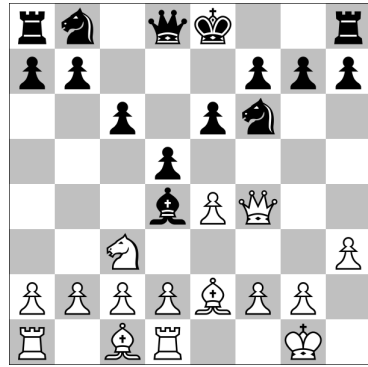


I had about an hour before the critical final round matchup against GM Erenburg. To win the title, I believed it would be necessary to (1) not lose against Erenburg; and (2) perform better than Samuelson in the last round — together, a pretty tall order! However, two things happened to dramatically improve my mood and my chances. First, I rechecked the wall chart going into my final round game, and my tiebreaks had improved to where they were now better than Samuelson's! This meant the pressure was on him to do better than me, rather than the other way around. The second event occurred during the game.

## Jason Morefield - Sergey Erenburg

### Caro Kann

**1 e4 c6 2 Nf3** [Last year, Erenburg asked me why I didn't play the Two Knights against his Caro Kann. When preparing for this game, I asked myself the same question and didn't have a good answer. It's a very good choice for a game you can't afford to lose and don't mind playing for a long time.] **2... d5 3 Nc3 Bg4 4 h3 Bxf3 5 Qxf3 Nf6 6 Be2 e6 7 O-O Bc5** [One of two main lines, and a very principled choice. Black controls d4, preventing the push. 7... Nbd7 is the other main move. It is quite solid, but can be difficult to play for a win: 8 d4 dxe4 9 Nxe4 Nxe4 10 Qxe4 Nf6 11 Qd3 leaves a very quiet position where White has a small but persistent edge. If Black opens the game, White's bishops get a chance to shine, but if he doesn't White just has a little bit of extra space and the bishop pair. I can understand why Erenburg didn't want to go for this.] **8 Rd1 Bd4!** [The main idea. The bishop looks really awkward here, but it effectively prevents White from pushing forward.] **9 Qf4!?** [The move I had prepared before the game, sacrificing the e4 pawn for a big development advantage and good practical chances.]



### 9...Nbd7?

This is the second event that dramatically improved my chances. Erenburg made an uncharacteristic blunder, after which I was effectively playing for two results. Ordinarily I would have been second-guessing myself a ridiculous amount, but in this case I actually looked at this position before the game and asked myself "what happens if Black plays...Nbd7 instead of one of the two main moves?" The answer is: he falls victim to a discovered attack.

The best move for Black is to accept the pawn sacrifice, 9...Bxc3! I will refrain from offering too many details, but just to demonstrate why Erenburg may have avoided this line I will show an illustration what may have occurred: 10 bxc3 Nxe4 11



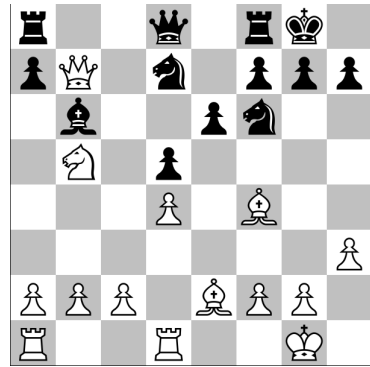
Rb1! (attacking the b7-pawn and provoking it forward) 11...b6 (11...Qe7 doesn't save Black. White has good compensation anyway after 12 Bf3! e5 13 Qe3 Nd6 14 Ba3 where the center is surprisingly unstable. Objectively Black holds, but this can be unpleasant to play unprepared!) 12 Ba3 (preventing Black from castling) 12...c5 13 Bb5+ Nd7 14 c4. You get the idea! Black has to constantly find accurate defensive moves to keep the game close to even, so it makes sense to avoid this line.

