

VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

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2025 - #6



Grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura (*see p 1*)



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Dulles ♙pen

VETERANS DAY WEEKEND saw 186 players assemble for the first annual Washington Dulles Open. One of them happens to be the second highest rated player in the world.

As has been widely chronicled, GM Hikaru Nakamura is conducting a technical ‘endgame’ aimed at gaining entry to the 2025 world championship Candidates tournament. His astronomical rating tentatively assures him a spot, but with the proviso that he must also have played at least 40 classical, over-the-board FIDE-rated games in the preceding year. Nakamura’s resume was short on that score. Therefore, in recent months he selected a handful of local events (in Louisiana, Iowa, and now here in Virginia) to make up the shortfall.

Aside from being a world class player, Nakamura is the preeminent online chess streamer. Appearing in tournaments of a sort that players of his class rarely enter afforded a special opportunity for his many fans to see him up close and in person. Nakamura readily embraced the spirit of the occasion, happily posing for photos, signing autographs, and just hanging out around talking chess.

In the end, Nakamura tied for 1st place with Pennsylvania master Daniel Girsh at 4½-½ apiece. Nakamura’s draw was a last round ‘grandmaster draw’ with the other GM in the field, former Virginia state champion Praveen Balakrishnan, who tied with Lokumannage DeSilva, Matthew Diao, Kent Slate & Benjamin Amrany in a big tie for 3rd place, all with 4-1.

Christopher JIANG swept the Under 1800 section, 6-0. Nayib Kuncar & Tyler Reynolds followed a point behind. The Under 1400 group also saw a clear winner, Perry McCallen with 4½-½. Akeem Cummings & Michael Jiang were runners-up with 4 points each. Kristiyan Donchev, James Nguyen, Ryan Moy & Sathvik Chokkaraju shared the winners’ circle in the K-12 scholastic competition. Arman Kozhakhmetov was the clear winner in the K-8 tournament. Tejas Mupkala won the K-5 section.

ON THE COVER GM HIKARU NAKAMURA, although not at the 2025 Dulles Open.
*The Editor snapped this photo in 2005 at the HB Global Challenge in Minneapolis.
 Nakamura's opponent was Estonian grandmaster Jan Ehlvest.*



Hikaru Nakamura - Tanush Dokka

King's Indian

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 g6 3 Bg2 Bg7 4 O-O O-O 5 d4 d6 6 c4 Nbd7 7 Nc3 e5
 8 e4 a5 9 h3 exd4 10 Nxd4 Re8 11 Be3 Nc5 12 Qc2 Bd7 13 Rfe1 c6 14
 Rad1 Qc7 15 f4 Rad8 16 Bf2 Bc8 17 a3 Re7 18 b4 axb4 19 axb4 Ne6
 20 Nf3 Nf8 21 Qd3 Red7 22 Na4 c5 23 Nc3 b6 24 Rc1 Bb7 25 Nd2
 Qb8 26 Rb1 Qc7 27 bxc5 dxc5 28 Nd5 Nxd5 29 cxd5 Ra8 30 Nc4 Ba6
 31 e5 Bxc4 32 Qxc4 Rb8 33 h4 h5 34 Ra1 b5 35 Qxc5 Qxc5 36 Bxc5
 b4 37 Reb1 b3 38 Ra3 b2 39 Bd4 Rdd8 40 Rxb2 Rxb2 41 Bxb2 Nd7
 42 Bd4 Bf8 43 d6 Bg7 44 Bd5 Kf8 45 Ra7 Bh8 46 Kg2 Bg7 47 Bc6
 Nb8 48 Bb5 Kg8 49 Rb7 Kf8 50 e6 fxe6 51 Bxg7+ Kg8 52 Be5 Kf8
 53 d7 Nxd7 54 Bxd7 Kg8 55 Bxe6+ Kf8 56 Bg7+ Ke8 57 Bf7 *mate* 1-0

Khanim Ismayilova - Hikaru Nakamura

Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 c3 Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 4 d4 e6 5 Nf3 cxd4 6 cxd4 d6 7 Bc4 Be7
 8 O-O O-O 9 Qe2 Bd7 10 Nc3 Nxc3 11 bxc3 Nc6 12 Bd3 dxe5 13
 dxe5 Qa5 14 Qe4 g6 15 Bh6 Rfd8 16 Rab1 Rab8 17 Rfc1 Be8 18
 Bc4 Qa4 19 Qe2 Na5 20 Bb3 Nxb3 21 axb3 Qa6 22 Qxa6 bxa6
 23 h3 Bc6 24 Nd2 g5 25 Nc4 Bd5 26 Nd6 Bxd6 27 exd6 f6 28 h4
 gxh4 29 c4 Be4 30 c5 Bxb1 31 Rxb1



