

VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

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2025 - #5

state champion
KEVIN SU



VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

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2025 Virginia State Championship

Kevin Su, of Herndon, scored $5\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ to capture the 2025 Virginia State Championship, played Labor Day weekend in Glen Allen. Vaibhav Kalpaka & Evan Ling shared 2nd/3rd half a point back. Other prizewinners included Nicholas Xie, William (Jack) Barrow, Will Moorhouse, Noah O'Neill & Robert Fischer in a 5-way tie for top Expert at 4-2; and Ryan Ho & Jackson Twilley also with 4 points to share top classes A/B.

In the Amateur (under 1800) section, Dan Koontz's $5\frac{1}{2}$ points was good for clear 1st place, making him Virginia Amateur Champion. Noah Guthrie & Nathaniel Haydon followed at 5-1 apiece. Other prizewinners included Tripp Southerland & Vanya Voloshin (= top C); and Evander Rodrigues (top D).

In the 5-round, 2-day Novice section, Scott Ninmer paced the field with $4\frac{1}{2}$. A massive tie followed at 4-1 including Reyansh Dixit, Darshan Parameswaran, Avyukt Thalluri, Cynthia Zhao & Christopher Lawyer, with U1000 and U800 prizes in the mix. Parth Shetty won 2nd U800. Sai Challa was the top Unrated.

The VCF Annual Business Meeting was held on Saturday morning in 'hybrid' in-person/Zoom mode. **Robert Jackson**, of Smithfield, was elected President for the coming year. All four Board positions were also up for (re)election. Rob Getty (King George), Mike Hoffpauir (Yorktown), Anand Dommalapati (Ashburn) & Nitin Patil (Virginia Beach) will serve for terms of varying duration.

Regarding the course of the main event, we are pleased to be able to offer the new state champion's own account of how the competition unfolded...

FIGHTING CHESS *by Kevin Su*



SINCE I STARTED PLAYING CHESS in 2015, I've made the trip to Glen Allen five times to play in the Virginia Closed. As a Northern Virginia resident, the commute is about two hours long, but the tournament has always been a worthwhile experience. My first appearance at the Closed was in 2018, when I was one of the bottom seeds in the Championship



section. Each year I've improved on my score little by little, eventually becoming a contender for the prestigious State Champion title. Now a junior in high school, I've had some success at scholastic state events, but winning the overall state championship can certainly be considered my most challenging and rewarding achievement in chess.

I entered this year as the 8th highest rated player. I had high hopes but not high expectations, and the run that I went on is nothing short of miraculous considering the strength of the field that I faced. What made this event so memorable is not only my result but also the fighting chess I played throughout the whole tournament, which I hope the reader can enjoy seeing as much as I enjoyed playing.

Kevin Su - Gabriel Cumming Jobava London

Having played many shaky first round games in past tournaments, my goal this game was to stay solid and wait for a mistake from my opponent. It eventually came, but not before several of my own!

1 d4 d5 2 Bf4 Nf6 3 Nc3 c5 4 e4 Nxe4 5 Nxe4 dxe4 6 dxc5 Qa5+ 7 Qd2?! [This is a bit of a pet move of mine. 7 c3 is considered the best here with Qa4+ and capturing on e4 to follow.] 7...Qxd2+ 8 Bxd2 Nc6 9 f3 e5 10 b4? [A normal-looking move, but not the most accurate. 10 Be3 was better to avoid Black's idea in the next note.] 10...exf3 [10...a5! would have worked in this particular position because of 11 c3 e3! 12 Bxe3 axb4 13 cxb4 Nxb4 -+] 11 Nxf3 Be7 12 Bb5 O-O 13 O-O-O Bf6 14 Rde1?! [I played this rook to e1 to avoid a pin ...Bg4, but it turns out ...a5 is still a strong retort. Interestingly enough, Stockfish claims that White's best idea is to sac the exchange as in the variation 14 Rhe1 Bg4 15 a4 Nd4 16 Re4 h5 17 Nxd4 Bxd1 18 Kxd1 exd4 19 a5. The point here is that

Black's b7 pawn is a major weakness, with the bishop actually being more useful than the rook with only one open file on the board.] **14...Be6 [14...a5 15 bxa5 Nxa5 16 Nxe5 Nc6 17 Nxc6 bxc6 18 Bc4 Be6 = Black has a lot of play and will likely regain the pawn. In fact, White's only option to maintain equality is 19 Rxe6!]** **15 Bxc6 bxc6 16 Nxe5 Bxe5 17 Rxe5 Bxa2 [With a sizable advantage on the clock, I was happy to play this endgame. I felt that I could continue making natural moves quickly while my opponent would need to play accurately to maintain equality.] 18 Rhe1 Be6 19 Bc3 Rac8 20 h4 Rfd8 21 Rg5 g6 22 h5 [with the threat of hxg6 and Rh1] 22...Rd5? [My strategy of putting my opponent under time pressure seemed to pay off as he traded into a worse endgame.] 23 Rxd5 Bxd5 24 hxg6? [I blitzed this out to keep up the pressure, but it almost completely dissipates my advantage. 24 h6! was a clever move to box in Black's king. 24... Bxg2 (or 24...Be6 25 Bf6 Rb8 26 Rd1) 25**



Re7 a6 26 Be5 Bd5 27 Kb2 Black is nearly in zugzwang and cannot prevent White's king from walking up the board. 24... **hxg6** [Cold shower. I thought I'd have 25 Rh1 here, threatening mate, but the game would be dead drawn after 25...f6.]



25 g3! [I thought for almost 20 minutes before deciding on what I think is the best practical move to keep the game alive. I considered 25 Bf6, but it fails concretely after 25...Bxg2 with Black's bishop always being able to come to h5 to block mate threats on the h-file.]

25...f5?! [Preventing the threat of Bf6 but opening the 7th rank for my rook is a little questionable. 25...g5 and bringing the king to g6 was better.] **26 Re7 Bf7 27 Rxa7 g5 28 Be5?!** [While objectively still close to equal, stopping Black's pawns in their tracks by 28 Bd2 would've been a much better attempt. Black's only move then is 28...f4! recognizing that White can't make progress with this 3-on-1 on the queenside. After 29 gxf4 gxf4 30 Bxf4 Re8 31 Rc7 Re4 32 Bd2 Bd5 Black is holding, even if wouldn't be easy in practical play.] **28...Re8 29 Bd6 Re4 30 b5 cxb5** [We've made time control here and both get an extra hour on the clock, but I kept playing quickly as sometimes players don't like to let their flag 'fall'.] **31 c6 Rc4 32 Ra8+ Kh7??** [An unfortunate blunder from my opponent, missing the game's continuation. White wouldn't be getting an extra queen after 32...Kg7 33 Be5+ Kg6 34 c7 Be6 35 Rf8 Bd7] **33 c7 Be6 34 Re8 Re4 35 Rxe6 1-0**

Niraj Patel - Kevin Su

Pirc

Since I was right around the middle of the pack of players who won their first game, I got 'paired down' again in round 2. **1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3 Nf3 Bg7 4 Bd3 Nf6 5 c3 O-O 6 Bf4?!** [Unorthodox from my opponent already on move 6. Usually White's setup goes h3, Be3, O-O & Nbd2] **6... Nh5** [I gladly took the opportunity to gain a tempo on the bishop, but it was even more accurate to start with 6...e5, eg, 7 dxe5 dxe5 8 Bxe5 Nbd7 9 Bd4 Re8 10 Nbd2 Nc5 Black has equalized.

