

VIRGINIA CHESS

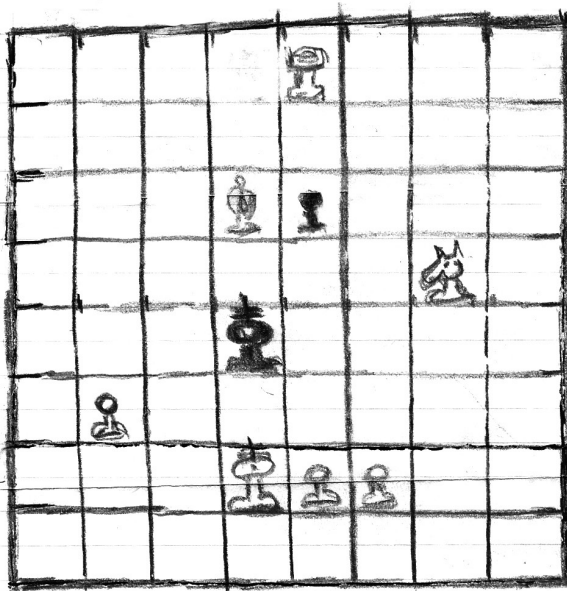
Newsletter

The bimonthly publication of the
Virginia Chess Federation

2026 - #3

MATE IN THREE, by Gary T. Robinson

(In honor of David Bronstein and Boris Spassky).



quiz: ★
Why the dedication?

VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

2026 - Issue #3

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Cherry Blossom Classic

The 13th Cherry Blossom Classic was played May 21-25 in Sterling. This premiere event has grown to be one of the strongest annual events on the east coast chess calendar.

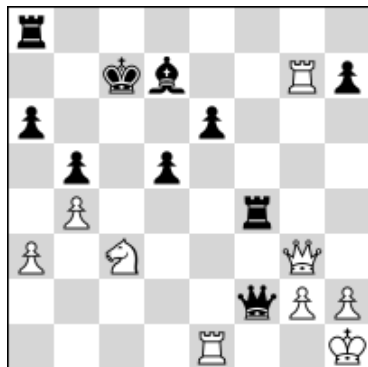
GMs Santiago Avila Pavas & Fidel Corrales Jimenez tied for 1st with 7½ out of 9. IM Oleksii Bilych was 3rd a half point behind. A large group followed with 6-3 including Titas Stremavicius, Jose Gabriel Cardoso, L S T De Silva, Thomas Bartell, Kevin George, Aditeya Das, Daniel Tabuenca Mendataurigoitia, Jennifer Yu & Tyson Brady. The Under 2200 (FIDE) prize was split between Qi Pang, Kyle Zhuang, Ronen Wilson & Rishith Bhoopathi.

Esat Omer Demirel scored 7-2 to claim undivided 1st place in the Under 2100 section. Aris Roland Brunovskis's 7½ points was likewise good enough to win the under 1700 group outright. Catelin Elizabeth Salas scored 5½ out of 6 to top the under 1000.

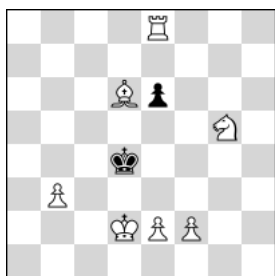
Fidel Corrales Jimenez - Titus Stremavicius French

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7
5 e5 Nfd7 6 Bxe7 Qxe7 7 f4 a6 8 Nf3
c5 9 dxc5 Nc6 10 Bd3 Nxc5 11 O-O
b5 12 a3 f5 13 exf6 Qxf6 14 Ne5 Nxe5
15 fxe5 Qxe5 16 Qf3 Kd8 17 Rae1

Qd6 18 b4 Bd7 19 Qg4 Kc7 20 Rf7
Rh8 21 Rxg7 Rf4 22 Qg3 Nxd3 23
cxd3 Qb6+ 24 d4 Qxd4+ 25 Kh1 Qf2



On the Cover...



Mate in 3

Delightfully old school Gary Robinson, long-time Virginia chess stalwart now living in Michigan, sent a problem he composed. The bonus quiz regarding the dedication ("In honor of David Bronstein and Boris Spassky") is also a clue to the solution. *See page 13 for the answer.*

26 Nxd5+! exd5 27 Qc3+ Kd8 28
Re8+! Bxe8 [28...Kxe8 29 Qe5+ Kd8 30
Qe7+ Kc7 31 Qxd7+ Kb6 32 Qc7mate]
29 Qc7mate 1-0



Continued





More Cherry Blossom Classic games...

