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*Photo credit: Philip Peterson.*

# The Queen's Gambit (Netflix)

By Karen Schmidt

In mid-October a chess friend texted me about a new Netflix series, *The Queen's Gambit*. I am a Netflix customer, so I decided to check it out. I will admit that I was a little skeptical. I had read an online synopsis of the story: the little Kentucky orphan girl becomes a chess prodigy, and eventually competes in a world-class tournament in Russia. It sounded a little too much like a fairy tale.

I watched episode one and was hooked. Over the next couple days, I binge-watched the other six episodes, and loved the whole experience. Around this time, texts and emails started pouring in from my chess and non-chess friends, asking if I was aware of the series. They know I'm a chess player, and that I'm usually the lone female chess player at Westlake Park in downtown Seattle. (See *The Seattle Times* story of 7/15/2019.)

I decided to approach *The Seattle Times* (again) to see whether they might want to print some of the chess stories I have written for *Northwest Chess Magazine*. (They had turned me down in the spring of 2019.) This time they got back to me and asked for a sample of my writing. I happily sent them links to two of my *Northwest Chess* stories, and they invited me to write a review of the Netflix series.

I had been captivated by the seven-episode series. It was well acted, with interesting characters, and outstanding sets. The fictional story of Beth Harmon was set in Kentucky in the 1950s and 1960s; the clothes, hair, cars and furnishings were all spot-on. But more importantly, the series captured the atmosphere and mystique of chess, and specifically "the chess tournament." I was even more surprised at the way it captured the experience of being the lone female chess competitor in a sea of men and boys. I once played in a tournament consisting of 38 men and boys, and two females: a nine-year-old girl and me. It is very intimidating, until one gets used to it, to be playing a boy or man, with several other boys and men hovering overhead and watching your game.

After watching the series, I began researching reviews and interviews about it. The first review I read was glowing, but a couple others criticized the actress'

style as "too bland." To my surprise, the series was based on a 1983 novel I had never heard of: *The Queen's Gambit*, by Walter Tevis. Further delving revealed that Tevis had been an English teacher, professional pool shark, chess player, sometime alcoholic, and eventually a respected novelist.

As an aside, several of Tevis' other novels were made into huge box office hit movies: *The Color of Money*; *The Hustler*; and *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. I just picked up a copy of the book *The Queen's Gambit*, and I may be reading several of Tevis' novels.

I particularly enjoyed a *Slate* interview about the series with Garry Kasparov, Russian former world champion. The director of the Netflix series, Scott Frank, consulted with both Kasparov and Bruce Pandolfini, American chess expert and teacher, to make sure that the chess scenes were very accurate. (In the excellent 1993 film, *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, Pandolfini was played by Ben Kingsley. Kasparov and I both loved that film!)

I also watched a November 14-minute CNN *Amanpour* interview with Kasparov and Judit Polgar, Hungarian woman Grandmaster. It was a fascinating interview, including a discussion of 1989 comments made by Kasparov. In a nutshell, his opinion in 1989 was that no women would ever be able to compete at the chess level of men. Judit, one of the three famous Polgar sisters, became a Grandmaster at the age of 15 in 1991. At that time she was the youngest GM in the world. She beat Kasparov while he was the reigning world champion, and has also beaten many other former world champions and top players. At her peak she was ranked number eight in the world in 2005. I was amused at the way Kasparov replied during the interview, when asked if he still held to those 1989 beliefs. He said, "We all make...you know...mistakes."

I highly recommend *The Queen's Gambit* series. It seems to have universal appeal beyond the chess theme. And the chess scenes are accurate, realistic and compelling. The chess energy or synergy, the competition, and the psychological dramas all ring true. As reported in recent

news stories, chess sets are flying off the shelves in stores, and the series is wildly popular not only in the United States, but in Russia! I noticed only a few minor inconsistencies in the chess scenes, such as players talking during a tournament game, and opponents making moves very quickly. In real life this would not happen, but of course in a movie you can't have scenes with 20 minute intervals between chess moves!

Beth's story and struggles are reminiscent of the author's own youth, and also of the young Bobby Fischer, who beat Boris Spassky of Russia in 1972 for the title of World Champion. That event also sparked a huge interest in chess in America at the time.

The only quibble I have with this series is that almost all of Beth's male opponents were friendly, helpful, and respectful. In real life for women players this is not always (or even usually) the case. I have had men tell me to my face that they won't play me because I'm a woman.

I continue to be amazed at the number of email replies I have had to my online *Times* review (11/30/20) and the "Weekend Plus" section printed review (12/4/20). Some of them have been heart-warming chess stories from others' lives, including a woman who must be nearing 80. She played in a high school boys' chess club tournament in 1958 to even out the number of players. Her boyfriend had taught her to play chess, and much to all the boys' shock, she won the tournament. She and her final round opponent still reminisce about it at their high school reunions, she said.

I have also had many replies from non-chess players, who enjoyed *The Queen's Gambit* series immensely after reading my review. Several of them thanked me for giving them a glimpse into the world of chess.

I hope that this series continues to appeal, and causes an increased interest in chess, especially among young players, girls and boys alike. Chess teaches many life lessons: concentration; planning ahead; strategy; fair play; persistence; and considering all options before making the next, best move.



Photo credit: Philip Peterson.

# 2020 Portland Chess Club Championship

By Wilson Gibbins

The Portland Chess Club Championship was held on five consecutive Tuesday nights, beginning September 29, 2020 and ending October 27, 2020. If you take a quick look at the crosstable, you might get the impression that the only master in the field bullied the other players to secure the victory. But it sure didn't feel that way.

There were two factors that were keys to victory. First, and most important, Nick Raptis didn't play this year. But the second factor was that I got help from the other players. My game isn't particularly sharp, so I draw a lot of games. Last year I was undefeated, but as I drew three games, I was never in contention.

For me to win tournaments, I need my fellow competitors to slow each other down. It is an application of the [crab-bucket strategy](#). To demonstrate my need for help, see how I fell off the pace with a draw in round two.

**Steven Deeth (2011) –  
Wilson Gibbins (2221) [E46]**  
Portland Chess Club Championship  
Chess.com (R2), October 6, 2020  
[Wilson Gibbins]

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 0-0 5.Nge2**

Steven and I have played a few times before. He always has White, we have always played the Rubinstein Nimzo-Indian.

**5...Re8**

This move has been recommended in two repertoire books. It looked interesting, as different lines can lead to radically different pawn structures. Unfortunately, I couldn't absorb the subtleties in a couple hours of prep time.

**6.a3 Bf8 7.Ng3 d5 8.Be2 b6 9.0-0 Bb7 10.cxd5 exd5 11.b4 Nbd7 12.Rb1**



Position after 12.Rb1

And now I suspect I have entered a battle of wits unarmed. Steven has a lot more experience with these QGD exchange variation pawn structures than I do. I am about equal here but am not very confident in my choice of moves or plans.

**12...a6**

I am swimming. Stockfish likes 12...g6 which is a more constructive idea that I eventually try on move 15.

**13.a4 c6 14.Bd2 Qc7**

14...a5 is an idea from the Tartakover QGD, but would be an admission that 12...a6 was a waste of time.

**15.Qb3 g6 16.Bf3 h5**

The moves ...g6 and ...h5 are a standard Nimzo idea against a white knight on g3.

**17.Nge2**

17.b5 might keep a little edge for White, but perhaps Steven had predicted the weak move I was about to play.

**17...Ne4?**

Black is still even after either 17...b5 or 17...Bd6.

**18.Bxe4!± dxe4 19.f3**

My f7 square is under attack.

**19...Nf6 20.f4?**

And Steven lets me off the hook. 20.fxe4 Nxe4 21.Nxe4 Rxe4 22.Rf6! threatens both 23.Rxg6+ and 23.Rbf1, with advantage to White.

**20...Rad8**

20...Bc8.

**21.h3 Qd7?!**

21...Bc8=

**22.Be1!±**

Steven's bad bishop is starting to look pretty good. Over the last three moves the evaluation has swung from (1) big advantage for Steven to (2) small edge for me back to (3) small edge for Steven.

## 2020 Portland Chess Club Championship

#	Place	Name	ID	Rating	Rd 1	Rd 2	Rd 3	Rd 4	Rd 5	Total
1	1	Wilson K Gibbins	10202825	2221	W5	D3	W2	W4	W7	4.5
2	2	Mike E Janniro	10482569	2067	W11	W8	L1	W3	D5	3.5
3	3-6	Steven B Deeth	12421422	2011	W10	D1	W6	L2	D4	3.0
4		Austin Tang	16097497	1852	W7	D6	W8	L1	D3	3.0
5		Robert Lundin	12424651	1883	L1	W10	W11	D6	D2	3.0
6		Michael J Morris	10505798	2035	W12	D4	L3	D5	W8	3.0
7	7	Ben Levy	30029948	1325	L4	W12	D10	W9	L1	2.5
8	8-9	David Edward Murray	12678095	1924	W9	L2	L4	W11	L6	2.0
9		Geoffrey Kenway	12637236	1390	L8	L11	W12	L7	W10	2.0
10	10	Gregory Markowski	12717342	1517	L3	L5	D7	W12	L9	1.5
11	11-12	David Lucas Roshu	15233503	1686	L2	W9	L5	L8	L12	1.0
12		James F Fowler	12422676	1622	L6	L7	L9	L10	W11	1.0

22...Nd5 23.Nxd5 cxd5 24.Bh4 Rc8 25.Rfc1

25.f5! keeps the pressure on. I can't win the pawn with 25...gxf5 because 26.Ng3 (or 26.Nf4).

25...b5 26.axb5 Qxb5 27.Kf2?!

27.Qa2 Rxc1+ 28.Rxc1 Bxb4 (28...Rc8.) 29.f5 and Stockfish thinks this unbalanced position is equal; 27.Qb2 Rxc1+ 28.Nxc1 is also close to equal.

