

# Our Darkest Chess Hours

## The Chess Friends

*(The Man Benjamin Frederick, The Myth Sarang Sankrithi, and The Legend Vivaan Sankrithi)*

<https://www.chessfriendsbooks.com/blog>



*Peshka in the dark*

Howdy! It's the Chess Friends!

After more than 15 blog posts (and counting!), you already know that just like the neighbor kids, we like a good joke. We live by a good joke. If we see a good knee-slapper, we pick it up and use it right away. Or, according to our parents, overuse it. But today, we don't want to share moments that made us want to joke (read about them [here](#)). Today we want to share our downfalls, our darkest chess hours, our struggles, and how we are dealing with them.

### Sarang:

Before the pandemic, I got to around 1400 in my northwest chess rating. I was a very good trickster, with good tactics, and some calculated hope chess, meaning I would make so-so moves that often led to opponent blunders. Around that time, I began my battle with acute asthma, which makes it hard for me to breathe.

Over the next couple years, my rating dropped to around 1200. I was playing better players who wouldn't fall for my tricks, and I had to reinvent how I played as a chess player. It didn't help that I was in and out of

the hospital with asthma attacks and my chess practice wasn't as consistent. I also began my struggle with anxiety. Though things were looking rough, I loved chess and, like with my asthma, I had to keep fighting.

It was then that I discovered yoga. Yoga is now part of my daily life. It helps me focus, stay calm, and regulate my breathing. With all that under control, I have reinvented myself as a more patient, positional player, and I am well over 1500 in rating. Whatever struggles you may face in life, if you truly love something, as I love chess, you will always be able to overcome the struggles.

### Vivaan:

I started my chess journey when I was two and began playing tournaments when I was three. I am seven now but reading and writing have always been tough for me. Handwriting has always been super hard, and I sometimes confuse and switch letters and numbers, or write them reversed. For years, notating my chess games was super stressful and would slow me down a lot, and I couldn't focus on the chess games because I was so worried about the writing.

In some K-1 events, they had a neat

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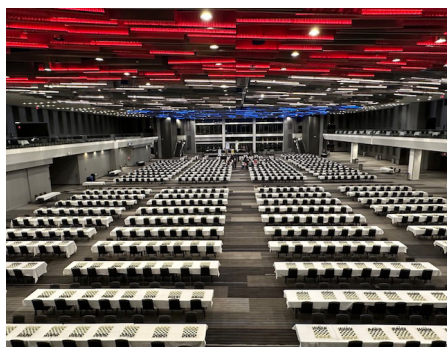
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*Columbus, Ohio was the place to be in April, 2024!*

notation sheet where you just highlight the letter, number, and piece, and those were ok. Writing between the lines in normal notation sheets, especially small ones, is very hard for me. Most of my notations are hard to follow so postgame analysis is hard, unless we do it right after the game, when I remember all the moves.

Now I use an approved device called a Chess NoteR ([ChessNoteR | The future of chess notation](#)). I still practice handwriting and reading and both are improving slowly. With the Noter, I can focus on my chess and analyze and learn better after. The way the Noter works is there is a picture of a chessboard on it and you touch the piece you want to move and then the square you move it to. Afterwards you can send all the moves with time stamps and everything as a document. I often share with my opponents who struggle with notation too!

## Benji:

I remember going to the National Elementary Championship in 2024. I was in 6th grade, so it was my last opportunity to participate at the Elementary School National level. Leading to that, I was training hard, but still couldn't get past the 1300s USCF rating. I had been stuck in the 1300s for a long time! *This is it*, I thought. This National would be my moment to shine.

Oh was I wrong. I was not playing good chess. I blundered. I missed tactics. I placed my pieces on the wrong squares. I let my opponents take control. I lost where I could have drawn. I drew where I could have won, including opponents rated lower than me.

After the last round, which was another disappointing draw, I sat down in the hotel hallway. Without the chess

crowd, the place felt too quiet, like no chess battles, nothing happened earlier. The only reminder of the tournament was the mess the chess kids left on the floor: lost notation sheets, snack wrappers, empty food containers... Sitting there, with my participation medal, I felt like an empty container. I think I even cried that time. *What is wrong with my game?* I thought. The bad blunders were swirling in my head. I had three choices. One: To quit; only I couldn't quit. Two: To shrug it off and forget about it. It's just a game. But I couldn't forget. My third choice was to take this feeling of frustration and turn it into motivation, use it to push myself forward.

I promised myself that I would train even harder and come back stronger the next tournament. I studied what went wrong, and realized that I was never really attacking in my games. My mindset was on "how should I survive," and I needed to change it to "how should I attack." I decided I would try to get sharper and more tactical positions.

Then, one month later, I had my greatest tournament! I didn't lose a single game, and the 1300s USCF became a distant memory in my rear-view mirror. Did I have bad tournaments since then? Yes, I did. But I kept going. The chess journey continues.

When will I stop for lunch?  
When I see a fork on the board!

Ha! You didn't think we would leave without a single knee-slapper, did you? Here are more chess jokes, to lighten up the mood!

Knock, knock!  
Who's there?  
Alaska!  
Alaska who?  
Alaska TD!

\*\*\*

Knock, knock!  
Who's there?  
Orange!  
Orange who?  
Orange you going to make a move?!

\*\*\*

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Pudding!

Pudding who?

Pudding your King in Check!

\*\*\*

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Boo!

Boo who!

Are you sad you lost your game?

\*\*\*

Why can a Knight see in the dark?

It has Knight vision!

That's all for today, Friends! Share some dark and light moments of your chess journeys in the comments!

Three Cheers, Fellow Future Master Chess Friends! Stay positive and play chess!

The Man Benji, The Myth Sarang, The Legend Vivi



*Peshka in the light*