9...e5?! is the old main line. However, objectively White stands noticeably better here. 10 Qg3! and Black's best is to keep the tension by 10...O-O (10...dxe4? is too greedy: 11 d3! exd3 12 Bxd3 and thanks to the dual threats of Qxg7 and Ne2 Black is under a surprising amount of pressure and already significantly worse. White's huge lead in development and bishop pair fully compensate for the missing pawn, and then some!) 11 d3 White has a clear edge. The bishop on d4 is rather awkward and can be targeted by Bf3/Ne2, and the pawn on e5 is annoying to defend.

Black can still go into the lines similar to 7...Nbd7 by playing 9...Nxe4 here, but White keeps a slight and annoying advantage as usual. 10 Nxe4 dxe4 11 Qxe4 and the bishop pair will be useful in the long run.

**10 exd5!** [Now Black loses a clear pawn!] **10...Be5** [10...Bxc3 makes things worse. 11 dxc6! and Black doesn't even manage to set up a stable center before losing material.] **11 Qb4! cxd5 12 d4!** [slightly more accurate than taking b7 immediately] **12...Bc7 13 Qxb7 O-O** [While the computer is optimistic, this position is far from

trivial. Black's remaining pieces are well placed, and I will likely lose time with my queen, so Black may be able to generate some queenside counterplay.] **14 Nb5! Bb6 15 Bf4!** [My goal was to impede Black's natural development to stop the queenside counterplay from becoming a problem. 15 c4 would probably have been easier in the long run. 15...Rb8 16 Qa6 dxc4 17 Bxc4 the isolated pawn on d4 is well-defended and all my pieces are active.]

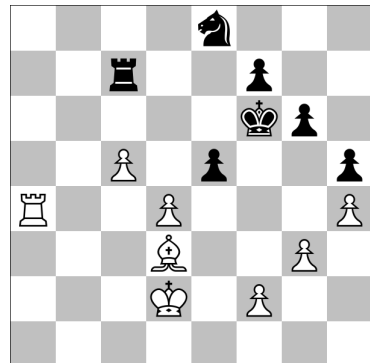


**15...a6?!** [Erenburg finds a unique development scheme but misses a surprisingly strong shot. I saw 15...e5! after I played 15 Bf4 but was unsure about how to evaluate it. Turns out, it's surprisingly strong! 16 dxe5 (16 Bxe5?? gives Black too much leeway on the dark squares: 16...Nxe5 17 dxe5 Rb8 18 Qc6 Ne4! and now by being extremely careful, 19 Nd6!, I should only be slightly worse; but 16 Be3! is good. 16...Rb8 17 Qa6 Re8 Black's central counterplay grants partial compensation for the pawn, though White still has an advantage.) 16...Rb8! 17 Qa6 (17 Qc6 Rc8 18 Qd6 Bc5 19 Qa6 Ne4 is similar but Black is more active) 17...Ne4 18 Nd4! Qh4! 19 g3



Qxh3 20 Bf1! After a bunch of only moves, White retains a slight advantage... but this should never have been allowed!] **16 Nc3 Ra7 17 Qc6 Nb8 18 Qa4 Bc7** [By trading off my annoying bishop, Erenburg hopes to generate significant queenside counterplay with his knights and prevent me from utilizing my pawn majority.] **19 Bxc7 Qxc7** [Nonetheless, I was very comfortable here. On the neighboring board, Samuelson had found himself in a difficult position against Brady, so it was likely I wouldn't need more than a draw to get the state title!] **20 Bf3?!** [This move was a bit too ambitious. I thought the bishop would be in the way on d3, so I wanted to prepare the long-term plan of Ne2, Rac1, b3, and c4, after which the bishop on f3 would be useful attacking d5. However, this gives up critical control over the c4-square, which proved very annoying later on.] **20...Nfd7 21 Qa3 Nb6 22 Na4!** [Every trade of pieces helps the player with extra material, assuming I don't make concessions to get the trade.] **22...N8d7 23 Rac1 Nxa4 24 Qxa4 Nb6 25 Qa5 Nc4!** [Although this is the best move, it gets me closer to an endgame that will be impossible to lose.] **26 Qxc7 Rxc7 27 b3 Nd6** [27...Na3 may have been objectively better, but it is still unpleasant to defend 28 c4! dxc4 29 bxc4 Rxc4 and now 30 d5! White's bishop is far stronger than Black's knight. Though the material is soon to be even, a6 is a massive weakness, and if it falls, Black may just be lost. During the game, the main move I was considering was 30 Rxc4, but Black has better chances of holding against that: 30...Nxc4 31 Be2 Nb6 32 Rb1 Nd5 33 Bxa6 and the extra pawns on e6 and d4 give Black some much-needed stability.] **28 Be2 Rc3?!** [I was very happy