27...Rxc1 28.Nxc1

With the knight far away from the f4 and g3 squares, White's attacking move f4-f5 isn't as powerful. 28.Rxc1 Bxb4 29.Rb1 a5.

28...Rc8 29.Na2 Rc4

This is a good time to spend a move to keep his bishop off the f6-square with 29...Kg7. Jump ahead to move 35 to see why.

30.g4?!

Objectively, Steve should sit tight instead of counter-attacking, but practically this works out well.

30...hgx4 31.hgx4 Qd7

With control of the open file, some play on White's advanced kingside pawns, and White's knight out of play on a2, I have a clear advantage. I also have to be careful about his pieces and pawns sneaking in around my king.

32.Qd1 Qc8 33.Rb2 Bc6 34.Kg3



Position after 34.Kg3

34...Bd7?

This bad move doesn't lose the game, but it does end my hopes of winning. I should be working to keep his bishop from reaching f6 with 34...Qe6.

35.Bf6!

Now I must part with my dark-squared bishop to stop him from checkmating me by putting one of his major pieces on the h-file.

35...Qc6 36.g5 Bg7 37.Bxg7

And my positional evaluation has changed

from "the advantage of the two bishops" to "the owner of the bad bishop." :-)

37...Kxg7 38.Rh2 Qe6 39.Rh4



Position after 39.Rh4

Stockfish still likes my position, but I don't. The bad bishop combined with the potential for an accident on the h-file means that I will be living in fear for the rest of the game.

39...Kf8 40.Qd2 Qc6 41.Rh8+ Ke7 42.Qb2 Rc2 43.Qa3 Ke6 44.b5 Qxb5 45.Nb4 Rg2+

I thought this was the only move that drew, but Stockfish finds ten other moves for Black that evaluate to 0.00.

46.Kxg2 Qe2+ 47.Kg1 Qe1+ 48.Kg2 Qe2+ 49.Kg1

1/2-1/2

Austin Tang (1865) –  
Wilson Gibbins (2021) [B83]  
Portland Chess Club Championship  
Chess.com (R4), October 20,2020  
[Wilson Gibbins]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Be2 Nf6 8.0-0 Be7 9.Qd2

As a dogmatic teenager, I learned from *Modern Chess Openings 10* that the "only" correct way to play this position was 9.f4 and 10.Qe1 with the idea of playing Qg3 and intimidating Black's king. But over the last 48 years I have seen that there are lots of ways to interpret the white side of the Sicilian. Austin has more space and better development, so he isn't under any obligation to start playing for mate on move nine.

9...0-0 10.a4 d6 11.f3 b6

Austin's 11th move allowed me to play this, as without a pawn on f3 he could exchange knights on c6, play Bf3, and harass me on the long diagonal. Stockfish wants me to break out with 11...d5 as 12.exd5 exd5 is probably close to equal. My isolated d-pawn is compensated by his loose pieces on the e-file and his inability to pressure my d-pawn with Bf3. But this

isn't the overwhelming game that Black sometimes gets with the ...d5 break.

12.Rab1

If you don't know why Austin played this "mysterious rook move," jump ahead to move 15.

12...Bb7

12...Ne5 is more fun, but requires more calculating, something Austin's brain does better than mine. :-)

13.Nxc6 Bxc6 14.Rfd1



Position after 14.Rfd1

14...Qb7

14...d5 is playable, but not as strong as it sometimes is in the Sicilian, as White's pieces are centralized and he has good control of the d-file.

15.b4

Not the kind of move we would have made back in 1972, as weakening White's control of the c3- and c4-squares would have been considered positional suicide. Since then, I have seen some Scheveningen Sicilian games where White plays b4 and chokes off Black's counterplay. After 12.Rab1 I suspected the b2-b4 push would come, but I didn't know how to arrange my pieces to prepare for it.

15...Bd7

15...Rfc8 is probably best, but only equal.

16.Bf4

16.b5 axb5 (I probably would have played 16...a5 to shield my b-pawn from attack by the rook on b1, which looks cramped but still close to equal.) 17.Nxb5 Bxb5 18.Bxb5=. (18.Rxb5 Rxa4 19.Rxb6 is also equal.)

16...Rfc8 17.Rb3

17.Bxd6? Bxd6 18.Qxd6 Rxc3

17...d5?!

Leela recommends 17...Rd8, but then why didn't I just put it there on move 16? Maybe to tempt White's rook off the back rank? 18.Bxd6?! Bxa4 19.Nxa4 Rxd6.

18.exd5?!

18.e5±

18...exd5?!

Simpler is 18...Nxd5 19.Nxd5 exd5= 20.Qxd5? Qxd5 21.Rxd5 Be6.

19.Be5 Be6 20.Qd4?

20.Bd4= White's and Black's weaknesses are offsetting penalties.



Position after 20.Qd4

20...a5!

I didn't see this move right away; it was a couple of minutes before I noticed it. But I had decided to spend a little time on this position. I sensed I might be squeezed to death due to my isolated d-pawn and lack of space, and thought I needed to find some counterplay before it was too late. But the engines believe I am equal even if I don't play 20...a5.

21.Nb5

I saw this when I played 20...a5, and thought the position was getting messy. 21.bxa5?? Bc5.

21...Rxc2!±

I tried to make 21...axb4 work, but after 22.Nd6 Bxd6 (22...Qc6 23.Nxc8 Rxc8 is an interesting exchange sacrifice, but White has just as many chances here as Black.) 23.Bxd6 we are in that messy position that I feared, with my dark squares turning to toast.

22.Qd3 Rc6

22...Rc4±

23.Nd4 Rcc8

23...axb4!± 24.Nxc6 Qxc6

24.bxa5

24.Bxf6 Bxf6 25.Nxe6 fxe6 26.bxa5 Rxa5 27.Qe3 gives White some pressure for his pawn.

24...Rxa5 25.Nxe6 fxe6. 26.Bd4

Now 26.Bxf6 allows Black the option of 26...gxf6 which gives Black a nice pawn center at the expense of a more open kingside. And it prevents 27.Qe3 with the answer 27...Bc5.

26...Bc5 27.Bxc5 Raxc5 28.Qe3 Qc6 29.Bb5 Qd6 30.Re1 Kf7

The only way to defend my e-pawn. But when I played it, I wondered if I was playing with fire. If he can put a third attacker on my e-pawn, I have no way to defend it.

31.Qd4 R8c7

Not best, but I wanted the ability to bring another defender to my e-pawn. 31...Rc1 32.Rb1 Rxe1+ 33.Rxe1 Qc5±.

32.Rbe3

32.Qb4 pins my rook, making it harder to find constructive plans that are not weakening in some way. Sure, I can push my d-pawn if I can't find a better move, but I hate opening the a2-e6 diagonal for his bishop to attack my e6 pawn.

32...Rc1 33.Qd2 Rxe1+ 34.Rxe1 Qc5+?!

A nervous move.

35.Kf1

I was hoping for 35.Kh1 when I have back-rank threats and his king is farther from the action in an endgame. But this isn't Austin's first rodeo, and he doesn't fall for my bluff.

35...Qd6

Admitting my mistake.

36.Kg1 Nd7

Next bluff — I am hoping that Austin values his bishop over my knight, and will let me play Nc5 to defend my e-pawn with my knight from a more active position.

37.Qd3 Kg8

Stockfish prefers 37...g6 and 37...h6, but I didn't want to create all those kingside entry squares for his queen.

38.Bxd7

I am not sure if this is best, but it was the move I didn't want to see.

38...Rxd7 39.Rc1 Rc7 40.Rxc7 Qxc7

I normally struggle in queen endings, but this one didn't look too bad to me. My king seems safe enough, and the passed d-pawn is a psychologically menacing presence if not yet an actual threat.

41.Qb5 Kf7

41...Qc5+?? 42.Qxc5 bxc5 43.a5! is hilarious fun for the whole family. Except me.

42.Kf2 Ke7

By sneaking my king into the square of the a-pawn, I have made the move 43...Qc5+ into a threat. 42...Qxh2? 43.Qd7+=

Kf6 44.Qd8+ Kf5 (44...Ke5?? 45.Qb8+) 45.Qf8+ Kg6 46.Qe8+=.

43.Qb2 Qc5+ 44.Ke2 Kf7

If he won't let me trade queens, there is no use keeping my king in the square of his a-pawn.

45.Qb3?!

45.Qe5 Qc2+ 46.Kf1 Qxa4 47.Qc7+ Kg6 48.Qxb6 Qc4+ is better for Black, but no clear win in sight.

45...Qg1! 46.Kd3



Position after 46.Kd3

46...Qf1+?!

I lose my nerve / can't calculate far enough. My biggest fear is that he will get a passed a-pawn that will run faster than any of my pawns. 46...Qxg2! 47.Qxb6 Qxf3+ 48.Kc2 (48.Qe3 Qd1+; 48.Kd2 Qf4+) 48...Qe4+ 49.Kc3 (49.Kb3?? Qb1+) 49...Qxa4.

47.Kc3 Qc1+ 48.Kd3 Qc5 49.f4?! Ke7

49...Qf2!-+

50.g3 Qf2

Not as strong as it was on move 49, but it maintains the advantage.

51.Qb4+ Kf7 52.Kc3?!

A trap that doesn't quite work.

52...Qe1+!

I fall in.

53.Kb3 Qxb4+ 54.Kxb4 Ke7 55.Kb5 Kd6 56.Kxb6

Austin obtains the unstoppable outside passed pawn, but it isn't enough.

56...d4 57.a5 d3 58.a6 d2 59.a7 d1Q 60.a8Q Qb1+ 61.Ka7

Ends the suffering. 61.Ka6 Qa2+ 62.Kb7 Qxa8+ 63.Kxa8 e5 is a winning pawn ending.

61...Kc7

It is mate in two or White can sacrifice the queen to make it mate in four.