Justin Paul – Santiago Avila Pavas Philidor

1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 e5 4 Nf3 Nbd7 5 Bc4 Be7 6 O-O O-O 7 Re1 c6 8 a4 a5
9 h3 Qc7 10 b3 exd4 11 Nxd4 Ne5 12 Bf4 \$5 Nxc4 13 bxc4 Qd8 14 Qf3 Be6 15
Rab1 Qc8 16 Nf5 Bxf5 17 exf5 Re8 18 g4 h6 19 Rbd1 Bf8 20 Rxe8 Qxe8 21 h4 d5
22 g5 Ne4 23 Nxe4 dxe4 24 Qg4 hgx5 25 hxg5 Rd8 26 Rxd8 Qxd8 27 g6 Bc5 28
Qh5 fxg6 29 fxg6 Qd4 30 Be3 Qa1+ 31 Kg2 Bxe3 32 Qg4? [32 fxe3 Qc3 33 Qd1!]
32...Kf8 33 fxe3 Ke7 34 Qf4 Qc3 35 Qxe4+ Kf6 36 Kf3 Qe1 37 Qe8? Qf1+ 38 Kg3
Qxc4 39 e4 Qe6 40 Qd8+ Kxg6 41 Qxa5 Qxe4 42 Qc5 Qd5 0-1

Ronen Wilson – Jennifer Yu Scotch

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4
Ba6 9 b3 Qh4 10 a3 Nf4 11 Qe4 Ng6 12 Qxh4 Nxh4 13 Nd2 c5 14 Bb2 Be7 15
f4 Bb7 16 Rg1 O-O 17 O-O-O f6 18 g3 Nf5 19 Bd3 Nd4 20 Rge1 f5 21 b4 Nf3
22 Nxf3 Bxf3 23 Be2 Bxe2 24 Rxd7 Bxc4 25 Rxe7 Rf7 26 Rxf7 Kxf7 27 bxc5
Ke6 28 Rd1 Rb8 29 Rd4 Bb3 30 a4 Bd5 31 Bc3 g6 32 Ba5 Rb7 33 Kc2 c6 34
Rb4 Rxb4 35 Bxb4 Bf3 36 Ba5 a6 37 Kc3 Bd1 38 Kb4 Bc2 39 Bd8 Bd1 40 Ka5
Kd7 41 Bf6 Bc2 42 Bg7 Bd1 ½-½

Colonial Open

Capital Area Chess hosted the 7th Colonial Open in Sterling April 2-5. Francesco Sonis & Oleksii Bilych each scored 6-1 to tie for 1st place in the Open section. Thomas Coulon won the Under 2000 section outright with 6 ½ points. Michael Kravitz & Smaran Sainathuni shared top honors in the Under 1600, 6 points apiece. Dhanush Parvataneni swept the Under 1200 group, finishing a full 2 points ahead of the field.



J'adoube

A correction to page 1 of our previous issue (VIRGINIA CHESS 2026/#2). Following the note to White's 9th move in the game Su-Holder, the moves from the note 9...Nc6 through 13 Nxe4 ± were mistakenly repeated – a simple layout *fingerfehler* – in boldface no less, as if these moves had been actually played. This confused untold number of readers. Thanks to Brian Morris as the first to point out the problem.



Fifty years ago, Virginia hosted the US Open for the first time. Former VCF President Sam Connor looks back.

Fairfax 1976

by Sam Connor

1976. Bicentennial Summer. Presidential election in the fall. Life was exciting for a rising high school Junior like myself.

But nothing was more exciting than the fact that the US Open chess tournament was coming to George Mason University in July 1976. This was the Big Time. The World Open was in only its second year, so “big national event” basically meant the US Open. From August 15-27, 1976 the center of US Chess was in Fairfax, Virginia.

Not to say that the road bringing the Open to GMU '76 had been easy.

The Virginia Chess Federation (VCF) submitted its bid at the 1975 US Open in Lincoln, Nebraska. The idea of a national event near DC during bicentennial summer was embraced by the delegates. The idea of day trips to the capital, Monticello, and Mount Vernon fired up the delegates. Between the possibilities and careful ground work all seemed well...

...until Andrew Margrave *of the Virginia delegation* moved that 1978 and future US Opens be tobacco free. Seems like a natural idea today, but not then and not there. In fact, a huge part of the funding for the VCF's bid came through a grant by Phillip Morris, the cigarette giant. The Margrave resolution blew a big hole in the plan. The whole plan might have died right there, had not the organizing committee led Richard O'Keefe and J Allen & Helen Hinshaw managed to make up the difference through stout fundraising and creative scheduling. Which, in turn, changed all future US Opens.

1976 was a curious down period in American chess. Bobby Fischer surrendered his title in 1975. In doing so, he cratered what had seemed like a golden era for US chess. The USCF kept the ship afloat while looking for new ideas to popularize our game.

One possible lifeboat came from overseas. Soviet GM's Anatoly Lein & Leonid Shamkovich emigrated to the US and began a two-year domination of our open tournaments. Both would play in Fairfax. This was the first wave of what would become a sea of foreign-born players coming to America and elevating the game here, especially with the birth of the USCF Grand Prix a few years later.

Of ongoing interest for young players like me was the possibility of dramatically increasing your rating through the 'bonus point' system. Bonus points had been introduced 18 months earlier to combat rating deflation. Do well, play above your expectation, and extra rating points came your way.