to see this move. 28...Rfc8 29 Bxa6 Ra8 30 Bd3 Rxa2 is significantly more annoying, since I can't dislodge the rook from a2. 31 Ra1 Rca7 32 Rxa2 Rxa2. Pushing c4 without endangering the queenside is a lot harder when Black's rook is behind my pawns.] **29 Bxa6 Ra8 30 Bd3 Rxa2 31 Ra1! Rxa1 32 Rxa1** [Around this point Samuelson lost his game, meaning that I only needed a draw to win the title. (Brady would also have 5 points, but I had a better tiebreak.) Of course I could get a draw by asking for it here, but since my extra pawn grants me really good winning chances, I figured I'd play for the win anyway.]{*The Brady-Samuelson game appears on page 16*} **32...g6 33 Kf1 Kf8 34 Ke2 h5 35 Ra7 Nc8 36 Ra8 Ke7 37 Kd2 Rc7 38 h4** [I start by fixing Black's pawns on light squares where they could eventually be targets for my bishop.] **38...Nd6 39 g3 Kf6 40 Ra6 Ke7 41 Ra4 Kf6 42 c4** [Finally! I begin pushing forward. The c-pawn is far easier to support than the b-pawn would have been.] **42...dxc4 43 bxc4 e5 44 c5 Ne8** [Up until now I had played the endgame more or less perfectly. Here, however, I miss a very simple tactic. Had I played the right move in this position, I probably would have won.]



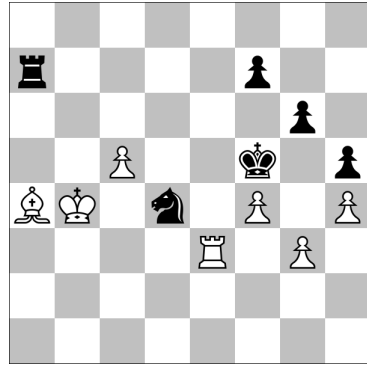


#### 45 Ra6+?

I'm still significantly better, but after this move Black can put up a lot of practical resistance. They say that in a winning position, after you miss one win, the wins get harder and harder to find until you're not winning anymore. That was definitely true here. 45 dxe5+ was, of course, the right move. 45...Kxe5? (45...Ke6 is objectively better for Black, but after 46 Rc4 I keep both pawns here too: 46...Kd5 47 Kc3 Rxc5? 48 Rxc5+ Kxc5 49 Bc4 and Black just loses the entire kingside) 46 Re4+ and White wins a knight! I somehow overlooked that the rook could move horizontally. Was this fatigue, finally catching up to me? Perhaps, but that is unlikely to be the only reason. Since I realized I basically had the state championship guaranteed, it became psychologically harder to calculate.