0-1

This game begins with 34 moves of positional maneuvering followed by 15 moves of total chaos. In some kinds of positions, it is difficult for even solid, experienced players to make accurate moves. My suggestions in the last 15 moves are unfair to the players, as I am just taking the advice from engines who excel at this sort of foolishness. I would have struggled over those last 15 moves too.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 b6

I played 4...0–0 against Steven, which I consider safer, but as it is less unbalanced, Black has fewer chances to play for a win. Mike mixes it up early.

5.Nge2 Bb7 6.a3 Be7 7.d5 0–0 8.Ng3 d6 9.Be2 Nbd7 10.0–0 c6 11.e4 cxd5 12.cxd5 exd5 13.exd5 Rc8 14.Nf5 Rxc3?!



Position after 14...Rxc3

Mike throws in a speculative exchange sacrifice. It can't objectively be correct (can it?), but it will force an unbalanced game. White shouldn't be able to do too much damage with his rooks on the only open file in the short term.

15.Nxe7+ Qxe7 16.bxc3 Nxd5 17.Bd2 Ne5 18.c4 Nf6 19.f4

The standard way to exploit the two-bishops is to use pawns to take away outposts from the knights. Unfortunately, this opens up a few squares around White's king. Bobby The Great One said you have to give squares to get squares, but Wilson The Cowardly One hates to give squares, especially when the squares are near his king.

19...Ned7

19...Ng6 20.Re1 Nh4 shouldn't be too dangerous to White, but I wouldn't like seeing those minor pieces swarming my king.

20.Bf3 Nc5 21.Bxb7 Qxb7 22.Bc3 Nfe4

23.Bb2 Qd7

Stockfish likes 23...f5 with both knights well anchored, but it weakens the long diagonal for White's bishop to exploit.

24.f5 f6

Mike prefers to use his f-pawn to blunt White's dark-squared bishop.

25.Qf3

25.Qd5+! Kh8 26.Bd4± prepares White to trade off the knight on c5, put rooks on the e- and d-files, and break down the defense of Black's d-pawn. 26...Nd2? 27.Bxc5 Nxf1 28.Bf2.

25...Qf7 26.Qe2 Qd7 27.Rad1 Re8 28.Qc2 Rc8 29.Rd4 Ng5 30.Rfd1 Nf7 31.Bc1 Nb7 32.Qf2

White has doubled rooks on the isolated d-pawn, Black has retreated both knights to passive squares, and Stockfish says it is about equal. Chess is a strange game.

32...Rc5 33.Re1 Ne5

One of Black's knights gets reactivated.

34.Qf4 Qc8

Stockfish suggests pawn-grubbing 34...Na5 with equality. But it isn't a drawish equality — both sides will have opportunities.

35.g4



Position after 35.g4

This is where the fun begins. White gets to attack, at the cost of some weaknesses around his king.

35...h6 36.Qe4 b5

Exploits the fact the White can't capture the b-pawn without losing his bishop on c1. A related idea is 36...d5 37.Qg2 (37.Rxd5? Rxc4) 37...dxc4∞; And the engines are still happy to pawn-grub with 36...Na5∞.

37.Bf4 bxc4 38.Rb1 Rc7

And Stockfish says this crazy position is roughly even. You might think that the positional evaluation might be dominated by a single factor, like White's active rooks, Black's passed pawns or White's airy kingside, but Stockfish says it all

balances out.

39.Rc1 c3 40.Rc2

40.Bxe5 also maintains equality for White, as 40...dxe5 41.Rd3 Rc4 42.Qd5+ Kh7 43.Kh1 Rxc4? (43...Rc7=) 44.Rdxc3 and White wins the knight. But in the heat of battle, White would be reluctant to allow this much play around his king.

40...Kh7

Sneaky.

41.Bxe5?

Now this loses, because White has no queen check on d5.

41...dxe5 42.Rd3 Rc4±

42...Nc5!+

43.Qe2 Qc5+ 44.Kg2 Qxa3

44...Qc6+! 45.Kh3 e4 46.Rd1 and it isn't clear to my eye whether Black is making progress or just weakening his position, but Stockfish declares "progress."

45.g5!

Back to equal.

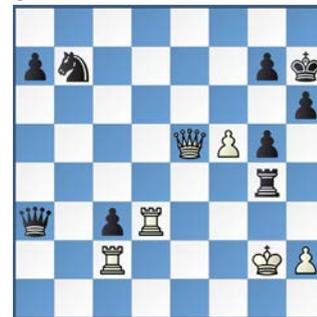
45...fxg5

45...hxg5? 46.Qh5+ Kg8 47.Rd7 Qf8 48.Rxb7

46.Qxe5

46.f6! = and Black has quite a few moves to maintain equality, but 46...gxf6?? is not one of them. 47.Rd7+ Kg6 48.Qxc4.

46...Rg4+



Position after 46...Rg4+

47.Kh3!?

47.Rg3! = Don't ask, just trust the engine in positions like these.

47...Rf4?

47...Qa4.

48.Rcxc3?

48.Rd7! Qf8 49.Rxb7+-

48...Qa1+ 49.Qe2 Qg1

Not much between despair and ecstasy.

0–1

**Apropos Adult Swiss #5**  
**January 16th-17th, 2021**  
**via Chess.com**  
**USChess ONLINE RATED!!!**



**Open to players age 18+ with established USChess membership.**

**Format:** 5-round Swiss System online tournament. Pairings will be made offline by the TD, game launches automatic.

**Entry Fee:** There is no entry fee for the tournament. USChess membership required.

**Rounds:** Sat. 10am, 2pm, 6pm Sun. 10&2  
**Time Control:** G/90 +5

**Prize Fund:** \$750 Guaranteed. **20% added** if 20 or more players, +30% added for 30 or more players with all prizes bumped proportionally. 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> \$225-\$100-\$50, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> U2000 \$75-\$50, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> U1800 \$75-\$50, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> U1600 \$75-\$50. Prizes without players will be split among other rating classes.

**Ratings – USChess Online Rated!** USChess regular online rating used.

**Byes:** Two half-point bye available by end of day January 15<sup>th</sup>, 6pm. NO EXCEPTIONS.

**Zoom:** All players will be required to use Zoom throughout the tournament, no exceptions.

**Memberships and Accounts:** Current USChess membership required. WCF membership required for WA residents. All must be paid 1/15. Renew USChess at [uschess.org](http://uschess.org). Working chess.com account and Zoom capability required.

**Registration:** Register online at <https://nwchess.com/OnlineRegistration> OR email USCF ID# and chess.com username to [kentmcnallchess@gmail.com](mailto:kentmcnallchess@gmail.com) by Friday January 15th 6pm

**Apropos Chess Events** is hosting this tournament and a series for no-entry free online events to promote online chess, and adult chess. Apropos Chess Events is a not-for-profit, private organization.

**TD:** Kenton McNall, 206-853-8624, [kentmcnallchess@gmail.com](mailto:kentmcnallchess@gmail.com)

**APROPOS TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS coming in March 2021!**

**Apropos Adult Swiss #6  
February 13th-14th, 2021  
via Chess.com  
USChess ONLINE RATED!!!**



**Open to players age 18+ with established USChess membership.**

**Format:** 5-round Swiss System online tournament. Pairings will be made offline by the TD, game launches automatic.

**Entry Fee:** There is no entry fee for the tournament. USChess membership required.

**Rounds:** Sat. 10am, 2pm, 6pm Sun. 10&2  
**Time Control:** G/90 +5

**Prize Fund:** \$750 Guaranteed. **20% added** if 20 or more players, +30% added for 30 or more players with all prizes bumped proportionally. 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> \$225-\$100-\$50, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> U2000 \$75-\$50, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> U1800 \$75-\$50, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> U1600 \$75-\$50. Prizes without players will be split among other rating classes.

**Ratings – USChess Online Rated!** USChess regular online rating used.

**Byes:** Two half-point bye available by end of day February 12<sup>th</sup>, 6pm. NO EXCEPTIONS.

**Zoom:** All players will be required to use Zoom throughout the tournament, no exceptions.

**Memberships and Accounts:** Current USChess membership required. WCF membership required for WA residents. All must be paid 2/12. Renew USChess at [uschess.org](http://uschess.org). Working chess.com account and Zoom capability required.

**Registration:** Register online at <https://nwchess.com/OnlineRegistration> OR email USCF ID# and chess.com username to [kentmcnallchess@gmail.com](mailto:kentmcnallchess@gmail.com) by Friday February 12th 6pm

**Apropos Chess Events** is hosting this tournament and a series for no-entry free online events to promote online chess, and adult chess. Apropos Chess Events is a not-for-profit, private organization.

**TD:** Kenton McNall, 206-853-8624, [kentmcnallchess@gmail.com](mailto:kentmcnallchess@gmail.com)

**APROPOS TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS coming in March 2021!**

# Team Washington Wins Inaugural States Chess Cup

By Josh Sinanan

Team Washington emerged victorious in the Championship match in the first ever States Chess Cup on Saturday, November 14! The States Chess Cup is a new online team chess league hosted on lichess.org and organized by Saumik Narayanan, a Minnesota-based expert and chess aficionado. The purpose of the league, which was started this past fall, is for players to represent their state and play against others from around the country. The season began in September with 29 states participating in head-to-head matches played once per week, usually on a weekday evening. The league schedule consisted of a seven-week regular season followed by a four-week playoff bracket. In the regular season, each of the 29 states were geographically grouped into four divisions and played each other team once in a round-robin format. The top-two teams from each division then advanced to a single-elimination playoff

bracket to determine the champion of the States Cup.

