

VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

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Virginia Chess Federation

2025 - #2



**Record-smashing 172 entrees
at Coastal Virginia Open**



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2025 - Issue #2

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The 4th Coastal Virginia Open, a VCF Cup event, was held January 31-Feb 2 at the Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront. With a \$3500 guaranteed prize fund plus trophy sections, the event drew a record-smashing 172 players. The event was organized by Hampton Roads Chess Association (HRCA).

The weekend kicked off with a Blitz tournament of four double rounds and 20 players. Tyson Brady took clear 1st place with a perfect score of 8 points. Lukas LeBakken, Timothy McCall & Bruce Flores tied for 2nd/3rd with 5½ points each. Aaradhya Patil finished with 4½ and Top U1600. With 3½ points, Constantine Bueltmann-Prok won Top U1000.

The main event was a 5-round Swiss in six sections. The Open and U1600 sections decided the majority of cash prize pot. The U1200 section – redesigned after polling local players – featured a lower entry fee and smaller cash payout, along with trophies and other non-cash prizes. These three sections were played at G/90+10. The event also featured two one-day scholastic events: U800 on Saturday (G/40; d5), and non-rated “Rookie” on Sunday (G/25; d3). A small Family and Friends section rounded out the offerings.

Reckoning the small, mostly below 2000 turnout for the Open section at our Zofchak Memorial last fall, the CVO experimented with free entry for National Masters. This turned out to be an effective inducement, doubling the size and greatly increasing the strength of the section to the benefit of all players. Here again master Tyson Brady took clear first place with 4½ points. A three-way split of 2nd/3rd at 4 points included Emmanuel Carter from North Carolina, Timothy McCall & Larry Larkins. Top U1800 was shared between Jackson Twilley & Alexander Morton, each with 3 points. Jackson also won a Top Upset prize and submitted his game. Christopher Lawrence won the other Top Upset prize in the Open section.

Notes by Macon Shibut

1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4 4 Nf3 e6 5 O-O
a6 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 Nd5!? {diagram} A remarkable
move that elicits a remarkable reply.

7...g5!?

If 7...exd5 White will recover the piece, eg 8 exd5 Nb4 10 Re1+; or 8...Nce7 9 d6 Nc6 (better 9...Qb6 with something like 10 dxe7 Bxe7 but White is still for choice after 11 Re1) 9 Re1+ Ne7 10 d6





32 f3? [A panicky move giving back the entire advantage. 32 c6! Retains a winning advantage: 32...Ree1 33 cxb7+ Kxb7 34 Qxa6+ Kc7 35 h4! (35 g3 wins too but it's less accurate because even after Kg2 White will not be threatening to move the bishop) 35...gxh3 36 gxh3 White will go Kg2 and liberate the bishop; ...Rxf1+ will always leave him a winning endgame thanks to the a-pawn.] **32...Ree1 33 Kf2 Rxf1+ 34 Kg3 gxf3 35 gxf3 Rg1+ 36 Kf4 Rd4+**



In the U1200 section, Muchen Liang won clear 1st with a perfect 5-0, earning a trophy and the section's only cash prize. The other trophy winners, in tiebreak order, were Ved Vihaan Mamilla (2nd place, 4 points), Josiah Greenwood (3rd, 4 points), Oscar Koudinoff (4th, 3½), and Philip Pound (5th, 3½). Josiah also won our special Top Unrated prize package of a free chess set, clock, and one month Chess.com Diamond and Chessable Pro memberships.



The Saturday Scholastic U800 section saw 44 children competing for trophies and medals. In 1st place on tiebreaks with 4½ points was Sarveshver Prabakaran. Aarya Patil took 2nd, Shritik Mishra 3rd, Brayden Kirshenbaum 4th & Jayden Guo 5th. Alisa Rassokhina won the Top U500 trophy. Ezekiel “Zeke” Roque took home the Top Unrated trophy, and Ridhan Katkar claimed the Top U300 trophy.