The Open began on August 15 with a then-record 569 player turnout. It was held in George Mason's new Student Union building (now SUB1). There was one round per night at 7pm with a 50/2, 20/1 time control. No sudden death. Long running games were adjourned at 2am. There would be no Saturday game as that day was reserved for the USCF Delegates meeting.

The original idea was for play to happen in three areas. The top four boards were to be in a private room with moves carried to a viewing area via closed circuit TV. The "Big Room" on the second floor of the building would hold about 100 more boards, with the top 25 arranged on the west and north walls cordoned off by a rope line. Finally, the remaining boards would be in the "Fish Tank"—a basement floor area which was normally a snack shop and gathering spot for students.

Shortly before the first round, the revolutionary and egalitarian spirit of 1776 overtook someone who didn't like the top four boards getting special treatment. This anonymous activist — never determined who —sabotaged the close circuit TV setup, causing boards one through four to be moved to the Big Room.

The field was like nothing I had ever seen. Lein and Shamkovich were joined by GMs Walter Browne, Pal Benko, Nick DeFirmian, William Lombardy & Arthur Bisguier... along with IMs William Martz & John Watson. Also playing were Virginia champs Rich Delaune & Ed Kitces, as well as Lev Blonarovych, who finished 2nd in many state championships and equal first in the seven-way tie in 1974.

There were also players I called "Regional Big Dogs". In those days before Internet and before a wide number of tournaments offered the chance to get a FIDE title, there were players who might dominate weekend tourneys in a region of the country but were not otherwise widely known. They were typically 2400+ strength, and every year one or more of them would burst into prominence at the US Open. Think Joe Bradford, winning the whole thing in 1978 in Phoenix. In 1976, those players were Curtis Carlson, Thomas Wozney and Calvin Blocker.

The youngsters were present in force too. John Fedorowicz, Joel Benjamin, Richard & Thomas Costigan, Ron Henley, Mark Ginsburg, Steven Odendahl—all players who came into chess during "Fischer fever" and who would vie for the US Junior Championship over the next five years.

Yeoman service was provided by David Sands & Don Barr in cranking out daily bulletins. After every round—while simultaneously playing in the tournament(!)—they would go through the scoresheets, select games for the bulletins, and type out 30-40 games, photocopy, staple, and have ready for distribution. Of course PC's make it a lot easier these days. By the end of the tournament, those guys had muscles on muscles in their typing fingers.

The first game to really set abuzz the folks watching from behind the ropes came in round 4.



John Fedorowicz - Joel Benjamin English

1 g3 g6 2 Bg2 Bg7 3 c4 e5 4 Nc3 d6 5 Nf3
Nc6 6 Rb1 a5 7 a3 Nf6 8 d3 O-O 9 O-O
Be6 10 b4 axb4 11 axb4 h6 12 b5 Ne7 13
Bb2 Ne8 14 Ra1 Rc8 15 Ra7 b6 16 Nd2 f5
17 Na2 Qd7 18 Nb4 g5 19 Qb3 f4 20 Rfa1
Kh8 21 Bb7 Rb8 22 Ne4 Bg4 23 f3 Be6 24
Nc6 Nxc6 25 Bxc6 Qe7 26 g4 Bd7 27 Nc3
Be6 28 Bd5 Bc8 29 Ne4 Nf6 30 Nxf6 Bxf6
31 Kg2 Kg7 32 h3 Rh8 33 Qb4 Qd8 34 Ra8
Rxa8 35 Rxa8 Qd7 36 Qa4 {diagram}
36...h5 37 Rb8 hxg4 38 hxg4 Rh4 39 Qa8 Rxg4+
40 fxg4 Qxg4+ 41 Kf1 Qh3+ 42 Bg2 1-0



It was also around round 4 that an impact of the innovations began. This was (I believe) the first US Open with 'satellite events' taking place during the day or on the weekend. Quads, game/60 and simul. Understand that in 1976, especially if you lived outside NYC or Chicago, it was difficult to play a lot of rated games unless you were up for travel and hotel fees. But at Fairfax, if you played the main event plus all the satellite events, one could get in forty (40!!) rated games over two weeks, a number that many players normally couldn't reach in a year.

Like at all large tournaments, players quickly found their pace and pattern. Things unique to the venue that would matter little to the world outside the event. Things such as...

"Where is the best local Pizza?"

(That would be Piccos on Main Street where began my lifelong friendship with Woody Harris)

"What did Benko think of the Old Budapest restaurant?"

(Benko, a Hungarian émigré, loved it and ate there frequently)

"Where do you go after a game?"

(To your room. Fairfax did not have a swinging night life)

In the end, Lein & Shamkovich dominated the competition, tying for first with 10-2. One surprise was Arnold Denker. The 1944 US champion and recent retiree did well, closing on the leaders and reaching as far as a *mano a mano* shot in the last round.