- **East Division:** Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania

- **South Division:** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia

- **Central Division:** Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma

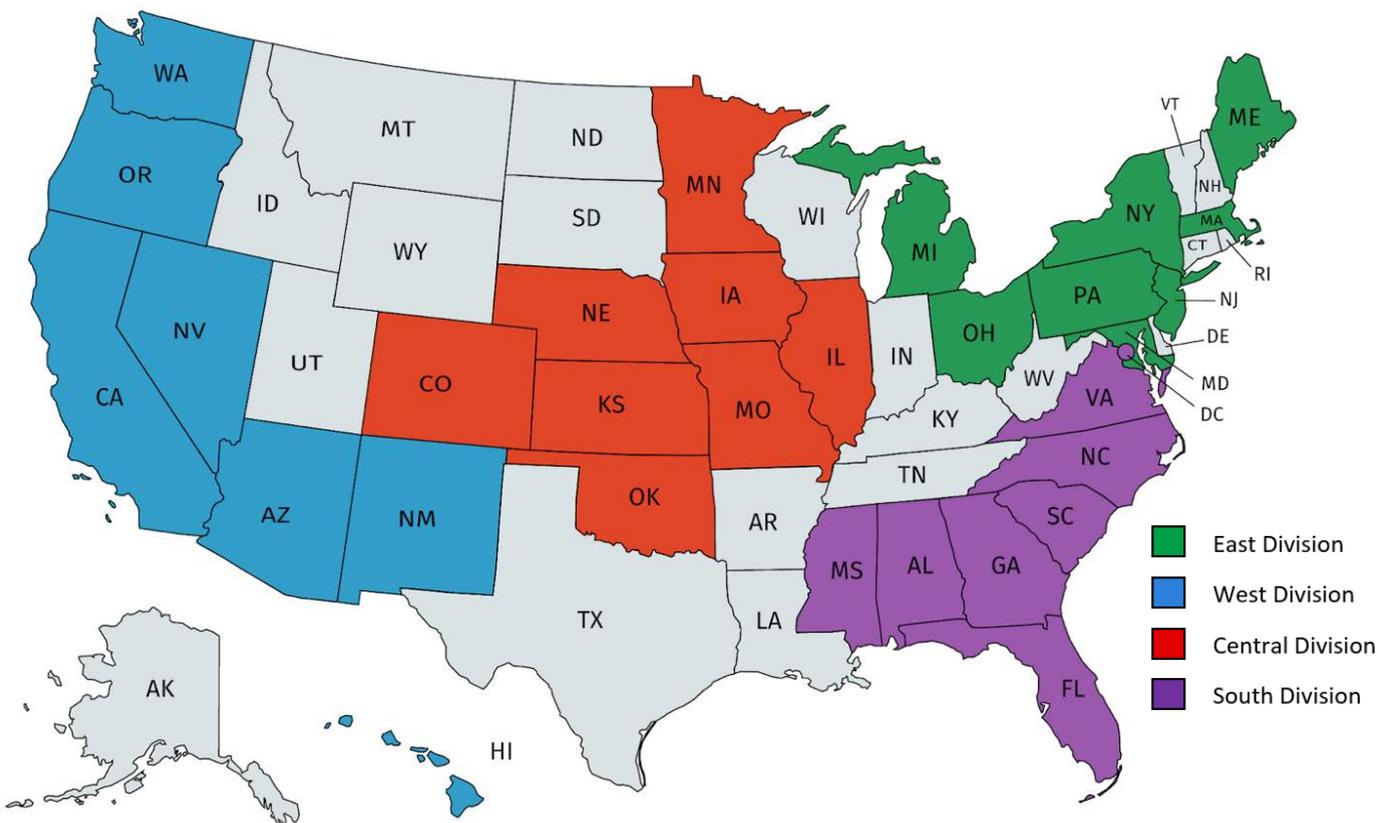
- **West Division:** Arizona, California-North, California-South, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington

The South Division initially had three additional teams, which later dropped from the league. In response, the South schedule was modified and two wildcard spots were added to the playoffs to keep the league balanced.

The match format was based off the PRO Chess League, with each team presenting a lineup of four players. Each player played one rapid game (G/15+2) against each opposing player, for a total of four games per player, and 16 games per match. Crucially, the lineup for each team

# Full Team Washington Roster:

Player	US Chess Rating
<i>IM Georgi Orlov</i>	2507
<i>IM Bryce Tiglon</i>	2498
<i>NM Kyle Haining</i>	2288
<i>Co-Captain NM Josh Sinanan</i>	2259
<i>NM Derek Zhang</i>	2257
<i>NM Rushaan Mahajan</i>	2209
<i>Daniel Shubin</i>	2161
<i>WFM Anne-Marie Velea</i>	2103
<i>Tim Moroney</i>	2048
<i>Advaith Vijayakumar</i>	2026
<i>Sophie Tien</i>	1916
<i>Co-Captain Jacob Mayer</i>	1827
<i>Co-Captain Eddie Chang</i>	1825
<i>Ananth Gottumukkala</i>	1800

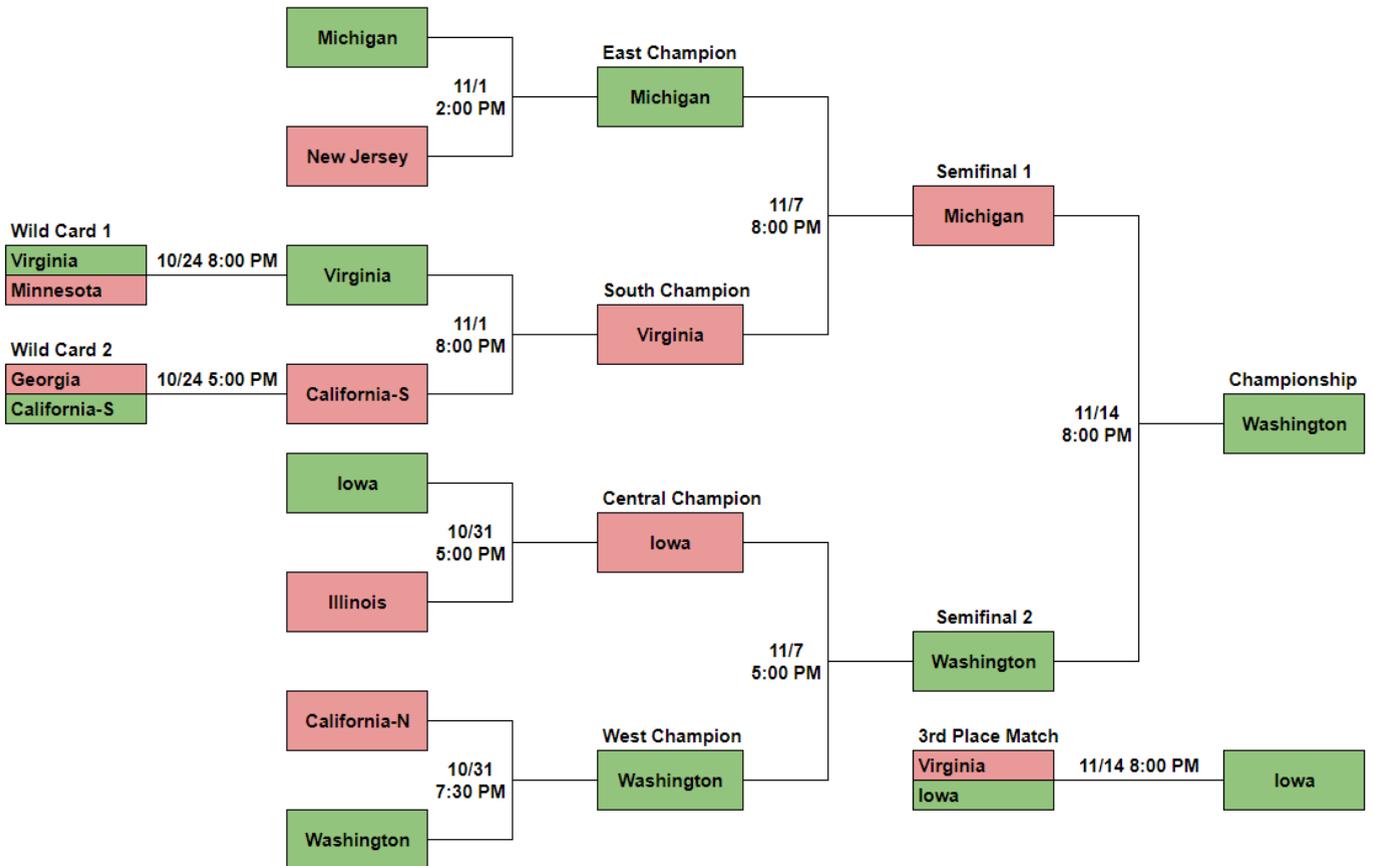


The first States Chess Cup featured 29 U.S. states battling through a regular season and bracket playoffs.

# Western Division Final Standings

#	Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Match	USAT	Game
2	California-N	8.5	6	10	8	12	9.5	16	5.5	191.25	70
8	Washington	9	9.5	6	10.5	8	9.5	10.5	5.5	186	63
3	California-S	13	7.5	9.5	8	8	11.5	15	5	205.25	72.5
1	Arizona	7	10	6.5	10	8.5	16	10.5	5	195.75	68.5
7	Oregon	7.5	8.5	8.5	9.5	14	6.5	5.5	4	174	60
5	Nevada	8	6.5	12	6.5	7.5	6.5	1	1.5	152	48
4	Hawaii	8	11	7.5	6	4	4.5	5.5	1.5	146.75	46.5
6	New Mexico	3	5	4	5.5	2	0	0	0	66.75	19.5

*Washington and Oregon were both part of the West Division, which was arguably the strongest division in the league, with many teams sending four-player squads averaging 2190+ nearly every week of the regular season. Five West teams — Arizona, Oregon, Washington, and two California teams — still held a chance to make playoffs in the final round of the regular season. In the end, California-North won on tiebreaks with Washington, as the top-two qualifying spots in the division. The additional wildcard spot went to California-South, which edged out Arizona on tiebreaks.*



*States Cup Playoff Bracket.*



After ten weeks of play by nearly 30 state teams, Washington and Michigan met in the 2020 States Cup Championship. (Top-Bottom) League President Saumik Narayanan, FM Josh Posthuma, and Tim Moroney comment on the games in the Championship round.

had a rating cap of 2200 US Chess, which allowed more states to field competitive rosters each week. The league games were played on lichess.org, with games rated under the US Chess online rapid category. Each match was also streamed live on Twitch, which enabled fans to follow their favorite states game by game.