The Sunday non-rated Scholastic Rookie section attracted 39 children also playing for trophies and medals. Adarsh Sharma won clear 1st with a perfect score, taking home a trophy and a US Chess membership. Logan Butt & Noah Paillard followed with 4½. Chris Jacob Sabin & Colin Kirshenbaum followed half a point behind. Recognizing the wide age spread of the group (players from Kindergarten to high school!), this section also awarded class trophies for top finishing players in the younger age groups: Top K5 (Jack Ziaja, 4 points), 2nd K5 (Jack Jensen, 3 points), 3rd K5 (Eli Kou, 3 points), Top K3 (Ayla O’Grady, 3 points), 2nd K3 (Rishav Malhotra, 3 points), and 1st K1 (Aedan Sullivan, 3 points).

The unrated Family and Friends section was a new experiment. Only four players (all parents of scholastic players) took up the gauntlet, making it a Quad. Michelle Kirshenbaum’s perfect 3-0 won, and she also got the “Top Team” trophy for her combined score with son Brayden on Saturday. Denis Mileyko took 2nd place.

The HRCA looks forward to seeing you at the Zofchak Memorial Open at the Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront in September!

Lifelong Connections thru Chess

by Sorel Utsey as told to Christina Schreveis

David Torbert and Ben Bland played in their first rated chess tournament on January 21st, 1995. It was a scholastic event, the Fort Eustis Scholastic Open, and the tournament director that day was Sorel Utsey.

In July 2024, after a 17 year break, David returned to active play for the 124th US Open in Norfolk.

Ben likewise returned to active play, in November 2022, after a 14 year break. The event that drew him back was the Hampton Roads Chess Club’s Mark Bland Club Championship, named in honor of his father Mark Bland. Mark was a beloved member of the local chess community who passed away shortly after being honored by this legacy tournament.

Besides honoring his father, another factor in Ben’s return to chess was that his own sons started playing. After earning his first rating in the event named for his grandfather, Leon Bland played at the Saturday Scholastic tournament on December 17, 2022, where his tournament director was... the very same Sorel Utsey!

Sorel, David, and Ben were reunited at the 4th Coastal Virginia Open thirty years after the now-grown boys’ first rated event. At the CVO, David was playing, Sorel was directing, and Ben was supporting his sons in the scholastic sections.



Utsey (left), Leon Bland (center), Ben Bland (right)



Virginia Scholastic Championships

The Virginia Scholastic Championships were held March 8-9 at Monticello High School in Charlottesville. A total of 367 players contended across ten sections.

In the College championship, Aneesh Desai ran off a perfect 4-0 to take 1st place. Reigning Virginia State Champion Jason Morefield & Owen McCoy followed at 3½.

The K thru 12 saw a tie for 1st between masters Aarush Vinod & Kent Slate, each 4½-½. A 4-way tie with 4 points apiece included Brian Tay, Yogeshwar Yehamandram, Khanim Ismayilova & James Wright.

James Wright - Vaibhav Kalpaka Gruenfeld

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 Qb3 dxc4 6 Qxc4 O-O 7 e4 a6 8 Be2 b5 9 Qb3 Bb7 10 e5 Nd5 11 O-O e6 12 Bg5 Qd7 13 a4 Nxc3 14 Qxc3 bxa4 15 Rfc1 Rc8 16 Bd1 Bc6 17 Nd2 Qe8 18 f3 Bb5 19 Ne4 Nd7 20 Qa5 Nb6 21 b3 axb3 22 Bxb3 Rab8 23 Rc5 Qd7 24 Qd2 Rd8 25 Rd1

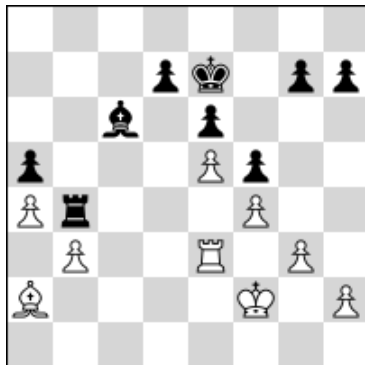


25...Na4 26 Rcc1 c5 27 Bxa4 Bxa4 28 Nxc5 Qb5 29 Nxa4 Qxa4 30 Bxd8 Rxd8 31 Ra1 Qc4 32 Qe3 h5 33 Rac1 Qa4 34 f4 Kh7 35 h3 Rd7 36 Rd2 Bf8 37 g4 h4 38 Rf1 Rb7 39 Qf2 Be7 40 Rd3 Qc4 41 Rf3 Rb3 42 Rxb3 Qxb3 43 Qf3 Qb2 44 Qd3 Kg7 45 f5 Bg5 46 fxg6 fxg6 47 Kh1 Be7 48 Qe3 Qc2 49 Qf3 Kh6 50 Qf4+ g5 51 Qe3 a5 52 Rf2 Qb1+ 53 Kh2 a4 54 Qf3 Qh7 55 Qf7 Qxf7 56 Rxf7 Bb4 57