45...Ke7 46 Kc3! Nf6 47 Kc4 [47 Ra2 may have been more precise, preparing to bring the rook to the e-file earlier than in the game.] 47...exd4 48 Kxd4 Rd7+ 49 Kc3 Ng4 50 Ra2! [However, it is still very strong here!] 50...Rc7 51 Re2+ Kf6 52 Kb4 Ne5 53 Bb5! Kf5 [After my last stretch of very accurate moves, I again have a massive advantage.] 54 f4?! [And again, I make things harder for myself!] 54...Nf3! [Like with the Re4+ skewer, I had completely missed that this move was legal! I am still winning, but the psychological impact cannot be overstated. The thought entered my mind that if I was missing moves this simple, I could conceivably lose this game! I began imagining nightmare scenarios where Black sacrifices the knight for the c-pawn, wins all three kingside pawns, and starts marching down the

board... Of course this is completely unrealistic, but despite chess players' best efforts, no humans are perfectly rational. 54...Ng4 is what I thought he had to play, after which 55 Bd3+ Kf6 56 Kb5 the win is very easy without Black's king or knight involved in the defense.] 55 Re3 Nd4 56 Ba4 Ra7 [I have made things more difficult for myself, but I am still winning.]



#### 57 Re5+?

57 Rd3 was my main idea, but I couldn't make it work against 57...Ke4. However, I have the very nice 58 Ra3! when Black cannot move the king to d5 because of Bb3+. Although White is not currently threatening a lethal discovery, Black cannot do anything to stop White's threat of Kc4, after which those threats will become real!

As for 57 Rc3, I was hesitant to let Black's king get any closer to the c-pawn since I thought that, with my pawn on f4, the g3-pawn would be weak to counterattacks if Black could stop the c-pawn with the king. However, Black can't actually do that! 57...Rb7+ 58 Kc4 Ne6 59 c6 Black's blockade will not last long, and the pawn on g3 is perfectly safe. And if 57...Ke6—the move I was actually concerned about



— 58 c6! Kd6 59 Rd3! Kd5 60 Bd1! White wins material thanks to some beautiful geometry: 60...Ke4 61 Kc4! Nxc6 (61...Nf5 62 Bf3mate) 62 Bf3+ and the knight on c6 is lost. Remember what I said earlier, that every time you miss a win, the next one is harder? I am fully willing to admit that by this point in the game, I was not going to find this one.

57...Kg4 58 Rg5+? [Only now are my winning chances completely gone. My last chance was to admit my mistake was 58 Re3 and then 58...Nf5 59 Ra3! forcing the rook away from the a-file. 59...Rc7 60 Kb5 Nxc3 (60...Ne7 is also quite annoying, but

far more passive and less scary) 61 Kb6! Re7 62 c6! Kxf4 63 c7 Rxc7 64 Kxc7 With Be8 winning at least one of Black's pawns, White is at no risk of losing here, and really should win.] 58...Kh3 [I finally realize that I cannot stop...Ne6, after which I will lose the g3-pawn and everything else. Fortunately, I can still bail out with a draw, which I eventually accepted that I must do.] 59 Rd5 Ne6 60 Bd7 Kxg3 61 Bxe6 fxe6 62 Rg5+ Kxh4 63 c6 e5 64 Rxe5 Kg3 65 Rg5+ Kxf4 66 Rxc6 h4 1/2-1/2 We will both lose a rook to stop the enemy pawn, leaving only bare kings, so we agreed a draw here.

Overall, a rather anticlimactic end to the tournament. While I would of course have wanted to win this game and achieve clear first, you have to play the moves to make it happen, which I did not. All you can do is learn from your mistakes, and work to make sure they don't happen again!

And with that, I was Virginia State Champion for the third time in four years. Overall, this was a really tense event with a lot of really close games. I am very honored to have emerged on top. Any one of my last three opponents could have won the tournament and it would have been entirely deserved. Thanks to everyone for playing, and I hope to be able to compete next fall to defend my title!