31...Kf7 32 Be3 e5 33 Ra1 Ke6 34 Rxa6 Rd7 35 Ra3 h3 36 g3 Kd5 37
 Kh2 f5 38 Kxh3 f4 39 gxf4 exf4 40 Bxf4 Kxc5 41 Be3+ Kd5 42 Bxa7
 Rbb7 43 Be3 Rxd6 44 Ra5+ Ke6 45 Ra3 Rd3 46 Ra6+ Kf7 47 Rh6
 Kg7 48 Rh4 Rdx3 49 Rg4+ Kf6 50 Rf4+ Ke5 51 Rh4 Rg7 52 Kh2



Rd3 53 Bf4+ Kf5 54 Bg3 Kg5 55 Ra4 Rd5 56 Bh4+ Kf5 57 Kh3 Rg1
58 Bg3 h5 59 Kh2 Rdd1 60 Ra5+ Ke4 61 Ra4+ Kd3 62 Ra3+ Kc2
63 Ra4 Rge1 64 Rh4 Ra1 65 Kg2 Rg1+ 66 Kh2 Kd3 67 Rf4 Rgb1
68 Kh3 Ra5 69 Rf3+ Ke2 70 Re3+ Kf1 71 Kh4 Kg2 72 Re5 Rh1+
73 Kg5 Rxe5+ 74 Bxe5 Kxf2 75 Bf4 Kg2 76 Be5 h4 77 Kg4 h3 0-1

Hikaru Nakamura - Matthew Guo Diao

Queen's Gambit

1 c4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Qc2 dxc4 5 Qxc4 Bg4 6 Nbd2 e6 7
g3 Be7 8 Bg2 O-O 9 h3 Bh5 10 e3 Nbd7 11 g4 Bg6 12 Nh4 e5
13 Nxc6 hxg6 14 dxe5 Nxe5 15 Qc3 Nd3+ 16 Ke2 Nc5 17 Nb3
Nd5 18 Qd4 Qb6 19 Qc4 Rad8 20 Bd2 Nxb3 21 axb3 Bb4 22
Bxd5 Bxd2 23 Be4 Bb4 24 Rhd1 Qc5 25 Qxc5 Bxc5 26 b4 Rxd1
27 Kxd1 Rd8+ 28 Ke2 Bb6 29 b5 cxb5 30 Bxb7



30...g5 31 b4 Rd7 32 Bc6 Rc7 33 Bxb5 Rc2+ 34 Kf3 Rb2 35 Rd1
Rxb4 36 Rd5 g6 37 Rxg5 Kg7 38 Bd7 a5 39 Re5 Kf6 40 Re8
Rb2 41 Ra8 Kg7 42 h4 Rd2 43 Ba4 Ra2 44 Be8 Rd2 45 Ra6 Bd8
46 g5 Kf8 47 Ba4 Kg7 48 Ra7 Rb2 49 Be8 Kf8 50 Bxf7 Bb6 51
Rd7 a4 52 Bxg6 a3 53 Rf7+ Kg8 54 Rb7 Kf8 55 Be4 a2 56 Rb8+
Kg7 57 Ra8 Bc5 58 h5 1-0

L S T De Silva - Hikaru Nakamura

Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 3 exd5 Qxd5 4 d4 g6 5 Nf3 Bg7 6 Nbd2 cxd4 7
Bc4 Qd8 8 Qb3 Nh6 9 Nxd4 O-O 10 N2f3 Nc6 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12
O-O Qc7 13 Re1 Nf5 14 Qa4 e5 15 Be3 Nxe3 16 Rxe3 Kh8 17 Qa3



f6 18 Rd1 Bf5 19 Ree1 Rfd8 20 h3 a5 21 Qa4 Bd7 22 Qc2 Bf8 23 Nd2 Be7 24 Nf1 Bc5 25 Qe2 Re8 26 Rd2 e4 27 Red1 Bc8 28 a3 a4 29 Ba2 Qe7 30 Qc4 Ba6 31 Qf7 Qxf7 32 Bxf7 Re7 33 Rd8+ Rxd8 34 Rxd8+ Kg7 35 Be8 Rb7 36 Bxc6 Rxb2 37 Ne3 f5 38 Bxa4