Team Washington's games were broadcast each week by Tim Moroney on his SlothyChess Twitch channel: <https://www.twitch.tv/slothychess>

Team Washington tied for first place in the West Division with California-North, each with a record of 5.5/7 match points. In the Western Division Title match, which was played on Halloween, Team Washington's "Fantastic 4" — NM Kyle Haining, NM Derek Zhang, NM Rushaan Mahajan, and Advaith Vijayakumar — took down a very strong Northern California Team and led Team WA to a 9.5-6.5 victory!

In the end, after ten weeks of hard-fought chess through a regular season and playoff bracket, the States Cup boiled down to two final teams: Washington and Michigan. Both teams submitted top-heavy lineups for the Championship Match, with Washington's Fantastic 4 vs Michigan's strong FM, two NMs, and a Class-A player.

The Championship started off with a close 2-2 first round, with the top two players on each team prevailing against the lower two rated players. In round 2, Team Washington kicked it into high gear with a huge 3.5/4 score! First, NM Derek Zhang ground down Michigan's

board four Ryan Wang and then NM Rushaan Mahajan won a tricky knight vs bishop endgame against Michigan's top gun, FM Mark Heimann (2485). Despite

Michigan holding winning positions on the other two boards and appearing to be heading towards round equalization, Team Washington's top board NM Kyle Haining pulled out a draw in a wild time scramble with Michigan Master Tony Nichols, and Advaith Vijayakumar capitalized on a mouse slip by NM James Canty to win a drawn rook endgame! Michigan was able to narrow the gap with a 3-1 score in the third round. Heading into the final round where the corresponding players from each team face off, Team WA held a narrow one-point lead. NMs Kyle Haining and Derek Zhang each held draws against their higher-rated opponents, while young stars Rushaan and Advaith scored clutch victories on the lower boards, propelling Team Washington a resounding 9.5-6.5 victory! With this win over Michigan, Team Washington became the first-ever States Chess Cup Champions!!

Thanks to an incredible initial response to the first States Chess Cup, a second season of the league has been announced. Team Washington hopes to defend their title next year!



Team Washington's Jacob Mayer hoists the new traveling States Chess Cup. Photo credit: Jacob Mayer.

**James Canty (2376) –  
Derek Zhang (2257) [C00]**  
States Chess Cup: Finals  
lichess.org, November 15, 2020  
[Derek Zhang]

**1.e4 e6 2.d3**

I had expected the game to go into a French Winawer. 2.d3 was an unpleasant surprise.

**2...d5 3.Nd2 b6 4.g3 dxe4 5.dxe4 Bb7 6.Bg2 a5 7.Ne2 Bc5 8.0-0 a4?!**

Over-extending. 8...e5!?!=

**9.a3 Ne7 10.b4 axb3 11.cxb3 0-0 12.Bb2 Nec6 13.b4 Be7 14.f4 Qd3 15.Rf3 Qd8**

15...Qd7!? 16.Qc2 Rd8 17.Nb3 Na7. Despite a severe lack of space, at least Black owns the d-file here.

**16.Qc2**

James did a great job of keeping pressure on me throughout the game, both on the board and on the clock. I was already down to seven minutes here, while James had nearly 13 minutes and a dominant position.

**16...Nd7 17.Rd1 Rc8 18.Rd3 Qe8 19.e5 Ndb8?**

19...Bxb4! 20.axb4 Nxb4 21.Qb1 Bxb2 22.Rb3 Bb7 23.Rxb4 Nc5±. Black has good chances here due to White's exposed king and strength of the light-squared bishop on the long diagonal.

**20.g4 Bxb4 21.Rh3 Bc5+ 22.Kh1 g6?!**

22...h6 23.g5 Rd8 24.gxh6 g6! Surprisingly, White has nothing here. Unfortunately I missed this idea in the game.

**23.Ne4 Be7 24.Nf6+?!**

Premature. Better was Qc1 with the idea of f5 and Qh6.

**24...Bxf6 25.exf6 Na5 26.Bxb7 Nxb7 27.Nd4 e5**

Here, I was down to just 26 seconds, compared to James' eight minutes. However, instead of taking the time to

find a crushing continuation, James made the mistake of continuing to play quickly to try to pressure me on the clock. In the haste, he blundered immediately.

**28.Qf2??**

28.fxe5 Nd7 (28...Qxe5 29.Nf5 Qf4 30.Ne7+ Kh8 31.Nxg6+ fxg6 32.f7+ Qf6 33.Bxf6#) 29.Nf5 Nxe5 30.Ne7+ Kh8 31.Qf2 and mate is unstoppable.

**28...exd4 29.Qh4 Qe4+ 30.Kg1 h5??**



Position after 30...h5

With ten seconds on the clock, I blunder back. However, moving quickly despite still having eight minutes on the clock, James again misses a winning continuation. 30...g5! 31.Qxg5+ Qg6+.

**31.Qg5??**

31.gxh5 Qe2 32.Rf1+-

**31...Qe2**

31...Nc5! 32.Qh6 Ne6+-

**32.Qh6 Qxd1+ 33.Kf2 Qd2+ 34.Kg3 Qe1+ 35.Kf3**

I briefly noticed that Qf1 was a possibility, but with the seconds counting down and knowing that a draw would clinch (at worst) a tied match and subsequent blitz tiebreaker, I took the three-fold repetition without a second thought.

**35...Qe3+**

35...Qf1+ mate is forced. 36.Kg3 Qg1+ 37.Kf3 hxg4+ 38.Ke2 Rfe8+ 39.Kd2 Qf2+ 40.Kd3 Nc5+ 41.Kc4 Qc2+ 42.Bc3 Qb3+ 43.Kxd4 Nc6#

**36.Kg2 Qe2+ 37.Kg1 Qe1+ 38.Kg2 Qe2+ 39.Kg3 Qe1+ 40.Kg2 Qe2+**

Normal objectively, James should have won. But this game's wild twists, with heavy time trouble and multiple late blunders by both sides, is reflective of the late-game and late-match excitement that States Chess Cup matches typically have! Thanks again to Saumik for organizing such a fantastic event for chess players in the time of COVID.

1/2-1/2

**James Canty (2317) –  
Advaith Vijayakumar (2026) [B22]**  
States Chess Cup: Finals  
lichess.org, November 15, 2020  
[Advaith Vijayakumar]

Going into round two, the match was tied with both teams scoring two wins. After a disappointing first round loss against FM Mark Heimann, I found myself up against National Master James Canty III with the black pieces. Canty achieved his National Master title in 2009 and nowadays competes in tournaments across the United States in search International Master and Grandmaster norms. It was clear, before the match started, that I would have to brace myself for a grueling battle.

**1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 Qxd5 4.d4 g6!?**

Having done a bit of preparation against my opponent before the match, it was clear that Canty's primary weapon against the Sicilian Defense was the Alapin Variation, a weapon where he was equipped with extensive opening preparation. In fact, he even created a video course titled "The c3 Sicil For The Kill"! Entering his comfort zone, the theoretical mainlines of the Sicilian Alapin, would be impractical, so I opted for a lesser-known line. With 4...g6, Black aims for an improved anti-IQP structure where the dark-squared bishop is destined to put pressure against the isolated d4-pawn. Games in this variation often feature lengthy, positional struggles

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rather than sharp, tactical finishes. Black is generally solid in these structures so therefore I believe that the system I played in the game is somewhat underrated and deserves more attention from stronger players.

**5.Nf3 Bg7 6.Na3 cxd4 7.Bc4 Qe4+ 8.Be3!**

Excellent opening preparation from Canty! White utilizes a simple tactic to nearly complete development and regain his sacrificed pawn. Fortunately, I was still booked up at this point as well.

**8...Nh6**

8...dxe3?? 9.Bxf7+! Kf8 10.Qd8+ Kxf7 11.Ng5+ Kf6 12.Nxe4++-

**9.cxd4 0-0 10.0-0 Nf5**

Relevant: 10...Bg4 11.Ng5 Qxe3 12.fxe3 Bxd1 13.Raxd1 Nc6 14.h3 Rad8 15.g4 a6 16.Nb1 b5 17.Bb3 Na5 18.Nd2 Nxb3 19.Nxb3 Rd5 1/2-1/2 (19) Robson,R (2673)-Guseinov,G (2666) chess.com INT 2020.

**11.Qb3 Nd6**

11...Nxe3 is playable but after 12.fxe3 the prospects of the newly-opened f-file and White's pressure against the f7-pawn are scary for the human player.

**12.Bd3**



Position after 12.Bd3

**12...Qe6N**

Predecessor: 12...Qg4 13.Rac1 Nc6 14.h3 Qd7 15.d5 Ne5 16.Nxe5 Bxe5 17.Rfe1 Bf6 18.Nb5 Nxb5 19.Bxb5 Qd6 20.Bc5 Qd8 21.Qe3 Qxd5 22.Bxe7 Bxh3 23.Qxh3 Bxe7 24.Rxe7 Qxb5 25.b3 Rad8 26.Qf3 Rd7 27.a4 Qg5 1/2-1/2 (27) Sermek,D (2547)-Sax,G (2560) Celje 2004.

**13.d5+-**

White has a huge lead in development while I will suffer due to the large amount of ineffective pieces I presently have.

**13...Qg4 14.Rac1 Nd7 15.Nc4 Nf6**

Status quo: My opponent still has more than thirteen minutes on his clock while I find myself with less than five. The situation is not looking good for me

neither on the board or the clock...