I will probably regain the pawn with a lot of activity to follow.] **7 Be3 e5 8 O-O Nc6 9 Qb3?!** [An interesting idea from my opponent, taking control of the diagonal and bringing the knight to g5, but I felt like this encouraged me to carry out my natural plan of ...Kh8 and ...f5] **9...Kh8 10 Ng5 exd4?** [Played after around 15 minutes. Perhaps greedily, I decided to grab the pawn on d4 after calculating a long line involving Nxf7+. However, the simple move 10...Qe7 would have left



White nothing better than to retreat the knight: 11 d5 Nd8 12 Re1 f6 13 Nf3 f5 and White is in some trouble.]

11 cxd4 Nxd4 12 Qxf7?!



I evaluated 12 Nxf7+ Rxf7 13 Bxd4 Bxd4 14 Qxf7 Bxb2 15 Nd2 Bxa1 16 Rxa1 Bd7

to be better for Black, but the advantage certainly isn't as significant as I thought.

12...Nf3+!! [I wish I could say I saw this ahead of time, but actually my intent was 12...Qd7, which yields a decent edge. "When you see a good move, look for a better one!"] 13 gxf3 Qxg5+ 14 Bxg5 Rxf7 [A reasonably clean conversion followed.] 15 Nd2 Bxb2 16 Rab1 Bc3 17 Kg2 Bxd2 18 Bxd2 Bh3+! [A second "brilliant" move, at least according to chess.com. Now conversion should be pretty straightforward.] 19 Kxh3 Rxf3+ 20 Kg2 Rxd3 21 Rfd1 b6 22 Rbc1 Rc8 23 Kg1 Nf6 24 Bc3 Rxd1+ 25 Rxd1 Kg7 26 f4 Kf7 27 Re1 Re8 28 Bxf6 Kxf6 29 Kf2 d5 30 e5+ Ke6 31 h4 c5 32 Ke3 Rd8 33 Rg1 d4+ 34 Ke4 d3 35 Rd1 c4 36 a4 d2 0-1

Kevin Su - Edward Kitces

Pirc

Dr Edward Kitces was the first of three former state champions I played in the tournament. Despite being outrated, I felt optimistic about my chances because it had been six years since my opponent's last tournament, according to USCF. 1 d4 Nf6 2 Nc3 g6 3 e4 d6 4 f3 Bg7 5 Be3 Nbd7 6 Qd2 e5!? [A bit of a surprise. Typically, Black goes for more queenside play against this setup with ...c6 and ...b5, or something of that nature.] 7 h4 c6 8 O-O-O Qa5 9 Kb1 O-O 10 h5?! [I played this pretty quickly, assuming Black shouldn't take on h5 and open the file. As it turns out, I missed a pretty important resource. 10 d5 was better, removing the tension on d4 and keeping Black's queen away from the kingside, eg, 10...Re8 11 h5 Nxh5 12 Nge2 Nhf6 13 g4±] 10...Nxh5 11 Bh6? Bxh6?!

[I calculated 11...exd4! 12 Bxg7 Kxg7 13 Qxd4+ Qe5 but then didn't notice that 14 Qxd6? fails to 14...Qxd6 15 Rxd6 Ng3! winning a piece. However, even without this tactic the endgame isn't appealing for White. Black has easy development with ...Ne5 and ...Be6] 12 Qxh6 exd4 13 Nce2 Qe5 14 g4 Qg7 15 Qg5?! [A very natural move, but in fact the pawn belongs on g5: 15 Qd2 Nhf6 16 Ng3 d5 17 g5! Ne8—the knight must leave its best defensive square—18 N1e2 Nd6 19 Nxd4 ±] 15...Nhf6 16 Nxd4 Re8 17 Nge2?! [At this point my opponent was starting to get low on time. Realizing that I had lost much of my advantage on the board, I started blitzing out moves to put pressure on his clock. Of course, some mistakes came with this. It's hard to prevent ...d5

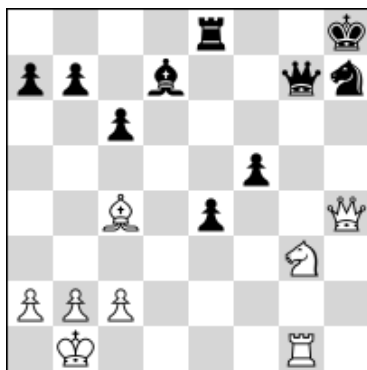


but at least I could have prepared for it by 17 Nh3, eg, 17...d5 18 exd5 Nxd5 and I have 19 Bc4 when if 19...Ne3 there is 20 Rhe1] 17...d5! 18 Ng3 dxe4 19 f4 [It's best to just give up the pawn.] 19...Nf8 20 Be2 Bd7 21 Rdg1?? [Leaving the knight on d4 hanging is a big mistake. 21 Qh4 would give White decent compensation with the attack, eg, 21...e3 22 Ndf5! gxf5 23 gxf5 Ng6 24 fxg6 fxg6 25 Rdg1—unclear, especially under time pressure.]



21...Ne6?? [A miss that handed me back the advantage. White's position would be collapsing after 21...Nd5! 22 c3 Qf6 23 Qh6 Qxf4] 22 Nxe6 fxe6?! [Stockfish suggests 22...Rxe6 23 Nf5 gxf5 24 gxf5 Qxg5 25 Rxg5+ Kf8 26 fxe6 Bxe6. An endgame like this is definitely hard to evaluate from a distance, but the engine finds this more attractive than the game continuation.] 23 Rh6 Rad8? [Not a great square for the rook. Better 23...Re7 24 Rgh1 Rf8 and

Black is defending pretty easily against a move like 25 f5 exf5 26 Bc4+ Be6 27 Bxe6+ Rxe6 28 gxf5 Re5] 24 f5! exf5 25 gxf5 Re5 26 Bc4+ Kh8 27 Rxh7+! [I was happy to spot this pretty quickly, especially after I had almost blundered with 27 Rxg6?? Qxg6 and White could resign.] 27...Nxh7 28 Qxd8+ Re8 29 Qh4?! [I wanted to keep the pressure on the h-file. However, Black would be in zugzwang after 29 Qc7! gxf5 30 Ne2 Qe7 31 Nf4] 29... gxf5?? [A big mistake on the last move before time control. White is probably still winning in the event of 29...Qf6 30 Qh2 Bxf5 31 Rh1 Qg7 but keeping the g-file closed definitely makes it more difficult.]