38...f4 39 Ng4 e3 40 fxe3 fxe3 41 Rd7+ Kf8 42 Rd8+ Kf7 43 Ne5+ Kg7 44 Nf3 e2+ 45 Kh2 Bb7 46 Ne1 Bf2 47 Rd7+ Kh6 48 Nd3 e1Q 0-1

Hikaru Nakamura - Praveen Balakrishnan

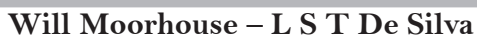
Ragozin

1 c4 e6 2 Nc3 d5 3 d4 Nf6 4 Nf3 Bb4 5 Qa4+ Nc6 6 e3 O-O 7 Bd2 dxc4 8 Bxc4 Bd6 9 h3 e5 10 O-O Bf5 11 dxe5 Nxe5 12 Nxe5 Bxe5 13 Rfd1 c6 14 Be1 Qe7 15 Bd3 ½-½

Daniel Girsh - Sam Martin

French

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 Bd2 cxd4 6 Nb5 Bxd2+ 7 Qxd2 Nc6 8 f4 Nge7 9 Nd6+ Kf8 10 Nf3 Qb6 11 O-O-O Bd7 12 Be2 Qa5 13 Qxa5 Nxa5 14 Nxd4 Nc8 15 Nxc8 Rxc8 16 Rhf1 Ke7 17 Rf3 Nc6 18 Nb3 g5 19 g3 gxf4 20 gxf4 Rhg8 21 Rg3 b6 22 Kd2 f6 23 exf6+ Kxf6 24 Rh3 Rg7 25 Rh6+ Ke7 26 Ke3 Be8 27 c3 Bg6 28 Bb5 Nb8 29 Nd4 Rf8 30 Rg1 Rgf7 31 Rg4 Rf6 32 h4 a6 33 Be2 b5 34 h5 Bb1 35 Rg7+ R8f7 36 Rxf6 Kxf6 37 Rg8 Nd7 38 Ra8 Nc5 39 b4 Ne4 40 Rxa6 Nxc3 41 Rxe6+ Kg7 42 h6+ Kf8 43 Bxb5 Nxb5 44 Nxb5 Bxa2 45 Nd4 Ra7 46 b5 Ra3+ 47 Kf2 Rd3 48 Nf3 Rb3 49 b6 Bb1 50 Ne5 d4 51 f5 Rb2+ 52 Kf3 d3 53 f6 Rb5 54 f7 1-0



1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5 Nd4 5 Bc4 Bc5 6 d3 d6 7 Na4 b5 8 Nxd4 bxc4 9 Nf3 Bb6 10 Nxb6 axb6 11 d4 Nxe4 12 O-O f6 13 Qe2 d5 14 dxe5 O-O 15 Nd2 Nc5 16 Re1 Bf5 17 Nf1 fxe5 18 Qxe5 Bxc2 19 Ne3 Re8 20 Qd4 Re4 21 Qd2 Bd3 22 f3 Re8 23 Ng4 h5 24 Ne5 Qf6 25 f4 Re6 26 Qe3



26...Nb3 27 Nd7 Rxe3 28 Nxf6+ gxf6 29 Bxe3 Nxa1 30 Rxa1 c5
31 Bd2 b5 32 Kf2 d4 33 a3 b4 34 Rc1 bxa3 35 Ra1 a2 36 h3 Re8
37 Ba5 Re2+ 38 Kg3 Rxb2 0-1

2026 (58th) Virginia Open Chess Championships

January 2-4, 2026

**Dulles, Virginia
at the Washington Dulles Marriott
45020 Aviation Drive**



Tournament Website
www.vachess.org



US CHESS
STATE AFFILIATE



Praveen Balakrishnan - Kyle Zhuang

King's Indian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 h3 O-O 6 Be3 c5 7 Nf3 cxd4 8 Nxd4 Nc6 9 Be2 Nxd4 10 Bxd4 Bd7 11 O-O a6 12 Qd3 Bc6 13 Qe3 Nd7 14 Bxg7 Kxg7 15 b4 Qb6 16 b5 axb5 17 cxb5 Qxe3 18 fxe3 Ra3 19 bxc6 bxc6 20 Rfc1 Rfa8 21 Rab1 Nc5 22 Bc4 e6 23 Rb6 Rc8 24 Bb3 Nd7 25 Rb4 Nc5 26 Rc2 Rc7 27 Na4 Nb7 28 Nb2 Kf6 29 Rb6 Na5 30 Nc4 Nxc4 31 Rxc4 Ke5 32 Rbxc6 Rxc6 33 Rxc6 Kxe4 34 Rxd6 1-0

