Laying down the Law: In the Chess Room office, National Arbiter Scott Mason and International Arbiter Judit Sztaray get ready to make a ruling.

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Special Event with
Grandmaster Sam Shankland
Tuesday, January 16 at 5:30 pm

Mechanics' Institute is proud to welcome GM Sam Shankland for a special lecture and book signing event in the Chess Room.

Sam Shankland is an American Chess Grandmaster and the 2018 US Chess Champion. He is a 10-year veteran on the US Olympic Team, a two-time Olympiad Gold Medalist (2014 and 2016, Silver Medalist in 2018), a former World U-18 co-champion (2008), and the winner of dozens of international tournaments across four continents. His peak FIDE rating of 2731 FIDE placed him at #21 in the world.

In addition to his playing career, he has worked as an analyst for World Champion Magnus Carlsen in preparation for the 2014 and 2016 World Championship matches. He has published four books as well as nine online opening database courses, and he is a co-owner and co-founder of Killer Chess Training.

Onsite at Mechanics’ Institute
Free and open for all!
milibrary.org/events
Recent Tournaments at Mechanics’ Institute

On December 9, Mechanics’ Institute hosted our monthly double-header of Scholastic Swiss in the morning, Quads in the afternoon.

The Quads had a nice turnout of 47 players competing in 11 sections, and Arun Dixit (2226) won the top Quad with 2.5 points.

Complete results for the December Quads can be found here.

The monthly Scholastic Swiss had 30 participants in two sections.

Ian Kartiwa (818) took 1st place in the 500+ section with 3.5 points out of 4. Tied for 2nd through 4th places with 3 points each were Keshav Raman (963), Arfan Pasha (820), and Maxim Dennis (734). Taking 5th place on tie-breaks with 2 points was Kepler McTiernan (1177).

Keanu Chow (487) scored a perfect 4-0 to take clear 1st in the under 500 section. Tied for 2nd through 5th with 3 points apiece were Josh Kayauk (489), Ben Huynh (unr.), Theodore Linehan (311), and Miles Lee (205).

Complete results for the December Scholastic Swiss can be found here.

Both the December Quads and the December Scholastic Swiss were directed by Local TD Arthur Liou, assisted by Local TD Michael Hsu and Anthony Simich.

There was a great turnout of 68 players competing in three sections for the 5th Annual John Donaldson Championship (FIDE rated) held over the weekend of December 16-17.

Rishabh Chandrashekhar Gokhale (2182) took 1st in the 2000+ section with 3.5 points from four games. Tying for 2nd, 3rd, best under 2200, and best under 2000, each with 2.5 points, were Neil Bhaduri (2115), Itai Reingold-Nutman (1881), Patrick Peijun Liu (2257), Rowen Oregel (1882), Daniel Viden (1876), Cailen Melville (1866), and Arjun Nathan (1802).

Andrew Wu (1660) and Mohammad Soltani (1647) tied for 1st and 2nd in the 1600-1999 section with 3.5 points apiece. Tied for 3rd and the best under 1800 spot with 3 points each were Zeno Kalonaris (1615), Frederick Dutter (1900), and Advit Kulkarni (1610). The best under 1600 prize was split between Avik Saha (1397) and Aaron Feng (1421) with 2.5 points each.

Mechanics’ Institute Trustee Mike Hilliard (1405) had a terrific result, scoring a perfect 4-0 to win the under 1600 section outright. In clear 2nd with 3.5 points was Romeo Nehme (1192). Tied for 3rd place and best under 1400 with 3 points apiece were Angela Zixi Wang (1025) and Aashvi Sri Rangamreddy (1359). Finally, Ethan Wangchen Gao (1132) scored 2.5 and took the best under 1400 prize.

Complete results for the 5th Annual John Donaldson Championship can be found here.

The 5th Annual Donaldson was directed by National Arbiter Scott Mason.
The 2023 Winter Tuesday Night Marathon (TNM) started on November 7, and finished up on December 19. We had 87 players who competed in four sections.

NM Archit Dasika (2218) won the 2000+ section convincingly with 6.5 points from 7 games, a full point and a half ahead of 2nd place finisher Christophe Bambou (2107). Tied for 3rd place and best under 2200 with 4.5 points each were Edward Lewis (1932) and WFM Natalya Tsodikova (2181).

Michael Walder (1922) won the 1600-1999 section with an unbeaten 6-1 performance, edging out Wilson Wong (1863) by half a point. In clear 3rd was Sheng Jian (1590) with 5 points. There was a six-way split for best under 1800 between Nicolas T. Horde (1526), Guy Argo (1767), Fernando Toledo Guerrero (1693), Gregory Rousso (1677), Chunhui Gu (1613), and Hoa Long Tam (1583), all scoring 4.5 points.

Hayes Alexander Marvin (1593) took clear 1st in the 1200-1599 section with a 6-1 score. There was a six-way tie for 2nd, 3rd, and best under 1400 between Pratyush Hule (1388), Nicholas Morello (1481), Drew H. Clark (1437), Oliver Peter Nystrom Burke (1276), and Anubhav Maheshwari (1274), all who scored 4.5 points.

Brett Fisher (unr.) and Hector McKemey (unr.) both scored 5.5 points, splitting 1st and 2nd places in the under 1200 section. Mitchell Walters (unr.) and Andrew Singer (987) tied for 3rd and best under 1000 with 5 points each.

Information and final standings for the 2023 Winter TNM can be found here.

The 2023 Winter TNM was co-directed by National Arbiter Scott Mason and International Arbiter Judit Sztaray.

Last round TNM action: NM Archit Dasika (left) on his way to victory over Catalino Santos Jr. The Mechanics’ Institute is in the process of reinstating DGT boards for future broadcasts - stay tuned!
On January 6 we hosted the **23rd Bob Burger Memorial**, with 69 players competing in four sections.

**Patrick Liu** (2226) and **Sricharan Pullela** (2194) each scored 3-1 to share 1st and 2nd places in the 2000+ section. **Alex Shrauger** (2087) finished in clear 3rd with 2.5 points.

There was also a tie for 1st and 2nd in the 1600-1999 section between **Anthony Liu** (1894) and **Hayes Marvin** (1649), each scoring 3.5 points. Tied for 3rd were **Fredrick Dutter** (1900) and **Henry Lien** (1728).

**Zack Schuster** (1242) took clear 1st in the 1200-1599 section with 3.5 points. A half-point behind in a 4-way split for 2nd and 3rd places were **Romeo Nehme** (1409), **Rail Akhmetov** (1362), **Sahil Shivakumar** (1206), and **Loida Guo** (1045).

**Neeraj Rao** (1030) took clear 1st in the u1200 section, and was the only player in the tournament to score a perfect 4-0. In clear 2nd was **Kyan Agdassi** (unr.) with 3.5 points, followed by a 5-way split for 3rd with 3 points apiece between **Kevin Dolan** (1146), **Anthony Pivarunas** (1000), **Jimmy Sanchez** (814), **Youting Long** (678), and **Alex Vincent-Hill** (unr.).

Complete results for the 23rd Burger Memorial can be found [here](#).

The 23rd Burger Memorial was directed by Local TD **Arthur Liou**.

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Mechanics' Institute Trustee Robert "Bob" Burger (1931-2019) was a chess master, author (*The Chess of Bobby Fischer*), and noted problemist.
Bob Burger stories from Kenn Fong

The 23rd Bob Burger Memorial Tournament was held on Saturday, January 6 - our first tournament of 2024. In honor of Mr. Burger's enduring legacy with Mechanics' Institute, a brilliancy prize was offered in his name with the support of friend of the club Kenn Fong, a longtime chess player and community member.

Kenn shared stories of Bob that were read aloud before the tournament, which players reveled in and cheered for as they started their clocks.

*Mechanics’ Institute is proud to host tournaments in honor of chess players that have contributed greatly to the world of chess and to our club. We honor their legacy through our community of players and sharing their stories to lift up their memories.*

Please look for Bob's books in the Mechanics’ Institute Library. Besides The Chess of Bobby Fischer and Grandmaster Chess, look for copies of the California Chess Reporter, which was published around the corner at 244 Kearny Street, the home of California Municipal Bonds, Guthrie McClain's firm. It was the top bond rating company for California bonds.

He also ghost wrote The Polish Prince, singer Bobby Vinton's autobiography(!), and some fiction, but not under his own name.

Bob was the founding partner in the public relations and advertising agency, Burger, Felix, and Wood located in the Belli Building. I can only recall one client of his, Cara Mia brand, which still exists. I have a jar of Cara Mia Artichoke Hearts in my refrigerator.

Burger and McClain financed many events, including the 1972 US Junior Championship at the Palace Hotel, where I was the Assistant Tournament Director under Alan Benson.

Bob had a very large home in Berkeley. He had ten natural and adopted children.

Whenever World Champions or distinguished Grandmasters visited Mechanics’ Institute, Bob opened his home to them. He had GM Svetozar Gligoric and GM Bent Larsen (both of whom were top ten players for decades), and World Champions Tigran Petrossian and Vasily Smyslov, all of whom I had a hand in arranging their Mechanics’ Institute visits.

During former World Champion Vasily Smyslov's only Lone Pine appearance, I got into a tiny bit of trouble with Grandmaster Isaac Kashdan, who was Tournament Director.

When Smyslov drew his final round game with Los Angeles GM Larry Christiansen, he secured a tie for second place. I met him at the wall charts and whispered my congratulations. He smiled. Then I asked him, "Dollars or Rubles?"

Our laughter got us in trouble with TD Isaac Kashdan, who theatrically shushed us both!

By the way, Smyslov used his money to buy and import an American car!
Later, during the visit to Bob's home, Smyslov found an old piano in Bob's basement rec room. A talented pianist but also a concert operatic baritone, Smyslov began playing and singing. Bob returned home from work to find that, one-by-one, all ten of his children were sitting around the maestro, silently enchanted!

There is an important game between Bobby Fischer and Bob during a simul, and the game is a terrific fighting game. At the end when Fischer resigned, Bob, without looking, raised his hand behind his head and surprisingly the owner of Harrington's Pub shoved a twenty dollar bill into it!

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Here are a selection of games submitted for the brilliancy prize. The entries were judged by IM John Donaldson. Notes are by the winners. Congratulations to Hayes Marvin, who took the prize with this sparkling miniature:

**Tingxun Liu (1408) - Hayes Marvin (1649), 23rd Bob Burger Memorial, 2024.**

“I submitted this game because of the move 8...Ng4! It is a brilliant move because it targets the f2 square and tempts my opponent to capture, opening up the h-file with possibilities for mate on h2.”


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9.hxg4 hxg4 10.Bxg4 Qe5 11.g3 Qxg3# 0-1.

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**Sam Sloan (1900) - John Chan (1517), 23rd Bob Burger Memorial, 2024.**

1.g4. “This was the first time I played against the Grob in a tournament.”

1...d5 2.Bg2 Bxg4 3.c4 Be6 4.Qb3. “Pressuring d5 and b7.”


17.d5 Ng4 18.Ng3 Nhf6 19.Kg2 h5 20.h3 h4 21.hxg4 h3+ 22.Kh1. “White has problems with his king.”


30.Nce4 Ng4# 0-1.
Rail Akhmetov (1362) - Colin Shober (1214), 23rd Bob Burger Memorial, 2024.
“In this game, feeling tired from the previous round, I played in my naturally aggressive (but also pretty careless) style, leading to an early loss of a knight. Despite this setback and a daunting computer evaluation of minus 5, I didn't give up. I pushed my initial aggressive ideas and with precise play turned a losing position into a win. My opponent had chances to draw by returning material but was psychologically unprepared to give up their substantial lead. This was my first time at the Mechanics' Institute Chess Club, and the experience has been great.”

The 2024 New Year Tuesday Night Marathon kicked off on January 9, and runs until February 20. This FIDE rated 7-round Swiss has 71 players competing in four sections.

The 2024 New Year TNM is co-directed by National Arbiter Scott Mason and International Arbiter Judit Sztaray.

IM Elliott Winslow

A selection of annotated games from rounds six and seven of the 2023 Winter TNM, and round one of the 2024 New Year TNM annotated by IM Elliott Winslow and the players. All the games from the current TNM can be found here, and games from previous TNMs are in the Tournament Archive.
Archit Dasika locked up 1st with this interesting win against young Sivavishnu Srinivasan in a complicated and topical Catalan/Bogoindian. I get some credit for the Dasika's early win by letting myself get paired the previous round and then forfeiting, sicker than I realized. Don't believe those home Covid antigen tests! As Round 6 was being played I got a lab test back: "Covid Detected!" I just hope nobody got sick from me, let alone as sick as I was. That forfeit meant that Christophe Bambou didn't play Dasika, and who knows what would happen in *that* game. Bambou had two already-requested byes for the last two rounds, so that was that. 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 Well, except that if Srinivasan could pull off an upset, then the two of them would be tied for 1st-2nd! Tall order though. Let's see... 4.Nf3 Bb4+ There it is, the Bogo spin on the Catalan. 5.Bd2 This does at least "put the question" to the bishop. 6...0-0 [6...dxc4]}

7.0-0 Again, this and 7.Qc2 have happened hundreds of times. [Would you consider 7.Qc1!? It's done rather well!]

pawn. ]
[ 8.Bg5!? has hundreds of games as well. ]

8...b5 Possibly suspect.
[ 8...Bxd2 is the main move, essayed by the Cars (Carlsen, Caruan, and Cer, Karjakin) with a good score.

9.a4!

Bxd2?! Stepping into a forcing sequence that has done quite well for White.
[ 9...c6 10.axb5 Bxd2 11.Nfxd2 ]

[ 9...bxa4!
B) 10.Ne5 Qxd4!? (10...Ra6 11.Rd1 c5±) 11.Bxa8 Qxe5± is ragged compensation for the exchange. ]

[ 12.Qc3 ]
[ 12.Na3 ]

12...Qc5 13.Nba3!
[ 13.Qb3 is even a bit better ]

Speaking of ragged! But the big problem is, how to solve the absurd position of that rook on a7. 13...a4?! That doesn't solve anything.

[ 13...c6!? ]
[ 13...Bd7!? ]

14.Rac1
It's an easy annotation to note that 14.Rfc1 makes more sense, keeping a rook aiming at a4.

14...Nbd7? Giving up on the White squares.

14...Bb7 15.Bxb7 Rxb7 16.Qxa4 Ra7 17.Qd1 Qh5!? shouldn't work, but at least it could put a scare into White.

15.Ne3

15.Qd3!+- says SF

15...Qb6?!

15...Qe7 16.Qc3

15...Qxc2 16.Rxc2 Nb6 17.Rfc1 Ne8± Ugh, but still holding on...

16.Rfd1 Okay, this rook is pulling its weight. The bad news: Black is lost. There just isn't any solution to the backward c-pawn, while White can continue to improve. 16...Ne5 17.Qc5?!

A combination of reduction and preying on young players' traditional endgame weakness. But it could give Black a hopeful continuation.

[On 17.Qc3! Dasika might have been annoyed by Neg4 18.Nxg4 Nxe4 but 19.Qd4 trading queens anyway, still leaves Black with big problems.]

17...Ned7?

17...Qxc5 18.Rxc5 Ned7 19.Rc3 Nb6 20.Rdc1 Ne8 Black might yet get in...Bb7. Not equalizing, but fighting on.

18.Qxb6?


18...Nxb6!

18...cxb6 19.Rc6+- will pick off that pawn eventually.

19.Rc3

19.Rc5

19...Re8

19...Bd7!? 20.Rdc1 Rc8± is a goal line defence that might just work for a while.

Ugh. 22.b6! Winning material, maintaining a bind. 22...Ra5?!

22...Nxb6 23.Rxb6 cxb6 24.Rxc8+ Re8 White didn't actually win material, but the endgame is (computer here) winning. The Catalan Bishop could yet rule on two diagonals at once (from c6)!

23.bxc7

(Diagram)
Alarms are going off when such a pawn is still on the board. 23...Ne8 24.Nec4 Rh5 25.Nd6 Nxd6 26.Rxd6 Kf8 27.Rd8+ Re8 28.Bc6 A *very* interesting game! It's back to the drawing board for Black.

[ 28.Bxa8 ]

1-0


(Diagram)
Nbd7 7.b3 a6 8.d4 b6 9.cxd5 exd5 10.Ne5


(Diagram)

(Nbd7 7.b3 a6 8.d4 b6 9.cxd5 exd5 10.Ne5

b5 14.Qf3 Rc7 15.Qh3 Ne4 16.Rac1

Bb7 11.f4 Rc8 12.Bd3 c5 13.Bb2

(Diagram)
20.f5 Bg5 21.f6?! Taking the Black pressure down a bit and opening lines (-0.86) 21...Bxf6 22.Rxf6

IM Elliott Winslow said that this type of play constitutes the Ed Lewis Reality Distortion Field. Perhaps he is right. (-1.60) 22...Nxf6 23.Rd1 Qe7 24.Ba3 Re8

25.h3 b4 26.Bb2 Be6?

and just like that, White is better (+1.66) 27.d5!
Nxd5
[ 27...Bxd5 28.Ng4 Nxg4 29.Rxd5 f6 30.Qxg4 (+3.00) ]
28.Rxd5!