Rf6+ Kg7 58 Rxe6 a3 59 Ra6 Bc3 60 d5 Bxe5+ 61 Kg2 Bb2 62 Kf3 Kf7 63 Ke4 Ke7 64 Kf5 Bc1 65 Kg6 Kd7 66 Kf6 Kc7 67 Ke7 Bf4 68 Ra7+ Kb6 69 Rxa3 Kc5 70 Rd3 Kc4 71 Rd1 1-0

Ronen Wilson - Kent Slate Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6 5 Nc3 b5 6 Bd3 Qb6 7 Nf3 Qc7 8 O-O Bb7 9 e5 f5 10 a4 b4 11 Na2 Bc5 12 Re1 Ne7 13 c3 Nbc6 14 cxb4 Nxb4 15 Nxb4 Bxb4 16 Bd2 Qa5 17 Qb3 Nc6 18 Bxb4 Qxb4 19 Bc4 Qxb3 20 Bxb3 Ke7 21 Rad1 Na5 22 Nd4 Rhc8 23 Rd2 Rc5 24 f4 Rb8 25 Red1 Bc8 26 Ba2 Rb4 27 b3 Nc6 28 Nxc6+ Rxc6 29 g3 Rc7 30 Kf2 Bb7 31 Rd3 Be4 32 Re3 Bd5 33 Rdd3 Rc1 34 Re1 Rc8 35 Ree3 a5 36 Rc3 Rc6 37 Rxc6 Bxc6





38 Ke2? [38 Ke1] 38 Bxa4 39 Kd2 Bc6
40 Kc3 Bd5 41 Kb2 Rd4 42 Kc3 Rd1
43 Re2 h6 44 b4 axb4+ 45 Kxb4 Be4
46 Bb3 Rf1 47 Ba4 g5 48 Rd2 Bd5 49
fxg5 hxg5 50 Bb5 Rc1 51 Rf2 d6 52
exd6+ Kxd6 53 Bd3 Ke5 54 Bc2 Be4 55
Bb3 Bd5 56 Re2+ Kd4 57 Bxd5 Kxd5
58 Rd2+ Ke5 59 Re2+ Kf6 60 Kb3 f4
61 Rf2 Ke5 62 Re2+ Kf5 63 Kb2 Rc6
64 Re1 f3 65 h3 e5 66 Ra1 e4 67 Ra5+
Kg6 68 h4 gxh4 69 gxh4 f2 70 Rg5+
Kf7 71 Rf5+ Rf6 0-1

Kent Slate - Aarush Vinod
Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 3 exd5 Nf6 4 Bb5+
Nbd7 5 d4 Nxd5 6 dxc5 e6 7 c6 bxc6
8 Bxc6 Rb8 9 Nf3 Bc5 10 O-O O-O 11
b4 Bb6 12 Bxd5 exd5 13 Bf4 Rb7 14
Qxd5 Qf6 15 Bg3

Sambhav Jain won K thru 12 Under 1400 section with 4½ points. Sharveen Balan followed half a point behind.

Top-seeded master Kyle Zhuang topped the K thru 8 group with 4½-½. Hanford Chong, Joy Zhang, Jagadeeshwar Yehamandram Sridhar, Kanav Shah & Emin Baim all scored 4.

Kyle Zhuang - Hanford Chong
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 d6 4 O-O Bd7
5 c3 a6 6 Ba4 g6 7 Re1 Bg7 8 h3 Qe7
9 d4 Nf6 10 d5 Na7 11 Bxd7+ Nxd7
12 c4 O-O 13 Nc3 b5 14 cxb5 Nxb5
15 Nxb5 axb5 16 Qc2 Rfc8 17 Be3
Nf6 18 Rec1 Qd7 19 Nd2 Ra6 20 b4
Qe8 21 Nb3 Nd7 22 Na5 Nb8 23 Qd3
Ra8 24 Qc3 Bf6 25 Rc2 Bd8 26 Rac1
{diagram}