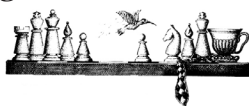
Sam Martin - Max Lu

Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Qxd4 Nc6 5 Qe3 g6 6 Be2 Bg7 7 h3 Nf6 8 Nc3 O-O 9 O-O Nd7 10 Rd1 Nc5 11 Bd2 Bd7 12 a3 Rc8 13 Be1 Ne6 14 Rab1 Kh8 15 Nd5 f5 16 exf5 Rxf5 17 c4 Qf8 18 b3 b6 19 Bc3 Bxc3 20 Qxc3+ Qg7 21 Qxg7+ Kxg7 22 Bd3 Rf7 23 Re1 Rcf8 24 b4



24...Rxf3 25 gxf3 Ng5 26 Re3 Nxf3+ 27 Kg2 Nfe5 28 Rd1 e6 29 Nc3 Ne7 30 Rxe5 dxe5 31 Bxg6 Kxg6 32 Rxd7 Nf5 33 Rxa7 Nh4+ 34 Kf1 Rc8 35 c5 bxc5 36 b5 Nf5 37 a4 Nd4 38 a5 Rb8 39 b6 Nc6 40 Rc7 Nxa5 41 Rxc5 Nb3 42 Rb5 Nd2+ 43 Ke2 Nc4 44 b7 Kf7 45 Ne4 Ke7 46 Kf3 Kd7 47 Kg4 Nd6 48 Nxd6 Kxd6 49 Kh5 Kc6 50 Rb2 e4 51 Kh6 Kd5 52 Kxh7 Kd4 53 Kg6 Kc3 54 Rb6 Kd3 55 h4 Ke2 56 Rb2+ Kf3 57 h5 e3 58 fxe3 Kxe3 59 h6 e5 60 h7 Kd3 61 Kg7 Kc3 62 Rb1 Kc2 63 Rb6 1-0





L S T De Silva - Benjamin Amrany

English

1 Nf3 d5 2 e3 c5 3 b3 Nf6 4 Bb2 e6 5 c4 Be7 6 cxd5 exd5 7 Bb5+ Nc6
8 Ne5 Qc7 9 O-O O-O 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Be2 Re8 12 d3 Bf5 13 Nd2
Rad8 14 Rc1 h5 15 Nf3 Bd6 16 Bxf6 gxf6 17 d4 Qb6 18 Bd3 Be4 19
Bxe4 Rxe4 20 dxc5 Bxc5 21 Qc2 Ba3 22 Rcd1 Bc5 23 Rd3 Be7 24 Rc1
Qa6 25 Nd4 c5 26 Nf5 Re5 27 Nxe7+ Rxe7 28 Qxc5 Ree8 29 Qd4
Re4 30 Qxe4 dxe4 31 Rxd8+ Kg7 32 Rd2 f5 33 h3 Qa5 34 Rdc2 Qa3
35 Rd1 Qa5 36 h4 a6 37 Rcd2 Qa3 38 g3 Qa5 39 Rd5 Qxa2 40 Rxf5
Qxb3 41 Ra1 Qd3 42 Rxh5 f6 43 Rha5 Kg6 44 Rxa6 Qc3 45 Rd1 Kf5
46 Kg2 Kg4 47 Rd4 Qc2 48 Rxf6 Qe2 49 Rxe4+ Kh5 50 Re5+ 1-0

Daniel Girsh - Praveen Balakrishnan

Pirc

1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 g6 4 Bf4 Bg7 5 Qd2 c6 6 O-O-O b5 7 f3
Nbd7 8 Bh6 Bxh6 9 Qxh6 Qa5 10 Kb1 Nb6 11 Nce2 Nc4 12 Nc1
Qc7 13 h4 a5 14 Nh3 a4 15 a3 Bxh3 16 Rxh3 Rb8 17 g4 c5 18
Bxc4 bxc4 19 c3 d5 20 e5 cxd4 21 exf6 dxc3 22 Qe3 Rxb2+ 23 Ka1
Rb1+ 24 Ka2 Qb7 25 Qxc3 O-O 26 fxe7 Rb8 27 Rh2 Qxe7 ½-½

World Senior

by Robert Fischer

THIS YEAR I reached my 65th birthday and I decided to celebrate by playing in the FIDE World Senior Championship, which was held in late October in Gallipoli Italy. Gallipoli is a small seaside town on the coast of southern Italy. It was a perfect chess vacation. For those who might want to consider playing in Europe, I want to highlight some of the differences between chess in Europe and in the United States.