## Sergey Erenburg - Andrew Samuelson London

*Notes by Andrew Samuelson*

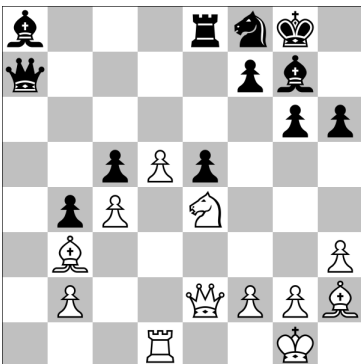
1 Nf3 [This was already a surprise as I expected e4. I'd gotten a few good positions against Sergey with Black in the past, so this seemed like a decent way to avoid any preparation and just play a game.] 1...c5 2 c3 [Aiming for a London system or perhaps a reverse Slav. Now d5 may be best, but I wanted to avoid a reverse Slav as I figured my opponent probably understood it better than I do.] 2...Nf6 3 d4 e6 4 Bf4 b6 5 e3 Be7 6 h3 Bb7 7 Nbd2 O-O 8 Bd3 d6 9

Qe2 Nbd7 10 O-O [I could still play ...d5, but I've had some success with this hedgehog setup.] 10...Qc7 11 e4 Rfe8 12 Bh2 e5 13 dxe5 [13 d5 would lead to a very different type of game with a blocked center] 13... dxe5 [I remembered from previous analysis that it's often better to capture with the knight here. However, during the game I saw some Bb5 ideas I didn't like: 13...Nxe5 14 Nxe5 dxe5 15 Bb5 Red8 16 a4. This may be better than the game for me, but either way





Black is still a bit worse.] **14 a4 Bf8 15 Bc4** [The threat of Ng5 is a awkward to meet. I'd prefer to get ...g6 and maybe follow up with Bg7 or Nh5 without having to play ...h6] **15...h6 16 Rfd1 g6 17 Ne1 a6 18 Nc2 Bg7 19 Ne3** [I've actually had this position once before against another grandmaster. Then I played 19...Bc6, which did not work out well. I remembered some of that game and as it turned out, the move I chose here matched my old analysis. More recent engines favor White here in any case, so maybe black needs an earlier improvement.] **19...Nf8 20 Nd5 Nxd5 21 exd5** [21 Bxd5 is also reasonable. 21...Rad8 22 Nc4 Bxd5 23 exd5 should be somewhat better for White with the passed pawn on d5 as Black's kingside majority is not very mobile yet.] **21...Qd7 22 Bb3 b5 23 axb5 axb5 24 Rxa8 Bxa8** [24...Rxa8 may have been the better recapture as White can't really take on e5. I'm only a little worse after 25 c4 Ba6 26 Qd3 Qb7 with a structure more favorable than the game continuation.] **25 c4 b4?** [25...bxc4 is probably preferable, even though I get an isolated c-pawn. 26 Qxc4 Qa7 27 Qc2 Rd8 28 Ne4 Nd7 29 Bg3 f5 30 Nc3 White is somewhat better but it seems playable for Black. In the game both of my queenside pawns are at risk.] **26 Ne4 Qa7**