**16.Nxd6 exd6 17.Rc4?!**

Better was 17.Rfe1 The point is that 17...Qh5 can be met with 18.Bf4 when White's d-pawn is poisoned (cannot be captured safely). 18...Nxd5 (18...Qxd5? 19.Bc4 Qf5 20.Bxd6±) 19.Bxd6 Rd8 20.Be5±. White has a lead in development as well as the initiative.

**17...Qh5!**

Now it is surprisingly difficult for Canty to hold on to his d5-pawn.

**18.Rh4 Qxd5 19.Bc4 Qc6 20.Bd4?!**

White needs to pose real threats to get something in return for his lost pawn. For this reason, moves such as 20.Ng5 or 20.Rc1 were better.

**20...Bf5**

Yes, I am up a full pawn for dead nothing. A few moves ago, it seemed as though White would soon be up a queen for dead nothing!

**21.Rd1 Rac8 22.Bc3 d5 23.Bb5 Qc7 24.Nd4 Bd7 25.Bd3?**

25.Bxd7 Qxd7 26.Nc2 is sad but necessary.

**25...Ne4?**

Not only does the text move miss a simple tactic that wins material, but it also loses most of my advantage by giving away my extra pawn. My rationale during the game for this poor objective decision was that my clock was ticking down (under a minute at this point) and my primary goal was to simplify so as to avoid complications. 25...g5!

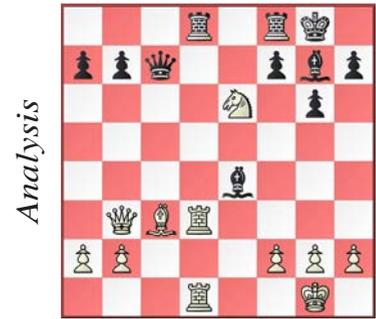


(#Diagram-analysis after 25...g5)

Amusingly, White's seemingly active rook now finds itself trapped! 26.Rh3 Bxh3 27.gxh3 Ne4+.

**26.Bxe4 dxe4 27.Rxe4 Bc6 28.Re3 Rcd8 29.Red3 Be4?? 30.R3d2??**

An incredible oversight from both players. Had Canty been given the position before 30.R3d2 as a fresh puzzle, I have no doubt that he would have been able to find the knockout blow. 30.Ne6!!



(#Diagram-analysis after 30.Ne6)

30...fxe6 31.Qxe6+ Kh8. At the very least, White can pick up the bishop on e4, after which he will be up a healthy pawn, but calculating the following line is a bonus. (31...Qf7 32.Qxf7+ Kxf7 33.Rxd8 Bxc3 34.Rxf8+ Kxf8 35.bxc3+- should require simple technique from White to convert this winning endgame.) 32.Bxg7+ Kxg7 33.Rd7+ Kh6 34.Qh3+. The only winning move. (Of course not 34.Rxc7?? on account of the back-rank checkmate. 34...Rxd1#) 34...Kg5! 35.R1d5+!! Bxd5 36.Rxc7+-. White's material advantage coupled with Black's severely exposed king is decisive.

**30...Bd5 31.Qc2 Bc6 32.b3 Rd7 33.Nxc6 Rxd2 34.Rxd2**

What follows is a forcing series of simplifications. 34.Bxd2! may have been White's final try to play for an advantage. The point is that now that the c-file is open for the white queen, Black will be forced to compromise his pawn structure. 34...bxc6 35.Be3±. Black's weak pawns (the c6-pawn and a7-pawn), both of which White currently targets, would have given Canty something worth playing on for.

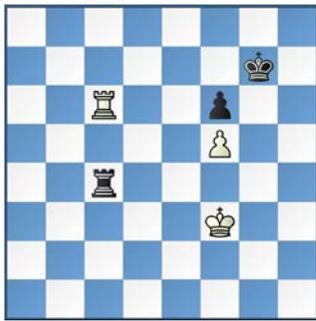
**34...Qxc6 35.Bxg7 Qxc2 36.Rxc2 Kxg7 37.Rc7 Rd8 38.g3 Rd2 39.a4 b6 40.Rxa7 Rb2 41.Rb7 Rxb3 42.a5 b5 43.a6 Ra3 44.a7 b4 45.Rxb4 Rxa7=**

At this point, I offered a draw. Players would call the current situation a "dead draw" — no other result can be imagined from this position. Canty declined this offer, no doubt frustrated at the turnaround of events that transpired, which he definitely regretted after the game.

**46.Rb6 Re7 47.Kg2 h5 48.h3 Rd7 49.g4 hxg4 50.hxg4 Re7 51.f4 Rd7 52.Kf3 f6 53.f5 gxh5 54.gxf5 Rd4 55.Rc6 Rb4 56.Rd6 Rc4 57.Rc6??**

[Diagram top of next page]

Well, what can I say? My best explanation for this blunder was that Canty was playing under his time scramble instincts of attempting to "flag" the opponent even though this game was played with a two-second increment. This circumstance



Position after 57.Rc6

goes to show how excessive play of bullet chess can be detrimental to one's play even at the master level.

### 57...Rxc6

White immediately resigned. Clearly, the element of luck was present in the victory of mine that I just now shared but I am proud of my defensive play in the earlier phase of the game where I was significantly behind in development with my queen getting constantly booted around. In summary, what started as a largely theoretical battle soon transformed into a back-and-forth middle-game, dead-drawn endgame, and lastly a heartbreaking finish for one of the belligerents in this thrilling finals game. This was crucial for the match situation and delivered a huge psychological blow in favor of Team Washington. I learned a lot upon analyzing this game and I am certain that most readers can as well even through the few inaccuracies made by both players.

0-1

**Mark Heimann (2485) –  
Kyle Haining (2288) [A39]**  
States Chess Cup: Finals  
November 15, 2020  
*[Kyle Haining]*

1.g3 g6 2.Bg2 Bg7 3.c4 Nf6 4.Nc3 c5  
5.Nf3 0-0 6.d4 cxd4 7.Nxd4 Nc6 8.0-0  
Ng4 9.e3 d6 10.Nxc6?!

Tempting, but Black gets a lot of activity and it is difficult to hold onto the c4-pawn. 10.h3 Nge5 11.b3 a6 12.Nde2 Rb8 13.Bb2± Efimenko, Z (2695)-Ovsejevitch, S (2572)/Mukachevo 2012.

10...bxc6 11.Bxc6 Rb8 12.Bg2 Ne5 13.Qa4?!

White should give back the pawn 13.Qc2 Nxc4 14.b3 Ne5 15.Bb2 Qd7 16.Qe2 Bb7 is a balanced game.

13...Qd7? 14.Qxd7 Bxd7 15.Nd5 e6 16.Nf4 Nxc4 17.Rb1 Na3 18.Ra1 Nc2 19.Rb1 Na3 20.Ra1



Position after 20.Ra1

Here I faced the choice of making a draw or pressing for the win. Draw would have been a good result considering my opponent's significant rating advantage and the match situation—Washington was up a point going into the last round—but my position was so good I wanted to play on.

20...Bxb2 21.Bxb2 Rxb2 22.Rfd1 d5 23.e4 Ba4 24.Rd3 Nc2 25.Rd2 Rfb8 26.Rc1 Rb1 27.Rdd1 Rxc1 28.Rxc1 d4 29.Nd3 Bb5

Better to trade my knight than my bishop. Bishops will be better in this endgame, since there are pawns on both flanks 29...Nb4 30.Nxb4 (Pinning does not work 30.Rb1 a5 31.a3?! Bc2-+) 30...Rxb4.

30.Bf1 Bxd3 31.Bxd3 Nb4 32.Rb1 Rb6 33.Bc4 e5 34.f4 exf4?!

My advantage starts slipping away. I

should not give up support for my d-pawn so easily 34...Nd5 35.Re1 (35.Rxb6 Nxb6 36.Bb3 Nd7+) 35...Ne3 36.Bb3 exf4 37.gxf4 is a better version of the game, with an active knight and unpinned pieces.

35.gxf4 Kf8 36.Kf2 Ke7?!

36...Nd5 37.Rxb6 Nxb6 38.Bb3 Nd7! 39.e5 Nc5 Here my knight is no worse than a bishop. It forms a nice blockade with the d-pawn.

37.Ke2 f6 38.h4 Nc6 39.Rxb6 axb6 40.Kd3 Kd6 41.Bg8 h6 42.Bh7 g5

Leaving the g-pawn to go after the a-pawn gives me better winning chances, as I get a second passed pawn 42...Kc5 43.Bxg6 Nb4+ 44.Kd2 Nxa2 45.Kd3 this is probably still a draw though, as White can form a blockade with Bf7 and play a well-timed e4-e5 to meet Black's plans.

43.e5+ fxe5 44.fxg5 hxg5 45.hxg5 Ke6 46.Kc4

White should be drawing comfortably after Ke4 with an active king and light-square blockade, but perhaps my opponent was playing for the win.

46...Ne7 47.Kb5? Nf5?

Black wins after 47...Kd5! 48.g6 d3 49.g7 e4 50.g8Q+ Nxb8 51.Bxg8+ Kd4. White's king is too far away. 52.Bb3 e3 53.Kxb6 e2-+.

48.Bg8+ Ke7 49.Kxb6?

White needs to maintain the blockade. 49.Bh7 Ng3 50.Kc4 should be a draw.

49...d3 50.Bb3 e4 51.Bc4 Ne3?

With seconds left on the clock, I chose the wrong plan. 51...d2 52.Be2 e3 53.Kc5 Ng3 54.Bd1 e2-+.