Anatoly Lein – Arnold Denker Nimzoindian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 a3 Bxc3+ 5 bxc3 O-O 6 Bg5 d6 7 f3 c5 8 e4 Qa5 9
Qd2 cxd4 10 cxd4 Nc6 11 Ne2 h6 12 Be3 Bd7 13 Nc3 Rfc8 14 Be2 e5 15 d5 Nd4



16 Bxd4 exd4 17 Qxd4 b5 18 O-O bxc4 19 Rfc1 Qc5 20 Qxc5 Rxc5 21 Rcb1 Kf8 22 Kf2 Rac8 23 Rb7 Ra5 24 a4 Be8 25 f4 Nd7 26 Bg4 Rb8 27 Rxd7 Bxd7 28 Bxd7 Rb2+ 29 Kf3 Ra6 30 a5 Rb3 31 Bb5 Rxc3+ 32 Ke2 Rc2+ 33 Ke3 1-0

I finished 7-5, and got 'paired up' so often that the bonus points bumped my rating 200 points! But my fondest achievement actually occurred after the tournament was over. By dint of irrepressible energy and relentless focus, Helen Hinshaw convinced Lubosh Kavalek to give a simul on the day after the Open finished. The grandmaster took on forty players and did not lose a game. I was fortunate enough to get a draw. There was a 12-year-old on the board next to me who had won the Open's class D prize and came to the simul directly from the award ceremony. He set his enormous loving cup trophy next to the board with his prize check in the cup. His mom suggested he was being a bit presumptuous, but Kavalek, watching with a grin, said it was quite all right. The young man was deservedly proud of his achievement and should show it to the world.

Kavalek had published a magnificent tournament book on the Wijk Aan Zee 1975 tournament. Many players brought copies hoping he would autograph them. He not only signed for anyone who asked, but he also played through and commented upon the Brilliancy Prize game that left everyone in awe:

Walter Bowne – Vlastimil Hort Wijk Aan Zee 1975 Pirc

1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 g6 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 Be2 O-O 6 O-O c6 7 a4 a5 8 Be3 Ng4 9 Bg5 h6 10 Bh4 Na6 11 Re1 Nb4 12 Bc4 g5 13 Bg3 Nf6 14 Nd2 d5 15 Bb3 Bg4 16 f3 Bh5 17 Be5 Qb6 18 Kh1 Rfd8 19 Qe2 Rac8 20 Rad1 Bg6 21 Qf1 Rd7 22 f4 gxf4 23 Qxf4 Nxc2 24 Bxc2 Qxb2 25 Bxf6 exf6 26 Qe3 Qxc2 27 Rc1 Qb2 28 Nxd5 Re8 29 Nc4 Qa2 30 Re2 Qxe2 31 Qxe2 cxd5 32 Nb6 Rdd8 33 Qb5 Bxe4 34 Qxa5 f5 35 Qd2 Re6 36 a5 Rg6 37 Rg1 Bf8 38 Na4 Rc8 39 Nc3 Bb4 40 Qb2 Rxc3 0-1

A delightful conclusion to a wonderful event! I got older, played in a lot of tournaments, including two more US Opens, and I helped organize another. But nothing is so pleasant as my memories of that Bicentennial summer, when the chess world came to George Mason University.





Central Virginia Open

by Robert Jackson

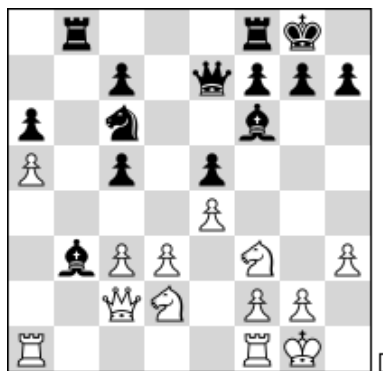
The 3rd Central Virginia Open brought high-level strategy and intense competition to Glen Allen, Virginia, April 10–12. Hosted at the Hilton Garden Inn, the event drew a large field of over 100 players competing across three main sections.

In the Open, GM Sergey Erenburg & IM Lokumannage De Silva displayed master-class precision, ending the weekend nearly perfect with $4\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ scores, drawing only one another. Meanwhile, the U1700 and U1100 sections showcased the rising talent in the region. Alan Plaskey & Rohan Battula shared 1st place in the U1700 with $4\frac{1}{2}$ points apiece. The U1100 section saw co-champs as well, with Shritik Mishra & Jayden Wainwright each scoring 4-1.

The tournament was ably directed by Chief TD Associate NTD Robert Jackson, assisted by Local TD Cayden Jackson and Club TD's Nitin Patil & Sree Kolluru.