**27 Nd6?** [27 f4! was much stronger, but it's a committal move to play near the time control. 27...Bxd5 (27...Nd7 28 Nd6 Rd8 29 fxe5 would be a disaster) 28 Rxd5 exf4 29 Nf6+ Bxf6 30 Qxe8 Qa1+ 31 Rd1 Qxb2 is just winning for White] **27...Rd8** [27...Re7? 28 Nc8 would be embarrassing] **28 Nb5 Qb6** [Trying to stop f4 by 28...Qb8 was probably more tenacious] **29 Kh1 Nd7 30 f4 Qf6** [We reached the time control with White in control. I was just trying to find moves to keep the game going.] **31 fxe5 Nxe5 32 Rf1** [Also Black's position would be passive and unappealing after 32 Re1 Qb6 33 Qd1 f6 34 Qe2 Rb8 35 Rd1] **32...Qg5 33 Bf4 Qh5 34 Qxh5 gxh5** [It was unfortunate to accept this structure, but I didn't see a better way to defend. My kingside majority is now crippled and the d5-pawn will cause problems.] **35 Rd1 Bb7 36 Be3 Bf8 37 Bf4 f6** [At least now the knight is secure on e5. If 37...Bg7 but White has no reason to accept a repetition.] **38 Ra1 Ra8 39 Rd1 Rd8 40 Bg3 Ba6 41 Bxe5** [I noticed during my preparation that Sergey often had knight against bishop, including in a previous win against me. However, in this case I think this is a concession. Now I have two bishops and a passed e-pawn and White can forget about getting a d6-Bc7 construction.] **41...fxe5 42 Ra1 Bb7** [42...Bc8 43 Ra8 Be7 may have been a better way to defend the bishop. I think I'm close to okay there.] **43 Ra7 Rd7 44 Bc2 Bc8 45 Ra8 Bb7 46 Rb8** [avoiding the repetition with Ra7] **46...Ba6 47 Bf5 Rb7 48 Rd8 Bxb5** [Giving up the bishop pair but getting some counterplay with the queenside pawns looked necessary for concrete reasons. If 48...Kg7 49 d6 Bxb5 50 cxb5 Rxb5 51 d7 Be7 52 Re8 Kf6 53 Rf8+ Kg7 54 d8Q Bxd8 55



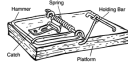
Rxd8 White would be winning.] **49 cxb5 Rb6** [necessary to stop d6.] **50 Bd7?** [This is a serious misstep in time pressure. White's advantage is more or less gone now, and continuing to press in time trouble led to misfortune.] **50...Rd6 51 Be6+ Kg7 52 Rb8** [52 Rc8 e4 53 Rc7+ Kg6 54 b3 h4 55 Kg1 Rb6 56 Kf2 Rxb5 57 Ke3 would be close to equal and less risky for White.] **52...c4 53 Rc8 Rb6 54 Rc7+ Kg6 55 Bd7** [White should still be better here. ; Bailing out by 55 Rxc4 Rxb5 56 Rc8 Kg7 might have been prudent as he was very low on time by now. If he insists on pushing still, 55 Rc6 was a better way, eg 55...Rxb5 56 d6 Rb8 57 d7 Rd8 58 Bxc4+ Kg7 59 Be6 h4] **55...c3!** [making a dangerous passed pawn of my own!] **56 bxc3 b3 57 Be8+** [If 57

Rc6+ Rxc6 58 dxc6 b2 59 Bf5+ Kxf5 60 c7 Kg6 61 c8Q b1Q+ 62 Kh2 Qf5 the extra piece should win for Black after both sides queen. But 57 g4 hxg4 58 hxg4 Kg5 59 Bf5 Rxb5 60 c4 Ra5 61 Kg2 h5 62 Rf7 Ra2+ 63 Kg3 h4+ 64 Kh3 Bc5 should still be okay for White.] **57...Kg5 58 Rf7 Rf6** [Now there's no way back to stop the b3 pawn] **59 h4+ Kf5 60 g4+ hxg4 61 Rxf6+ Kxf6 62 h5** [This move came with a draw offer. However, I had seen a winning idea.] **62...e4!** [There may actually be other ways to win, but this is by far the simplest. White's bishop will be cut off.] **63 Bg6 Ke5 0-1** The b-pawn cannot be stopped. Moreover, White may have flagged at some point in the past few moves. I thought he had two seconds left and didn't notice the flag until after the game.