26...c5 27 Nb7 Qd7 28 Nxd8 Qxd8 29
bxc5 dxc5 30 Qxe5 Nd7 31 Qb2 Qb6 32
e5 Qb7 33 e6 fxe6 34 dxe6 Nf8 35 Rxc5
Rxc5 36 Rxc5 Nxe6 37 Rxb5 Qd7 38
Rb8+ Rxb8 39 Qxb8+ Kf7 40 Qa7 Qxa7



15...Qg6 16 Nbd2 Nf6 17 Qc6 Re7 18
Rae1 Bb7 19 Qb5 Ne4 20 Nxe4 Rxe4
21 Rxe4 Qxe4 22 Qe5 Qc2 23 a3 Rc8
24 Re1 h6 25 Qe7 Bd5 26 Qd7 Rd8
27 Qg4 Be6 28 Qf4 Qxc3 29 a4 a5 30
bxa5 Bxa5 31 h4 Qb2 32 Rc1 Bd2 33
Rd1 1/2-1/2



41 Bxa7 Ke7 42 a4 Kd7 43 a5 Kc6 44 Kf1
Kb5 45 Bb6 Nf4 46 h4 Nd5 47 Ke2 Kc4
48 Kf3 Kb5 49 Ke4 Ne7 50 Ke5 Nf5 51
g3 Kc6 52 Kf6 Kb5 53 Kf7 Ka6 54 Kg8
h6 55 Kf7 g5 56 hxg5 hxg5 57 Kf6 1-0



Puru Jain Bhandari & Akshay Namilae scored $4\frac{1}{2}$ apiece to win the K thru 8 Under 1200 championship. Runners up were Damien Nguyen, Ayyappan Muthuvel, Nicholas Kokhan, Caden Porter & Ronak Nanda.

K thru 5 championship was won by Shreyas Krishnan. The 4-1 runners up were Alexander Zhou & Tanush Dokka.

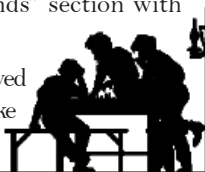
Three players scored $4\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ to tie atop the K thru 5 Under 1000 section: Smaran Sainathuni, Lee Huang & Eden Rubin-Smith. No fewer than six players were right on their heel, just a half point behind: Hironori Onuma, Donovan Christian, Srihan Asapu, Pranav Palaniappan, James Miani & Pooja Sreekumar.

The K thru 3 race ended in a massive 5-way tie between Amelia Zhang, Pranav Kolluru, Vladislav Inchin, Avyukt Varma Thalluri & Jacob Gebretensai. Srithik Gopisetty followed with $3\frac{1}{2}$.

Adam Bennani recorded a 5-0 sweep in his very first rated tournament to win the K thru 3 Under 600 championship. Aaron Yu & Aadhav Karthikeyadurai each scored $4\frac{1}{2}$.

Finally, Andrew Tichenor paced a 4-round "Parents & Friends" section with $3\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$. Herbert Acedo & Csaba Gabor followed at 3-1.

Michael Hoffpauir organized on behalf of the VCF. Julie Wells served as Chief Tournament Director. She was assisted by Jeff Forbes, Mike Hoffpauir, Christina Schweiss, Anand Dommalapati & Georgina Chin.



Virginia Senior Open May 30 - June 1, 2025

Country Inn & Suites By Radisson
10358 Patriot Hwy, Fredericksburg, Va
Friday, May 30 - Sunday, June 1, 2025

All players must be at least 50 years old as of Monday, July 28, 2025.

Tournament will determine Virginia's representative at the 2025 John T Irwin National Tournament of Senior State Champions during the 2025 US Open at Madison, Wisconsin (July 28-31, 2025). Virginia's representative will receive a stipend of at least \$600.

5-SS, Game/90 with 30 seconds time increment for each move. \$2,200 prize fund: \$650-450-300 (unrated player winning a place prize is limited to \$300), Top Under 2200 200, Under 1800 \$165, Under 1400/unrated \$135. \$50 for the top Upset in each round, plus another \$50 to the top Upset of the tournament. Entry Fee \$75 through midnight on May 24, increases to \$95 on May 25 and at the tournament site.

Find all other details and register online at www.vachess.org



UPSET!