Sergey Erenburg - L M S T De Silva

Notes by Sergey Erenburg

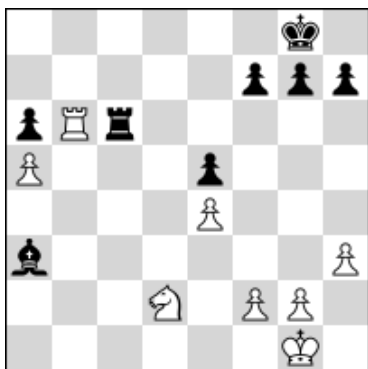


White to Play

19 Nxb3 c4!? [Otherwise White's knight can be brought from f3 to c4 via d2.]
20 dxc4 Nd8 21 Ne1 [21 Nc1 Ne6 22 Nd3 Nc5 23 Rfd1 c6 24 Nxc5 Qxc5 25 Qa2 +/-] **21...Qe6** [21...Qd6 22 Rb1 Ne6 (22...Qc6 23 Nd4) 23 Nd3 Qc6 24 Nd2 Rxb1 25 Rxb1 Nf4 26 Nb4 Qc5 27 Nxa6 Qxa5 28 Nb4 Qc5 +/-] **22 Nd3 Be7 23 Ra4 Nb7** [23...Qc6 24 Nd2] **24 c5 c6** [24...Qc6 25 Rb4; 24...Nd8 25 Rb1 or 25 Nb4 c6 26 Rb1 Qc8 27 Nd3] **25 Rb1 Nd8 26 Rb4 Rb5 27 Rxb5 cxb5 28 Nb4 Qc8 29 c4 Nc6 30 Nxc6** [30 cxb5 Nxb4 31 Qc4 axb5 (31...Na2 32 b6) 32 Qxb4 Qc6 +/-] **30...Qxc6 31 cxb5 Qxb5 32 c6** [32 Rd1 Rb8 33 c6 Rc8 34 c7 Qb7 35 Rd7 Kf8 36 Qc4 Ke8 37 Qa4 Qb5 38 Qxb5 axb5; 32 Qc3! f6 (32...Rc8 33 Qxe5 Bf8 34



Kh2 h6 +/-) 33 Rc1] 32...Rc8 33 Nd4? [Throwing a way a winning position 33 c7! Qb7 (or 33...Bd6 34 Rd1 Be7; or 33...Bf8 34 Rd1 Be7 35 Qc3 Kf8 36 Nc5 Ke8 37 Nd7 Qb7 38 Qxe5 Rxc7 39 Nb6 Kf8 40 g3) 34 Rc1 Bg5 35 Qc6 Qxb3 36 Qxa6 Qe6 37 Qxe6 fxe6 38 Rc2 Kf7 39 a6 Ke7 40 a7 Kd7 41 Rb2] 33...Qc5 34 Qxc5 Bxc5 35 Nb3 [35 Nf5 g6 36 Rc1 Ba3 37 Rc3 gxf5 38 Rxa3 Rxc6 39 exf5 Kg7] 35...Ba3 36 Ra1 Bb2 37 Rb1 Ba3 38 Nd2 Rxc6 39 Rb6 ½-½



I offered draw in a time trouble. The game could have continued 39...Rc1+ 40 Kh2 and now:

40...Rc2 41 Nb1!—this move was missed by both players—41...Be7 42 Rxa6 Rxf2 43 Ra8+ Bf8; or 41...Bf8 42 Rxa6 Rxf2 43 Ra8 Ra2 44 Nc3 Ra1 45 a6 g6 46 g4 Kg7 47 g5 Bb4 48 Nd5 Bd2 49 h4 h6 50 gxh6+ Bxh6 51 a7

40...f6 41 Rxa6 Bb4 42 Ra8+ Kf7 43 Ra7+ Kg8 44 a6; or 43...Kg6 44 Nf3; 43...Ke6 44 Nf3 Rc4 45 Rxg7 Rxe4 46 Rxh7 Bxa5 47 Ra7 Bb6 48 Ra2 ±

Zach Traynor - Alan Plaskey Queen's Pawn Game

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 Bf5 4 Bg2 e6 5 c4 Nbd7 6 O-O Be7 7 Nc3 O-O 8 Nh4 Be4 9 f3 Bg6 10 Nxc6 hxc6 11 cxd5 Nxd5 12 e4 N5b6 13 f4 c6 14 h4 Nf6 15 e5 Nfd5 16 h5 g5 17 Qg4 f5 18 exf6 Rxf6 19 fxg5 Rxf1+ 20 Bxf1 Nc7 21 h6 Qd6 22 h7+ Kh8 23 g6 c5 24 dxc5 Qxc5+ 25 Kh2 Rf8 26 Bg2 Rf5 27 Bf4 Ncd5 28 Ne4 Qc2 29 Bd6 Ne3 30 Qh3 Rh5 31 Bxe7 Qxg2mate 0-1