52.Bb3 d2? 53.Kc5= d1Q 54.Bxd1 Nxd1 55.Kd4 e3 56.Kd3 e2 57.Kxe2 Nc3+ 58.Kd3 Nxa2 59.g6 Kf6 60.g7 Kxg7

1/2-1/2

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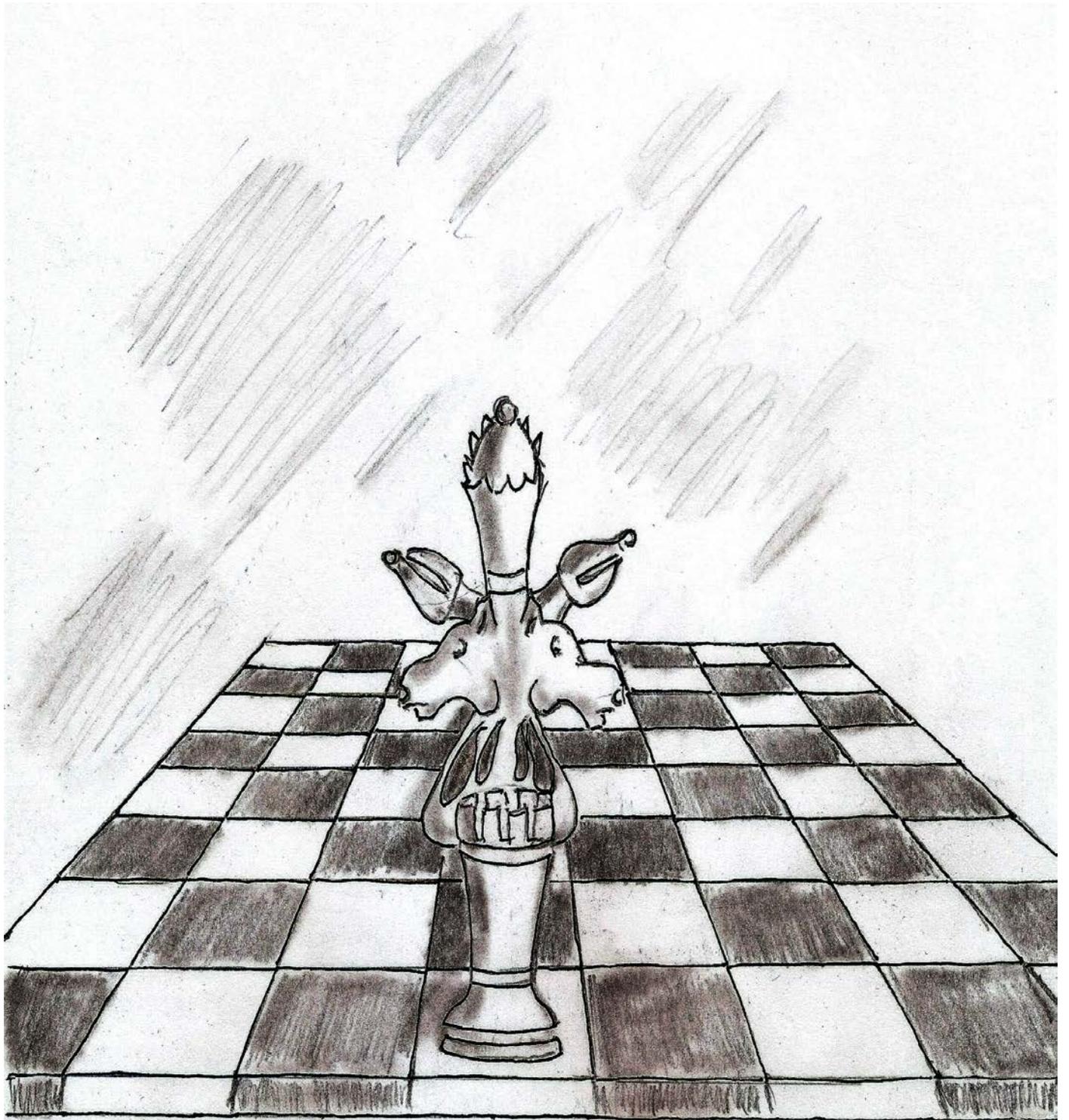
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2020

# THE ULTIMATE CHESS PIECE

# 2020 Washington Scholastic Mini Teams Championship

By Siva Sankrithi and Josh Sinanan

Saturday, November 7, we ran the Washington Scholastic Mini Teams Chess Championship for over 150 young players, grades K-12. Scholastic chess players participated from throughout the West Coast, including parts of Washington, Oregon, and California. The event was hosted by the Washington Chess Federation, organized by Siva Sankrithi, and directed by WCF Scholastic Coordinator Jacob Mayer. A total of 151 players competed in three-player "mini" teams across three sections separated by grade level: K-3, 4-6, and 7-12. We have received so much positive feedback and I'm truly thankful for everyone who participated and contributed to the success of the event. Reflecting on the experience, both as an organizer of a major online tournament for the first time, and as a Chess Dad witnessing his child playing in a competitive team event for the first time, here are four takeaways I'll carry forward:

1. Children crave challenge, collaboration, competition, and community, and we can provide that for them even in the middle of a pandemic.

2. Children play more for their teammates than themselves and are committed to being their best for the good of the team.

3. Chess is truly transcendent. The critical thinking applies to all aspects of life and the sport brings together people of all ages, from all walks of life, spanning the continuum of life experiences.

4. Organizing, facilitating, and running a team event in the online space, with hundreds involved in hundreds of different physical locations is hard to do well but so worth it, and having the right team of people makes all the difference.

Congratulations to all of the amazing chess gladiators who competed in this historic team tournament. Our vibrant scholastic chess community continues to thrive despite these uncertain times!

**Vihaan Jammalamadaka (1737) –  
Suya Metzmaker (1602) [D13]**  
WA Scholastic Mini Teams  
Championship  
Chess.com, November 7, 2020  
*[Ralph Dubisch]*

Northwest Chess

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 Bg4?!  
5.cxd5  
5.Ne5±  
5...cxd5  
5...Bxf3 6.gxf3 cxd5  
6.Qb3 Bc8 7.Bf4 e6 8.Nb5 Na6 9.e3 Bd7  
10.Bd3 Be7 11.0-0  
11.Nd6+ Bxd6 12.Bxd6  
11...0-0 12.Rac1 Qb6 13.a4 Rac8  
14.Ra1 Bxb5 15.axb5 Nc7 16.Ne5 a6  
17.Bg5 Rfd8 18.Bxf6 Bxf6 19.Qc2 Nxb5  
19...Bxe5 20.Bxh7+ Kh8 21.dxe5 Nxb5  
22.Qb1∞  
20.Bxh7+ Kh8  
20...Kf8 21.Qxc8!  
21.Nxf7#  
1-0

**Varnika Jammalamadaka (1649) –  
Oscar Preiner (1398) [D06]**  
WA Scholastic Mini Teams  
Championship  
Chess.com, November 7, 2020  
*[Ralph Dubisch]*

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c5 3.cxd5 Qxd5 4.Nf3 Nc6?  
More or less necessary is 4...cxd4 5.Nc3  
Qa5 6.Nxd4 Nf6.  
5.Nc3 Qd8 6.d5!  
Gain of space with tempo.  
6...Na5 7.e4 b6 8.Bb5+ Bd7 9.Bxd7+  
Qxd7 10.Ne5 Qd6 11.Qa4+ Nc6 12.dxc6  
Nh6 13.c7+ Qc6 14.Qxc6#  
1-0

**Hannah Nami Gajcowski (1204) –  
Varnika Jammalamadaka (1649)[D10]**  
WA Scholastic Mini Teams  
Championship  
Chess.com, November 7, 2020  
*[Ralph Dubisch]*

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 dxc4 4.e4 b5 5.a4  
b4 6.Na2 e6  
6...Nf6 7.e5 Nd5 8.Bxc4 e6 9.Nf3 is the  
normal move order, when 9...Be7 10.Bd2  
a5 11.Nc1 puts the knight on a path to b3,  
and perhaps later the c5-outpost.  
7.Bxc4 Nf6 8.Bg5 Be7 9.e5 Nd5 10.Bxe7  
Qxe7 11.Nf3 0-0 12.b3?  
White has a reasonable game after 12.Nc1  
heading to the b3-square.  
12...Nd7 13.0-0 a5 14.Qc2 Bb7 15.Bd3  
h6 16.Nd2 c5 17.Qb2 Nf4 18.Bb5 Qg5  
19.g3 Nh3#  
0-1

January 2021

The Washington  
State

Championship

will take place

online via

Chess.com

February 13-15

and feature

three sections:

Championship,

Premier, and

Invitational.

Page 19



Photo credit: Philip Peterson.

# SEATTLE CITY CHAMPIONSHIP

JANUARY 30-31<sup>ST</sup>, 2021

A NORTHWEST CHESS GRAND PRIX EVENT

Site: Online via 

**Format:** A 5-Round Swiss in two sections: Championship and Reserve (U1600). Co-hosted by the Seattle Chess Club & the Washington Chess Federation.

**Entry Fee:** \$45 by 1/23, \$55 after. \$40 Play-up fee if rated under 1600 playing in Open section. SCC members receive a \$15 discount. Free entry for GM/IM/WGM or US Chess Rating 2400+.

**Time Control:** G/60; +5. Late Default: 10 min.  
**Rounds:** Sat 10 AM, 1 PM, 4 PM. Sun 10 AM, 1 PM.

**Byes:** Two half-point byes available, Sunday rounds must commit at registration.

**Prize Fund:** \$1,000 (based on 40 paid entries). Additional prizes may be added depending on registration numbers.

**Championship:** 1<sup>st</sup> \$200, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$130  
1<sup>st</sup> Expert: \$100, 1<sup>st</sup> Class A: \$90, 1<sup>st</sup> Class B: \$80

**Reserve:** 1<sup>st</sup> \$100, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$80  
1<sup>st</sup> Class C: \$70, 1<sup>st</sup> Class D: \$60, 1<sup>st</sup> Class E & Under: \$50, Unrated: \$40



**Memberships:** Current US Chess and WCF membership/Northwest Chess subscription required. Memberships must be paid at time of registration. A Chess.com and Zoom account are required.