Matthew Diao - Awonder Liang
2025 Baltimore Open
Modern

Notes by Matthew Diao



Going into this game, I wasn't really feeling stressed because I knew I was most likely going to lose. I was just hoping to give Awonder a fight, and not get crushed immediately. {GM Liang is currently ranked #8 in the US and #40 in the world -ed} **1 d4 g6** [I was sort of expecting The Modern, because that's what GMs tend to play when they think they can win with anything.] **2 e4 Bg7 3 Nf3 d6 4 Bc4 a6 5 O-O e6** [I knew somewhat about this system. I had played it as White twice before, and both times I followed the same idea with c3 and maneuvering the knight over to g3 while maintaining a strong center.] **6 Bb3 Nd7 7 Re1 b6 8 c3 Bb7 9 Bf4 h6** [My initial intent here was to play 10 Nbd2 but I got scared at some ideas with ...g5 and ...h5 and chickened out with 10 h3] **10 h3 Ne7 11 Nbd2 O-O 12 Qe2** [At this point I was quite happy with my position as I didn't think Black had any good pawn breaks. I wasn't sure what his intentions were.] **Kh8 13 Rad1 Qe8 14 Nf1 Ng8** [This was an interesting idea, but I didn't really get the point. I thought my pieces were well position and 15 7e5 seemed natural.] **15 e5 dxe5 16 Nxe5 Ndf6 17 Bc2 Ne7 18 Qd2 Kh7 19 Ng3 Ned5** [Although he managed to get my bishop, his kingside is weak with h5 incoming and his pieces are positioned awkwardly.] **20 h4 Nxf4 21 Qxf4 h5 22 Ne4** [Apparently trading was bad, but the top computer line was 22 Qg5 Kg8 23 Nxc6, which I didn't even consider, especially considering the strength of my opponent. I really just wanted to get into an easy position to play.] **22 Bxe4 23 Bxe4 Nxe4 24 Qxe4 Qa4?** [A shocking move. It took me a few minutes to see 25 Nxf7, and another few to make sure I wasn't seeing things. At this point my heart rate amped up quickly and I was already thinking about what the heck was going on, as this was entirely unexpected.] **25 Nxf7 Bf6 26 Ne5 Rg8** [My opponent was clearly upset here and blundered the same tactic, although Black was already lost.] **27 Nxc6 1-0** All in all a game I am happy with, and it's possible I'll keep it as my career highest win!



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CoachMatt.AwardSpace.us



DIALOG

Ughur Bakhish submitted a game he'd played with some questions. The editor tried to answer:

Aaryan Mummidi - Ughur Bakhish
2024 North American Youth Championship
Queen's Gambit Declined

Notes by Ughur Bakhish (plain text) and Macon Shibut (italics)

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Be7

If a strong player plays the Queen's Gambit against me, I'm in for a long game because I basically cannot attack in such closed positions. I always tend to get super passive and stuck. How to play in such closed positions? and what if you can't figure out how to improve your pieces?

Not that there's anything wrong with defending the Queen's Gambit, but it's true that it often does not generate early attacking possibilities for Black. So you could simply choose a different opening. There's a galaxy of Benoni and King's Indians out there if attack is what you absolutely want. Even within the Queen's Gambit family there are more active possibilities compared to what you chose here: everything from respectable Tarrasch (3...c5) and Ragozin (3...Nf6 4 Bg5 Bb4) systems to less reputable but the still viable (especially at you level) Albin Countergambit (2...e5!).

This word "passive" is almost cliché in chess literature. People don't think about its true meaning. Passive is not merely a question of greater or lesser piece activity. It involves which side is setting the agenda. Who is the hammer, and who is the anvil? At the risk of getting ahead of the game at hand, one thing I notice is that you repeatedly anticipate your opponent's threats. In other words, you voluntarily play passive moves to address future danger rather than pressing

your own active possibilities. I'll point out specific examples as we come to them. The fundamental way to avoid passive positions is to not settle for passive moves.

For all of that, I'll point out that you actually didn't wind up "super passive and stuck" as this game went. You achieve a reasonable, active isolated queen pawn position, which is exactly the sort of thing attacking players often aim for as Black against 1 d4

4 Nf3 Nf6 5 Bf4 a6

This is the first example of what I said above. The move ...a6 is often useful in these sorts of positions, so I'm not going to brand it an outright mistake. But it is a needlessly passive choice, especially given an obvious and natural alternative like 5...O-O.