Bxd5 29.Nd7!!

Dislocating the Q & R, while controlling the f8 square so the Black queen cannot stop the mate on g7 (+5.20) 29...f6 30.Nxf6+ Qxf6 31.Bxf6 Rc6 Black loses his way in defense 32.Qxg7# 1-0
Mike Walder wasn't thrilled with his rating plummeting below 2000 (way below!), but at least made some bucks and a chunk of rating points, clinching first in the 1600-1999 section with a round to go. Jian Sheng recovered with a win in the last round, grabbing third.

Black needs to take this Two Knights Variation of the Caro Kann more seriously. This isn't the currently still raging ...Nf6; Nxf6+ exf6 thing.

5.Qe2

This has been seen a lot at the highest level. But is it a serious play for advantage? Or a "can't lose" line? I don't know, but when you see MVL with a plus score on both sides (what happened to the Najdorf?), you do have to wonder.

5...Nxe4 6.Qxe4 Qa5 Slightly annoying for White, but just slightly.

[ 6...Qd5 sends White's queen off *somewhere* (probably f4). ]

[But 6...Nd7 is the Main Move. ]


Svane has a huge score for Black in over a dozen games. 8.Qf4 e6 White has only a nominal plus. 9.0-0 Be7 10.d3 0-0 11.Bd2

[ 11.g4!? Bg6 12.a4 "spacing up." ]

11...Qc5?!

[ 11...Qd8 12.Bc3 Nd7 (Svane and others): it's like some Center Counter where White has avoided d2-d4. ]

12.a4

[We've come this far, and Mike's move is definitely more subtle than B v C: 12.b4 Qd6 13.Qxd6 Bxd6 14.a4 Rc8 15.b5 cxb5 16.axb5 Nd7 17.Nh4 Bg4 18.h3 was 1-0 48, Kiesel, L (1701)-Gaertner,A (1414) Verden op-B 2023 (7) after

A) 18...Bh5 19.g4 Be7 (19...Bg6 20.f4 ) 20.Nf5 exf5 21.gxh5 Ne5! 22.Bd5 Rxc2 23.Be3±;

B) 18...Be7? 19.hxg4 Bxh4 20.g5± ]

12...Nd7 13.a5 With some sneakiness in mind... 13...Bf6?! 13...Bd6= 14.Qe3 Ne5 (14...Qxe3 )]

14.Ra4 A one-mover: 15.Bb4. 14...Qe7 [Mike's Tactical Analysis suggests 14...Be5 15.Nxe5 Qxe5 16.Qxe5 Nxe5 but 17.Bb3± is somewhat...
surprisingly not so easy for Black. That a-pawn and the a-file annoy: b5 18.axb6 axb6 19.Rfa1 And there's always the Two Bishops and the lack of a great (permanent) square for Black's knight. Steinitz's constriction method! 

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
1 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

15.Bb4
[ 15.g4!+ is tactical trouble: b5 ( 15...g5 16.Nxg5 Bxg5 17.Qxg5+ Qxg5 18.Bxg5 Bxg4 19.Rb4 )
15...c5!± 16.Ba3?! White lets much of the plus slip.
[ 16.Bd2± It's hard to appreciate White's advantage, but it's there. ]
16...Qd8 Some pawn move on the queenside was better. 17.Bb5 Be7
18.h4
[White should try 18.a6± b6 19.g4 Bg6 20.h4 ]
18...Nf6!= Black is fully equal and even a bit more. 19.Ne5?
[ 19.a6 b6 20.b3 ]
19...Qc7?
[ 19...Bd6!± puts White on the spot! ]

20.Nd7! This doesn't win or anything, but it must have been some sort of surprise.
20...Qxf4?!
21.Nxf6+± gxf6
[ 21...Bxf6 22.Rxf4 h5!? 23.Bxc5 Rfc8 24.Rc4± a6 25.Ba4 Bxh4 26.Rd1! Bd8! 27.Bb6 g5 Black is holding on. ]
22.Rxf4 A lot of little threats: g4 22...h5
23.Re1
23...Rfd8?? Black cracks.

A) 27.Bxf8 Kxf8! (27...Bxf4 28.Be7± and Rb1);
B) 27.Rxf5!? exf5 28.Re7±]

[23...Bd6! 24.Rc4 b6=]

24.Rxf5
1-0


10...e5! Black has equalized 11.dxe5

[Here are some 2600 players at it:

11...Nxe5 12.Nxe5 Bxe5 Entering a typical Meran position 13.Qc2?!
SF's second best move, my idea is just to wait because White has a hard time developing the DSB 14.f4?N For some reason I had a feeling there was a possibility White will play f4, the idea is probably to start a kingside attack where White has the pawn majority. However there's one clear refutation to this move 14.Bg5? Bxh2+ 15.Kxh2 Ng4+ 16.Kg1 Qxg5 Classic ]
[Predecessor: 14.Re1? Bb7 (14...Ng4!? ) 15.f3 c5= ]
0-1 Apostolakaki,E (1218)-Karavitaki, E (1690) GRE-ch U12 Girls Achaia 2017 (2) ]
[EW: 14.h3! is only a slightest of plusses for Black. No Greek Gift! ]
14...Bd4+! The only move to maintain a crushing advantage 15.Kh1 Ng4!
It was on my radar since I played a6, I did not see a defense for White who has to give up material or really suffer. Black threatens Qh4 16.g3 Prevents Qh4 but allows another tactic 16.h3 Qh4! Threatening the fork on f2. Black DSB still cannot be developed 17.Ne2 Nf2+ 18.Kh2 Ba7 The position is unholdable in my opinion. (EW: It took Stockfish almost a minute (!) to refute 19.Ng1Ng4+! 20.Kh1 Qg3!! 21.hxg4 (21.Nf3 Nf2+ 22.Rxf2 Qxf2 ) 21...Bxg4 22.Bd2 Qh4+ 23.Nh3 Bxh3 24.Be1 Qh5 25.Bf2 Rfd8!-+ ]
16...Nf2+! 17.Rxf2 Bxf2 And the queen is overloaded 18.Kg2 [18.Qxf2 Qxd3 ]
18...Bb6 19.Ne2 Covering d4 19...c5 20.b3 Qd7! Threatening to infiltrate on h3 21.Ng1 Bb7 [21...c4! 22.bxc4 Bxg1 23.Kxg1 Qd4+! Missed that one but the position is already desperate for White even without this cute tactic ]
22.Bb2 Rad8 Like with a6, I had a feeling he would play Rd1 and allow me to finish quickly... 23.Rd1 Bxe4+
There's no perpetual by sacking both bishop on g7 and h7 at the end of the variation so this forces matters 24.Bxe4 Qxd1 25.Bxh7+ Kh8 26.Qf5
White is looking to sack on g7 to force a perpetual [26.Bxg7+Kxg7 There's no perpetual ]
26...Qd5+ Kills any counterplay so White resigned (down 2 exchanges, the g1 knight is out of the game, there's still a fork threat on d2 so White is lost) [26...a5 A random move to illustrate White's idea 27.Qh3 Leads to a decisive counter attack (27.Bxg7+ The main idea behind Qf5 Kxg7 28.Qg5+ Kxh7 29.Qh4+ Kg6 30.Qg5+ Draw by perpetual )]

0-1
Burke juggernaut. Had he won he might have at least tied for first in this section's TNM as well. Still, we might expect more to come in 2024. And now Pratyush is just a half point behind Hayes, with an inevitable matchup in the last round. Unfortunately for whatever reason he was unable to make the last round, letting Marvin take clear first; he still tied for 2nd-6th.  


Qxb3  9.Nxb3  
[ 9.axb3!  a6  10.h3  Be7  11.b4  0-0  12.Nb3± ]

9...b6?  
[ 9...a5  10.Be2  Ne4= ]

10.Rc1±  

10...Be7?!  
[ 10...bxc5  11.dxc5  Ne4  12.Nfd4± ]

11.Ba6!+-  

(Diagram)
As I had just found out that I had been suffering from Covid for the last month, I was rather low on annotator's energy -- so I see that the last dozen or more games I was more looking to get back to sleep than to find something interesting to write about. But now I can at least see who won the sections, and pick a game or two for these last couple rounds. This win by Brett Fisher who tied for 1st-2nd was without flaw on his part. He was solid in the opening, he occupied good squares, he pressed on the half-open file on the queenside and won material, he finished up tactically. Well done. 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.Nf3 Bg4 6.c3 Nf6 7.Bf4 e6 8.Nbd2 Bd6 9.Bxd6 Qxd6 10.0-0 0-0 11.Re1 a6 12.Qc2 Bxf3 13.Nxf3 Rac8 14.a3 h6 15.Rac1 b5 16.Qd1 Na5 17.Qc2 Nc4 18.Bxc4 bxc4 19.Ne5 Rb8 20.Re3 Rb3 21.f3 Rfb8 22.Re2 Rxb2 23.Qxb2 Rxb2 24.Rxb2 Qxa3 25.Rb8+ Kh7 26.Rbb1 Nh5 27.g3 f6 28.Nd7 Qd6 29.Nc5 e5 30.Ra1 exd4 31.cxd4 a5 32.Rxa5 Nxc3 33.hxg3 Qxg3+ 34.Kh1 Qxf3+ 35.Kh2 Qh5+ 0-1

He plays solid openings, he avoids problem squares and pieces, he takes slight plusses. And he's pretty brisk about it -- even if you find your way through there's the clock. In his short time in the TNMs he's won quite a few games where his opponents just didn't have the time to find their way to the draw. 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.Nf3 Bg4 5.Be2 Nc6 6.dxc5 e6 7.0-0 Bxc5 8.Bf4 Nge7 9.Nbd2 0-0 10.h3 Bxf3 11.Nxf3 Qc7 12.Bh2 Ng6 13.Bd3 Nb4 14.Bxg6 hxg6 15.c3 Nc6 16.Qe2 Rfd8 17.Rfd1
Actually Black has to find some only moves. 28.Rc2!± And still comes out worse.]

26...Rxd4 But now it's nothing to speak of. The "good knight vs. bad bishop" motif annoys White until the end of the game, but on the board he was holding. But it cost time... 27.Be3 Rdc4 28.Kh1 b6 29.a5 Qc7 30.axb6 axb6 31.f4

This is actually a three-fold repetition, but given that White lost on time on the next move he probably couldn't show it anyway. 62.Kh4= Ne7 Time 0-1
and Wu missed a win and could have gone down brilliantly -- but Parsons first played a dicier knight check, then another inaccuracy and Zhuoyuan was back in. Then it was drawn, then Wu blundered, Parsons returned the favor -- and in a complicated endgame Wu eventually took it down. Very exciting!

1.e4 c5 2.g3 d6
   [2...d5 ]

(Diagram)

...dxe5 10.Bxc6+ Bd7 11.Bxa8 Qxa8
12.Nc3 Bc6 13.Qe2 h5 14.Bg5 Ng4
15.Bxe7 Kxe7 16.Qc4 f5 17.Rad1 h4
18.Rd3

(Bh1??+-)
   [18...hxg3+ ]
19.f3
   [19.Qc7+ Kf6 20.f3]
19...hxg3 20.Qc7+ Kf6

(Diagram)

21.Ne4+
   [21.Nd5+!]
   A) 21...exd5 22.Qd6+ Kf7
      (22...Kg5 23.f4+ ) 23.fxg4
      (23.Qd7+ );
   B) 21...Kg6 22.fxg4 f4 23.Kxh1
      (23.Rxf4!? ) 23...Rxh2+ 24.Kg1
      exd5 25.Qxe5 d4 26.Qf5+ Kh6
      27.g5+ Kh5 28.Qh7+ Kg4
21...Kg6 22.fxg4?
[ 22.Nd6!+- Nhx2 23.Qf7+ Kh7
24.Qxe6 ]
22...f4
[ 22...gxh2+= 23.Kxh1 (23.Kf2??)
23...Qxe4+ 24.Rdf3 fxg4 25.Qf7+
Kh7 26.Qh5+= ]
23.Qxe5

Bxe4??
[ 23...Qxe4 24.Qxe4+ Bxe4 25.Rd2=
Kg5 26.Re1 Ba8 27.Rxe6= ]
[ 26.Qxe6+ Kg5 27.Qe5+ Kh4
(27...Kxg4 28.Rf7) 28.Qxf4+- ]
26...Qd5! 27.Rxe6+! Kf7 28.Re7+ Kg6
29.Qxe4+ Qxe4 30.Rxe4 h1Q
31.Rxh1 Rxh1

(Diagram)

32.Kf3?
[ 32.Rxf4! Rh2+ 33.Kf3! Rxc2
34.Rb4+- ]
32...Rb1?
[ 32...Rf1+ 33.Ke2 Rb1= ]
33.Ra4
[ 33.b4! Rf1+ 34.Ke2 Rc1 35.Kd2!
Rf1 36.c4+- f3 37.c5 ]
33...Rxb2

34.Rxa7?
[ 34.c4! Kf6 (34...Kg5 35.Rxa7 g6
36.Ra5+ Kh4 37.Kxf4) 35.Kxf4 g5+
36.Ke4 Re2+ 37.Kd5! ]
34...Rxc2= 35.Kxf4 Rc4+ 36.Kg3
B75

[Wong, Wilson] 1863

[Admassu, Yonathan] 1663

Winter TNM: 1600-1999 (7.6) 19.12.2023

[Wong, Wilson]

EW: Wilson Wong took clear second with this tense victory over up-and-coming Stockton player Yonathan Admassu. As regular readers of the games archive know, Wilson always sends in his detailed thoughts about his games, independently of the sharpest theory sometimes, but always insightful. Perhaps he’s lucky the rampaging Michael Walder decided not to play the last game (1st was already decided), else they would have met. Still, well-earned. 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.Be3 Bg7 7.f3 a6 8.Qd2 h5 Black plays last book move. ...h5 is a popular way in dealing with an English/Yugoslav attack. Many moves are better than what I played, including Be2, Bc4, h3, and more.

9.0-0-0? I know this response against the Najdorf is also inaccurate but I am not sure why it’s so bad. Black has dramatically slowed down White’s ability for a kingside attack and grabbed space on both wings so White can take advantage of Black’s tempo loss to do something in the center. Bc4 style isn’t popular in the mainline so I was less willing to wing it in this line, but I can see how it would be strong, stopping White from breaking with ...d5. I didn’t like all the tempis Black would gain against my c4-bishop and c3-knight so decided to just castle and see what Black does. 9...b5 Now Bc4 isn’t an option and Black will have an easier time to break in center. Additionally, Black prepares ...Bb7, which would apply pressure to White’s center, which could potentially make pushing f-pawn difficult. Black is very behind in development.

10.h3

[ 10.Nd5 Bb7 11.Nxf6+ Bxf6
I didn’t like that all I did was trade off a pair of knights to lessen the penalty of Black’s slow development. Black’s bishop are active, whereas White’s light-squared bishop is useless. ]

10...h4 Black wants to stop g4, and while it looks scary and a kingside pawn avalanche is a dangerous plan, Black is very behind in development. While White won’t be able to get a English/Yugoslav attack going, there are still attacking prospects against Black’s f7-g6 pawn chain, which can get softened up further by f4-f5.

[ 10...Bb7 This was screaming to be played. A big point behind ...a6 and ...b5 is to get the light-squared bishop to the long diagonal. Black is behind in development so finishing development should be the top priority. ]

11.Bd3 Continuing development and preparing f4, f5 plan. I secure e4-pawn in view of ...b4. 11...Nbd7

A good developing move. d7-knight has more prospects on this square, able to jump to c5- or e5-squares. Black isn’t worried about Nc6 which wastes time and does nothing. 12.f4 I still have a development lead and there is no threat to my king yet. While its common to tuck the king with Kb1, I don’t think b1-king is always the best square for it, and its not
so bad to force Black to make threats first for me to then better secure my king. Black hasn’t castled yet. Its possible for Black to castle both sides, or play ...e6 then keep king on e7-square. Black ...O-O seems suicidal in view of f5, Rdg1, g3, ripping open lines to Black's king. If Black tries to ...O-O-O then the fragility of Black’s central pawns can be cause for concern once White’s f-pawn trades with Black’s g-pawn, giving White’s knight a beautiful f5-square. Black’s d6-e7 pawn chain is vulnerable to knight sacrifices, removing a defender go f6-knight. Additionally, Black ...O-O-O just takes away any pressure to White's king, while Black's king is still susceptible to attack, and because of that, White would also have an easier time playing in the center. Black keeping king in center will take time and would be very uncomfortable. 12...Bb7 The natural developing move fails tactically. 13.a3 I didn't consider more candidate moves, missing a killer tactical shot. Since I miscalculated, I just secured my c3-knight which is vital to keeping my center intact for the meantime. 13.e5

A) 13...b4 14.exf6?? This was what I calculated which made me avoid e5. (14.Na4 dxe5 15.Ne6 fxe6 16.Bxg6+ Kf8 17.fxe5 White once again has a completely dominant position. Black's pawn center was destroyed, Black's king has no pawn shelter, White has way more active pieces, and tons of open lines, especially to Black's king.);

B) 13...dxe5 14.Ne6 fxe6 15.Bxg6+ Kf8 16.fxe5 White wins back piece, destroys Black's central pawns, destroys Black's pawn shelter, and opens the position when Black is undeveloped while

White is well developed.]