Mark Ginsburg - Sergey Erenburg

Notes by Sergey Erenburg



White to Play



16 Ne5 Bb5 17 f4 Nc6 18 Ndf3 Nxe5 19 Nxe5 Nd7 20 Rf3? [20 Nc4 Nb8 21 f5 Bg5 22 Rce1 Nc6] 20...Bf6 21 d4 Qd6 [21...Qb8 22 Rc3 Nxe5 23 dxe5 Be7 ♣] 22 Kh1 [22 Rf2 cxd4 23 Qxc8 Rxc8 24 Rxc8+ Nf8] 22...cxd4 23 Qxc8 Rxc8 24 Rxc8+ Nf8 25 Nd3 Be7 26 Rc1 Nd7 [26...f5! 27 exf5 exf5 28 Rd1 Bc6 29 Rf2 Be4] 27 b4 h6?! [27...a5] 28 Kg1 [28 e5 Qd5 29 Ne1 a5] 28...a5 29 Rd1 axb4 30 axb4 [30 Nxb4 e5] 30...Nb8 31 Rf2 Nc6 32 e5 Qd7 33 Be4 Bxd3 [33...Bc4 ♣] 34 Rxd3 Bxb4 35 Bxc6?! [35 Rf1 Bc5 36 Rfd1 g6 ♣] 35...Qxc6 36 Bxd4 Qc4 37 Rd1 b5 -+ 38 Be3 Qb3 [38...Bc3] 39 Rd8+ Kh7 40 Bd4 Qd1+ 41 Rf1 [41.Rf1 Qd3 42.Rc1 Ba5 43.Rd6 Qd2 41 Kg2 Bc5 42 Rf1 Qd2+ 43 Rf2 Qa5 44 Rd7 Qa8+ 45 Kh3 Qc8 46 Bxc5 Qxd7] 41...Qd3 42 Bb6 Bc5+ 0-1

Elina Plaskey - Tyler Strother Italian

Notes by Elina Plaskey

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 d3 Bc5 5 Be3 Bxe3 6 fxe3 O-O 7 O-O d6 8 h3 [8 a4 Bg4 9 Qe1 Bxf3 10 Rxf3; 8 Nc3] 8...Na5 9 Bd5 [9 Nbd2 Nxc4 10 Nxc4; 9 Bb3 Nxb3 10 axb3 h6 11 Nc3 Be6 12 Qe1] 9...c6 [9...Nxd5 10 exd5 b6 11 b4 Nb7] 10 Bxf7+ Rxf7 11 b4 Qb6 [11...c5 12 bxa5 Qxa5 13 Nbd2 h6 14 Nc4 Qc7; 11...Nc4 12 dxc4 Nxe4 13 Nxe5 Rxf1+ 14 Kxf1 Qf6+ 15 Nf3 Qxa1] 12 Qe1 h6 [12...Nc4 13 dxc4 Nxe4] 13 bxa5 Qd8 14 d4 [14 Na3 Be6 15 c4; 14 Qb4 Be6 15 Nc3] 14...Nxe4 15 dxe5 d5 16 Nbd2 Qxa5 17 Nxe4 Qxe1 18 Rfxe1 [18 Raxe1 dxe4 19 Nd4 Re7; or 19 Nd2 Bf5 20 g4 (20...Bg6 21 Rf4) Bh7 21 Rf4 g5 22 Rxf7 Kxf7 23 Rf1+ Ke7 24 Rf6] 18...Rxf3 19 gxf3 dxe4 20 fxe4 [20 Kh2 exf3 21 Rf1 Be6 22 Rxf3] 20...Bxh3 21 Kh2 [21 Rab1 b6 22 Red1 Re8 23 Kh2 Be6 24 a4 c5 25 Rd6 Kf7 26 a5] 21...Be6 22 Rg1 a5 23 Rg6 Kf7 24 Rag1 Rg8 25 a3 b5 26 R6g2 g5 27 Rd2 Ke7 28 Rd6 Rc8 29 Rf1 c5 30 Rf6 Bf7 31 Rxh6 b4 32 axb4 cxb4 33 Rh7 Rxc2+ 34 Kg3 b3 35 Rb6 a4 36 Rb7+ Ke6 37 Rh6+ Kxe5 38 Re7+ Be6 39 Rhxe6mate 1-0

Macon Shibut - Larry Larkins Dutch

Notes by Macon Shibut

1 Nf3 e6 2 g3 f5 3 Bg2 Nf6 4 O-O Be7 5 c4 O-O 6 Nc3 d6 7 d4 Ne4 8 Bd2 Bf6 9 Qc2 Nxd2 10 Qxd2 d5 11 Rfd1 c6 12 Rab1 Nd7 13 b3 Be7 14 e3 Bb4 15 Qc2 Nf6 16 Ne5 Qe8 17 Ne2 Bd6 18 b4 g5?! 19 b5 Bxe5? 20 dxe5 Ng4 21 Qc3! Nxh2? [This does not quite work.] 22 bxc6 bxc6 23 Kxh2 Ba6 [the problem is 23...Qh5+ 24 Kg1 Qxe2 25 cxd5 cxd5 26 Qc6, eg 26...f4 27 exf4 gxf4 28 Re1 Qg4 29 Qxa8 fxg3 30 fxg3 Qxg3 31 Qxa7 winning] 24 Nd4 Bxc4 25 Rd2 [25 Qa3! was better ΔQd6] 25...c5 26 Nb3 Rc8 27 Na5 Ba6 28 Nb7 Rb8 29 Rdb2 Qh5+ 30 Kg1 Rf7 31 Nd6 Rxb2 32 Qxb2 Rf8 33 Qa3 Be2 34 Qxa7 Bd3! [I underestimated this] 35 Rb8? [The unexpected difficulties introduced by Black's last move affected me. 35 Rc1 f4 36 Qe7! was the right way, eg 36...f3 37 Qxe6+ Kh8 38 Bh3; or 36...Qh6 37 exf4 gxf4 38 Qh4 Qg7 39 gxf4 c4 40 Qg3] 35...Qd1+ 36 Kh2 Qh5+