30 Ne2 [The conversion wasn't obvious, but with an extra hour on the clock and Black's king wide open, I had time to find a win.] 30...Qf6 31 Qh5 Rf8 32 Rh1 Qe7 33 Nf4 Be8 34 Qh6 b5 35 Bb3 Rf6 36 Rg1 Qf8 37 Qh4 Bf7 38 Bxf7 Qxf7 39

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Nh5!? [a tricky move to play for the win]
39...Rd6? Most natural, but this allows a forced win. 39...Re6 also loses: 40 Qd8+ Qf8 (40...Nf8 41 Qd4+) 41 Qd4+ Nf6 42 Nf4 Rd6 43 Ng6+ and takes the queen with check. Black's must-find move was 39...Rh6! which actually makes it much more difficult

for White. 40 Qd8+ Qf8 41 Qd4+ Nf6 42 Ng3 c5 43 Qe5 Qg7 White must be very careful to stay winning.] **40 Qg3 Rh6 41 Qe5+ Nf6 42 Nxf6 Rxf6 43 Qh2+ 1-0** A messy, back-and-forth game, but I think the win can be attributed to my keeping up the kingside attack the whole time.

Andrew Samuelson - Kevin Su

Pirc

I've played Andrew Samuelson many times over the past few years, including as recently as August right before the Virginia Closed. That shouldn't be too surprising since he is one of the most active masters in Virginia, and it also came as no surprise to learn that he is a two-time Virginia state champion. **1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Be3 Nf6 5 f3 O-O 6 Qd2 e5!?** [Funnily enough, I realized I didn't know enough main line theory here, so I decided to copy almost the same idea I faced as White in my previous game.] **7 Nge2 c6 8 g4 b5 9 h4 b4** [Probably not 100% accurate, but both sides have played pretty sensibly to this point.] **10 Nd1?** [Too passive. White was probably afraid that the knight would end up stuck on a4, but that turns out not to be a big issue. After 10 Na4 Qa5 11 b3 exd4 12 Bxd4 c5 13 Bxf6 Bxf6 14 O-O-O Nd7 15 h5 in some ways the knight on a4 becomes a defensive asset. White's attack looks more convincing.] **10...exd4 11 Nxd4 Re8 12 g5 Nh5 13 a3 d5?!** [I did not play 13...bxa3 because I thought his rook would be strong on the third rank, but it actually ends up working in Black's favor: 14 Rxa3 d5 15 Nf2 Bf8! 16 Ra1 a5] **14 axb4 dxe4 15 c3?**

[White should prevent the position from opening up. After 15 f4 Qc7 16 Qf2 Bg4 17 Be2 Bxe2 18 Nxe2 Nd7 19 Ng3 Nxc3 20 Qxc3 his king is safe from immediate danger.] **15...exf3 16 Nxf3 Qc7?! 17 Rg1?!** [After 17 Qh2 Black needs to avoid the queen trade, so 17...Qb6 18 Kd2 Qb7 19 Kc1 c5 20 Bg2 Bf5 21 Bxc5 Nc6 and while Black is nonetheless better, White's king is safer than in what happened.] **17...Nd7 18 Be2 Ng3 19 Nf2 Nxe2 20 Qxe2 Nb6 21 Nd1 Nd5 22 Kd2 Bf5 23 Qh2**



I think we both underestimate how totally winning Black is here. Stockfish gives -7(!) after almost any move that avoids the queen trade.

23...Qxh2+??



I played this partly because of a miscalculation and partly due to psychological reasons. I had close to 20 minutes left on the clock, which is plenty to make time control, but my opponent had over an hour. In these kinds of situations, it's easy to get fixated on closing the time gap rather than focusing on your position. As indicated above, 23...Qd7 was completely winning, eg 24 Bd4 Nxb4 25 Ra4 c5 White will lose material while Black's attack keeps raging on.

24 Nxh2 Nxe3? [I blitzed out what I had calculated, but it wasn't too late to pivot to a better idea. 24...Rad8 25 Ke2 h5 26 Re1 Nf4+ 27 Kf1 Nd3 28 Re2 Be5 Black's superior piece activity still dominates.] **25 Nxe3 Rad8+ 26 Ke2 Be5** [Fortunately, I slowed down to reconsider, which allowed me to maintain a moderate advantage. I was going to play 26...Rd3 based on 27 Rg3? Be5 but unfortunately, it isn't forced: 27 Ng4! =] **27 Nh1 Bf4 28 Kf3 Re4?** [An interesting idea, but not the best concretely. 28...Bc7! is the best move by far according to the engine. However, Stockfish's idea is quite deep here and

I think that it would be very difficult in practice to work out a variation like 29 Rxa7 Be4+ 30 Ke2 Bb8 (30...Bb6? 31 Rb7 =) 31 Ra1 f5! 32 gxf6 Rd6 33 Rg4 Kf7 34 Rf4 h5 35 Rf2 Bf5 +. Essentially, White's queenside majority is supposed to be ineffective as long as the threats continue in the center, while Black's kingside majority will roll up the board after the f6 and h4 pawns get picked up.] **29 Nxf5 gxf5 30 Ra5??** [Continuing the recurring theme of blunders right before time control. My opponent clearly missed the game's continuation, else he would have preferred 30 Rxa7! Rd3+ 31 Kf2 Rh3 32 Ra6 Re6 and Black still has some pressure but objectively it should be equal.] **30...Rd3+! 31 Kf2 Bc7 32 Rxf5 Bb6+ 33 Rc5 a5 34 Ng3 Rxh4 35 Ke2 Bxc5 36 bxc5 Rd5 37 Rf1 Rh2+ 38 Ke3 Rxc5 39 Ne4 Rh3+ 40 Kf4 Rg6 41 Ra1 h5 42 Nd6 Rg4+ 43 Kf5 Rf3+ 44 Ke5 h4 45 Rxa5 h3 46 Ra8+ Kh7 47 Ra1 h2 48 Rh1 Rh3 49 Nxf7 Rg1 50 Rxh2 Rxh2 51 Nd8 Re1+ 52 Kd6 Rd2+ 53 Kc7 Re7+ 54 Kc8 Re8 55 Kc7 Rxd8 56 b4 R2d3 57 c4 R8d4 58 Kxc6 Rxc4 59 Kb5 Rdd4 60 c6 Rxb4+ 61 Kc5 Rbc4+ 62 Kb5 Rc1 63 c7 Rdc4 64 c8Q Rxc8 0-1**