13...Qc7 Common square to develop queen to. Black can line up a battery on c-file but c2-pawn is well defended for the time being.

[13...Nc5 Black could've forced White to resolve the situation in the center, triple-attacking e4-pawn. 14.e5 dxe5 15.fxe5 Nd5 (15...Nfd7?? For some reason I missed 15...Nd5. 16.e6 The idea I was going for, but missed candidate move that crushes White.) 16.Nxd5 Qxd5 17.e6 17...Qa2 or 17...O-O-O and Black is way better.]

14.f5 Thematic pawn-break in response to ...h5 setups. White weakens Black’s square control in center and has the possibility of Ne6 fork if Black's f7-pawn is no longer there to cover e6-square.

14...Ne5 Its hard to make recommendations for Black. Black's king is unsafe on the wings, while in the center it is currently blocking rooks from connecting. 15.fxg6 Nhxg6 16.Nf5 I not only win f5-square for my knight, I also either win the bishop pair or push Black to undevelop. 16...Bf8 Black has hard choices to make. Black's dark-squared bishop is vital to contest dark-squares and tries to hold onto center together, hoping to withstand any attacks, then finish development. 17.Qf2 Preventing ...O-O-O, pressure h4-pawn, and open rooks contact on d-file. Black needs to address Nxd6 and Bxb5+ threats. 17...Rc8 Black seeks counterplay. 18.Rhf1 The move I wish I played was 18.Nxd6+ but Stockfish likes the move I played more. I don't know why this move is preferred. The text move does develop a piece and apply pressure on the weak f-file, but I like the positions after 18.Nxd6+ significantly more since it wins a pawn and destroys Black's pawn center. In the current
position, it isn't clear how I should proceed after something like 18...Bc6.

[ 18.Nxd6+ I wanted to make this move but only saw it after I made the move in the game. I need to sharpen my pattern recognition and be more attentive to overloading tactics. exd6

18...Ne5 Black doesn't stop my Nxd6+ threat so I'm not going to waste my second chance to make the move.

19.Nxd6+ This wins a clean pawn and destroys Black's pawn center, which also is supposed to support Black's king.

19...exd6

[ 19...Qxd6 20.Bxb5+ axb5 21.Rxd6 Rxc3 White is way better. ]

20.Qxf6 White just has everything in the position. White has a safer king, a better pawn structure, more active pieces, and more material. 20...Rg8 Reasonable to go for some counterplay.

21.Rf2

[ 21.Qf2 I discarded this move because I wanted my rook to do duty of covering my 2nd rank pawns, but underestimated the dangers of Black's dark-squared bishop and the precarious position of my king, which also exposes it to pins and forks. Rg3 22.Kb1 Nxd3 23.Rxd3 Bg7 24.Bd4 Stockfish's top recommendation. Stockfish neutralizes Black's threats, leaving White with a superior position and two extra pawns. ]

[ 21.Bd4 Nxd3+ 22.Rxd3 Rxg2 I didn't like I was giving Black counterplay in a position I assumed there was no way I shouldn't convert. ]

21...Rg3 I thought this was an empty threat since I'll be following up with exchange of a piece, getting closer to an endgame.

[ 21.Bg7 22.Qxh4 Nxd3+ 23.Rxd3 This looked totally harmless to me which is why I didn't fear ...Bg7, but later the piece will be a thorn in my side. ]

22.Bf4 This looked like a simple move to liquidate into a winning endgame.

[ 22.Bd4 I discarded this move in view of the skewer ...Bg7, which wins an exchange or a piece. Bg7 23.Qf5 ( 23.Qxh4?? Rxd3 24.cxd3 Ng6 Black is slightly better, and practically, it looks very difficult for White. ) 23...Nxd3+ 24.Rxd3 Rxd3 25.Bxg7 I didn't see this in the game and would avoid this if possible. Stockfish gives this +2.0 which seems fair, but I can see myself with a slim chance of fumbling the game into a draw. ]

22...Bg7 This caught me by surprise, since it leaves h4-pawn hanging. Black's pieces are so well positioned, but fortunately, White is two pawns up, and White's pieces are on reasonable squares.

23.Qxh4 Fortunately the tactics work in White's favor. I grab the free pawn, which also removes the defender to g3-rook. Black has to make something work because the endgame is totally lost.

23...Nxd3+ 24.cxd3 The correct recapture, disconnecting g3-rook's contact.

[ 24...Rg6 The only move to fight for a draw. The endgame is totally lost for Black so Black's only chance is to keep pieces on the board and make White's progress difficult. Black's bishop pair and the semi-open position is a very strong asset compared to White's clumsy rooks, which has more difficulty navigating the board. ]

25.Qxg3 1-0 White wins.

[ 25.Bxb2+ 26.Kxb2 Qc3+ 27.Ka2 White's king finds shelter from checks and is just a]
rook and pawn up.

1-0

[Tam,Hoa Long 1583
Dutter, Frederic 1914
Winter TNM: 1600-1999 (7.7) 19.12.2023
[Tam,Hoa-Long]

EW: This line brings back memories for me -- I haven't looked at the theory for over thirty years! I played White against IM William Martz in the 1973 and had a transcendent incident, sacrificing two rooks for a knight and a completely impossible to calculate position, winning when he lost the thread. Back then I thought the Four Pawns Attack was the refutation of the Alekhine Defense; nowadays I wimp out and play 4.Nf3. Let's see Hoa-Long's understanding of this particular line. He was winning but lost the way...

1.e4 Nf6 2.e5 Nd5 3.d4 d6 4.c4 Nb6 5.f4 dxe5 6.fxe5 Nc6 7.Be3

[7.Nf3?! Bg4 8.Be3± Likely transposes into the game, but up a tempo for Black.]

7...Bf5 8.Nc3 e6 9.Nf3 [9.Be2 tries to delay Nf3 another move, hoping that black blocks themselves from playing ...Qh4+ later. Be7 10.Nf3 Bg4 11.0-0±]

9...Bg4 10.Be2 Bxf3 11.gxf3 Qh4+ 12.Bf2 Qf4 13.c5 Nd5 first move out of book 14.Nxd5 exd5 15.Qc1?! Offering a queen trade on c1 makes more sense before pushing 13.c5. [15.Qd2 White's rook isn't necessarily good on c1. Trading on d2 instead helps activate the king. If Black avoids the trade, he's going to have a hard time developing the rest of his pieces given his space disadvantage. Qxd2+ (15...Qf5 16.0-0-0 a5 17.Qd3 Qd7±)]

15...Qxc1+ [15...Qf5 16.Qe3 (16.Qc3) 16...Nb4±]

16.Rxc1 g6?! [16...Ne7 17.Bd3 g6 18.Kd2 Bh6+ 19.Be3 Bxe3+ 20.Kxe3± Bad knight versus bad bishop, but White should be able to make threats on both sides of the Board, while Black's king will struggle to contribute]

17.Bb5 Black is going to have a hard time preventing me from giving him doubled c-pawns. Once I trade off the knight, there's no more pressure on d4. [17.Be3 Ne7]


A) 19...Bxe3 20.Rxe3 fxe5 (20...Kd7 21.f4 Rae8 22.Kf2±) 21.Rxe5±;

B) 19...g5 20.h4 0-0-0 (20...fxe5 21.dxe5 0-0-0 22.Bxc6 d4 23.Bxb7+ Kxb7 24.Bxd4 gxd4 25.Rxh4±) 21.Bxc6 bxc6 22.hxg5 Bxg5 23.Bxg5 fxg5 24.Kf2± no reason to give Black an outside connected passed pawn.]


19...0-0-0 20.Bxc6 bxc6 21.f4?! I was happy to turn my bishop into a pawn and enjoy the passed pawn in an endgame, but this is perhaps too passive [21.exf6? doesn't win a pawn immediately because of Rde8+ 22.Kf2 Rhf8 23.Be5 Bg5=] [21.Rf1 fxe5 22.Bxe5 Rhf8 23.f4±]

21...Kd7 22.Rf1 f5?! Relieving the tension and closing down the kingside should be good for White. White can now go gang up on Black's a-pawn. 23.Kd2?
Walking into the pin did raise flags for me, but I wanted to save a tempo moving my king to c3 so I can get my rooks to the a- and b- files.

23.h4 Completely shutting down the queenside. I was worried that Black could trade a set of rooks to give me doubled b pawns, but that just helps my other rook target Black's a pawn.


Locking my rooks out of the queenside. Maybe from here I can reroute my rooks to the h file and try to give Black a backwards pawn on the kingside.

Rb4 25.Rd3 a5 26.a3 Rb5 27.Kd1 Rb8 28.Kc2 Ke6 29.Rh1=} 24...Rb4

25.Rd2 Rhb8 26.Rcc2= I don't see how either side makes any progress ]

23...g5 24.Kc2

[24.fxg5 Bxg5+ 25.Kc2+ likely transposes into the game ]

24...gxf4 25.Bxf4 Bxf4 26.Rxf4 Ke6


29...h6 30.Rfh4 f4 31.Ke2?

[31.Rxh6+ Rxh6 (31...Ke7 32.Rxh8 f3 33.Rxf8 Kxh8 34.Rf4++; )

32.Rxh6+ Ke7 33.Ke2 f3+ 34.Kf2±]

31...f3+ 32.Kf2 Rhg8 33.Rxh6+ Ke7

34.Rf6 Rxf6 35.exf6+ Kxf6 36.Kxf3?!

41.Re2 Rf3+ 42.Kc2 Rf4 43.Rd2 Rf3+ White's plan is to push b3 then run the king up the a-file. ]

36...Re8 37.Rh6+ Kg5 38.Rxc6 Re4

39.Rxc7 Rxd4 40.Rd7?

[40.Rxa7 Rc4 41.Ra5 d4 42.Ke2 Rc2+ (42...Kf4 43.Kd3 Rb4 44.c6 Rxb2 45.Rc5 Rb8 46.c7 Rc8 47.a4--; 43.Kd3++)]

40...Kf6 41.Rd6+?

[41.c6 Ke6 42.Ke3 Rc4 43.Rxa7 Rxc6 44.Kd3 Ke5+-]

41...Ke7 42.Ke3 Rh4 43.Rxd5 Rxf2

44.Rd2?? allows my king to get cut off [44.b4! Rxa2 45.Kd4

A) 45...Rb2 46.Kc4 Rc2+ 47.Kb5+; B) 45...Rd2+ 46.Kc4 Rxd5

47.Kxd5 Kd7 48.b5 Kc7 49.c6

B1) 49...Kc8 50.Kd6 Kd8 51.c7+ Kc8 52.Kc6 a6 53.b6+ (53.bxa6??= ;)

B2) 49...Kb6 50.Kd6+; C) 45...a5 46.b5 a4 47.Kc4 a3 48.Kb3+-]

44...Rh4 45.Kd3 Kd7 46.Kc3+ Kc6

47.b4?? [47.Rd4 Rh3+ 48.Kc4-]

47...a5 48.a3?? [48.Rd4 Rh3+ (48...Rxd4 49.Kxd4 axb4 50.Kc4O+-) 49.Kc4 axb4

50.Kxb4±]

48...axb4+ 49.axb4 Kb5 Allowing Black's king to get to a5 ends all hope for White. 50.Rd4

[50.Rd6 Rxb4?? (50...Rc4+ 51.Kd3 Rxb4 52.c6 Kb6 53.Kc3 Rh4=)

51.Rb6+ Kxc5 52.Rxb4+-]

50...Rh3+ 51.Kd2 Rb3 52.Kc2 Rg3

53.Rd3 Rg2+ Black offers a draw

54.Kb3 Rg4 55.Rc3 Rxb4+ 56.Kc2

K6 57.Kd3 Rg4 58.Rc4 Rg3+

59.Kd4 Rg4+ 60.Kc3 1½–½

What a game! Andre was winning, winning, but Rayna just would not be put away. Then an extremely difficult ending arose, Persidsky had a problem-like win - didn't find it and, somehow, with her own excellent problem-like play, Rayna

D35

Yan, Rayna 1628

Persidsky, Andre 1781

Winter TNM: 1600-1999 (7.12) 19.12.23 [Winslow, Elliott]
won! What perseverance -- and how old is she?? Seven?? Oh we're in trouble...


14...Na6 15.a3 Nc7 16.d5?! g5!

17.Nfe2 cxd5 [17...Nxd5]


23.Rd4? Rfd7 24.Rcd1 Qe5 25.g3?! h5 [25...f4!]


26...h4?! 27.a4 Rd6 [27...f4+]


28...Nxb5 29.Qxb5 f4+ 30.Rc1 f3+ [30...Qf5]

[30...R8d7]

31.Kf1 Rh6 32.Ke1 hxg3 33.hxg3 Rh1+ 34.Kd2 Rxc1?!

[34...Rh2 35.Ke1 Kg6 36.g4 Kg7]

35.Kxc1?! Rd6?!= 36.Kb1 Qe6

37.Qb3?!

[37.Rd1=]

37...Kg6? 38.Qc2 Qd7 39.b3?!

[39.Qc1]

39...Rc6?

[39...Kh5-+]

[39...Kf5+-]
A2) 59.Kf1 Kf3 60.Ra2 g3 61.Rxf2+=
B) 54...Kxg3!-+ 55.Kd2 Kf2+ (55...Kg2)
51.Rxa5 Kxf2 52.Ra2+ Kxg3
[52...Kxe3 53.Ke1 Kd4 54.Re3 e3 55.Ra4+ Kd3 56.Rxg4]
53.Ke1! Kh3 54.Kf1 g3 55.Ra8 Kg4
56.Rg8+ Kh3 57.Kg1 Kf4 58.Re8 Kh3 59.Rxe4 f2+ 60.Kf1 g2+ 61.Kxf2
1-0

Cowger, Gabriella
McKemey, Hector
Winter TNM: u1200 (7.22) 19.12.2023
[Winslow, Elliott]

EW: McKemey would have taken clear first and, having played all the opponents close by was paired a point down with Cowger -- but she played solid and he had to concede the draw and tie for first in the under-1200 section. 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e5 Nd5 4.Bc4 e6
[4...Nb6 5.Be2 (5.Qe2 Nxc4 6.Qxc4; 5.Bx7+?? A potential line proposed during analysis by White, but it's just losing. Kxf7; EW: 5.d3? suggested by my Stockfish but still no big deal.) 5...Nc6]
5.Bxd5 exd5 6.d4 Nc6 7.0-0
[7.dxc5 Bxc5 8.Qxd5 d6! 9.exd6 Bxd6±]
7...d6 8.exd6 Bxd6 9.Re1+
[EW: 9.c4!±]
9...Be6 10.dxc5 Bxc5 11.Nbd2
EW: This looks like it could have come out of the Tarrasch French -- but where did White's bishop go? 11...0-0
12.Nb3 Bd6 13.h3 Qc7 14.Be3 b6
Black should just get rooks to the center. 15.Nbd4 Nxd4

39.Kd4 Be2 40.Ne3 Bf3 41.c4 axb4 42.axb4
½-½

B70

Yan,Ruiyang 2357
Walder,Michael 2003

2024 New Year TNM: 2000+ (1.1) 9.1.24 [Winslow,Elliott/Tactical Analysis 6.4]

Ruiyang is back in the TNM, and it's going to be tough for the rest of us. She and Dasika have some similarities of style, playing careful, positional chess, so their likely confrontation later in the tournament should be interesting. And I don't intend to be any pushover either. Mike prepared a transposition to the quieter Dragon lines and, as all too often, managed some advantage out of the opening, but was gradually outplayed, and fell apart later in the middlegame.


(Diagram)

bxa4?!N Black wins a pawn but comes under quite a bit of pressure. It might just not be worth it.