Position after 36...Qh5+

I burned most of my remaining clock calculating, trying to find a win that my intuition told me ought to be there. Not succeeding, I finally acceded to the draw. This was a failure not only in analysis but also in confidence, probably attributable to seeing an anticipated win devolve into an unclear mess. With stronger nerves and morale, I would have at least tried 37 Bh3! g4 38 Rxf8+ Kxf8 because I saw a draw by 39 Qb8+ Kg7 40 Qc7+ Kh6 41 Nf7+ Kg6 42 Nh8+ Kh6 43 Nf7+. Of course, looking ahead this way to a draw is more fraught than simply taking the draw that

is already on the board. But only playing on would have given me a chance to later discover 39 Kg1! gxh3 40 Kh2! At the board I poked down this alley but didn't appreciate that my attack is still irresistible from here. 40...c4 (40...Qf3? 41 Qf7mate) 41 Qb8+ Kg7 42 Qc7+ Kh6 43 Nf7+ Kg7 (43...Kg6 44 Qe7) 44 Ng5+ Kh6 45 Nxe6 etc. $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

A Lesson From GM Jim Tarjan

by Jerry Lawson

It was 11 AM on Friday, July 30, 1984, and I had a big decision to make: *Would I commit my first felony?*

I was a US Army captain attending interservice training at Naval Station Treasure Island, in the middle of San Francisco Bay. The temptation was the last round of the 1984 US Chess Championship, held a few miles away at UC Berkeley. Skipping the final afternoon of training would be going AWOL, technically punishable by up to twelve months in prison. I decided to go for it. For the love of chess.

By that evening I was glad I had taken the (minor) risk. GM Lev Alburt won the title, but it was Jim Tarjan who taught me something I have never forgotten.





Tarjan was among the favorites going in. A few months earlier he had won the Memorial Day Open in Santa Monica over a field that included GMs Seirawan, Christiansen, Browne & Quinteros, who all tied for 2nd place. He earned a Brilliancy Prize for his game against Christiansen.

James Tarjan - Larry Christiansen 1984 Memorial Day Open Nimzoindian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 c5 5 Ne2 cxd4 6 exd4 O-O 7 a3 Be7 8 d5 exd5
9 cxd5 Bc5 10 Na4 b6 11 Nxc5 bxc5 12 Nc3 Re8+ 13 Be3 d6 14 Bb5 Nbd7
15 O-O Rb8 16 b4 cxb4 17 axb4 a6 18 Bxa6 Rxb4 19 Bb5 Ng4 20 Bd2 Rd4
21 Ra4 Rxa4 22 Qxa4 Nc5 23 Qa7 Rf8 24 h3 Ne5 25 f4 Ned3 26 Rf3 Nb4 27
Be3 Nba6 28 Bd4 Nc7 29 Rg3 g6 30 Bc6 Bf5 31 Re3 h5 32 Bxc5 dxc5 33 Qxc5
Qf6 34 d6 Ne6 35 Qe5 Qxe5 36 fxe5 Kg7 37 Nd5 Nd4 38 Ne7 f6 39 Ba4 Rd8
40 Nxf5+ Nxf5 41 e6 Nxd6 42 e7 Ra8 43 e8Q Nxe8 44 Bxe8 Ra2 45 Rg3 1-0

There was also a rumor—possibly apocryphal, but the kind that sticks—that Tarjan had spent months working as a lumberjack in an isolated corner of the Northwest, studying chess in all his free time, insulated from every distraction. True or not, the other players' body language told you something: they respected him.

I had never seen so many strong players gathered in one place, and I doubt I ever will again. I spread my attention across all the boards in the final round, but I kept returning to Tarjan's game. I watched him dismantle six-time US Champion Walter Browne in twenty moves.

James Tarjan - Walter Browne 1984 US Championship Queen's Indian

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 b6 4 g3 Ba6 5 b3 b5 6 cxb5 Bxb5 7 Bg2 c5 8 O-O Bc6
9 Ba3 Na6 10 Nbd2 Rc8 11 Rc1 Bxf3 12 Bxf3 cxd4 13 Bxf8 Rxf8 14 Nc4 Rxc4
15 Rxc4 e5 16 Qc1 Qb6 17 Qa3 Nc7 18 Rfc1 Ne6 19 Rc8+ Nd8 20 R1c5 1-0

As a Class A player, my analysis skills are not the best, but I thought Tarjan played great in that game. What impressed me most, though, was his manner in the post-mortem.

Other players who had won their games tended to be animated—loudly throwing out alternative lines, full of confidence. The losers, Browne among them, were equally emphatic in the other direction: making excuses, insisting they had been just one move away from turning the game around. Everyone seemed certain about everything.