The tournament lasted a full two weeks—eleven rounds, one per day, plus a rest day in the middle. When players arrived on October 20, the organizers provided transportation from the airport to selected hotels. All of the hotels included board, which meant all meals included. The food was what you would expect in Italy—lots of seasonal vegetables, fresh fish and meats and cheeses. And, of course, ice cream!



There were over 400 players from 62 countries. With the hotels full with chess players, mealtime conversation revolved around chess for the most part, and a little about American politics. Being an American, I did get asked about this quite frequently.

A special aspect of this event was that most of the players had been playing tournament chess for more than fifty years. And they are still playing! I am often saddened when I think of all the people I played with as a junior who I never see at tournaments anymore. The performance of 84-year-old Nona Gaprindashvili was especially inspiring. Back in the day, she held the women's world championship for an astonishing 16 years. She still plays well, finishing 3rd in the Over-65 Women division.

Rounds were at 3 pm daily and pairing were posted the night before. Many of my opponents had hundreds of games in the database. This made preparation much different from American tournaments, where the pairing often appear just before the round starts and you might find a only few of you opponent's games in Chessbase. While I am mainly a 1 Nf3 player, in this tournament I was also able to play 1 e4 and 1 d4 as I was confident about what my opponents would play.

The closing ceremony was held in a large opera house. Nathan Resika, a FIDE master from New York and a professional opera singer, treated us to a few music numbers. Prize winners of the different categories got to stand on the podium while the national anthem was played.

If you are at least fifty years old, you should seriously consider playing in this tournament next year. Next year's edition will be in Serbia.

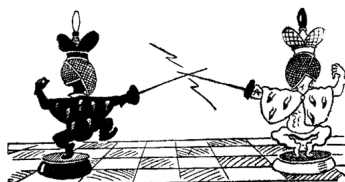
I wound up with three wins, three losses, and five draws, gaining 21 ELO points. Not a bad result, but it could have been much better. IM Christian Maier, from Germany, tied for 1st with 8½-2½ but things could have been much different if the fellow from Virginia had found the right move in his first-round game. We pick up the action after white's 31st move.



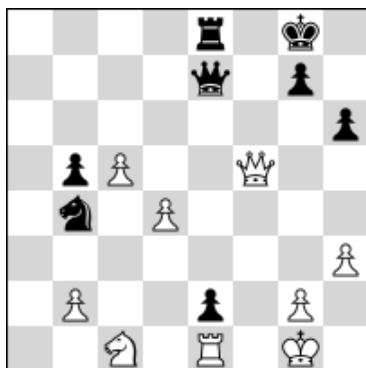


Christian Maier - Robert Fischer

Black to Play



30...Nb4 31 h3 d4?! [Time trouble was looming and I was concerned about my weak b-pawn. I had no idea if this sacrifice was sound, but practically, with both of us short of time, it looked like a great try. However, 31...Rd8 32 Qb6 Qe8! = was more circumspect. Black's position is fine there, whereas it turns out the sacrifice is incorrect.] **32 exd4 e4 33 Qf5?** [33 Rf5 was the way for Christian to go, stopping the pawn and leaving Black no compensation.] **33...e3 34 Nc1 e2 35 Re1**



Here I felt stuck. If I play 35...Qe3+, won't he just go 36 Qf2 and eventually liquidate my e2 pawn?

35...Qh4?

In fact, 35...Qe3+ almost wins for Black. The move I missed was after 36 Qf2 Qd2 37 Kh2 and now 37...Qxc1! White has a hard fight to try and hold the draw after 38 Rxc1 Nd3 39 Qxe2 Rxe2.



If White tries 36 Kh2 (instead of 36 Qf2) he is again in a tough spot after 36...Qd2 because 37 Qf2 would again run into the surprising 37...Qxc1! But instead, 37 Rxe2 Rxe2 38 Nxe2 Qxe2 39 c6 gives him just enough counterplay.