[Black had a slight advantage after 14...Nxd5 15.axb5 axb5 16.Rxa8 Qxa8! (16...Bxa8 17.Bxb5 e6 18.Be2 Qb8 19.Bf3 Rc8 20.c3 Be5 ½-½ Needleman,A (2357)-Peralta,F (2549) San Luis zt 2.5 2007 (3) ) 17.Bxb5 Nc7 18.Bf1 Ne6 with Black having slightly the better of it. ]
[There are also 14...Qd7!? ]
[and 14...Qc7!? ]

[17.c4!? Nf6 18.b4 ]

17...e6
[17...Nf6!? doesn't weaken d6, and maintains some token advantage. ]

18.Rd3 Bc8?!
[18...Rad8 19.c4 Ne7 ]

19.b3 -0.17/37
[19.Qd2! 0.30/35 is superior. ]

19...Nc3 0.26/35
[19...Qc7 -0.17/37 deserves consideration. 20.Nc4 Bc3 ]

20.Qf3= Nd5 21.c4 Qc7? 0.94/32
[21...Nb4!= 0.04/36 22.Qxa8 Nxd3 23.Bxd3 Bc3 recovers the piece, but still with no advantage. ]
22. Bd2± Nb6! The only move 23. Bb4
White is much more active. The black rooks are passive.  23... Rd8? 1.86/25
[23...d5! 0.70/30 was necessary to activate the position, but White still has good play after 24. Rc1 (24. Bxf8 is some plus as well) 24... Bh6 25. Rc2 Bd7! 26. Bxf8 Bxf8 27. Rdd2 Qc5]
24. Qc6! Qa7?
25. Bxd6
[25. Bc5!]
1-0

A11

Lewis, Edward  1977
Dasika, Archit  2235
2024 New Year TNM: 2000+ (1.2) 9.1.24
[Winslow, Elliott]

1. Nf3 d5 2. e3 Nf6 3. c4 c6 4. h3 Bf5
5. d4 e6 6. a3 Nbd7 7. cxd5 cxd5
11. 0-0 0-0 12. Rd1 b5 13. e4 dxe4
Nd5 17. Ne5 Qe7 18. Bc2 Rd8
Qh4 22. Rxh4 Rxh4 23. Rc1 Rxc1+ 24. Qxc1 g6 25. Qc8+ Kg7 26. Qxa6
Bxe5 27. dxe5 Qa4 28. b4 Qd1+
29. Kh2 Qf1!=

(Diagram)

Equal! 30. Bd8
[Or 30. Bb6 Nf4 31. Qa8 Ne2 32. h4
Qg1+ 33. Kh3 Qh1+ (33... h5
34. g3=) 34. Kg4= White doesn't get mated!]
30... Nf4 31. Kg3 Nh5+ 32. Kh2 Qxf2
33. Bf6+ Kh6 34. Qc6 Qf4+ 35. Kg1
Qe3+ 36. Kh2 Qg3+ 37. Kg1 Nf4
38. Kf1 Qd3+ 39. Kg2 Qd2+ 40. Kf1
Qe3 41. Qc2 g5 42. h4 gxh4 43. Bxh4
Qd3+ 44. Qxd3 Nxd3

45. Bf6 Nb2?!
[45... Nf4! 46. Kf2 Nd5 47. Bd8 Kg6
48. g4 f6!±]
46. Ke2 Nc4
   [ 46...Kh5 47.Kf3 Nc4 48.g4+ Kg6 49.Ke4 Nxa3= ]

47. Kd3?
   [ 47.g4!= ]
47...Nxa3?
   [ 47...Kh5!-- ]
48. Kd4?
   [ 48.g4= ]
48...Kg6?
   [ 48...Kh5+ ]
49. g4+= h5 50.gxh5+ Kxh5 51.Kc5 Kg4 52.Be7 Kf4 53.Bd6 Ke4 54.Bc7 Kd3 55.Bd8 Nc4 56.Bc7 Na3 57.Bd8 Kc3 58.Bh4 Nc2 59.Kxb5 Nxb4

(Diagram)

60. Kc5
   [ 60.Be1+ Kd4 61.Bxb4 Kxe5= ]
60...Nd3+ 61.Kd6 Kd4 62.Bf6 Ke4 63.Bg7 Kf5 64.Bf6 Nf2 65.Bh8 Ng4 66.Bg7 Kg6 67.Bh8 Kh7 68.Ke7 Nh6 69.Bf6 Kg6 70.Kd7 Ng4 71.Bh8 Kf5 72.Kd6 Ne3 73.Ke7 Kg6

(Diagram)

74. Kd6?? Nc4++?? 75.Ke7 Nb6

(Diagram)
76. Kd6??
[ 76. Ke8 ]
[ 76. Kf8 ]
76... Nd5 77. Kd7 Kh7 78. Ke8 Kxh8
79. Kxf7 Nf4 80. Kf6 Kg8
0-1

8. Ne5?
[ But Stockfish is pretty adamant about 8. Be3 (which does score well, though rarely played). But one nice aspect of 8. Ne5 -- Black has a bewildering selection of responses! ]

Far and away favored, by A-players to 2600s (nobody higher has seen 7... Bg4).

8... Bh5 This does keep the pressure on e2, but that could be "Bishop on the Rim is Dim" (or is that --) (On this note, has anyone besides me read (I have a ways to go to finish) "Under the Surface" by Jan Markos (Slovak GM), the chapter "Anatoly Karpov's Billiard Balls"?? It's
especially curious, but the whole book is quite interesting. I have it on my phone through Forward Chess, will get through it all after a few more BART rides.


[8...Be6 has settled in as the Main Line, but I'm not convinced. ]

[My main concern was 8...cxd4 9.Nxg4 Nxg4 but Stockfish assures me that 10.e4! works ( 10.e3 is pretty good too, just not as good ) 10...Nd6 11.exd5 Nxd5 12.Qb3+ is actually too much for Black -- Nb6 13.a4! a5 14.Bg5!]

Be7 ( 14...Qxg5 15.Qxb6 ) 15.Bxe7 Kxe7 ( 15...Nxe7 16.Qb5+ ) and now the Romantic 16.Nc3+- I'll leave it to the Max Lange players among us to figure out why Stockfish thinks *this* works. ]

[8...Nxd4?? 9.Nxg4 Nxd4 10.e3 ]

9.Nc3


9...cxd4
10...Be7

11.Qxd4 Be7!

12.e4! More heroic than something snively like
[ 12.Qa4 Rc8 13.Qxa7
which Stockfish rates about the same. ]

12...dxe4 13.Qc4
[ 13.Qa4! ]

13...c5?! Daring me to get excited about some BxRa8 in the near future?
[ 13...0-0 14.Nxe4 is in the +0.43-0.47 range after a lot of moves by Black. ]

[ 14...0-0 15.Nxf6+ Bxf6 16.Qxc5+ takes advantage of that bishop on h5.
Reminds me of the 4.Nf3 Bg4 line of the Alekhine Defense. ]

15.Bxe4+-
[ 15.Qxe4! 0-0 ( 15...Rb8 16.Bf4 Rx b2 17.Qe5 woops )
with no queens the LSB won't be as missed. ]

15...Rc8
[I'd try 15...0-0 but 16.Bxa8 Qxa8
20.Qf1 Queasy, but winning (if you're a computer maybe). ]

16.Qa4++- I thought this *had* to win (king on f8??) but it's not the best!?
[ 16.Bf4 0-0 17.Bb7+- Stockfish wants that rook! ]

16...Kf8
[ 16...Qd7 17.Qxd7+ Kxd7 18.Bf5+ ]

17.Be3
[ 17.Qa6! actually makes sense, given how the game went. ]

17...Qb6
[ 17...g5!? It's still +-, but you have to appreciate the logic: someplace for the king, but giving the B/h5 g6 if it needs to survive some g4 hit. ]

18.b3?± Innocuous but drops a chunk of advantage. I saw what was coming, and I don't mind a little complication. But -- well, one of my favorite self-deprecating exercises when I hit a clunker is to tap the "+" button in the engine window. I usually run Stockfish 16 with five or six lines, but I do wonder: how bad *was* my move? On this occasion: 14th best.
Ten or eleven moves get a "+-" (winning), and a couple more slightly better than my move. As I say, I saw his next move but thought it would be "fun"...
[ 18.Rfe1+- 2nd best; ]
[ 18.Rfc1!+- would have been "better" ]
complications. ]

18...Be2 and he played it! But maybe it's not the best.
[ Stockfish still elects 18...g5!
the only move not flat-out losing.
(when 19.Bf5! is my best) ]

19.Rfe1! Bb5 20.Qa3 g6?! And this is tenth best by the computer, although he's just lost.
[ 20...h5!? 21.b4 h4!? 22.bxc5 Qc7
23.Qb3 hxg3 24.Qxb5! does get
crazy! ]

21.Rac1?‡ And again: dicing a big chunk off my plus, and he might well be able to hold -- if he can keep it together.
[Here also quite a list of winners instead, with the leader by a length:
I was concerned with
A) 22...Bf8 is a better but insufficient try: 23.Bxf8 Kxf8
( 23...Rxf8 24.Rac1 h5 25.h4
and Qxc5 or Re7 ) 24.Qb2 Rg8
25.a4 Bc6 26.Bc4 Bb7 27.Rad1
Qc6 28.Bd5;
B) 22...Bf6 23.b4!! suddenly exposes Black's king. I didn't see anything like Bxa1? 24.Bxf7+! Kxf7
25.Qf3+! and 26.Qd5+, mate follows. ]

21...Kg7! It's back to the drawing board, but I do still have solid positional plusses. 22.Rc2! With some nice designs 22...Rhe8! I saw this, and rather hoped he wouldn't. 23.Qc1! Bd6?
[ 23...Bf8 24.Bd5 ( 24.b4? Rxe4!
25.Bh6+ Kg8 26.Rxe4 Bd3= )
24...Kg8 25.Rd1 Red8 26.Rcd2‡ ]

24.b4! Qa6?!
[ 24...Re5 ]

25.bxc5+- Ba4?! 26.cxd6
[ 26.Bh6+! Stockfish actually sees
draftmate in 10. ]

1-0

EW: Brad Diller is back again, this time in control against Kayven Riese. White never quite seems to have his game in order. 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4
4.e5 Qd7 EW: This whole system in the Winawer French is baffling -- Black steps out of the way and lets White "gain space" but weaken squares. 5.Nge2 b6
6.a3 Bf8

(Diagram)

(Diagram)
7.b4\# This has got to be an overreaction. The computer makes White even, but in practice it’s too easy to just end up with holes.

[7.Nf4±]


7...Ba6= 8.Rb1 Bc4

[8...c5!=]

9.g3

[White should try 9.Nf4±]


[22.Nd4±]

(Diagram)

22...Qc6

[22...Qa4! 23.Rb3 Rc4]

23.c3= Qa4 24.Ra1 Qb3 25.Qd1 Qc4 Black has more active pieces. 26.Rb1

[26.Qd2=]

26...g5 27.Qc1

[27.Qb3=]

27...g4!± 28.Qd2 White is weak on the light squares 28...Kg7 29.Ra1

[29.Qd1]

29...h4 30.Rg1

[30.gxh4 Bxh4+ 31.Kf1]

30...hxg3+ 31.hxg3 Rh8 Wards off Rh1
32. Rg2 Qb3
[Not 32...Rh1 33.Rg1 Rh3
  (33...Rh2+? 34.Rg2+ ) 34.Kg2+ ]
33. Qc1 Rh3 34. Qa1 Qc2 Strongly threatening ...Nxg3! 35. Qg1 Nh4
0-1

Bambou, Christophe 2129
Wu, Zhuoyuan 1861
2024 New Year TNM: 2000+ (1.5) 9.1.24
[Winslow, Elliott]

0-0 14.Rd1 Qd7 15.h3 Bd6 16.Be3 Kh8 17.d5
  [17.a4!]
17...e5

22.axb6 f4 23.Ba4 Qf5 24.Bxe8 f3 Zhuoyuan throws a "Hail Mary" but he's
just down too much and there's no mate if White defends carefully.

25.Bxg6 Adding an element of
unnecessary drama. Most queen moves
(c4, b5, c2, f1) would win "simply."
25...Qe5 Christophe forgot about this!
Fortunately for him it's still a win. 26.g3
  [26.Bf4! Qxf4 27.g3 fxe2 28.gxf4
   exd1Q+ 29.Rxd1 (29.Nxd1 )
   29...hxg6 30.Nxe4 is Stockfish's
   favorite continuation. ]
26...fxe2 27.Nxe2

22. a4!? Rfe8 19.a5 e4 20.Qh5 Bg6
21.Qe2 f5

(Diagram)
That pawn on a7 is just too big a threat to queen. 34...h4 35.g4 Bb6 36.Nb5 h5 37.g5 e3 38.fxe3 Bxe3+ 39.Kg2 Bxa7 40.Rxa7 Rc8 41.Rd2 Re8 42.Nd4 Re7 43.Nf5 Pf7 44.Nxh4 Rg7

Conversely, here Black is a bit better because of their better pieces and control of the centre. Black can choose to play f4, e4, or slow play with Ng6 + Nf6. ( 11...e4? 12.Nxe4 Bxa1 13.Qxa1 Nxf5\#  If you had an extra tempo to take the bishop here, Black would be clearly better, however,
14. Bg5 And the house comes crashing down. 12. Ng5 White's best source of counter play.]
[10. Nd2]
10... f5 11. exf5??+
11... e4! Winning a piece, thanks to White's many hanging pieces. 12. f6
Bxf6 13. Bh6 Bxc3 And we win the capture chain. 14. Bxf8
16. Qxa1]
14... Bxa1 15. Bxe7
[15. Qxa1 Qxf8]
15... Qxe7 16. Re1 Bg7 And we get the tempo to save the piece. 17. Rxe4 Qf6
[17... Qf7 Spent a while in this position considering my options, ended up rejecting this because 18. Ng5 Qf6
19. Re8+ Nf8 20. Ne6 Felt like too much counterplay to give up! Bxe6 21. Rxa8 The point.]
18. Re8+ Kf7 19. Re6 Qa1 Forcing the bishop to move, winning a tempo.
20. Ng5+ Kg8 21. Bb1 Nf8! I was really proud of this move, because it solved any tactical problems I might have had with the knight disconnecting the bishop & queen, and it protects h7 from knight sacs. 22. Re8 Bg4! A nice little tactic to increase my material advantage.
23. Rxf8+
[23. Qxg4?? Qxb1+ 24. Qd1 Qxd1+
25. Re1 Qxe1#]
23... Rxf8 And the bishop is still untouchable :) 24. Qe1 Bf5 25. Ne4
Qd4
[25... Re8?! Unnecessarily complicated. 26. Nf6+ Bxf6 27. Qxe8+ Kg7+ but it still works.]
26. h3 Bxe4 27. Bxe4 Re8 28. Qc1
Qxe4 29. Qg5 Qe1+ And now a nice mating sequence. 30. Kh2 Be5+ 31. f4
Bd4 32. h4 Bg1+ 33. Kh1 Bf2+ 34. Kh2
Qg1+ 35. Kh3 Re3+ 36. Kg4 Qd1#
[36... Rg3# Also mate.]
0-1

Fisher, Brett 1344
Starr, Albert Martin 1500

2024 New Year TNM: 1200-1599 (1.15) [Winslow, Elliott]

Albert Starr tumbles a bit but comes out on top. Fisher just didn't quite untangle his "connected" (that's not necessarily a good thing) knights. 1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6
3. Nc3 a6 The Old/New Janowski Queen's Gambit! 4. Nf3 dxc4 5. e4 b5
6. a4 b4 7. Na2 Bb7 8. Bxc4 Bxe4
20. Qxf3 Qd5 21. Rac1 Qxf3 22. gxf3
Bd6 23. Rc6 Rfd8 24. Nc4 Ne8
25. Nbxa5 Be7 26. Re4 Bf6 27. b3
Bxd4+ 28. Kg2

Bc3
28...Rd5+ 
29.Nb7 Rd1 30.Ne5? f6? 
[ 30...Ra7 31.Nc5 Bxe5 32.Rxe5 Rd2+ 33.Kf1 Rd6! ]
31.Nd7? 
31...Rxd7 32.Rcxe6 Nd6 33.Nxd6 
Rx6 34.Re7 c5 35.Re7 f5 36.Re7 
Bf6 37.Re2 Rd3 38.Rxc5 Rxb3 39.a5 
Rb2 
[ 39...Ra3 ]
40.Rxb2 Bxb2 41.Rxf5 Ra6 42.Rb5 
Bc3 43.f4 Kf7 44.Kf3 Re6 45.Rb7+ 
Ke8 46.f5 Re7 47.Rb6 Kd8 48.a6 
Kc8 49.Re6+ Kb8 50.g4 Ka7 51.g5 
Re1 52.Kf2 Ra1 53.f6 gxf6 54.gxf6 
Bxf6 55.Rxf6 Rxa6 
[ 55...b3! ]
56.Rf7+ Kb6 57.Rxh7 b3 58.Rh6+ 
Kb5 59.Rh5+ Kc4 60.Rh8 Rb6 
61.Rc8+ Kd3 62.Rc1 b2 63.Rb1 Kc2 
64.Re5 b1Q 65.Rxb1 Rxb1 66.Kg2 
Kd3 67.h4 Rb5 68.Kf3 Kd4 69.Kg4 
Ke5 70.Kg5 Ke6+ 71.Kg6 Ke7 72.h5 
Kf8 73.h6 Kg8 
0-1
Abhishek Handigol

My Journey to National Master

A month ago, while traveling to New York on a break from tournament chess, I got a rather vague email from USCF saying "Congratulations! Your recent tournament performances have earned you one or more new milestones or norms towards your next norms-based title: National Master.”