The only reason to play ...a6 right now would be fear of Nb5. That's not such a terrible hammer that you just submit to the anvil role. After 5...O-O 6 Nb5, to start with there's always 6...Na6 — maybe not the ideal square for the knight, but it's a developing move which White's Nb5 was not. Also in such positions 6...Ne8 often covers everything. Here too neither side's knight looks great. They both may well end up going back where they came from, when the mutual tempi lost will be a wash. But most tellingly, a real attacking player should check if the 'threat' Nb5 can be ignored. You ought to invite such forays



with White's king still far from castling! Let's consider the continuation 6...dxc4!? and now if 7 Nxc7? Bb4+ 8 Nd2 (forced since White's bishop must defend Nc7) 8...e5! (deflecting the bishop from d2) 9 Bxe5 Ne4 White is already lost. What was that you said about Black not being able to attack in Queen's Gambit?

6 e3 O-O 7 Bd3 c5 8 cxd5 exd5 9 dxc5 Bxc5 10 Bg5 Be6

Another instance of voluntarily choosing a passive setup. You had a good, direct developing move in 10...Nc6 when 11 Bxf6 is no real problem because of 11...Qxf6 12 Nxd5 Qxb2. Later your bishop might go to the more active post g4 pinning White's knight.

11 O-O h6 [11...Nc6] 12 Bh4 Nc6

As I noted previously, you reached a position with some attacking potential. Nothing to complain about here.

13 a3 Be7 14 Bc2 Ne8 ?!

If I had played 14...Re8, I probably wouldn't have to risk opening kingside after 15 Qd3 Kf8. But if I use the bishop to block those pins on the knight, I always want to get rid of the pinning bishop since it forces my bishop to stay passive. Would there be any alternatives?

Just to be clear, you withdrew your bishop to e7 so now there is no actual pin to get rid of. This looks like is another example of fretting prematurely. Yes, the danger is Qd3, Bxf6 & Qh7mate. But can't you handle that easily enough with...g6 ? Sometimes ...g6 is too weakening, eg if h6 hangs or if White has a knight on e5 that can sacrifice itself on g6. But in this position I don't see

a problem. Therefore, Black should play a desirable active move like 14...Rc8.

15 Qd3 f5

Here too 15...g6 would be a less compromising defense.

16 Bxe7 Nxe7 17 Nd4 Qd7 18 Nxe6 Qxe6 19 Ne2 Nc7 20 b4 Rad8 21 Nd4 Qd7 22 f3 Ne6

If this position did not include the weak f-pawn, I would have been a bit in my comfort zone, not too positional, not too tactical. I tend to trade down and play an equal endgame, since I usually get wins against stronger players in the endgame.

White's play has not been as forceful as it might, so while your point about...f5 is well taken, you're position is not too bad. It's way early to talk about "trading down to an endgame," however. (But as a side note—if you do in fact make a habit of beating stronger players from equal endings, good for you!)

23 Nxe6 Qxe6 24 Bb3 Kh8 25 Kh1 Qg6

Once more — and I will stop beating the dead horse now— I understand you didn't like your queen opposite his bishop, but an active move like 25...Rfe8 looks better than reacting before 26 e4 is actually a threat.

26 Rad1 Rf6 27 Qc3 Rfd6 (27...Rc6) 28 Qc7 R6d7 29 Qf4 Qc6

Why invite his rook to take the c-file? 29...Qf6 (perhaps eyeing Qb2) looks better.

30 Rc1 Qf6 31 Bc2 Rc8

31...d4

Absolutely! After 32 exd4 Rxd4 you may even think about being a bit better.



32 Bb1 Rcd8 33 h3 Qd6

33...d4 is still good. Maybe you were trying too hard to "trade down to an ending"? You must play the position as it presents itself.

34 Qh4 Qe5 35 Rfe1 Rc7

Turned out to be a bad idea to trade here. I eventually get stuck and can't figure out a plan. How would I evaluate what to do and make a plan? How could I avoid being passive? I need an answer other than strategy books, since 99% of the time there is already an advantage to capitalize on.