Kevin Su - Jason Morefield Jobava London

At the start of round 5, I was the sole leader by half a point. I think it's fair to say that this round was the greatest challenge of the tournament up until this point, facing the #1 seed and defending champion. **1 d4 Nf6 2 Nc3 d5 3 Bf4 e6 4 Nb5 Na6 5 e3 Be7 6 Nf3 O-O 7 h4 c6 8 Nc3 Qa5** [I've faced 8...Qa5 once or twice before; my memory was a bit shaky, but I recalled that when I

reviewed those games the top engine move was 9 Be2, sacrificing the pawn on c3.] **9 Be2!? Ne4 10 O-O Nxc3 11 bxc3 Qxc3 12 h5 h6?** [Somewhat logical, but the pawn on h6 may become a hook for a pawn break or sacrifice in the future, while also weakening g6.] **13 Ne5 Nb4?** [Forgetting that c2 isn't hanging. 13...c5 14 Bxa6 bxa6 15 Rb1 c4 16 Re1 Bd6 17 Qg4 was only slightly



better for White.]] **14 a3! Na6** [not 14... Nxc2 15 Rc1] **15 Bd3 f5?!** [Although this move seems quite natural, blocking the diagonal and preventing the queen from coming to g4, the engine dislikes it. I think the main reasons why are because Black's dark squares are weakened and f5 becomes another hook for White's pawn breaks. Instead 15...f6 16 Ng6 Rf7 was recommended.] **16 Qf3** [16 g4! was even stronger: 16...Bf6 17 Kh1 Nc5 18 Rg1 Nd7 19 Ng6 +-] **16...c5?! 17 Bxh6!** [a relatively straightforward sacrifice] **17... Bf6** [if 17...gxf6 18 Qg3+ Bg5 19 f4 +-]



18 Qg3?! [I spent quite a long time here looking for a knockout win, but it doesn't seem to exist. 18 Bf4 was best, and the threats would become too much after 18... cxd4 (if 18...c4 19 h6!! cxd3 20 Qh5 gxf6 21 Bxh6 Qc7 22 f4 +-) 19 h6 dxe3 20 Qxe3 gxf6 21 Qg3+ Bg7 22 Rae1 all of White's pieces are joining the attack.] **18...Bxe5 19 dxe5 Rf7 20 Bxa6 bxa6 21 Bg5?!** [My idea was h6 and Bf6, but I quickly realized that after h6, the defense ...g6 would be a major issue. Therefore, 21 Bf4 was the right way: 21...Bd7 22 Qg6! pressuring e6 22...Re7 23 h6 Qxc2 24 Qg5 Rf7 25 Qh5 Be8 26 Rac1 Qa4 27

Rxc5 White keeps a winning advantage.]] **21...Bd7 22 Rab1 Bb5**



23 Rb3? [Especially with low time, it was very difficult to maintain my advantage in this complex position. The correct idea was to double rooks on the b-file and break with a4: 23 Rfc1! Qxa3 24 Bf6 Kf8 (or 24...c4 25 c3 Qf8 26 h6 g5 27 Qxg5+ Kh7 28 Bg7 ±) 25 Bh4 Qc3 26 h6 gxf6 27 Bf6 Rxf6 28 exf6 Qxf6 29 e4! fxe4 30 c4! dxc4 31 Re1 ±] **23...Qxc2 24 Rfb1 Qc4** [Preventing my idea, but 24... c4 was even better, and then if 25 Rb4 c3 26 a4? Qe2! 27 axb5 c2 28 Rc1 Qd2 +-] **25 f3 Raf8** [Jason told me after the game that he played this move planning to push f4. But obviously White shouldn't allow that, so we discussed also 25...d4 26 exd4 Qxd4+ 27 Be3 Qd5 (27...f4 28 Bxd4 fxf6 29 Bxc5 =) 28 Qf4 Rc8 I thought Black might be better in a position like this, but the engine says it's equal.] **26 Bf6** [provoking Kh8] **26...Kh8 27 Bg5 d4 28 h6 dxe3** [28...d3 would create some serious threats. 29 R3b2 Kg8 30 Bf6 g5 31 a4! (31 Qxg5+? Kh7 32 Bg7 Rg8 White can't make any more progress and Black's passed pawns become very strong) 31... Qxa4 32 h7+ Rxh7 33 Qxg5+ Kf7 34



Be7 Rfh8 35 Qf6+ Ke8 36 Qxe6 Qc4 37 Qd6 — a complete mess, but this again is somehow equal.] **29 hxg7+ Rxg7 30 f4! Qe4 31 a4 c4 32 Rb4 Be8?! [32...Qd4! initiates a line that is almost completely forced and gives Black a slight advantage according to Stockfish: 33 axb5 Rh7! 34 Bf6+ Rxf6 35 Rxc4 Qxc4 36 exf6 Qd4 37 f7 Rxf7 38 bxa6 e2+ 39 Qf2 Qd1+ 40 Qe1 Rd7 41 Kf2] 33 Rb8 Kg8?? [The decisive mistake. 33...Kh7! was necessary. 34 Re1 (or 34 R1b7 Rxb7 35 Bf6 Rxf6 36**

exf6 Qc6 37 Qh4+ White has nothing better than perpetual check) 34...e2 35 Qf2 c3 36 Rxe2 Qxa4 37 Rc8. Practically, I think White still has the advantage, but Stockfish points out the clinical 37...Rxc3 38 fxg5 Kg6 39 Rxc3 Rh8 with equality.] **34 R1b7!! [I had spotted this before he played 33...Kg8, struggling a little to contain my excitement outwardly.] 34... Rxb7 35 Bf6+! Kh7 36 Qh4+ Kg6 37 Qg5+ Kh7 38 Rxe8! Rxe8 39 Qh5+ Kg8 40 Qh8+ Kf7 41 Qg7mate 1-0**

Vaibhav Kalpaka - Kevin Su

Pirc

I was more than a little disappointed to find out Vaibhav had converted a win in round 5, since a draw in that game would've meant that I had already clinched the tournament. As it was I expected him to play hard for a win; holding a draw wouldn't be easy. **1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nf3 d6 4 Bd3 Nf6 5 O-O O-O 6 Re1 e5?! [Sticking to the same idea I played throughout the tournament, but here it's definitely a bit dubious because he might have responded 7 dxe5 dxe5 8 Nxe5 Re8 9 Nf3 Nc6 10 Nc3 Bg4 11 h3 Bxf3 12 Qxf3 Nd4 13 Qd1 and there is some compensation, but White is up a relatively clean pawn.] 7 c3 Nc6 8 h3 Nd7?! [I think this is already trending towards the wrong idea. 8...Nd7 is obviously preparing ...f5, but that break may be unnecessary in this setup. The engine suggests going for queenside play instead, 8...a5 9 Bc2 h6 10 Be3 a4 11 Nbd2**