Confused, I opened up my USCF profile, and was extremely shocked to see "National Master Certificate: Earned in 2023". As far as I knew, my highest rating was 2192, and I had dropped since then, but I looked at my tournament history and saw the event got re-rated to 2201! I was in shock. After 10 years of struggling in the 2000-2200 range, wanting to quit multiple times (and it would have probably been better for my sanity if I had), I had finally gotten the elusive National Master title. In this article, I will share the story of how I overcame the infamous 2000-2199 plateau.

After graduating college in 2021, a friend of mine at the UC Davis chess club convinced me to try again for the NM title. I wasn't sure at first, since I still had bad memories of my earlier struggles with OTB chess, but I decided to try it out in the end. My first tournament back to chess was the US Amateur Team West Championship. I was definitely nervous since I hadn't played seriously in around three years because of the pandemic. Especially on my openings, I had no idea what to play since I hadn't been studying theory. I searched Chessable for a system opening with white and found an interesting one with the moves 1. Nf3 and 2. e3, and decided to try it out. I ended up playing a great game which really boosted my confidence, Game 1 vs Zhang (2162) below.

My new rating was 2124, so I thought it can't be too long before I reach NM, right? Boy, was I wrong! Five months later, I started playing again, but I had a couple of disappointing performances. I got a coach and took a couple of classes to figure out where I can improve. Surprisingly, he said that my weaknesses were not chess-related, they were more psychological! A lot of the time I would know the right move to play, but I would second-guess myself, overthink and play something else instead. So I needed to work on my confidence! Here is an example, Game 2 vs Qin (2117) below.

I thought, maybe I need to play more tournaments to build confidence. So I tried playing a lot, almost every week in fact, since I thought I could play myself into shape. I was also determined to get NM by the end of 2022. This was definitely a mistake, especially since I wasn't improving, since it takes a while for improvement to actually show in my play. I was also getting frustrated, since I'd hear similar feedback after almost every game that I was either overthinking, or seeing ghosts. So I decided to take a 3-month break from chess and start again in 2023. I did end up playing some nice games though, one of which I wanted to show here, Game 3 vs Zhou (2052) below.

At the start of this year, I was playing a bit better than last year; I did more work on my openings, I was not second-guessing myself anymore, but I still wasn't improving. My coach told me I would play most games really well, but I would make some decisions in those games that weren't practical. For example, when I had a clear advantage, I would try to win quickly and lose my advantage. Time management was also a huge issue in my games; I would either get confused in the opening and spend time, or take too long on trivial moves in the middlegame and end up in time pressure later. It is also pretty difficult to play on weekends sometimes, especially with a 9-5 job, so this could also be a
reason why I didn't improve that much (simply because of fatigue and stress). I did play one quick knockout that I wanted to show here, Game 4 vs Rajaram (2099) below.

After taking another break and going on vacation, I was ready to play OTB again. I played in the National Open in June, hoping to win the U2100 section. Sadly, I fell sick during the tournament. After a rocky start in the 4-day section, I reentered the 2-day section and started 4-0 before losing a heartbreaking game up a piece in time pressure. Although I didn't win first, I definitely think this tournament is where I started to improve. I implemented three things that I think really made the difference in my tournament performances:

1. I noticed that I played a lot better in shorter time controls than longer ones, probably since I'm more of an intuitive player, so I tried to play in more of those tournaments.

2. I realized that I had huge issues with nerves, especially in time trouble, so I learned a couple of breathing techniques that I can use during the games (like the 4-7-8 breathing technique). I would also do a short meditation (~5 minutes) right before each game.

3. Since I noticed I was making recurring mistakes, every time I learned something from my coach or from a blog I would put it in my notes app, and make sure to read it right before each game. Some examples would be "Slow down in the opening" or "Don't rush in winning positions".

I also became pretty good at coming back from worse or losing positions, simply because I kept looking for chances. I would change my mindset from "Let me try to win" to "I'll probably lose if my opponent plays perfectly, but let's at least make it difficult for them". I think this alone also helped my results a lot too.

Here are a couple such examples, Game 5 vs Chakraborty (2281) and Game 6 vs Hamedani (1900) below.

Suddenly, I was back at 2130! As long as my rating was going up, I would keep playing consistently in order to keep the momentum going. I figured if I play enough while I'm in good form, I should hit 2200 eventually. Apart from analyzing my games, I didn't do much work on chess, except maybe some puzzles here and there and reviewing openings. I did pretty well in the next few tournaments, beating some strong players and breaking 2200 (after the re-rate).

I'll show some key games here, Game 7 vs Qin (2029), Game 8 vs Wang (2191), Game 9 vs Kagle (1991), Game 10 vs Shrauger (2062), and Game 11 vs Dasika (2224) below.

Thanks for reading! I hope reading this helps your chess, or at least inspires you to keep persevering towards your next rating goal. Also, I would like to thank Mechanics' Chess Club for hosting so many great and affordable tournaments, and for giving me the opportunity to write for the newsletter.
1. Nf3  d5  2.e3  Nf6  3.b3  c5  4.Bb2  
Nc6  This is the most common approach, with black trying to play as if they were white, but the problem is that they're not :) 5.Bb5  e6  6.Bxc6+  Not forced, I could wait for a6, but more likely that black will play Bd7  6...bxc6  double-edged. Black has a broken structure, but the bishop pair can become active  7.Ne5  Bd6  8.f4  trying to clamp down on the position 8...Qc7  9.0-0  0-0  10.Rf3!?  It's a bit direct, but I thought this was an aggressive approach  
[ 10.d3 probably this is the better way to play it, bringing the other knight to f3 and mobilizing slowly ]

10...Nd7  11.Rh3  protecting the pawn because of Qh5, here black has to play f5 or f6 11...g6??  
[ 11...f5 trying to lock the position, but my bishop on b2 is still uninhibited  12.Nxd7  Qxd7  13.Qh5  g6  14.Qh4±  I would definitely take white even though I haven't finished development because the bishop on b2 is extremely strong ]

(Diagram)

stopping Qh5...or does it?  12.Qh5!!  
Nope! I played this almost instantly and my opponent was shocked. So were his teammates :) 12...Nf6  
[ 12...gxh5?  13.Rg3+  Kh8  14.Nxf7#  double checkmate! ]

13.Qh4? not the best followup  
[ 13.Ng4!! I considered this but I didn't see the knockout blow, but white wins the queen back at least so I should have gone for this  13.gxh5  14.Nxf7+  
A) 14...Kg7  what I also didn't see is that white has forced mate here!  15.Ne8+  Kh6  ( 15...Kg6  16.Rg3+  Kg5  17.Ng7+  Ke4  18.d3# )  
16.Bg7+  Kg6  17.Rg3+  Kf5  18.Rg5+  Ke4  19.Nc3# would have been a nice finish!;  
B) 14...Kh8  15.Rxh5  h6  16.Nxd5+  Kh7  17.Nxc7  Bxc7  18.Rxc5+- ]

[ 13.Qh6! would also keep the pressure ]

13...h5?? misses a chance. black thought he can trap my queen, but I have a nice resource to get out of it  
[ 13...d4! the long diagonal needs to be closed at all costs  14.exd4  white is still winning but the knight on f6 holds everything ]

14.Qxf6  Be7  oh no! my queen is
trapped! 15.Nd7!! nope! second queen sacrifice! 15...d4
16.Qxe7 Bxd7 Now I'm up a piece and should convert 17.exd4 e5 18.Rh4 Rfe8 19.Qg5 exd4 20.Na3 clearing the back rank 20...Re2 21.Qxc5 Rxd2 22.Nc4 1-0

A) 9.g6? it doesn't seem like I've accomplished much but actually it's pretty strong. hgx6 ( 9...h6? 10.Bxh6 gxh6 11.Qxh6+- is basically winning ) 10.Qxg6+- queen is annoying and h4-h5-h6 comes;
B) 9.gxf6 Nxf6 and black is active. ]

8...Nd7 9.Qf3 My plan was Qg3-Nf3-h5-g6 9...c5 10.Qg3 b5 11.Nf3 c4

So here Bxh7 is begging to be played, and I spent all my time calculating it but still decided to not play it 12.Bf1??
[ 12.Bxh7+! Kxh7
A) 13.g6? this wouldn't work fxg6 14.Ng5+ ( 14.h5?! I also looked at this g5 15.Nxg5+ Bxg5 16.Bxg5 Qc7 17.Bf4 Rxh4 18.Qg6+ Kg8 19.exf4 looks unclear... ) 14...Bxg5! 15.hxg5+ Kg8+- and black is winning;
B) 13.h5! This is the correct follow-up that makes Bxh7 work, since g6 and h6 is coming 13...Kg8 14.g6! f5 15.h6!+- and black is lost ]

12...Qa5 Now even though the position on the board was equal, black has the upper hand psychologically, not to mention the immense time pressure I
was under from spending all my time on
the previous move 13.Bh3 b4
now it's definitely black for choice, I'm
still in the game but time trouble was a
huge issue 14.Ne2 b3+ 15.Nc3
[ 15.c3 I debated this too but not
effective time to decide which was
better bxa2 16.Nc1 Qb6 17.Rxa2
Nd6 I thought my pieces were pretty
awkward here ]
15...Bb4 16.0-0 bxc2 17.g6??
desperation 17...hxg6 18.Ng5 Ndf6
19.Ne2 Nh5 20.Qf3 Qb6 21.Rac1 f6
22.Rxc2 fxg5 23.hxg5 Bd6 24.Qg2
Bxf4 25.exf4 Nxf4 26.Nxf4 Rxf4
27.Rxc4 Rb8 28.Rc3 Qxd4??
29.Nxc8! I recovered the piece
somehow, but the position is still tough
and I was too low on time 29...Rxc8
[ 32.Bh3± had to be played ]
32...Nf5+ 33.Bxf5 gxf5 34.Qh3 Rh4+,
Rh4 is coming next, so I resigned.

0-1

3 D01
□ Handigol,Abhishek 2096
■ Zhou,Ruoyu 2052
Calchess State Championship 2022

Na6 5.e3 Be7 6.Bd3?! I messed up
the move order here.
[ 6.Nf3 is the main move 0-0 ( 6...Nh5
7.Be5 f6 8.g4! ) 7.Be2 c6 8.Nc3
Qb6 9.Rb1 c5 10.0-0 Bd7 11.Ne5
Rfd8 12.g4! with a strong attack ]
6...0-0 7.g4 c6 8.Nc3 Nc7?
too passive
[ 8...Nb4 this should be played 9.Be2
c5 challenges the center ]
9.g5 Nfe8 10.h4 f5 11.gxf6
I could’ve not taken en passant and got
a good position, but I thought it would
be easier to play with the open g-file. I
do have to be careful though, since I
also opened the f-file for black's rook.
11...Nxf6 12.Nf3 Nce8?! too slow
[ 12...Bb4 black should at least try
something active here. ]
13.Ne5 c5 14.Qf3?
hugely underestimates black's
counterplay.
[ 14.dxc5 If I just take on c5, black still
does not have play. Bxc5 15.h5 d4
16.h6! g6 ( 16...dxc3?? 17.Bxh7+
Nhx7 18.Qxd8+- ) 17.Bxg6! hxg6
18.Qd3+- ]
14...c4 15.Be2 Bb4 now black gets
a lot of play on the queenside which I
definitely did not have to allow. 16.h5
Bxc3+ 17.bxc3 Qa5 the queenside
pawns are going to fall no matter what,
so I decide to go all-in for the attack
18.0-0?! Qxc3 19.Kh2! not wasting
time. preparing g1 for the rook
19...Qxc2 20.Rg1 Qe4 21.Qg3
[ 21.Qh3 this might be better,
supporting h6. ]
21...Qf5 22.Qh4 now surprisingly black
is lost, since it's too difficult to
activate his pieces. Rg5-Rg1-h6 is
coming with a sac on g6 22...Qc2
23.Rg2 this is sneaky, but the immediate
h6! was better.
[ 23.h6 Qxe2 24.hxg7 Nxg7
( 24...Qh5 25.Qxh5 Nhx5 26.gxf8Q+
Kxf8 27.Bh6+ Ke7 28.Rg8+-
white is up the exchange and has
more active pieces, black does not
have enough compensation )
25.Rxg7+! Kxg7 26.Qh6+ Kg8
27.Rg1+ Ng4+ 28.Nxg4+- ]
23...c3
[ 23...Qxe2? 24.f3+- nice little queen
trap ]
24.Bd3 Qb2 25.h6! rook sac! 25...g6
[ 25...Qxa1 26.hxg7 Nxa7 27.Rxg7+!
Kxg7 28.Bh6+ Kh8 29.Bxf8+- ]
26.Bxg6! hxg6 27.h7+ Nhx7
28.Rxg6+ Kh8 29.Rag1 Nef6
30.Qxh7+!! Kxh7
   [ 30...Nhx7 31.Rg8+! Rxg8 32.Nf7# ]
31.Rh6# 1-0 White wins by checkmate.
1-0

4 D00
Handigol,Abhishek 2085
Rajaram,Rohan 2099
January Master Swiss 2023

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.d3 h6!? has definitely been played before, but always makes my opponents think
5.Nbd2 e6 6.c3 Bd6 7.Bg3 0-0 8.Bd3 b6 9.e4! A pretty new development that leads to a tricky line for black 9...Be7
10.e5 Nd7?
   [ 10...Nh5 is the main move 11.Ng5 Bxg5 12.Qxh5 g6 13.Qe2 with an interesting position. Personally I think white has all the chances here ]
11.h4 f6?? looks natural, but loses on the spot 12.Ng5! opens the queen to h5
12...fxg5 13.Bxh7+! a natural followup
13...Kxh7 14.hxg5+ Kg8
   (Diagram)

15.Rh8+!! no time for black to consolidate
   [ 15.Qh5?? this is too slow Bxg5 16.Qh8+ Kf7-+ ]
15...Kxh8 16.Qh5+ Kg8 17.g6 mate is unstoppable 17...Nf6 18.exf6 Rxf6 19.Qh7+ Kf8 20.Qh8#
1-0

5 C55
Chakraborty,Dipro 2281
Handigol,Abhishek 2087
22nd Charles Bagby Memorial 2023

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.d3 h6!? has definitely been played before, but always makes my opponents think
5.Nc3 d6 6.a3 g6 7.b4 Bg7 8.Bd2 0-0 9.0-0 Qe7?! doesn't seem like the best square for the queen, because the knight wants to go to e7. probably better is Be6 10.Re1 Be6 11.Nd5 now this hits the queen, showing Qe7 was a poor move. 11...Bxd5?!
   [ 11...Qd8 this is probably better, now my knight has the e7 square after Bxd5 ]
12.exd5 Nb8 now my knight has to go here, which is less than ideal 13.c3
Nbd7 14.Bb3 Kh7 a prophylactic move, preparing against Qc1 15.Ra2 Rae8 16.c4 e4? too hasty. this helps white to open up the e-file, where my queen on e7 doesn't help me  
[16...Qd8 needs some more preparatory moves 17.Bc3 Ng8 18.Rae2 f5 with about equal chances. white has the two bishops but the light squared bishop doesn't have an active diagonal ]

17.Bc2 Ne5!? this was my idea, trying to make it complicated by sacking a pawn, but black is definitely worse 18.Nxe5 Qxe5 19.f3 Qd4+ 20.Be3 Qc3 21.Bd2 Qd4+ 22.Be3 Qc3 I'm definitely fine with a draw! 23.dxe4 Qxc4 24.Bb3 Qa6 luckily I have this square for my queen, but it's not looking good! white has the open c-file and my c7 pawn is a target 25.Qc2 c6 I try to free my position a bit and give some room to my pieces, also getting rid of the c7 target 26.dxc6 bxc6 27.Qd2 d5 again, fighting against the pawn chain and getting rid of the d6 target 28.Bc5
dxe4!? I thought this was interesting, and instead of overthinking like I usually do, I decided to go for it! Also since it was rapid and my opponent was low on time, it was a good practical try  
[28...Rh8+ this didn't seem fun to play, but probably is objectively best ]