**Tyson Brady - Andrew Samuelson**  
Sicilian

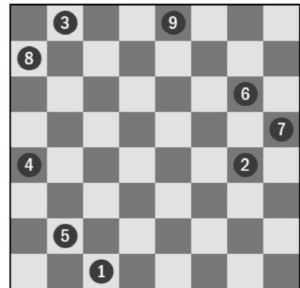
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Be3 e5 7 Nb3 Be6 8 f3 h5 9 Qd2 Nbd7 10 O-O-O Rc8 11 Nd5 Bxd5 12 exd5 Qc7 13 Kb1 g6 14 c4 b6 15 Be2 Bg7 16 g4 hxg4 17 fxg4 a5 18 g5 Ne4 19 Qc2 Ndc5 20 Nxc5 Nxc5 21 Rdf1 Rh4 22 h3 Rb8 23 Bf2 Rf4 24 Be3 Rxf1+ 25 Rxf1 Qe7 26 Bg4 e4 27 Be2 Kf8 28 h4 Kg8 29 h5 Nd3 30 hxg6 b5 31 c5 dxc5 32 Bxd3 exd3 33 Qh2 Re8 34 gxf7+ Qxf7 35 Rxf7 Kxf7 36 Qh5+ Ke7 37 Bxc5+ Kd8 38 Bb6+ Kd7 39 Qf7+ Re7 40 Qf5+ Kd6 41 Qxd3 Be5 42 Qxb5 Rh7 43 Qc6+ Ke7 44 Qb7+ Kd6 45 Qxh7 1-0

**J'Adoube**



Regarding the solution to the CHESSearch problem on page 13 of our previous issue, I credited Daniel Miller with a solution that was incorrect. Vanya Voloshin wrote in giving correct answer as 2861. (Also, 6821 is not prime, being divisible by 11.)

What is not clear is genesis of the mistake. I no longer have Dan's original email, so I can't say for certain whether he submitted an incorrect solution, or a correct solution that got botched on the way to publication. I should have looked at it more carefully before going to press in any event, so put this one firmly on the Editor.



*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.*



## A Plea to Virginia/DC/Maryland Area Affiliates

by ANTD Robert Jackson

The Virginia Chess Federation (VCF), Hampton Roads Chess, Capital Area Chess, DMV Chess, Eastern Chess and others. What a wonderful time to be a chess player in the Old Dominion!

There is no shortage of quality tournament opportunities for Virginia, Maryland and DC players. Missing a tournament no longer means you have to wait a couple of months for another opportunity to raise your rating to new heights... or to tell everyone how you were *definitely* winning, but then your opponent found a move you didn't see, but only because you were really tired.

As a parent of two chess players, I think this is fabulous. However, as an organizer, an employee with another affiliate, and a VCF Board member, I am starting to see a concerning trend. I fully understand how difficult it is for organizers to find an weekend on the tournament calendar that is not already taken by another event. However, something even more concerning is the response that is given to fellow affiliates when they ask why someone ran a tournament right on top of theirs. I would like to give some insight.

Mike Hoffpauir does an amazing job keeping up with the Clearinghouse on the Virginia Chess Federation website (<https://vachess.org/Clearinghouse/Clearhouse.html>). This is a great spot to see if your event is in conflict with another affiliate. I use the Clearinghouse for every event I schedule. I do not ever want to compete with other affiliates.

However, as someone who runs tournaments in the Richmond area and works in the Hampton Roads Chess scene, we have not always received the same consideration from other organizers. We regularly hear the same answer from other affiliates when they step into our previously-scheduled weekend: *"It doesn't matter, you're too far away from us."*

To be clear, this is unequivocally false. *It does matter!* In the Hampton Roads/Richmond area, we count on attracting 10-12 players from Northern Virginia/Maryland at our events. Their participation can provide income of \$1000 or more. We not only rely on those 10-12 players to boost our entry, but also as a way to give local players a quality tournament by attracting strong talent coming from that area. When an event in those areas gets scheduled on top of ours, that number dwindles to almost zero. This usually means that a tournament we were hoping to make a profit on turns into a loss.

To be clear, the vast majority of affiliates follow the Clearinghouse and are respectful of the other organizers. I am putting out this open letter to establish understanding among affiliates who habitually run events on the same weekend as other events already listed on the clearinghouse. Please understand that *it has a serious effect on others*. We all need to work together to keep chess booming in Virginia!

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