Bd7] **9 Be3 f5?! [After some calculation, I concluded that this didn't lose immediately, but unfortunately that didn't mean it was best! If instead 9...h6 10 Bc2 f5 11 exf5 gxf5 12 dxe5 dxe5 White is still better, but it's good to take back with the pawn on e5] 10 exf5 gxf5 11 Ng5 Nf6 12 dxe5 Nxe5 13 Bc2 Kh8 14 Nd2 Nd5 15 Qh5?! [The right idea was 15 f4 securing the knight on g5. Then if 15...Ng6 16 g3 h6 17 Bb3 Nxe3 18 Rxe3 +-, or if instead 15...Nxe3 16 Rxe3 Qf6 17 Ndf3 Nc4 18 Re2 Bd7 19 Bb3 b5 20 Nd4 +- As long as White's knight stays on g5 and Black's pawn structure is weak, White seems to get a decisive advantage in every line.] 15...h6 16 Ngf3 [Still 16 f4, eg 16... Bd7 17 fxe5 Nxe3 18 Rxe3 Qxg5 19 Qxg5 hxg5 20 exd6 cxd6 21 Nc4 and White is slightly better due to Black's inferior pawn structure.] 16...Nxe3 17 Rxe3 Bd7 18**



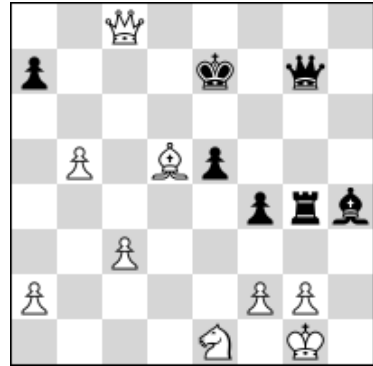
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Rae1 Be8 19 Qh4 f4 20 R3e2 Bb5? [I didn't like the endgame 20...Qxh4 21 Nxh4 Bh5 22 Re4 a5 since White has control of the e-file and my pawn structure is worse, but it would be very difficult for White to make progress there.] **21 Nxe5! dxe5 22 Qg4 Qg5 23 Qf3!** [I didn't expect this at all, but the exchange sac worked out very well for White as my light squares became extremely weak. That said, 23 Qxg5 was also good. hxg5 24 c4 Bc6 25 Be4 Bxe4? 26 Nxe4 Rf5 27 Rd2 Raf8 28 Red1 Rsf7 29 Rd7 with an extreme case of knight dominating bishop.] **23...Bxe2 24 Rxe2 h5?** [I thought this was the only good way to protect h7, but 24...Bf6 was better. I overestimated the reply 25 Ne4 when in fact 25...Qg7 26 Nc5 Rae8 27 Nxb7 e4! 28 Rxe4 Rxe4 29 Bxe4 Qe7 is close to equal. Instead White could try 25 Qxb7 and after 25...Rab8 26 Qe4 Qg8 27 b4 Rbd8 my position is less congested with the bishop on f6.] **25 Qxb7 Rab8 26 Qe4 Qh6 27 b4 Bf6 28 Nf3 Rbe8 29 Rd2 Re7 30 Rd5 Rg8 31 b5 Qg7** [Black can't do much besides shuffle back and forth.] **32 Ne1 Qf7 33 Qf3??** [giving me a big opportunity] **33...Rg5?** [Not on the lookout for tactics, I played rather quickly. Black would have gained the upper hand after 33...e4 34 Qxf4 Qxd5 35 Qxf6+ Rgg7 36 Qh6+ Rh7 37 Qf6+ Reg7 38 Qf8+ Qg8] **34 Rd8+ Re8 35 Rxe8+ Qxe8 36 Qe4 Qg8?!** [Stockfish says this is just as good as any other move, but I missed that White now wins material by force. 36...Qd7 keeps shuffling without losing anything immediately: 37 c4 Rg7 38 Nf3 Qe6 etc] **37 h4 Rg4 38 Qf5 Kg7?** [I thought 38...Qf7 39 Nf3 was even worse than the game's continuation, but Black is surviving after 39...Kg7 40 Nxe5 Bxe5 41 Qxe5+ Kf8! 42 f3 Rg7 43 a4 and while

White should still be winning, it looks like Black is gaining some activity.] **39 Qxh5 Kf8 40 Qf5 Ke7 41 Bb3 Qg7 42 Qc8 Bxh4 43 Qxc7+ Ke8 44 Qc8+ Ke7 45 Bd5**



It's hard to comment on what happened when almost any move was winning, but I think Vaibhav started to go wrong around here. He had spent most of the game up by close to 30 minutes on the clock, but over the past 10 moves he calculated a lot and slipped below my time. I think if he had kept the time advantage in addition to the superiority in position, it would've been a lot more difficult for me to save the game even if I closed the gap on the board.

45...Rg6 46 Nd3 Rd6 47 Nc5? [A critical mistake, a lot of the advantage dissipates after this move. 47 Qc7+ Rd7 48 Qc5+ Kf6 49 Qc6+ Ke7 50 Qe6+ Kd8 51 Nxe5 was one of many winning lines. The key is just to keep giving checks.] **47...Qg6!** [The threat is ...Qb1+ with either mate or perpetual check coming.] **48 Qb7+ Kf8 49 Ne4 Rd8 50 c4 Be7!** [= ...f3 and ...Qh6 are coming, and that isn't easy to address] **51 Qc6** [I was relieved to see this move, since both of us were under 10 minutes on the clock at this point. With only 5-second delay, keeping



the queens on the board would most likely lead to a decisive result. With the queens traded, I was pretty confident I could at least reach the notoriously difficult lone bishop and knight endgame.] **51...Qxc6 52 bxc6 Rb8 53 Be6?! [If 53 Nc3 a6 54 g3 fxg3 55 fxg3 Bd8 56 g4 White is still better, but it's hard to keep the advantage with low time.] 53...Rb1+ 54 Kh2 Bd8 55 Nc3 Rb6 56 Bd7 Rb2 57 Nd5 Rc2 58 c7 Bxc7 59 Nxc7 Rxc4 60 Nd5 Rc2 ½-½** A very nerve-wracking finish to the tournament!



Turning now to action beyond the champion's board, the following game won the Top Upset prize – 318 points!