29.Bxf8 Rxf8 30.Bd1? a mysterious retreating move  
[30.fxe4 white should just take the pawn and ask me to prove compensation Ng4 this was my idea, but I don't think it's enough for the exchange 31.h3 Qb6+ 32.Kh1 Rd8 33.Qe2 Ne5 white has some activity and my position is solid (besides the weakness on c6), so I hoped I could generate something, but ultimately white is much better. ]

30...Re8 makes sense, but not as forcing. I missed an important chance  
[30...Nd5! threatening a nasty Bc3 31.Rxe4? (31.fxe4 probably best is to give back the exchange since black's dark squared bishop is powerful Bc3 32.Qe2 Qb6+ 33.Kh1 Nf4 34.Qe3 Bxe1 35.Qxf4= just an engine line of what could happen, I would definitely take back here! ) 31...Nc3 wins back the exchange with interest ]

31.g3 e3?! I thought this was a nice move, idea is Rxe3 Qb6, but it closes down the position and the a7-g1 diagonal  
[31...Nd5! again, this is the best move ]

32.Qe2  
[32.Qc1 now white can try to blockade on the light squares Nd5 33.Be2 Qb6 ]

32...Qb6 33.Kg2 Nd5 34.Bb3 Nc3 35.Qc4 Nxa2 36.Bxa2 Re7+ I got back the exchange and have a strong passed pawn on e3, but I still have to deal with f7 and c6, and the blockade on e2, so winning this wasn't easy, but I managed to do it (in an intense time scramble :) )

0-1
Here black is suffering since my pieces have no active prospects and white has all the control in the position. The only way to get back in the game is to complicate the position 20...Kh8 getting out of the a2-g8 diagonal 21.Kh2 Rad8?
[21...Qh4 I should’ve taken this chance to reroute my queen 22.g3 Qe7]
22.g3 oops. Now my queen is stuck. 22...Rfe8 23.Bf3 Nf8 trying to untangle my pieces, maybe Ne6 and c5? 24.b4 Ne6?
[24...dxe5! Important to take here first, I was hesitant because it leaves me with two pawn islands but it’s worth doing to open up the rooks 25.dxe5 Ne6 black is worse but it’s not over yet] 25.Qg2?
[25.exd6! cxd6 26.d5!+- transforms the pawn structure so I have a weakness on d6]
25...g5! Suddenly I’m back in the game 26.Bxc6 gxf4! 27.Bxd7 Rg8!?
Sneaky in-between move, now white is under a lot of pressure 28.g4??
An oversight after which white is immediately losing. White has to sac the queen
[28.Bxe6 Rxg3 29.Bd5 Rxf3+ 30.Bxg3 dxe5 white has several pieces for the queen, a pretty tricky position]
0-1

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.d3 h6 5.c3 d6 6.0-0 g5 I had played this system before against him, so I was a bit worried that he might have prepared something. 7.Nbd2 Bg7 8.Bb3 a5 9.a4 Qe7 10.Nc4 Be6 Luckily, we were following a line from my prep that I reviewed right before the game, so I did not have to think here :) 11.Ne3 Qd7 12.Re1 d5 13.exd5 Nxd5 14.Nc4 f6 15.d4 g4 16.Nh4 0-0-0 17.dxe5 fxe5 18.Ng6 Rhe8 19.Ngxe5 Nxe5 20.Nxe5 Bxe5 21.Rxe5 Here I was not sure how the line went, so I tried to play reasonable-looking moves 21...Qg7 luckily, I played the correct move from my analysis, getting the queen out of the d-file to threaten discoveries on the white queen
didn't look like a bad move
22.Qd4 Nxc3! 23.Qxc3 Qxe5!!
24.Qxe5 Bxb3 25.Qf5+ Be6!
(25...Kb8?? 26.Be3+-) 26.Qc2 Bb3
27.Qf5+= this is the forced draw that was in my prep, shows just how crazy preparation is nowadays...

22...Bf7 23.Rxe8 Rxe8 24.Be3
in between move 26.Kf1 (26.Kh1
Qxf7+-) 26...Qxf7+-]

24...Nxe3 25.Bxf7 Qxf7 26.fxe3
here this looks pretty equal, but I thought I could put some pressure 26...Re4
[26...h5 this looks better, stabilizing the pawn structure on the kingside
27.Qf2 Qe6 28.Rd1 Qxe3 29.Qxe3
Rxe3 30.Rd5 this still liquidates to a draw with best play]

27.Qf2 Qe8 28.Qf5+ Kb8 29.Qxa5
Rxe3 30.Rf1 Re1 here we were both in time pressure. I was fine with a draw, but I really wanted to win this game so I was trying to play quickly 31.Qf5 Rxf1+
32.Kxf1 Qxa4 33.Ke2 b6 34.Qf8+
Kb7 35.Qxh6 Qb5+ 36.Ke1 Qxb2
37.Qd2 Qb1+ 38.Kf2 Qf5+ 39.Kg3
here I got an idea - I can try to create a passed pawn on the queenside, which could potentially be dangerous later

39...b5 40.Qd4 c6 now if white takes on g4, I can take on c3 without worrying about Qf3+ 41.c4 this is fine objectively, but this helps me create my own passed pawn! 41...bxc4
[41...c5!? this is also interesting and probably a better try 42.Qg7+ Kb6
43.cxb5 c4 44.Qc3 Kxb5 objectively a draw, but now I can potentially get the passed pawn going, and in this line compared to the game my king and pawn are further advanced]

42.Qxc4 now I realized I'm losing the g4 pawn no matter what, but white's pawns on the kingside aren't that threatening, and white's king has nowhere to hide from checks, so I wasn't too concerned

22.Qd4 Nxc3! 23.Qxc3 Qxe5!!
now I thought of giving a perpetual but I still wanted to see if I can push my pawn a bit further 44...Qe3+ 45.Qf3 Qg5+
46.Kf2 Qh4+ 47.Qg3 Qd4+ 48.Kf3 c5
now my queen is centralized, his king and queen are in an awkward position, my c pawn is moving fast, and his pawns are still on h2 and g2 so I thought I had good practical chances to win here

49.h4 c4 50.Qf4 Qd3+ 51.Kf2 Qc2+
52.Kg3 c3 53.Qb4+ Kc6 54.Qc4+ Kd6 this is probably a perpetual, but I was hoping to hide my king behind my pawn 55.Qd4+ Ke6 56.Qb6+
now white can't check from in front and has to switch sides, but I thought I can try to hide my king near my queen

56...Kd5 57.Qb5+ Kd4 58.Qd7+ Kc4
59.Qc7+ Kb3 60.Qb6+ Ka2 61.Qa6+
now I'm threatening to play c2 with check, so white has to stop it 63.h6??
white had only seconds on his clock here, so it's easy to make a mistake
[63.Qf6! white has to stop the pawn, and there is no way to shield the black king from future checks Kb1
64.Qf1+ Ka2 65.Qa6= black can't
escape the checks ]
63...c2++ 64.Kh2 c1Q 65.Qf6+ Qc3 66.Qf2+ Ka3 67.Qf8+ Ka2 68.h7 Qg3+ 69.Kg1 Qd1+ 70.Qf1 Qe3+ 71.Kh2 Qh5# a thrilling game, and an important one on the way to NM, showing that sometimes pressing in a drawn position can be worth it 0-1

8 A45
Handigol, Abhishek 2133
Wang, Jeffery 2191
17th Smith Memorial Tournament 2023

1.d4 Nf6 2.Bf4 g6 3.e3 Bg7 4.Nf3 0-0 5.h3 pretty quiet system, but it's a pretty straightforward setup 5...d6 6.Be2 c5 7.0-0 Qb6 now I thought of playing Qc1, but I thought why not set a trap with Nbd2? I had looked at this position before and saw that Qxb2 enters a losing position 8.Nbd2 I played this fast and acted like I forgot about the pawn. please take the pawn, please take the pawn... 8...Qxb2 YES! 9.Nc4 Qb4 10.c3! this is the key idea. Black saves the queen (barely), but I get a better position out of it 10...Qb5 forced [ 10...Qxc3?? 11.Rc1! Qb4 12.Rb1! Qc3 13.Rb3+- ] 11.Nxd6 Qd7 12.Bb5?! probably not necessary, since my bishop goes back to e2 later after being chased with a6 12...Qd8 13.Nxc8 Qxc8 14.Rc1 protecting c3 14...a6 15.Be2 Nc6 16.Qc2 opening the way for the other rook 16...Rd8 17.a4 preventing b5 ideas 17...e6 18.Rfd1 cxd4 19.cxd4 Qd7? 20.Ne5! wins another pawn 20...Qe7 [ 20...Nxe5 apparently black can do this, which I didn't think was possible in the game 21.dxe5 Nd5 22.e4 Rac8 23.Qb2 Nxf4 24.Rxd7 Nxe2+ 25.Kh2 Nxc1 26.Rxd8+ Rxd8 27.Qxc1 Bxe5+ and black has good compensation for the queen, though I would still take white ] 21.Nxc6 bxc6 22.Qxc6 now I'm up a pawn, but was definitely not underestimating my opponent 22...Nd5 23.Bg3 Qg5 threatening Nxe3 24.h4 Qe7 25.Bxa6! now I can "fall" for the trap, but I planned a resource here 25...Nb4 26.Qb7! a nice move. now black either has to be down two pawns or trade queens 26...Qxb7 27.Bxb7 Ra7 28.Bf3 Rxa4 29.Rc4 this was the point. now black is stuck! 29...Bf8 tries to free the rook 30.Rb1 nope! now if the rook moves, I'll get two bishops for the rook 30...Be7 31.Kh2 just in case there are any Ra8-Ra1 ideas trying to unpin [ 31.Bd1 ] 31...Kg7 32.Bd1 finally getting more material 32...Ra5 33.Bc7 actually, I'll go for the rooks instead! 33...Rc8 looks like black solved Bxa5 and Rxb4, but there's another trick I was planning! 34.Be5+ Rxe5 35.Rxc8 now black is down an exchange and a pawn, which is hopeless. an important game which put me on 4/4 for the tournament (and...

[10.0-0 is the correct move]

10...f6 11.Nxc6 Bxf4 12.exf4 bxc6 now the h4 pawn makes no sense

13.Qc1 cxd4 14.cxd4 Qa5+ 15.Nd2 Luckily I'm still fine here, since I'm threatening to take e4 and castle

15...Nxd2 16.Qxd2 Qb6

[16...Qxd2+ 17.Kxd2 e5!= now black has no problems]

17.0-0 here I have some chances because of black's weak pawns 17...Ba6

18.Bxa6 Qxa6 19.Rfe1 Rfe8 20.Qc3 putting pressure on both the pawns

20...Qb6 21.Rac1 Rac8 22.b4 trying to fix the pawn on c6 22...Kf7

23.Qc5? actually, this is a mistake since my queen is more active than black's. I could potentially use it on the kingside later 23...Qxc5 24.Rxc5 black definitely has chances to hold, but I can try to put pressure on a7 and c6 and e6. Black's king can't hold everything 24...Ke7

25.Rec1 Kd7 sadly, the king is too close for me to play b5, otherwise that would just win on the spot. 26.R1c3 Rc7

27.h5 not sure if this was necessary, but maybe g7 can be weak later. of course, this is double edged since h5 can also be a weakness. 27...Rb8 28.a3 Rb5

29.Kf1

[29.Rxb5? I definitely don't want to do this since I want to keep the pawn on c6 cxb5=]

29...Rxc5 30.Rxc5 Kd6 now c6 and a7 are pretty well defended, and e5 is coming, so I had to think of how else I can put pressure. 31.Ke2 Rb7 32.Ra5 not allowing Rb5 to try to trade the rooks, and also tying the rook to a7 32...e5 tries to break, but now I can use the d4 square for my king 33.fxe5+

maybe opens up the position too soon 33...Rxc5 34.dxe5+ Kxe5 35.Ke3

Kd6? no need to go back!

[35...Rf7 this is a lot better, trying to get some activity with the rook and slightly more active king 36.Ra6 d4+ 37.Ke2 Kd5= black is holding everything and has an active rook]

36.Ra6 now it's getting difficult for black if not already lost 36...Re7+ 37.Kd4 Re4+ 38.Kd3 Rh4 39.b5! important move, if I liquidate the pawns with Rxa7 it's less convincing

[39.Rxa7 Rxe5 40.Rxg7 c5 41.bxc5+ Kxc5 this is winning but a lot less clear]

39...Rhx5 40.Rxc6+ Ke5 41.Rc7 Rg5 42.g3 not allowing the rook to get active 42...Rg4 43.Rxa7 now I have
two connected passers, which will definitely be stronger than the d pawn. 43...Kd6 44.a4 Kc5 45.Kc3 trying to help the pawns with the king, but still keeping an eye on the d-pawn 45...h5 46.Rc7+ Kb6 47.Rc6+ Kb7 48.Kb3 now my rook is in a better position and I can just go Rd6 to stop the d pawn, and advance my own pawns 48...g5 49.a5 h4 50.a6+ Kb8 51.b6 Rc4 a nice trick, but I won't take your rook! 52.a7+
[ 52.Rh6 this was a lot more straightforward, since the two passers creates a mating net Rc8 53.Kb4 h3 54.a7+ Ka8 55.Kb5 now Ka6 and b7 is unstoppable, and black has too many pawns to hope for a stalemate ]
52...Ka8 53.Rh6 Rc8 54.gxh4 gxh4 55.Rxh4 just for good measure, taking the pawn 55...Kb7 56.Rh6 d4 I still have to be a bit careful but luckily I have an extra f pawn which decides the game 57.Kb4 Ka6 58.Rc6! Rd8 59.Rd6! Rc8 60.f4 d3 61.Rxd3 Kxb6 62.Ra3 Ra8 63.Kc4 now my king can get in, and it's over 63...Kc6 64.Ra6+ Kd7 65.Kd5 other than a couple mistakes, I was happy overall with how I converted the rook ending 1-0

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Nf3 a6 I like playing the open catalan as black, since white has to prove compensation for the pawn (although I do admit it can get dangerous for black). for some reason sub-2200, people aren't prepared for this 6.0-0 Nc6 7.e3 Rb8 8.Qe2 b5 9.b3 cxb3 10.axb3 Bb7 11.Rd1 Nb4 12.Bb2 Be7 13.Nbd2 [ 13.Nc3 I could tell my opponent was confused from my opening choice. It felt like the knight belonged on c3 rather than d2 ]
13...0-0 14.e4 Nd7 [ 14...c5! black can get away with this, which is an important move to challenge white's center, although it leads to complications 15.e5 ( 15.Rac1 Rc8 ) 15...Nd7 16.Ne4 Bd5 17.dxc5 Nxc5 18.Nfg5 Ncd3! 19.Rxd3 Nxd3 20.Nxh7! Kxh7 21.Qxd3 g6 black has an edge, but obviously it doesn't look simple. ]
15.Nf1 the f1 knight doesn't have many prospects 15...Qe8 16.Bc3 Rd8 17.Rac1 c5 finally I get this break c5. white definitely doesn't have compensation anymore 18.dxc5 Bxc5 19.Qb2

Bxe4? here's where I slipped, allowing my opponent back in the game unnecessarily. [ 19...f6! simple and effective 20.Nd4 Ne5! aiming for the d3 square ]
20.Bxg7 Nd3 this doesn't really work since white can sac the rook 21.Rxd3 Bxd3 22.Bh6 e5 23.Bxf8? cashes in
too early
[ 23.Bh3! attacking e5 indirectly  Qe7 24.Bxf8 Nxf8 25.Qxe5 Ba3 26.Qxe7 Bxe7= with equal chances apparently, although I would take black here because of the two bishops and the queenside majority ]
23...Bxf8 24.Ra1 e4 now my dark squared bishop is unopposed 25.Re1
Bg7 misses an opportunity
[ 25...Bb4! 26.Re3 Qe7 27.N3d2 Nf6 the d3 bishop and e4 pawn are stopping white’s pieces ]
26.Qd2?? blunders a piece, but it was already a difficult position
[ 26.Qc1 ]
26...Bxf1!
[ 26...Ne5 this move order also works 27.Nxe5 Bxf1 28.Qa5 Bxg2 29.Nxf7 ( 29.Nc6 Rc8 ) 29...Kxf7 30.Kxg2= ]
27.Kxf1 Ne5 28.Nd4 Qd7 here my opponent resigned, in view of
29.Rxe4 Ng6! key square
30.h4 Bxd4 31.h5 Ne7 32.Qg5+ Kf8 33.Qh6+Bg7 34.Qxa6 Qf5 and black is up a piece.
0-1

The final challenge of the tournament. I obviously wanted to win for my NM chances, and my opponent is solid so I thought I would go for something sharp! I didn't have enough time to prepare something with 1. e4, so I tried to find a sharp line that didn't have too much theory (and would hopefully catch him by surprise) 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.c4
edged position ]

19...Qd6 gives the advantage, but I probably would've played the same thing.