Tarjan was different—quiet, contemplative. When someone asked about an alternative line, he didn't answer immediately. He would think—sometimes for a long moment—and even then his responses were tentative, often prefaced with a



response like “Maybe something like this would work?” He spoke as though the game he had just won were still unresolved, still concealing its secrets.

Even though Tarjan only finished tied for 3rd, he gave me the impression that he understood chess’s complexity—its uncertainty, the near-impossibility of finding absolute truth in any position—more deeply than anyone else in the room. The contrast reminded me of the lines from Yeats’s *The Second Coming*: “*The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.*” That afternoon taught me that genuine mastery and genuine humility often arrive together. The most impressive thing about a great player may not be how confidently he speaks, but how carefully he listens to the game.

The Rest of the Story . . .

Tarjan’s win over Browne turned out to be the last game of his first chess career. Tarjan moved to Santa Cruz and worked as a public librarian for three decades. He famously donated his trophies to local youth tournaments, telling people he was “just a librarian.” He foreshadowed his retirement in an interview in the September 1984 *CHESS LIFE* in which he explained the difficulties of trying to make a career as a professional player in the United States.

Tarjan’s second chess career, his return to chess in 2014, was equally legendary, including a victory over former World Champion Vladimir Kramnik at the 2017 Isle of Man International at age 65. Kramnik was rated #3 in the world before the game, but he lost so many rating points that he could not qualify by rating for the next Candidates tournament. (The organizers took pity and seeded him into the Candidates anyway).



Kramnik resigning to Tarjan



Tarjan's typically modest post-game assessment: "Surprisingly, I can still make some moves, and I held in there. I came out of retirement a few years ago, and I feel like I'm getting better. You can think of me as a promising three-year-old!"

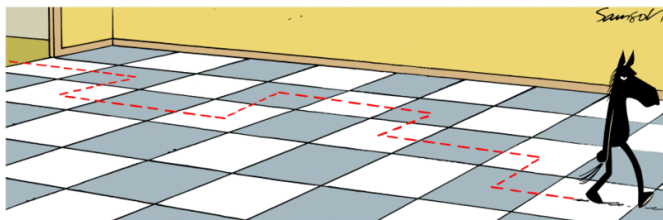
James Tarjan – Vladimir Kramnik Isle of Man 2017 English

1 c4 Nf6 2 g3 c6 3 Nf3 d5 4 b3 Bg4 5 Bg2 e6 6 O-O Nbd7 7 Bb2 Bd6 8 d3 O-O
9 Nbd2 Re8 10 h3 Bh5 11 Re1 a5 12 a3 e5 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 Nh4 Nc5 15 Qc2
Ne6 16 Rac1 Nd4 17 Qd1 Nb5 18 Nb1 Qd7 19 Kh2 Ra6 20 Nf3 e4 21 dxe4
Nxe4 22 Rf1 Bb8 23 Nc3 Nbx3 24 Bxc3 Rae6 25 Be1 h6 26 Rc2 Ba7 27 Qc1
Bb6 28 e3 Qb5 29 Nd4 Bxd4 30 exd4 Bf3 31 Bxf3 Qxf1 32 Bg2 Qd3 33 Bxa5
Qxd4 34 Be1 b6 35 b4 Nd6 36 Bc3 Qd3 37 Rd2 Qc4 38 Bxd5 Re1 39 Bxc4
Rxc1 40 Rxd6 Rxc3 41 Bb5 Rb8 42 a4 Rb3 43 Rd4 Rb2 44 Kg2 Rc8 45 Bd3
g6 46 a5 bxa5 47 bxa5 Rc5 48 a6 Ra2 49 h4 Kg7 50 Rd7 Rc3 51 Be4 Rxa6 52
Bd5 Rf6 53 f3 Rc2+ 54 Kh3 Rd2 55 g4 g5 56 hxg5 hxg5 1-0



Shenandoah Open July 31 - August 2, 2026

The Comfort Inn Monticello, 2097 Inn Drive, Charlottesville, VA 22911
5-SS, Game/90+30. Three sections: Championship (minimum rating 1500 USCF),
1600-900, and Under 1000/Unrated. Unrated players must play in the U1000 section
unless granted special permission by tournament director. Unrated players are
only eligible for 50% of any cash prize earned. Rounds Fri 7pm, Sat 11am & 4pm,
Sun 10am & 3pm. \$\$ \$5000 b/100 entries. *Championship* \$1200-600-300, U2000
\$200, U1800 \$200. *1600-900* \$700-400-200 U1300 \$200. *Under 1000/Unrated* \$500-
300-200, trophies for top 3 scholastic, medals for all scholastic players. EF \$100
by May 1, \$110 May 1-July 17, \$120 thereafter. Register: <https://caissachess.net/online-registration/index/8500>. Registration closes 1 hour before the start of round 1.



COVER SOLUTION

1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 Nf3 *mate* — the King's Gambit! Bronstein and Spassky both played the King's Gambit. A game between them with this opening formed the basis for the chess scene in the movie *From Russia With Love*.

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