36 Rxe2 [I'd intended 36 Qf2 Qg5] **36...Qxd4+ 37 Kh2 Rxe2 38 Nxe2 Qxb2 39 Qe4 Nc6 40 Qxc6 Qxe2 41 Qd5+** [Here I rushed my move just to make sure I'd made time control. A cardinal sin.] **41...Kh7?** [After 41...Kf8 White cannot exchange queens, and he can't mate the king. He always has to guard against perpetual, so Stockfish gives the position zeros!] **42 c6 Qe3 43 Qf5+ 1-0** A rough way to start the tournament.

Here is my best game from the tournament.

Robert Fischer - Henk Brongers

Caro-Kann

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Nf3 a6 [I anticipated that Brongers would play this move. The theory line 6...Bg4 7 cxd5 Nxd5 8 Qb3 Bxf3 9 gxf3 e6 10 Qxb7 Nxd4 11 Bb5+ Nxb5 12 Qc6+ Ke7 13 Nxd5+ exd5 14 Qxb5 normally leads to an ending with about even chances that has been played many times with lots of draws.] **7 c5 g6** [Here I thought about playing 8 Ne5 and taking on c6, trying to exploit that pawn structure, but then I thought "why don't I just finish my development?"] **8 Be2 Bg7 9 O-O Ne4 10 Qb3 O-O** [not 10...Nxd4? 11 Nxd4 Bxd4 12 Qa4+] **11 Rd1 Nxc3 12 bxc3** [It seemed like opening the b-file and strengthening my center was the best option.] **Na5 13 Qb4 Re8 14 Bf4 f6** [I think I have a slight edge in piece activity, and ... f6 weakened his king a bit, so it seemed time for a pawn break.] **15 c4 e6** [if 15...dxc4 16 d5] **16 cxd5** [This move opens a diagonal for his bishop, but it also gives him a weak pawn on d5. I wanted to give my a1 rook a job, and my e2 bishop wants to be on f3. I am not sure where the knight belongs; it might go to c3 or e3 via the first rank.] **16...exd5 17 Re1** [So if we trade rooks, he will give his active rook for the inactive one on a1] **17...Bf8 18 Nd2** [Continuing with my plan. I will put the bishop on f3 and reroute the knight to c3 or e3 to put pressure on d5] **18...Nc6 19 Qc3 b6** [This move really surprised me. What was he doing? I saw that he wanted to attack d4.] **20 cxb6 Qxb6** [I could not get 21 Rb1 to work, so I continued with my plan.] **21 Bf3 Rd8** [21...Be6 looked challenging,



but only a brave man would put the bishop there. 22 Rxe6 Rxe6 23 Bxd5 Nxd4 24 Re1 Re8 25 Bxe6+ Rxe6 26 Rxe6 Nxe6 27 Qxf6] **22 Rab1! Bb4** [This runs into a tactic, but Black is losing material in any case.] **23 Rxb4 Nxb4 24 Bc7 Qb5 25 Bxd8 Bf5 26 Bxf6 Rc8 27 Qe3 Qd7 28 Qe7** [Black could safely resign.] **28...Qxe7 29 Bxe7 Nc2 30 Bxd5+ Kg7 31 Rc1 Re8 32 Bc5 1-0**

My Best Game

by Jerry Lawson

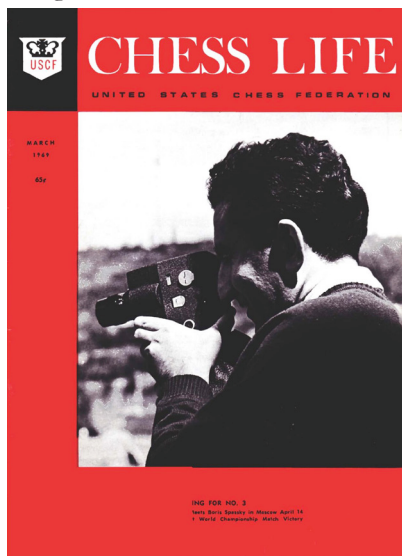
I GREW UP in a chess desert—the West Virginia coalfields. As the *New York Times* said of my home, “McDowell County, the poorest in West Virginia, has been emblematic of entrenched American poverty for more than a half-century.” An academic study concluded that of 3,142 counties in the United States, McDowell County ranked last in life expectancy. My family wasn’t so well off either. The coal industry is cyclical, so whenever my father was laid off, we relied on welfare and food stamps to survive. I’m not complaining—we were better off than many of our neighbors.