[ 19...Nc5! heading for the e4 square which is quite weak, although it gets extremely complicated (more than a human can understand), I will show the line for fun: 20.Rh1 Qxf2 (20...Nxe4+?? 21.Qxe4+-) 21.exd5 g6 22.Rxh7! Bxd5 (22...Kxh7 23.Rh1+ Kg8 24.Nc6+- threats of Ne7 and Rh8) 23.Nf3! threatening Rh8# Nxb3+ 24.Qxb3! Rxc3! 25.Qxb6 Bxf3 26.Rxf7! desperado Rd3+! 27.Kxd3 Bxe2+ 28.Kd2! stepping into the discovery since the queen is attacked Qxf7 29.Kxe2 with a slight edge for black because of white's weak king ]

[ 19...Qxf2 20.Rcf1! Qh4 21.Rh1! Qxg5 22.Rfg1! now black is in trouble because of Nxe6 ideas opening the bishop Rxg5 23.Qxc3 Qf6 24.Nxe6 Qxc3+ 25.Kxc3 fxe6 I obviously didn't calculate this engine line, but intuitively I thought Qxf2 would help me open more files ]

20.Rh1 dxe4?? probably black didn't see the refutation coming, or was worried about exd5 or e5, but the move order was key here

[ 20...g6 21.e5! Qxa3 22.Rh6= white's attack looks dangerous, with both the rooks about to be doubled, but the position is pretty unclear ]

21.Qxe4+- g6

(Diagram)

22.Rxh7!! overlooked by my opponent, this is the reason this dxe4 move order doesn't work 22...Rxc3 nice try, but [22...Kxh7 23.Qh4+! Kg7 24.Qh6+! Kg8 25.Rh1+-]

23.Rch1! just ignore the rook! 23...Rc2+ 24.Qxc2 f5 25.gxf6 black resigns since there is no way to stop all the mates. A satisfying final victory against a strong player that pushed me over 2200 (barely)! 25...Bf5

[ 25...Nxf6 26.Qxg6# ]

[ 25...Rxf6 this is the most satisfying one 26.Rh8+ Kf7 27.R1h7# ]

26.Rg7#

1-0
The Chess Scuttlebutt

Links to some of the news that make up our world.

Chess and hamburgers in Canada.

A deep-dive into Star Trek’s Tri-Dimensional chess.

Improve your chess - by giving it a rest.

The effects of psychedelics on chess players is explored here.

The FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Commission finds that Hans Niemann did not cheat in his game with Magnus Carlsen, and Carlsen is fined 10,000 euros for withdrawing from the 2022 Sinquefield Cup “without valid reason.”

An eight year old girl from England is the chess world’s latest sensation.

And they keep on coming: yet another eight year old defeats five Grandmasters at the 2023 World Rapid and Blitz Championships in Samarkand.

Accusations of cheating are firing up the chess world, with chess.com, Vladimir Kramnik, and Hikaru Nakamura involved in the latest imbroglio.

IM Carissa Yip wins the 2023 North American Junior U20 Championship for her 1st GM norm.

WIM Rita Atkins on education, gender stereotyping, and much, much more.

Chinese Chess (Xiangqi) is rocked by a curiously familiar cheating scandal - with a disgusting twist.

World Champion for 27 years, Dr. Emanuel Lasker was born on Christmas Eve.

A shout out to the Perpetual Chess Podcast, and listen here as International Masters John Donaldson and Cyrus Lakdawala remember IM Jeremy Silman.

Was the first murder in the Antarctic over a disputed chess game?

Urine samples, private lounges, inappropriate shoes: The 2023 FIDE World Rapid and Blitz made headlines for all the wrong reasons.

Magnus Carlsen won both the 2023 World Rapid and Blitz, and now has a total of 17 World Championship titles. In a statement victory for Russian women, IM Anastasia Bodnaruk and GM Valentina Gunina won the Women’s Rapid, and Women’s Blitz respectively.

Does playing chess make you an idol worshiper?

The United States Chess Federation has revised its Safe Play Policy.
The River Thames is dumping sewage into the Chess River.

A shout-out to the C-Squared Podcast, hosted by Grandmasters Christian Chirila and Fabiano Caruana, and watch here to see how six Indian players were robbed in Spain.

We also follow Chess: The Game of Kings, on Reddit. Here is GM Jan-Krzysztof Duda refusing to shake hands with Putin supporter Russian GM Denis Khismatullin at the 2023 World Rapid and Blitz, an action that could have led to his disqualification.

A deep-dive into FIDE’s controversial ban on trans women competing in women’s events.

“Deep in the concrete jungle of LA, epic trash-talkers play chess day and night.”

OnTheQueenside has a terrific article about the rise of women’s chess in Asia on Substack, which hosts many other writers on chess, including WGM Jennifer Shahade and FM Dennis Monokroussos.

Chess players meet around the country in libraries and cafes, in restaurants and art galleries. They even play on basketball courts.

WGM Dorsa Derakhshani’s fascinating story, from Iranian exile to medical school in the United States.

It’s official: Carlsen gives up his place in the 2024 Candidates Tournament, and will be replaced by GM Nijat Abasov from Azerbaijan.

We appreciate Wikipedia’s coverage of all things chess, including comprehensive entries on the 2024 Candidates Tournament and the 2024 Womens Candidates Tournament.

A Norwegian philosopher thinks it’s time to slow down our chess games.

A terrific interview with “content creator” and popular streamer, WFM Anna Cramling.

“Forgotten” World Champion Ding Liren returns to top level play in the Netherlands, after a less than sterling result at home in the 1st China Chess King tournament.

An in-depth update to the brouhaha surrounding chess on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley.

GM Ding is king: a list of the top prize-winners over the year.

No respect: Women’s World Champion GM Ju Wenjun is dissed by Carlsen fans.

The United States Chess Federation is seeking a new Executive Director.

Finally, you will soon be able to play chess on your smart-phone using your tongue.

Recent Games
A selection of games from around the world that have caught our attention.


40.Bxg6+! Kxg6
[40...fxg6 41.Qxe6 Qxc3 42.Ng4 Rf8 43.h5 gxf5 44.Qh6+ Kg8 45.Qxh5+]
41.Qe4+ Kh5 42.g4+ Kxh4 43.Nf3+ 1-0

[20.Nf5!]


(Diagram)

A classic exchange sacrifice tips the scales in black's favor. 


(Diagram)
Black is destroyed out of the opening.
1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 Be7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3 d4 7.e3 Ng6 8.exd4 Nxd4 9.Bb2 Bc5 10.Nc3 Re8 11.Ne5 Bd6 12.f4 Bc5 13.Kh1 Qe7 14.g4 Rd8 15.g5 Nd7 16.Ne4 Nf8 17.Qh5 Ng6 18.Ng4 Ba3

24...Ng4+! forces a king march into enemy territory with a predictable result.

Diagram
An incredible fighting game where Carlsen's extra rook is powerless against the black passed pawns.


(Diagram)

(Diagram)

33.Kh3 h5 34.e7 Rxe4 35.e8Q+ Kh7 36.Bxf7 Qf6 37.Bxg6+ Kh6 38.Qh8+ Kxg6 39.Re6 Rh4+ 40.Kg2 Rg4+ 41.Kf1 Rxg2 42.Qxg2 Qxe6 43.Re1 Qa6+ 44.Re2 1-0

□ Conrad Holt 2548
■ Shakhriyar Mamedyarov 2746
World Rapid 2023 (3.20) 26.12.2023

Black's king's side play boomerangs in text-book fashion. 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 d6 5.0-0 Bd7 6.c3 g5?!

(Diagram)

25.Qxf6+!

1-0

Cheparinov, Ivan 2663
Rapport, Richard 2731
FIDE World Rapid-ch Open 2023 (5.3)

FIDE World Rapid-ch Open 2023 (5.3)

Anastasia Bodnaruk 2340
Umida Omonova 2257
World Rapid Women 2023 (5.4) 27.12.23


(Diagram)
29. Qd6+ Kf5 30. Rd5+ Ke4 31. Qe6+ Kf4 32. Qe3+
   [ 32. Qe3+ Kg4 33. Qg3# ]
1-0


(Diagram)
A cute shot wraps the game up. 1.Nf3 d5 2.d4 Nf6 3.c4 dxc4 4.e3 e6


(Diagram)

A couple of nice shots and it's all over.  
Be7 5.0-0 0-0 6.Re1 d6 7.c3 Na5  
11.Nbd2 Re8 12.Nf1 h6 13.Ng3 Bf8  
14.h3 Nc6 15.d4 cxd4 16.cxd4 exd4  

Kd8! 12.Nd2 Kc7 13.Nf1 g6 14.g4 a5  
15.h5 gxh5 16.gxh5 Nb6 17.Ng3 Bd7  
21.exf5 Nxf5 22.Rab1 Ra6 23.Nxf5  
Bxf5 24.Rb2 Qg7 25.Qd1 Rg8 26.Kc1  
Qh7 27.Ra2 Nd7 28.Rb2 Nf6 29.Rg1  
Rxc1 30.Qxc1 Ra8 31.f4 Rg8 32.Qh2  
e4 33.Rb1 Qd7 34.Bd1 Bg4 35.Bc2  
Qf5 36.Kb2 Bxh5 37.Re1 b6 38.Kb3  
Rg6 39.Qh1 Rg3 40.Qh4 Rh3 41.Qf2  
Bf3 42.Rg1 Ng4 43.Qe1 h5 44.Bc1  
Rh2 45.Qg3 Be2 46.Re1 Bxc4+  
47.Kxc4 Rxc2 48.Qh4 Kd7 49.Be3  
Rg2 50.Qh1 Rg3 51.Bc1 Nf6 52.Rd1  
Rd3 53.Rxd3 exd3 54.Kb5 Qxd5  
55.Qh3+ Kc7 56.c4 Qc6+ 57.Ka6 b5+  
0-1  

20.Bb3 a5 21.a4 b4 22.Qd4 Rc7  
23.Rad1 Rd7 24.Kh1 Kh7 25.f3 g6  
Rxe5 29.Nd5 Nxd5 30.Bxd5 Qh4  
31.Ne2 Rc7 32.Nd4 Rg5 33.f4 Rg3  
34.Nf3  

Rxf3! 35.gxf3 Qxh3+ 36.Kg1 Bd4+!  
37.Qxd4 Qg3+ 38.Kh1 Rc2  
0-1  

This obviously pre-arranged draw drew condemnation from chess players around the world, and earned both players a double-forfeit in the tournament.  

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.Nd4 Nd5  
6.Ng5 Ng4 7.Nf3 Nf6 8.Ng1 Ng8  
12.Nb1 Nb8  

(Diagram)

(Diagram)


41.Re2 Qb7 42.Bb1 Qb8 43.Nf5+ Kf6 44.Nxh6 Qf4 45.Nf5 Qc1 46.Bc2 Qxb2
47.Ne3 Qxa3 48.Nxd5+ Kg7 49.Re5 f6 50.Re7+ Kf8 51.Ra7 Qc5 52.Ra8+ Kf7
59.Ra8 Kf7 60.Bf3 Ke7 61.Nc2 Qb5 62.Rxa3 Qb2 63.Ra7+ Kb8 64.Nd4
Qxc3 65.Nc6+ Ke8 66.Re7+ Kf8 67.Rc7 Qd3 68.Nb4 Qd4 69.Nd5 Ke8
70.Ne3 c3 71.Rc8+ Kd7 72.Ra8 Qd2 73.Ra7+ Kd8 74.Ra8+ Kd7 75.Be4
Qd4 76.Bf5+ Kc7 77.Rc8+ Kb7 78.Rc4 Qe5 79.Kf3 Kb6 80.Ke2 Kb5 81.Kd3
Qh2 82.Rxc3 Qxf2 83.Nc2 Qf1+ 84.Kd2 Qf2+ 85.Kc1 Qf1+ 86.Kb2 Qf2
93.Nb1 Qe5 94.Bf5 Qe2+ 95.Kb3 Qb5+ 96.Ka2 Qd5+ 97.Kb2 Qg2+
103.Kb2 Qb5+ 104.Ka2 Qd5+ 105.Ka3 Qa5+ 106.Kb2 Qb4+ 107.Kc1 Qe1+
118.Ne3 Qb6+ 119.Ka2 Qa5+ 120.Kb2 Qe5 121.Nc4 Qd4 122.Na5+ Kb6
128.Kb4 Qe7+ 129.Kb3 Qe6 130.Kb2 Qe1 131.Nd6+ Kb6 132.Ne4 Qg1
133.Kb3 Qh1 134.Nxf6 Qxh3 135.Nd7+ Ka7 136.Ne5 Qh2 137.Nc6+
Kb6 138.Nb4 Qg2 139.Bf5 Qf2 140.Rc6+ Kb7 141.Rc3 Kb6 142.Nd5+
Kb7 143.Be4 Kb8 144.Nb4 Qf7+ 145.Rc4 Qe6 146.Bd5 Qe3+ 147.Rc3
Qb6 148.Kc4 Qc7+ 149.Kb3 Qb6 150.Kc4 Qf2 151.Kb5 Qe2+ 152.Rc4
Qe8+ 153.Bc6 Qe5+ 154.Rc5 Qb2 155.Bd5 Qe2+ 156.Bc4 Qb2 157.Rf5
Kc7 158.Rxg5 Kd6 159.Rd5+ Ke7 160.g5 Kf8 161.Kc5 Kg7 162.Nc6
Qf2+ 163.Nd4 Qf8+ 164.Kb5 Qb8+ 165.Ka4 Qa7+ 166.Kb4 Qe7+ 167.Rc5
Qe1+ 168.Kb5 Qe8+ 169.Nc6 Qe3 170.Rd5 Kg6 171.Nd4 Qe8+ 172.Kc5
Qe7+ 173.Kb5 Qb7+ 174.Ka4 Qa7+ 175.Kb4 Qb7+ 176.Nb5 Qe7+ 177.Ka5
Qe1+ 178.Kb6 Qe3+ 179.Kc6 Qe8+ 180.Kc5 Qe3+ 181.Kb4 Qe7+ 182.Ka4
Qb7+ 188.Rb5 Qf3 189.Bd5 Qe3 190.Be4+ Kg7 191.Rb7+ Kf8 192.g6
Qd4 193.g7+ Qxg7 194.Rxg7 Kxg7
195.Kc4 Kf6 196.Kd4 Kg5 197.Ke5 Kg4 198.Ne2 Kg5 199.Bf3 Kg6
200.Nf4+ Kg7 201.Bd5 Kh6 202.Kf6 Kh7 203.Ng6 Kh6 204.Bg8 Kh5
205.Ne5 Kh6 206.Ng4+ Kh5 207.Kf5 Kh4 208.Kf4 Kh5 209.Bf7+ Kh4
210.Be8 Kh3 211.Ne3 Kh4 212.Ng2+ Kh3 213.Kf3 Kh2 214.Bd7 Kg1
1-0

26.g4! Kf7 27.d5 fxg4 28.fxg4 g5 29.e4 Kg6 30.e5 Bh8 31.Rc2 Re8 32.Rf1 Rac8 33.Rf5 Bf6 34.exf6 exf6 35.Rcf2

1-0
IM John Donaldson

Three New Books by New in Chess

_BEN JOHNSON_

**PERPETUAL CHESS IMPROVEMENT**

**PRACTICAL CHESS ADVICE FROM WORLD-CLASS PLAYERS AND DEDICATED AMATEURS**

_Foreword by GM Ben Finegold_

NEW IN CHESS

*Improve Your Chess Now* by Jonathan Tisdall 238 pages $24.95

*Perpetual Chess Improvement* by Ben Johnson 244 pages $24.95

*The How to Study Chess on Your Workbook Volume 2* by Davorin Kuljasevic 198 pages $24.95

Tens of thousands of books have been written about chess and among these titles are a number which will teach you how to play better in the opening, middlegame, and ending. What are rarer, much rarer, are books that aim to teach you how to study chess.

The birth of this genre dates back to Alexander Kotov's *How to Think Like a Grandmaster* which appeared in English in the early 1970s. Kotov's book was well received and since then many others covering similar subject material have appeared including *Chess Training for Budding Champions* by Jesper Hall, *Pump Up Your Rating* by Axel Smith, *Applying Logic in Chess* by Erik Kislik, *How to Study Chess on Your Own* by Davorin Kuljasevic and *Chess Improvement* by Barry Hymer and Peter Wells.