Timothy Middleton-Sally - Saharsh Darsh Shetty Ruy Lopez

Notes by Tim Middleton-Sally

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 O-O Bc5 6 c3 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 d4 exd4?! [Morphy played this and had a rare loss to Lowenthal in London 1858, White gets the center and active development.] 9 cxd4 Bb6 10 h3 [Also possible was 10 Nc3 Bg4 11 e5 dxe5 12 dxe5 Qxd1 13 Rxd1 Nd7 14 Bd5 and White is better. I rejected Lowenthal's 10 Bg5 in the game due to 10...h6. After 11 Bxf6 Qxf6 I did not see anything concrete to justify giving up the bishop; 11 Bh4 g5 12 Bg3 Bg4 looked unclear, and after 11 Be3 White has just lost time.] 10...O-O 11 Nc3 h6 [The strongest players have tried to complicate with 11...b4 but it is well met by 12 Na4!? Ba7 13 e5] 12 e5 dxe5 13 dxe5 Qxd1 14 Rxd1 Ne8?! [14...Nh7 had to be tried] 15 a4 Na5 16 Bc2 bxa4 17 Bxa4 Be6 18 Nd5 [stopping any problems on b3] 18...Kh8? [Not 18...Rd8? 19 Ne7+; but the game goes on after 18...Bxd5, although White still is better] 19 b4 Nc4 [There were problems also after 19...Nb7, eg 20 Nxb6 cxb6 21 Be3 b5 22 Bxb5] 20 Bb3 c6 21 Nf4! [21 Nxb6 Nxb6 22 Bxe6 fxe6 23 Be3 was possible, where the weak pawns might tell. However, the game continuation is stronger thanks to a specific tactical point.] 21...Nxe5 22 Bxe6 Nxf3+ 23 gxf3 g5 [White will convert the exchange after 23...fxe6 24 Ng6+ Kg8 25 Nxf8 Kxf8 26 Be3 because Black's minor pieces are poorly positioned to defend the weak pawns.]

{diagram}

24 Ng6+! fxg6 [24...Kg7 25 Nxf8 is no better] 25 Bb2+ Nf6 26 Rd7 a5 27 Rb7 Bd8 28 Rd1 Re8 29 Rxd8 Raxd8 30 Bxf6mate 1-0





Ed Kitces - Jack Barrow

Sicilian

Notes by Jack Barrow

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 [Normally, I play the Dragon, but for this game I decided to try the Najdorf just to see how well it does.] **6 Bg5 Nc6 7 Qd2 e6 8 O-O-O Be7 9 f4** [All of this seems to be book so far.] **9...Qc7 10 Nf3 h6 11 Bh4 Bd7 12 Kb1 O-O-O** [12...0-0 would just invite White to launch a pawn storm and rip the kingside wide open via g4-Bg3-h4-g5 which, from personal experience, does not end well for Black.] **13 Bd3 Rhe8 14 Rhe1 Kb8 15 h3 Bc8 16 Qf2 d5 17 e5 Nd7 18 Bxe7 Nxe7 19 Bf1 Qb6 20 Nd4 Nf5** [Played with the intention of trading knights and increase my chances of not losing.] **21 Nce2 f6 22 Rd3 fxe5 23 Rb3 Qc7 24 fxe5** {diagram}

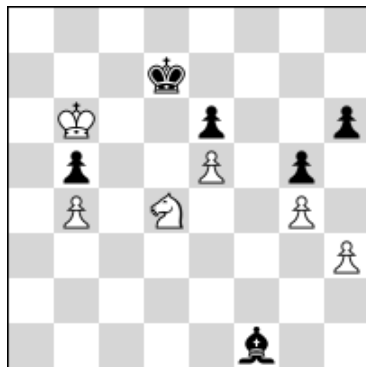
24...Nc5

Before I made this move, I got excited for a moment, thinking the e5-pawn was free for the taking. But after looking at the position for a few minutes, I decided that it might be trap after 24...Nxe5 (of course not 24...Qxe5? 25 Nc6+) and now 25 Qf4 looked scary as my queen and b-pawn both would be pinned if the e5-knight were to move, allowing Nc6+ winning material. However, in post-game analysis, 25...Bd7 seemed to resolve that problem.



Instead of 25 Qf4, White could go 25 Nxf5 exf5 26 Nd4 threatening 27 Nxf5 and 27 Bxa6, both of which win the pawn back and the game could go either way.

25 Rc3 Ne4 26 Rxc7 Nxf2 27 Rf7 Rf8 28 Rxf8 Rxf8 29 Nxf5 Rxf5 30 Nd4 Rf4 [I was happy here with my position. Queens are off the board and my pieces are somewhat more active than his.] **31 c3 Ne4 32 Bd3 Nc5 33 Bg6 Rf2 34 g4 Kc7 35 Re3 Kd7 36 Rf3 Rxf3 37 Nxf3 Ke7 38 b4 Nd7 39 Kc2 Nf8 40 Bd3 Bd7** [preparing to trade off the bishops via Be8-Bg6] **41 Kb3 Be8 42 c4 dxc4+ 43 Bxc4 b5 44 Be2 Bc6** [activating my bishop] **45 Kc3 Ng6** [activating my knight] **46 Kd4 Nf4 47 Kc5 Bd5 48 Nd4 Nxe2** [simplifying everything] **49 Nxe2 Bxa2 50 Kb6 Bc4 51 Nd4 g5 52 Kxa6 Kd7 53 Kb6 Bf1** [This is a tricky endgame for both sides.] {diagram}





54 Nc2 [If 54 Nxb5 then 54...Bxh3 55 Nd4 Bxg4 56 b5 Bh3 and White has the following options: i) 57 Kc5? Bg2 stops White's b-pawn from promoting. Black is free to walk his h-pawn up the board. ii) 57 Ka7 provides a more fighting chance as it provides support for the b-pawn. A plausible continuation would be 57...Bg2 58 b6 Kc8 59 Nxe6 Bd5 60 Ng7 Kd7 61 b7 Bxb7 62 Kxb7 g4 White has to play carefully for a draw here.] **54...Bd3** [If 54...Bxh3? 55 Ne3 traps the bishop and Black is in trouble. Trying to free the bishop with 55...h5 loses after 56 gxh5 Bf5 57 Nxf5 White's h-pawn promotes first and can stop both of my kingside pawns.] **55 Nd4 Bf1 56 Nc2 Bd3** [Assuming that we were just going to repeat the same dead equal position, I offered a draw. My opponent, who had just under 5 minutes remaining on his clock, decided to play on.] **57 Ne3 Be2 58 Kc5 Bd3 59 Kd4 Be2 60 Ke4 h5 61 gxh5 Bxh5 62 Kd3** [At this point my opponent had less than 2 minutes left, compared to my 35 minutes.] **62...Bg6+ 63 Ke2 Bf5** [Despite White being about to drop a pawn, Stockfish says it is still an equal position. From a human perspective, it is not easy for White to hold, especially with being so short on time. In fact, White blundered...] **64 Ng4? Bxg4+ 65 hxg4 Kc6 0-1** He cannot save the e-pawn (66 Ke3 Kd5) and Black's path to victory will be straightforward.