It's not so bad! Granted, things are a bit less comfortable now with ...d4 is off the table (because after exchanges on d4 the knight hangs). Your knight is indeed stuck tending f5. In a better world you might consider a Kh7, g6 plan, although 35...Kh7 just now might run into some g4 thing - but this should be checked carefully! Sometimes you just have to play move to move, without a broader plan. In that spirit, 35...Qb2 suggests itself. Or, since the root of Black's discomfort seems to be the f5/Ne7 co-dependency, maybe overprotect, 35...Rf8, and then see what White tries.

36 Rxc7 Qxc7

You're still fine, plus White's next move lets you off easy.

37 e4 fxe4 38 fxe4 dxe4?

38...d4 39 e5 d3

Indeed, that would have been correct. The move you played is just a tactical blunder. There's no insight or knowledge to avoid this mistake. Mate in one you either see or you don't.

39 Qxe4 g6 40 Qh4 Ng8 41 Bxg6 Rf8 42 Bb1 Rf4 43 Qh5 Qc3 44 Rg1 Qg7

45 Ba2 Ne7

45...Nf6 looks more natural, eg 46 Qe5 Re4 47 Qc3 Re2. Of course White is a pawn up in any case.

46 Qe8+ Rf8 47 Qd7 Rf7(??)

Lol rook hanging. I had very little hope in this position. How does a 2000 miss something like a rook capture? How to defend positions like this?

Well, it goes to show that people are not machines and mistakes happen. A player rated 2000 may seem daunting to you, but consider that against Magnus Carlsen he would likely lose a 20 game match by 20-0. So you can be certain he's making a lot of mistakes along the way even if they are not all so blatant as this. If we've learned anything from strong engines, it's that people are not very good at chess. That can either discourage us about the game in general or give us heart to fight hard against any human opponent. It's a question of attitude.

As for defending such positions, you actually show a pretty good way in the rest of the game. Keep your pieces as active as possible, watch out for direct threats, make the opponent work to prove his extra pawn's worth. Direct exploitation of this extra pawn would involve exposing White's own king, so he's going to seek some simplification first. Sometimes the defender would want to avoid that, but in this case your own king is uncomfortable too. So some exchanges are probably unavoidable.

48 Qd8+(?) Rf8 49 Qc7 Nf5 50 Qxg7+ Kxg7 51 Rd1 Re8 52 Rd7+

White is following the adage 'When material up, trade pieces; when material down trade



awns.' But such a rule of thumb is not universal. Keeping the rooks on would offer White more ways of trying to make progress.

**52...Re7 53 Rxe7+ Nxe7 54 Bb1 b6
55 Bd3 a5 56 bxa5 bxa5 57 Kg1 Kf6
58 Kf2 Nd5 59 a4 Nc3 60 Bc2 Kg5**

In principle I'd prefer the centralizing 60...Ke5 but maybe it doesn't matter here.

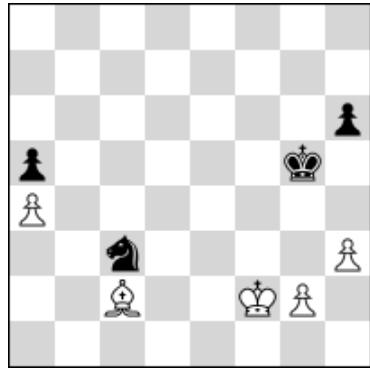
A pawn down, but still hope — a bishop vs knight endgame like this can be drawn.

True! White set himself up for something more or less like this when he exchanged rooks. Let's examine those drawing chances a bit further. What has to happen now for White to win? He can't just force the extra pawn through because the bishop is worthless against a dark square blockade. If the queenside pawns were gone, the position is already a draw because Black could just put his king on g7 and sit forever. At some point White's king will have to go over and attack a5. That's a long trip. While it happens, Black can counter on the kingside. It's worth bearing in mind is that the h-pawn is the 'wrong color' for White's bishop. That is, if the g-pawn somehow disappears - either Black captures it or sacrifices his own h-pawn to give White two h-pawns - the draw is again automatic because Black can sacrifice his knight on a4 and White's king+bishop+however many h-pawns can't budge Black's king out of the h8 corner.

Let's consider a sample variation to see how a direct approach might play out.

