A soccer player in a green and blue uniform is running on a green field. He is wearing a green long-sleeved jersey with blue vertical stripes and the word "Providence" on the front. He is also wearing blue shorts, blue socks, and yellow and black cleats. A soccer ball is visible in the foreground. The background is a blurred stadium with spectators.

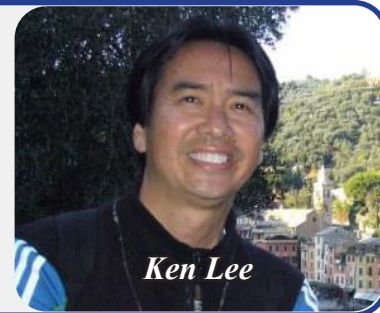
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Danny Musovski. Photo courtesy of Seattle Sounders.

Interview with Danny Musovski

(Forward for the Seattle Sounders)

Ken Lee



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Danny Musovski joined the Seattle Sounders in February 2024 as a forward. He immediately made an impact on the team with his enthusiasm and team play.

Not long after he joined, a viral video called [The Moose's Gambit](#) was posted showcasing Danny's love of another sport: chess.

I recently met with Danny to discuss The Beautiful Game and The Game of Kings.

Ken: On behalf of Northwest Chess and the legions of football fans from all over the Pacific Northwest welcome!

Danny: Thank you. It's a pleasure being here.

Ken: When did you start playing soccer and chess?

Danny: I got into soccer when I was about four years old and just kept playing until now. I started playing chess in elementary school in the first grade. I was in the chess club with my older brother.

Then I had a very long break. I never really played tournament chess as a kid. With the COVID pandemic and the release of *The Queen's Gambit*, I started playing again.

It reignited my passion for chess. Now I play online nearly every day, and I really enjoy it. I almost forgot how much I loved chess.

Ken: Is your style of play in soccer influenced by your love of chess?

Danny: I think the way you play chess is a little bit reflective of how you approach strategy and all things competitive.

So, for me, as a soccer player, I feel like I'm an aggressive player who likes to take risks. In chess, I'm the same way where I like to open up if my opponent is out of position.

For example, if my opponent castles, I just start pushing my pawns on their vulnerable side and start putting on some pressure. I'm definitely not a chess master, but I enjoy the little tactical lessons here and there.

Ken: Have you tried to encourage some of your teammates or friends to play chess as well?

Danny: Yes, we have a couple of guys on the team that also play chess. There are some guys who are pretty good.

I'm like 1200 ELO on five-minute and ten-minute games, but we have Jackson Reagan who's about 1400. We're not super good but I think we're decent players. We play all of our games online on our phones.

Ken: Danny, do you find that playing a game at lunch or after a workout does something for your mental state as you wind down or gear up for a game?

Danny: Yes. Chess stimulates my mind in a very specific way. It gets my brain working and thinking. For one or two hours, I'm 100% fully engaged—just thinking and strategizing. Chess feels like a good workout. That's why I like it so much.

Ken: Soccer is called "The Beautiful Game" and chess is called "The Game of Kings." Do you have any other thoughts about how these two games inform one another?

Danny: In a lot of ways, soccer is like chess in that you have to always have to plan ahead. You have to react to what's in front of you.

Ken: What are your aspirations for the future of soccer in Seattle for yourself?

Danny: The Sounders team and fans have welcomed me. It's been great. I think I've already made some contributions to the team. I'm doing what I can to stay healthy, and I have no doubt I'll have a positive impact here with my team.

Ken: Do you ever think of your soccer matches like the beginning, middle and end game phases in chess?

Danny: Definitely. When you are in a soccer match you play differently depending on where you are in the match. You're not going to play the same way at the end of the game that you would at the beginning.

Ken: As a forward in soccer, have you ever thought of yourself metaphorically as a certain kind of piece on the board?

Danny: Oh, I'd say I'm like a Rook! I'm a very direct player and I like to make runs from behind. I try to make fast runs up and down the pitch.

Ken: Do you have any favorite openings that you like to play in chess?

Danny: My favorite opening is the Italian. It's what I'm most familiar with.

Ken: There's a lot of literature about how soccer players from different countries are reflective of their culture. That means French, German and Italian players all play different styles of football.

What's your style of football?

Danny: Well, my parents are from Macedonia so I feel that reflects on my particular soccer style. The eastern European style is very direct and, well, I guess I would call it, Balkan. I would describe it as a very tough and physical style. You just go through tackles, and you keep going through every challenge. That's definitely part of the soccer culture from that region, so definitely it's a part of me.

Ken: What do you think about the future of chess for you?

Danny: I'm definitely interested in the community. I'm not trying to become a chess master, but I could definitely use a couple hundred points on my ELO to get a little bit better. I definitely want to keep getting better to challenge my teammates.