Jack Barrow - Niraj Patel

Caro-Kann

Notes by Jack Barrow

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 dxc5 Bg4 6 c3 Nxe5? 7 Nxe5! Bd7 [If 7...Bxd1 then 8 Bb5+ and Black is forced to block the check with the queen: 8...Qd7 9 Bxd7+ Kd8 10 Kxd1 with two extra pieces plus the threat of 11 Nxf7.] **8 Qxd5 e6 9 Qxb7 Qc8 10 Qxd7+ Qxd7 11 Nxd7 Kxd7 12 Bb5+** [The game is essentially over. However, Black decided to play on for 14 more moves.] **12...Kd8 13 b4 Nf6 14 Bg5 Be7 15 Nd2 Nd5 16 Bxe7+ Kxe7 17 Bc6 Rab8 18 Bxd5 exd5 19 Nb3 Kd7 20 O-O-O Ke6 21 Rhe1+ Kf6 22 Rxd5 Rhc8 23 Rd6+ Kg5 24 Nd4 g6 25 Re7 a5 26 Nc6 1-0**

Macon Shibut – Will Moorhouse

Nimzowitsch Larsen

Notes by Macon Shibut

1 b3 e5 2 Bb2 Nc6 3 e3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e4 5 Nd4 Nxd4 6 Bxd4 d5 7 c4 dxc4 8 Bxc4 Bd6 9 Nc3 Bf5 10 f4 [10 f3.] **10...c6 11 Ne2** [For the moment I don't need to worry about 11...b5 because I can clear a retreat for my bishop by 12 Ng3 hitting his undefended Bf5. However, Black's reply underscores the lack of harmony in my position. My knight will not be comfortable on g3 and my king will not feel safe if I castle kingside, but otherwise my king rook is stuck.] **11...h5 12 Qc2** [For instance, if 12 O-O I feared 12...Ng4 13 h3 Qh4.] **12...h4** [For the moment it hangs together: 12...b5 13 Ng3 Bh7 14 Be2 Rc8 15 O-O h4 16 Bxf6 Qxf6 17 Nxe4.] **13 Qb2 Qe7** [Here if 13...b5 14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 Qxf6 gxf6 my knight goes the other way, 16 Nd4.] **14 a4 Rh6 15 Bc3 Rg6 16 Kf1** [16 O-O looked terrifying, although



I might have played it had I noticed that 16...Bh3 17 Rf2 Ng4? is unplayable due to just 18 gxh3! 16...Qd7 17 h3 Nh5 18 Kf2 Bc7 [I did not understand this move. I suppose he already saw the trick he would spring on move 23 and he was playing to set up.] 19 b4 [my first active gesture] 19...Rd8 20 Rad1 Kf8 21 b5 c5 22 a5 Be6 23 Qb3 Qd3? [Totally unexpected and, fortunately for me, not good. For some reason I thought he'd play 23...Kg8. 23...Ng3 would also have been pretty good since then I can't reply 24 Rhe1? Bxh3!] 24 Bxd3 [24 Bxe6 would be weak, but fortunately I have another way.] 24...Bxb3 25 Bxe4 Bxd1 {diagram}

If I had to guess, my opponent perhaps had been looking at sequences like 26 Bxg6 Bxe2 27 Bxh5 as far back as move 18 and he noticed the "obvious" 27...Bxh5 only after some false start. The retreat/capture on the diagonal creates a kind of optical illusion that makes the move actually not so obvious from a distance. When eventually you do see it, it can feel like a such big find that you just go for it impulsively.



26 Rxd1! Re6 27 Bxb7 [Two pawns already, a good bishop pair, and a prospective advanced outside passed pawn—way more than enough for an exchange.] 27...Nf6 28 Kf3 [28 Rb1 was better. I will take the knight with my light square bishop in any case, so preventing it from coming to e4 is not worth a tempo.] 28...Nd5 29 Bxd5 Rxd5 30 Rb1 f6 31 d4! cxd4 32 Nxd4 Re8 33 Nc6 [I also considered 33 b6 axb6 34 axb6 Bb8 but my pieces are less active than in the game and his b8 blockade looked pretty firm.] 33...Kf7 34 Nxa7 [This, on the other hand, was a hard choice compared to 34 Bd4 a6 (34...Rd7 seemed no better: 35 Bxa7 Bxa5 36 b6 Bxb6 37 Bxb6 Rd6 38 Nd4 Rb8 39 Bc5 Rxb1 40 Bxd6) 35 b6 Bb8 36 b7. Now I considered he would play 36...Bc7 to get out of the way of Nxb8 followed by Ba7, and unfortunately I didn't notice 37 Rb6!] 34...Rd3 35 Bd4 Bxa5 36 Nc6 Bd2! [I thought this was a mistake and considered 36...Bc7 37 b6 Bb8 38 b7 Ra3 39 Bb6 Bd6 the best try. In fact, my opponent defended with extraordinarily resourcefulness.] 37 Ke2 [This was why I believed 36...Bd2 to be incorrect. Had I better appreciated what is happening, I might have preferred 37 Rd1 Rdxe3+ 38 Bxe3 Bxe3 39 Rd7+] 37...Rxd4 38 Nxd4 Bxe3 39 Kd3 Bxf4 40 b6 Re3+ 41 Kc4 [The decisions at move 37 led to this position more or less by force. My knight can attack the queening square, so the pawn feels unstoppable.] 41...Ra3! [He wants to sacrifice his bishop for the pawn, attack g2 with his rook, and hopefully defend R+N vs R. For example, if now 42 b7 Ra2 43 b8Q Bxb8 44 Rxb8 Rxg2 45 Nf5 g5 White is not at all better. For the time being, promoting the pawn must take a back seat to defending g2.] 42 Rf1 Bb8 43 Nc6 Bh2 44 Rf2 Ra6 45 Rb2 Bc7



[Amazing, although truth be told even 45... Bg1 46 Nd8+ Ke7 47 b7 likely reaches his goal after 47...Ba7. I was searching for resources in the continuation 48 b8Q Bxb8 49 Rxb8 Ra2 50 Nc6+ when the stunning text move appeared on the board, disallowing the knight check on d8] **46 Kc5** {diagram} **46...Bxb6+?**



Stumbling right at the finish line after such a great defensive effort. I didn't notice it at the time either, but he could have played 46...Rxb6! 47 Rxb6 Bxb6+ 48 Kxb6 Ke6 and Black successfully gets at my pawns! Play it out if you don't believe me.