The three books being reviewed here all belong to this category. One, *Improve Your Chess Now* by the Norwegian-American Grandmaster Jonathan Tisdall, was first published to widespread acclaim by Cadogan (Everyman) in 1997. This edition is essentially the same book but has a new preface by the...
author. It also features a more generous layout plus the games are numbered and the index is more complete.

Despite having been written over a quarter of a century ago *Improve Your Chess Now* does not feel dated. Many of the topics Tisdall discusses such as pattern recognition and the art of playing bad positions are front and center today in any discussion of how to improve.

Tisdall's critical examination of Kotov's tree of analysis back in 1997 moved the discussion forward on how to improve one's analytical proficiency. His suggestion to incorporate a daily regimen of blindfold games to develop one's vision is still a good one as is his idea to play through and memorize short games in one's mind.

*Improve Your Chess Now* was written at a time when chess engines and the Internet played a much smaller role than they do now. These are now critically important, albeit more for professional players than those in his target audience of players rated roughly 1600-2200. Where Tisdall's book could have benefited from some updating is in the suggested reading list.

Club players looking for sensible and realistic advice on how to improve, who do not already have a copy of this book, will find *Improve Your Chess Now* most helpful.

Many in the chess community will be familiar with New Jersey master Ben Johnson's Perpetual Chess Podcast which he launched in 2016. During the past seven years Johnson has interviewed hundreds of chess players from top Grandmasters to amateurs. Pretty much everything chess-related has been discussed on the Perpetual Chess Podcast, but if one had to pinpoint the most popular topic it would likely be how can amateurs with busy schedules improve.

This topic is front and center in Johnson's *Perpetual Chess Improvement* which covers pretty much everything under the sun. The table of contents makes clear just how extensive the coverage is:

**Part I: The four pillars of chess improvement**

Chapter 1 Tournament games and their substitutes

Chapter 2 Game analysis

Chapter 3 Calculation and pattern recognition

Chapter 4 Coaches, chess friends and mentors

**Part II: Other aspects of chess you may want to work on**

Chapter 5 Do amateurs overemphasize opening study?

Chapter 6 Must you know endgames?

Chapter 7 Mimicking the masters

Chapter 8 Board visualization and blindfold chess

Chapter 9 How to approach speed chess

Chapter 10 Tactics redux
**Part III:** Working on your game away from the board

Chapter 11 Status and titles  
Chapter 12 Chess checklists  
Chapter 13 Habits and identity  
Chapter 14 Plateaus  
Chapter 15 Deliberate practice and chess study  
Chapter 16 Over-the-board tournament routines  
Chapter 17 Playing against children  
Chapter 18 Rest, fitness and mindfulness

**Part IV:** Tools of improvement

Chapter 19 Chess books  
Chapter 20 How to use the chess sites  
Chapter 21 ChessBase and Lichess studies  
Chapter 22 Extracting lessons from Stockfish and Leela  
Chapter 23 Optimizing Chessable  
Chapter 24 Chess YouTube

**Part V:** Final thoughts on incorporating chess study into your life

Chapter 25 Quantity vs quality  
Chapter 26 Parting advice and reminders  
Chapter 27 Games

*Perpetual Chess Improvement* doesn't just offer a wealth of information, it is also a fun read. Players of all levels will find something of interest here.

*The How to Study Chess on Your Workbook Volume 2* by Davorin Kuljasevic, differs from the other two books reviewed in that it is aimed at a very specific audience (FIDE 1500-1800) and is much more structured.

This follow-up volume to a previous workbook aimed at those rated 1800-2100 covers different parts of the game with well-explained examples and lots of exercises. Club players will benefit in particular from Kuljasevic's chapter entitled Visualization Bootcamp. An experienced teacher, he understands just how difficult it can be for club level players to visualize a few moves ahead.

This is Kuljasevic's fourth book and his fourth winner.
January Chess Social

We had an amazing Chess Social on Friday, January 5, with more than 40 people showing up to enjoy snacks and beverages. Afterwards, folks moved on to the Meeting Room to watch Searching for Bobby Fischer, the first offering in Mechanics’ Institutes month-long Chess in the Movies series hosted by CinemaLit.

CinemaLit host Matthew Kennedy with Mechanics’ Institute Chess Coach Zorba Hughes, a big fan of movies featuring chess. Zorba co-hosted Friday's CinemaLit offering, Searching for Bobby Fischer,
Winter Chess Camps

The Mechanics’ Institute Chess Club held our annual Winter Camps and they were a huge success! Over the holidays we had 35 campers join us to play chess, solve puzzles, and make new friends. Our promising scholastic campers had a lot of fun playing the royal game, although it's up for debate whether they prefer bughouse to regular old chess.

Additionally, all of the parents who responded to our camp survey gave us a unanimous whopping 5 star rating and we’re proud of the great feedback we’ve been getting. We’ll be offering camps in the Spring and all Summer as well, so if you know scholastic players who may be interested please check out our camps in the future!
December 18, Paul Whitehead said: “In chess there’s always a danger of overthinking things.” Elliott Winslow piped in: “Or underthinking.” I found an admonitory description online: “Overthinking is when you dwell on or worry about the same thing repeatedly. People who overthink can be paralyzed by their worries and may struggle to make decisions or take action. Overthinking can be caused by — and contribute to — depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders.” All of which could be caused by bad chess habits, too.

Continue to look for wins when you’ve already found one. “When Sal and I see a winning move, we look for more winning moves. Like the shortest win; or to have a backup plan. When you have a good position, you try to find the quickest way to win. And when you have a bad position, you just keep trying to survive and make the game last longer.”

Paul called it “a classic book,” Sal “an incredible book”:\ The Art of the Middlegame, by Paul Keres and Alexander Kotov, with an introduction and short first chapter by Harry Golombek. It was first published in Sweden in 1961, in English by Dover in 1964 and by others later. It has been winning friends for a long time. A good part of its value and appeal comes from its attention to the defense of difficult or lost positions (a 45-page chapter by Keres); other readers mention Chapter 4 by Kotov (“Various Pawn Positions in the Centre”) or the 5th and last chapter, “The Art of Analysis,” a deep dive by Keres into half a dozen endgame positions that were adjourned in top-level games back when unfinished games required players to work overnight or even for a few days until the adjournment session. The book is only 238 pages long, but there’s a lot in it.

It won’t hurt to list again some of the other books we’ve praised on Monday afternoons: The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal; Boris Gelfand, Positional Decision Making in Chess and Dynamic Decision Making in Chess, as well as his other recent books; Chess Informant’s Anthology of Chess Combinations; Grandmaster of Chess: The Complete Games of Paul Keres (3 vols.); and My Best Games by Anatoly Karpov, among many others.

We heard about an 8-year-old girl in a blitz tournament with a performance rating of 2300, WCM Bodhana Sivanandan, the first U.K. citizen to win a youth title in 25 years (a café regular in the know said they’re not as strong as they were in the late ’70s to late ’80s). Somebody out there predicted she would someday be the strongest player in the world. On October 25, Tarjei J. Svensen of Sweden wrote at Chess.com: “It’s a stunning performance by the talented youngster, who now has the triple crown in the Girls Under 8 category. Earlier in June, in Batumi, Georgia, she also secured two world championship titles in rapid and blitz, a repeat of the two titles she won in 2022. To add to her incredible list of accomplishments, the eight-year-old has won every single one of the 32 games she’s played in the three events.” British GM Peter Wells posted on X: “What amazes me is that the areas in
which she most impresses—level-headedness under pressure and endgame technique—are ones you expect to come with age and experience.”

In December we made a quick list of famous tournaments: Hastings 1895, St. Petersburg 1914, New York 1924, Moscow 1925 (see the movie Chess Fever), and Zurich 1953. One café member on January 8 asked if there might be a 2024 N.Y. tournament as a kind of centennial commemoration, but apparently there are no such plans yet.

Paul on not staying in your lane: “There’s a lot to learn from people way below you because they present a different set of problems.”

Life can be edgy in various ways, and there is always edginess within a game between two battlers. It’s something you have to control as you try to read the board properly; make good, timely moves; and manage the time on your clock on Tuesday night as it ticks down from two hours to zero (though on Saturday afternoon the time control is usually G/30 or G/40). Knowing there’s a thin line between winning and losing can produce a lot of fear and delight. The tension on the board can obviously affect your emotions quite a bit. As I work to control that, I try to remember the principles I know about how to move and how not to move, when to maintain and build the tension in a chess position, and when to release it. When to complicate and when to liquidate. I thought of it in connection with the tension and flexibility of the abdominal curve in the lower spine. Sit up straight, but stay relaxed, too. There are four natural curves in the spine, from neck to tail.

GM Simon Williams wrote about sealing the win of a key game against Boris Gelfand in the 2012 European Club Championships. Gelfand played in the Candidates Tournament six times; he won it in 2011 and played a match with Anand the following year. Williams gives the 43-move game four and a half pages with eight diagrams. Here’s how he defined the moment after Gelfand resigned: “At this point I turned into a shaking mess, as all the adrenaline started to flow out of my body, but I have to admit it was one of the best feelings that I have ever had playing chess. That is why we all love the game so much. Gelfand was a perfect gentleman and congratulated me on my victory, which is something that you do not see every day.” (The Killer Dutch, Everyman Chess: 2015, p. 20.)

We distinguish pieces from pawns, but at other times the pawns are included in the definition of pieces. “Chess” in the Merriam-Webster 9th New Collegiate Dictionary is defined as “a game for 2 players, each of whom moves [their] 16 pieces according to fixed rules across a checkerboard and tries to checkmate [their] opponent’s king.” How would you define it, if that were your job?

The Chess Cafe is a meeting place to talk about chess, life, and everything in between. Join FIDE Master and Chess Room Coordinator Paul Whitehead and a revolving cast of folks from around the country in a fun and casual atmosphere to discuss the latest chess developments and for the pure love of the game. The Chess Cafe is suitable for all levels of players and free for everyone.
A New Puzzle in the Library

Every week or so Mechanics’ Institute's Head of Technical Services, Steven Dunlap, puts up a chess puzzle in the library for our members to solve.

“Tunnel-Vision” is the theme this week.
Black to move and win. Taken from the game Anderson vs Eastham, Mechanics’ Institute Tuesday Night Marathon, 2017. Focused on the right side of the board, black missed the opportunity to snag the bishop on b3 with 1...Qb2+! The game ended in a draw instead when black traded queens with 1...Qxe3+.

Seeking Scholastic Chess Coaches

Are you interested in joining the team at Mechanics’ Institute? The Institute is currently seeking Scholastic Chess Instructors for the upcoming school year. Qualified candidates should have a foundational knowledge of chess and should be familiar with or willing to learn chess instructional techniques. Candidates should also have a basic foundation in classroom management and conflict resolution strategies, particularly working with children. This is an in-person position and candidates must be able to commute to schools in San Francisco. If you’re interested follow the link below or reach out to our Chess Program Manager, Alex Robins, at arobins@milibrary.org.
Employment Opportunities | Mechanics' Institute (milibrary.org)
1. **W.A. Shinkman** 1872
   White to play and mate in 3.

2. **T. Lama** 2023
   White to play and mate in 5.
Tournaments, Classes, and Events

Mechanics’ Institute offers a wide range of chess tournaments, classes, and special events. Our offerings include a monthly Chess Social, free classes for women and Mechanics’ Institute members, an online Chess Café, chess camps for adults and children, and much more.

You can find a list of ongoing and upcoming tournaments here.

Offerings for adults and advanced players can be found here.
Information about scholastic events, camps, and programming can be found [here](#).

Play chess in the oldest club in the United States!
## January & February Tournaments

Register for all tournaments at milibrary.org/chess

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tournament</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Start Time</th>
<th>Rounds</th>
<th>Time Control</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Non-Members</th>
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<td>23rd Burger Memorial</td>
<td>Saturday, January 6</td>
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<td>Tuesdays, January 9 - February 20</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10:00 am</td>
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<td>G/30;d5</td>
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<td>Saturday, February 10</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>G30;d5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Saturday &amp; Sunday, February 24 - 25</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>G/90+30</td>
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<td>Tuesday, February 27</td>
<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>G/3+2</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$30</td>
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</table>

57 Post Street, San Francisco, CA 94104 | chessroom@milibary.org | 415.393.0110
Tournaments in March

Register for all tournaments at milibrary.org/chess

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<tr>
<th>Tournament</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Rounds</th>
<th>Time Control</th>
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<th>Non-Members</th>
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<td>Tuesdays, March 5 - April 16</td>
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<td>G/120;d5</td>
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<td>$30</td>
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<td>G/60;d5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scholastic Chess Championship</td>
<td>Saturday, March 30</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>G/30;d5</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Game Analysis Series
with FM Paul Whitehead

Celebrate your finest victories, and learn from heart-wrenching defeats. The key to success in chess lies in understanding our own games. How do I determine my path forward? Where did I go wrong? Why wasn't that the best move and what could I have done instead?

Ideal for TNM and club players who want to improve their game and perhaps get a few plans in place for their next match. Students will be expected to send .pgns or bring in scoresheets to the class for analysis.

Cost: Members $175, Non-Members $200

chessroom@milibrary.org
(415) 393-0110 | 57 Post Street, San Francisco CA 94104
Free Women's Online Chess Class
by FIDE Trainer Sophie Adams

Coached by FIDE Trainer Sophie Adams, this class is for women and girls looking to develop their chess skills with a community of women. Knowledge of piece movements and mates is expected, but not required. Registration is needed so we may send the links for players to join.

Questions?
chessroom@milibrary.org / (415) 393-0110

Every Sunday on Zoom from 10 am to 12 pm

Register at milibrary.org/chess
Introduction to Chess: Free In-Person Class for Mechanics' Members

January 10 - February 14, 2024.

6 Classes

Wednesdays in the Chess Room

4th Floor
5 pm - 6 pm

Registration: milibrary.org/chess

Join us - beginner or intermediate player, and learn the fundamentals of the Royal Game with Mechanics' Institute Chess Room Coordinator, FIDE Master Paul Whitehead. From the basics: how the pieces move and capture, castling and en-passant; to more advanced strategy: checkmating patterns, how to think in the openings, middle-game strategy, and what to do in the endgame. The goal of the class is to open up a new world of fun and joy through the magic and beauty of chess!

chessroom@milibray.org

(415) 393-0110 | 57 Post Street, San Francisco CA 94104
Join the Chess Room for Chess Socials!
Free and encouraged for MI Members

5-6pm
First Fridays of the month:

January 5
February 2
March 1
April 5
May 3
June 7

Unwind from the week with fellow chess players. We'll have rousing game replays on the big screen, snacks, and lively conversation. Wine available for purchase in the Meeting Room provided before the CinemaLit program. Stick around for CinemaLit at 6pm!

Questions?
Contact chessroom@milibrary.org
Solutions

Tony's Teasers:

1. W. A. Shinkman, 1872. 1.fxe7! This sets up several mates using under-promotion: 1...Kd7 2.e8(Q)+ Kxe8 3.Ra8# is fairly straightforward, but both 1...Kf6 2.e8(B)! Ke6 3.Rh6#, and 1...Kxd6 2.e8(R)! Kc6 3.Re6#, are quite surprising.

2. T. Lama, 2023. 1.Qxf7! h1(Q). (1...Qxb7 2.Qxb7 h1(Q) 3.Qc6+! Bxc6 4.Ne6# is one amusing line.) 2.Rc7+! Bxc7 (2...Qc6 3.Rxc6+ Bxc6 4.Ne6#) 3.Qxc7+ Qc6 (3...Bc6 4.Ne6#) 4.Qa7+ Qb6 5.Qa3#!

Contact Us

Mechanics' Institute Chess Club is on the 4th floor at 57 Post Street, San Francisco, CA. Our phone number is (415) 393-0110.

We welcome any feedback, articles, or "Letter to the Editor" piece. Submit yours today at chessroom@milibrary.org

With more than 3,000 books and periodicals, Mechanics' Institute boasts one of the largest chess book collections in the U.S.

You can now access our newsletter directly from the chess home page! https://www.milibrary.org/chess
January Schedule of Events

See our website for a full listing of events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday, January 12</td>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>CinemaLit: Queen of Katwe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, January 13</td>
<td>1:00 pm</td>
<td>Teacher Tea: Do Your Lessons Love Your Students? with Studio Pathways</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, January 18</td>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>A People’s History of SFO with author Eric Porter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, January 19</td>
<td>5:00 pm</td>
<td>Mechanics’ Institute Evening Tour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, January 19</td>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>CinemaLit: The Thomas Crown Affair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, January 25</td>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>When We Walk By with author Kevin Adler and Shireen McSpadden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, January 26</td>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>CinemaLit: Queen to Play (on ZOOM)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, January 31</td>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>Storytelling Showcase with Corey Rosen</td>
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Learn about events and register! milibrary.org/events