{see diagram next column}

**61 Ke3 Kh4 62 Kd4 Ne2+ 63 Kc5 Kg3
64 Be4 h5 65 Kb6 Nc3 66 Bc6 Nxa4+!
67 Bxa4 Kxg2 68 Bd7 a4 draw.**

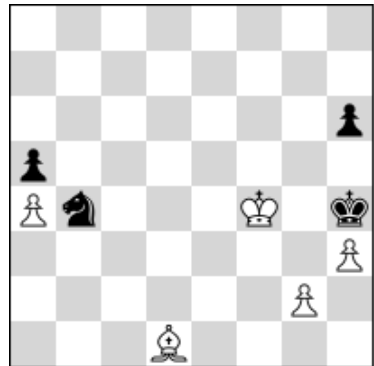


I'd think hard about 61 g3, eg 61...Kf6 62 Ke3 Ke5 63 h4 and maybe that's progress.

61 Kg3 Ne2+ 62 Kf2 Nd4 63 Bd1 Kh4?

63...Kf4, same principle as at move 60. You'd still be in position to invade the kingside when the moment comes. Moreover, the mating trick that got you in the game would never arise. But now there is another problem - see the next note.

64 Ke3 Nc6 65 Kf4 Nb4



66 Bg4

White plays for mate, but it should not work. Meanwhile, Black's decentralized king has opened a new idea. White can make a run at h6: 66 Kf5! For example, 66...Kg3 67 Bf3



Nd3 68 Kg6 Nc5 69 Bc6 Nxa4 70 Bxa4 Kxg2 71 h4 wins; or 66...Nd3 67 Bf3 Nb2 68 Bc6 Nd3 69 Ke4 (69 Kg6 Ne5+) Nb4 70 Bb7 Kg3 71 Kd4 Nc2+ 72 Kc4 White gets to a5 while Black can't set up the drawing mechanism we saw in the note to move 60.

66...Nd3+ 67 Ke4 Nb2

The draw is within reach. You could now go 67...Nc5+ 68 Kf3 (68 Kf5 Kg3) Kg5! and the a-pawn is lost (but not 68...Nxa4? 69 Kf4)

68 Kf4

He could try to reorganize for another run: 68 Kf3 Kg5 69 Bd7

68...Nd3+ 69 Kf5 Nb2 70 Ke4 Nxa4?

Tragic! The draw was there: 70...Kg3 71 Bd7 (71 Bf3 Nxa4) Kxg2 72 h4 Kg3 73 h5 Kh4 74 Be8 Nxa4 75 Bxa4 Kxh5

71 Kf4 1-0 I resigned before he could checkmate me.

WORLD AMATEUR TEAM EAST

Jack Holder – Ben Blair

Benoni

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e5 4 Nc3 d6 5 e4 h5!? 6 Bd3 Nbd7 7 Nge2 a6 8 O-O h4 9 h3 Be7 10 f4 [often an important pawn break, but possibly not the most opportune moment for it] 10 exf4 11 Bxf4 Nh5 12 Bh2 Ne5 13 Bxe5 dxe5 14 d6!? Bxd6 15 Nd5 Ng3? [15 Qg5; 15 Be6] 16 Nxg3 hxg3 17 Qf3 Be6 18 Qxg3 Bxd5 19 exd5 [19 Qxg7!] 19 Qh4 20 Qxg7 Qd4+ 21 Kh1 O-O-O

{diagram}

22 Bf5+? [22 Rad1!] 22 Kb8 23 Qxf7 e4! [winning] 24 Qe6 Rhe8 25 Qg6 [25 Qh6 Qe5] 25 Qe5 26 Kg1 Rg8 27 Bxe4 Rxg6 28 Bxg6 Rg8 29 Rae1 Qh2+ 30 Kf2 Bg3+ 31 Kf3 Bxe1 32 Rxe1 Rf8+ 33 Ke3 Qf4+ 34 Ke2 Qf2+ 35 Kd1 Qd4+ 36 Kc1 Rf2 0-1



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From the Archives...



VCF Archivist Paul Swaney has provided several photos from days gone by. We will print some from time to time, as space allows. It seems fitting that the first one features the late, great Charles Powell, a seven time Virginia state champion. The second picture features the late grandmaster Lubosh Kavalek, who lived in Reston. Can any reader identify the player looking over his shoulder? Also, can anyone identify the photographer who took these pictures?



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