47 Kb5! [winning! Taking the bishop straightaway would only draw as we saw before.] **47...Ra1** **48 Kxb6 Ke6** [48...g5 was another try but I believe White wins in any case.] **49 Rf2** [Doesn't spoil anything, but 49 Re2+ was more precise. If then 49...Kf5 50 Nd4+ he can't go 50...Kf4 51 Ne6+ Kg3 52 Nxg7 Rg1 53 Nf5+] **49...Rb1+** **50 Kc5 Rc1+** **51 Kb5 Kd5** [makes it easy] **52 Ne7+ Ke6** **53 Ng6! Rb1+** **54 Kc4 Ra1** **55 Kb3 Rb1+** **56 Kc3 Rc1+** **57 Kd3 Rd1+** **58 Ke3 Re1+** **59 Re2 1-0**

Gabriel Cumming – Noah O'Neill

Modern

1 d4 g6 2 Nc3 Bg7 3 e4 d6 4 Be3 a6 5 Qd2 b5 6 Bd3 Nd7 7 Nf3 Bb7 8 O-O c5 9 Be2 cxd4 10 Bxd4 Ngf6 11 e5 dxe5 12 Bxe5 Nxe5 13 Qxd8+ Rxd8 14 Nxe5 Nd5 15 Nxd5 Rxd5 16 Nd3 Rg5 17 g3 Bd4 18 c3 Bb6 19 Rfd1 h5 20 Bf1 h4 21 Bg2 hxg3 22 Bxb7 gxf2+ 23 Kf1 Rxh2 0-1

Jason Morefield – Will Moorhouse

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 Ne4 11 a4 Nxc3 12 bxc3 Bd5 13 Qb1 c6 14 h4 Nd7 15 h5 Re8 16 hxg6 hxg6 17 Be3 Nf8 18 Qc1 Ne6 19 Bh6 Bh8 20 Ng5 Nxe5 21 Qxe5 e6 22 Qg3 Qa5 23 Bd2 Bc4 24 Qh3 Bg7 25 Bg5 Bxe2 26 Qh7+ Kf8 27 Qxe7+ Kxe7 28 Bf6+ 1-0

Will Moorhouse - Mahin Ganesan

Slav

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 c6 4 e3 e6 5 Nbd2 Nbd7 6 Bd3 c5 7 O-O Bd6 8 e4 dxe4 9 Nxe4 Nxe4 10 Bxe4 f5 11 Bc2 O-O 12 b4 cxb4 13 Ng5 Nf6 14 Re1 Re8 15 c5 Bc7 16 Bb3 Ne4 17 Nxe4 fxe4 18 Rxe4 Bd7 19 Bb2 Qf6 20 Qe2 Qh6 21 h3 Kh8 22 Re1 Bc6 23 d5 Bd7 24 d6 Bd8 25 Bxe6 Bc6 26 Bd5 Rf8 27 Bxc6 bxc6 28 Re8 Qf4 29 Rxf8+ Qxf8 30 Qh5 Bf6 31 Bxf6 gxf6 32 Re7 Qg8 33 Qh6 Rf8 34 Rxh7+ 1-0





Book Review by Jerry Lawson

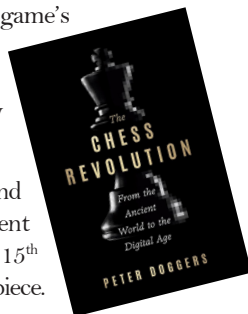
THE CHESS REVOLUTION: FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD TO THE DIGITAL AGE
by Peter Doggers. PuzzleWright Press, New York, 2024.

Which Hollywood hero held his own with Sammy Reshevsky?

Who's better at Bullet, a tipsy Magnus Carlsen or a sober Levy Rozman?

Does Hans Niemann really have a close personal relationship with a personal appliance most of us would just as soon not think about?

More to the point, how did a 1,500-year-old game learn to Blitz, Stream, and Go Viral? From Hollywood stars facing grandmasters to AI programs playing like alien geniuses, Peter Doggers' *THE CHESS REVOLUTION* captures the game's quirks, scandals, and triumphs with equal delight. Unlike dry chess histories or purely instructional books, Doggers blends cultural history, personal anecdotes, and modern controversy into a narrative that entertains as much as it informs.



Part I, "Chess as a Cultural Phenomenon," takes us on a whirlwind tour, starting with the game's birthplace as *chaturanga* in ancient India—before Spanish Queen Isabella's example inspired the 15th century rule change that let queens become the most powerful piece.

Doggers then fast-forwards through the centuries, showing how chess has popped up everywhere. It's been in famous art, classic literature, and even served as a metaphor in political smackdowns. He paints a picture of chess not just as a game, but as a silent co-star in humanity's greatest hits, from park benches to the dramatic final episode of that one Netflix series that obsessed everyone.

If Part I shows how chess seeped into our collective imagination, then Part II, "The Impact of AI: How the Computer Changed the Game," shows how technology rewired the game itself. It wasn't all that long ago the Mikhail Tal was saying that chess, "...would soon die if a robot turned up that could play better than anybody else." Fortunately, Tal's strength was calculation, not prognostication. As it turns out, chess has thrived since the legendary 1997 showdown between Garry Kasparov and IBM's Deep Blue. Doggers' description lets you practically feel Kasparov's headache through the pages. But the story doesn't end there. AlphaZero taught itself the game and began to demonstrate mind-boggling new strategies that seemed to come from an alien galaxy. This didn't kill chess. It made it more interesting.

Part III, "The Online Revolution: How the Internet Changed the Game," is even more instructive and entertaining. Doggers, an online insider since the days of screeching 1200 bps modems, is one of the people who helped the game transition from nerdy niche



to massive global community. He explains the perfect storm of the pandemic and *The Queen's Gambit*—as well as the mysterious “Third Wave” that boosted chess even more.

He gives a frank and insightful look at the drama of online cheating. Doggers provides a thoughtful review of the persistent gender gap in chess, making a strong, forward-thinking plea for parents and coaches to believe in their girls.

THE CHESS REVOLUTION is packed with personal anecdotes that make you feel like an insider. We get to hear the kind of stories you can't make up: playing basketball with Magnus Carlsen; interviewing Garry Kasparov at Bobby Fischer's grave. Doggers' blend of personal experience and serious research creates a narrative that is both authoritative and readable. His passion for chess is contagious. It's this energy that makes THE CHESS REVOLUTION such a compelling, can't-put-it-down book.

Doggers has created an entertaining, thoughtful, and thoroughly modern chronicle of a game that has defied the odds. He shows us that chess isn't just about bishops and rooks; it's a living, breathing part of our intellectual and cultural evolution. If you've ever been curious about why chess is suddenly cool again, this book is for you. In showing how chess has been re-imagined from royal pastime to online spectacle, Doggers makes clear it is not just a game. It's a mirror for how we think, compete, and connect.



Chess aficionado Humphrey Bogart and his wife, Lauren Bacall, play chess at their California home, c. 1949.

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