Not the most promising beginning for a chess player, but while in junior high school I taught myself to play from books. To me, Fred Reinfeld was the world’s best player at openings, middlegames, and endgames. I was a slow learner and lost a lot of Scholar’s Mates.

In high school, I organized a chess club. We played matches against other local schools, which I loved. Duard Addington (yes, he was actually named Duard) was the most talented player on our team, but after losing one game on first board, he insisted thereafter that I take on the other team’s best player.

Somehow, I got a free copy of the March 1969 *Chess Life* with Tigran Petrosian on the cover. I treasured it. Petrosian instantly displaced Reinfeld as my favorite player.

Distributing free copies of their magazine eventually yielded a high return on investment for the USCF, as I later





provided them income by participating in numerous tournaments, organizing events, and recruiting other USCF members. That's something scholastic chess organizers ought to keep in mind: a magazine or book given to the right child may have a disproportionate effect.

When I escaped the coal fields and went to college, I got a job and earned a little money. A USCF membership was one of my first purchases. I received my first 'paid' issue of *Chess Life* in March 1972, just as the Fischer Boom began.

Once I graduated from college, I could travel to tournaments. I'm not sure I've ever played a game of high enough quality to deserve publication, but I can absolutely identify my favorite game. It was played at the 1981 Southern Congress, in Atlanta. After three rounds, I was sitting on 2-1 and paired up.

Jerry Lawson - Tim Bonds

1981 Southern Congress

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 O-O Nxe4 6 d4 Be7 7 dxe5 O-O 8 c3 Re8 9 Bf4 Bf8 10 Bc2 Nc5

11 Bxh7+

This was My Best Move. Bonds told me he had often played this line, but no one had ever tried this against him.

11...Kh8

If 11...Kxh7 12 Ng5+ and now:

i) 12...Kg8 13 Qh5 Black must give up his queen to stop mate;

ii) 12...Kh6 13 Nxf7+ if nothing better;

iii) 12...Kg6 13 Qc2+ (13 Qg4 and even 13 h4 are also good, but the text is a long but straight road to a forced win) 13...f5 14 exf6+ Kxf6 15 Nh7+ Kf7 16 Qf5+ Kg8 back home, but... 17 Ng5 and wins!

12 Ng5 Nxe5 13 Qh5 g6 14 Bxg6+ Kg7 15 Nxf7 Nxf7 16 Qh7+ 1-0

Not a very original sacrifice, but it was fun to play. I lost in the last round to veteran South Carolina master Klaus Pohl in 15 moves, but 3-2 was good enough for top Class B, with my biggest cash prize ever. Not that that's saying much!





Help Wanted

by Jerry Lawson

I'm looking for one or more people to help me build out a website at the domain name chessmusings.org. The ideal candidates will be ambitious young people who are interested in chess and would like to help promote it. Volunteers will get priority, but I will consider paying one or more highly qualified and motivated people. Send a resume or email summarizing your qualifications and why you are interested to: zzlaws@gmail.com

Background Information: Way before there were reliable Internet search engines, I developed a pioneering website named Chess Links Worldwide. It was mainly an index to Internet chess sites, supplemented with some original content, most oriented toward promoting the VCF and other chess organizations. As GM Kavalek noted in his February 19, 1996 *Washington Post* Chess column:

"The future for chess on the Internet looks great. One only hopes that Jerry Lawson will continue to sift through many pages and provide a quality access to netsurfers on chess."

A WaPo search on the phrase "Chess links world wide Kavalek" should come up with this and other WaPo articles mentioning the site. After about 8 years of operations, life got in the way. I stopped updating the site and let the domain name lapse.

I have retired from full time work and would like to do something similar now. It will be a public service-type site, with an emphasis on supporting scholastic chess events and other things that are interesting and/or useful for chess lovers. The site will use the industry standard development platform WordPress, the same as my part time consulting business website (newideaslegaltech.com), but knowledge of WordPress is not essential. I will train the right person.

This is a great opportunity for ambitious young people who would like to gain practical experience with website development and/or content creation build out their resume.

If this sounds good, I'd love to hear from you.

2025-26 Virginia Scholastic & College Championships

Alexandria, March 7-8, 2026

Thomas Jefferson HS for Science & Technology



Virginia Chess
2851 Cherry Branch Lane
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