**Rating:** US Chess Online Rated and NWSRS Rated. Higher of US Chess January 2021 rating supplement or US Chess Online rating will be used to determine section, pairings, and prizes.

**Procedure:** Pairings will be released prior to the start of each round. Games will be started automatically by the TD in the [Live Chess](#) area. Players must report their result to the TD upon completion of the game.

**Fair Play Policy:** All players and parents (if U18) are required to sign the [WCF Fair Play Agreement](#) prior to the start of the tournament. All players will be monitored by Zoom during the games. WCF's Fair Play Committee will review any suspicious games on a case-by-case basis. Cheating of any kind is strictly prohibited.



**Info/Entries:** Make checks payable to Washington Chess Federation.

**Mail To:** Washington Chess Federation  
c/o Orlov Chess Academy  
4174 148<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE  
Building I, Ste. M  
Redmond, WA 98052

**Contact:** Josh Sinanan, WCF President  
**Phone:** 206-769-3757

**Email:**  
WashingtonChessFederation@gmail.com

**Registration:** Online at [nwchess.com/OnlineRegistration](#).  
Registration **deadline Fri. 1/29 @ 5pm.**  
\$15 Late Fee for payments accepted after the deadline. Unpaid players will receive a zero-point bye for round 1.



Photo credit: Philip Peterson.

## **WASHINGTON PRESIDENT'S CUP**

### A NORTHWEST CHESS GRAND PRIX EVENT

FEBRUARY 6-7<sup>TH</sup>, 2021

Site: Online via 

**Format:** A 5-Round Swiss in two sections: Open and Reserve (U1600).

**Entry Fee:** \$50 by 2/3, \$60 after. Free entry for GMs, IMs, WGMs, or US Chess 2400+. \$40 play-up fee if rated under 1600 playing in Open Section.

**Time Control:** G/70;+10. Late default: 10 min.

**Rounds:** Sat 10 AM, 1 PM, 4 PM. Sun 10 AM, 1 PM.

**Prize Fund:** \$1,200 (based on 40 paid entries).

**Open:** 1<sup>st</sup> \$200, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$150, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$100

1<sup>st</sup> U2000/U1800: \$70 Biggest Upset: \$25

**Reserve:** 1<sup>st</sup> \$175, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$100, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$75

1<sup>st</sup> U1400/U1200: \$70, 1<sup>st</sup> U1000/unrated: \$70 Biggest Upset: \$25

**Byes:** Two half-point byes available, request before end of round 2.

*Highest finishing Washington State resident in the Open Section seeded into the 2022 Washington Invitational.*

**Memberships:** Current US Chess and WCF membership/Northwest Chess subscription required. Memberships must be paid at time of registration. A Chess.com and Zoom account are required.

**Rating:** US Chess Online Rated and NWSRS Rated. US Chess February 2021 rating supplement will be used to determine pairings and prizes. Highest of US Chess, US Chess Online, or foreign ratings used at TD discretion.

**Procedure:** Pairings will be released prior to the start of each round. Games will be started automatically by the TD in the [Live Chess](#) area. Players must report their result to the TD upon completion of the game.

**Fair Play Policy:** All players and parents (if U18) are required to sign the [WCF Fair Play Agreement](#) prior to the start of the tournament. All players will be monitored by Zoom during the games. WCF's Fair Play Committee will review any suspicious games on a case-by-case basis. Fair play standards will be strictly enforced.



#### Info/Entries:

**Contact:** Josh Sinanan, WCF President

**Phone:** 206-769-3757

**Email:** WashingtonChessFederation@gmail.com

**Registration:** Online at [nwchess.com/OnlineRegistration](http://nwchess.com/OnlineRegistration). Registration deadline **Fri. 2/5 @ 5pm.** \$15 Late Fee for payments accepted after the deadline. Unpaid players will receive a zero-point bye for round 1.

# Chess960 (Fischer-Random) - What to Look for When Building Piece Harmony?

Valentin Razmov

[https://www.chess.com/member/coach\\_valentin](https://www.chess.com/member/coach_valentin)

## I. What is Chess960?

Chess960 (also known as Fischer-Random, proposed by Bobby Fischer) is a variant of chess in which the rules of play are the same, but the starting position is different. This offers players an opportunity to play truly fresh games, unencumbered by memorized book moves, established by grandmaster analysts and chess engines. In fact, there are 960 possible starting positions, in which the pieces are scrambled on the first (and last) row, while still observing a few important rules to preserve the integrity of the game and the relative similarity to classical chess:

- Black's pieces still mirror White's.
- The kings must be placed between the rooks (to preserve the idea of castling on either side).
- The two bishops of each player must be of opposite colors.

For the readers who love combinatorial math puzzles: Can you convince yourself that there are exactly 960 different starting positions conforming to the above rules?



Here is one such position (diagram 1):

Note how this position seems quite imbalanced compared to classical chess - all the heavy pieces start on one side of the board, some pawns are already hanging, the bishops point in the direction of the opponent's king and queen.

Castling in Chess960 is a bit special: To perform a castle, all squares between the king and corresponding rook must be vacant (just as in classical chess), and that king and rook will as a result land on the same squares as in classical chess castling, i.e., Kc1+Rd1 (if using the left rook) or Kg1+Rf1 (if using the right rook), regardless of where they were before the castling. Note that it is possible to castle on move 1 in some positions! Can you visualize such a starting position?

## II. How to Navigate the Opening?

Because of the completely new patterns resulting from the "scrambled" initial position, in practice mistakes are more common even in the very first few moves, and many Chess960 games (even between grandmasters) finish much faster. It is not as easy to coordinate the pieces properly and in new ways, especially in imbalanced starting positions and without the benefit of decades of theoretical exploration and experience in a given starting setup. With good opening play, however, after 10-15 moves the position may look very similar to one that began from a classical chess setup.

### II.1. General opening guidelines:

- *Opening principles from classical chess remain valid* in Chess960, generally. Strive for control of the center. Develop your pieces quickly. Bring your king to safety. Do not go material grabbing at the expense of sensible piece development. Fortify your weaker squares and seek to exploit those of the opponent. And so on.
- *Let go of preconceptions* from your classical chess training about which moves are good versus bad in the opening. In Chess960 your pieces may actually be laid out such that 1.e4 is a mistake, while 1.g4 is a good move. Can you think of a starting position in which a central pawn move would indeed be a mistake as early as move 1 (e.g., 1...e5), while a "reckless" (from a classical chess perspective) pawn thrust on the flank (e.g., 1.g4) would be a good move?

- *Strive for simple and logical moves* in the opening, rather than playing for a quick advantage. Otherwise you might quickly find yourself in a complex position, where it is easy to get in trouble even with an objectively better position. Generally, symmetrical openings tend to be relatively safer, though it is easier for Black to mirror White's ideas.

## II.2. Illustrative snippets from a recent online Chess960 tournament:



Diagram 2: [Game 1] Here, after **1.Ng3**, Black erred already on move 1 with the normal (by classical chess standards) **1...d5?** (see diagram 2). Do you see why that move is a mistake? White's best move, refuting Black's 1...d5?, is not a common opening move, but it is nevertheless strong.

The moral is, of course, that "*common*" opening moves may not be so good, while *uncommon* moves may be strong – so pay attention!



Diagram 3: [Game 2] This game, between different opponents, began from the same starting position as Game 1 (above), but took a different path: **1.b4** (White opens up the queen's path while capturing space on the queen-side) **1...b6** (Black follows suit; see diagram 3) **2.Qxg7** (White accepts the pawn sacrifice on g7, seeing that another pawn on h7 awaits to be captured too, plus an undefended knight on h8) **2...Ng6** (rescuing the knight while developing it, and also covering the g-file, so Black threatens ...Qxg2 in turn) **3.Nf3 e5 4.d3** (both sides fight for control of the center) **4...Bf6** (development with tempo) **5.Qxh7** (only move, and a worrying sign, since the white queen has so few squares to move to from there) **5...N8e7** (see diagram 4)



Diagram 4: [Game 2, continued] Here, both sides assessed the position incorrectly – from an objective standpoint. White thought they were worse, due to the troubles around the white queen being almost trapped. Black thought they were better due to the active piece development and strong compensation for the sacrificed two pawns, including ongoing threats like ...Rf8-h8, picking up the white queen. In practice, White is in trouble, since the correct path forward has become very narrow, even if chess engines give White more than nominal advantage. **6.Qh3?** (a mistake after which Black takes over with a strong initiative. Instead, after **6.Qh6 Nf5 7.Qd2 Nfh4 8.Rg1**, White might have been able to consolidate successfully, neutralizing Black's initiative while keeping the extra material. Another good path forward, which White considered, but incorrectly rejected as it seemed too weird, was **6.Ng5**, pressing on f7, with the idea

**6...Qxg2 7.Ng3 d5 8.e4! Bxg5 9.Bxg5 Be7 10.Qg7**, returning all material but solidifying White's position, leading to dynamic equality.) **6...Rh8 7.Qg3 Nf5 8.Qg4 d5** (Black keeps developing with natural moves, while White keeps trying to escape their queen - not a good sign!) See diagram 5.



Diagram 5: [Game 2, continued] This moment was the last call for White to save themselves, but in an already rather challenging situation they did not find **9.Bg5**, maintaining control over the h4-square, where the black rook threatens to land as soon as Black manages to drive off the white knight from f3 (via ...e5-e4). Instead, the game continued **9.h3? e4!** and the rest was easy for Black to convert into a win.

The simplicity and rapid advancement by Black in this game was partly due to White's aggressive start to the game, complicating the position beyond their ability to handle it; and partly due to Black being a much stronger titled player, coordinating their pieces properly and finding the right moves at the right time.



Diagram 6: [Game 3] Here, from a different starting position the game began **1.d4 g5** (opening the bishop's diagonal, attacking the d4-pawn, and claiming space on the king-side) **2.c3 d5** (claiming control of some of the central squares while opening avenues for Black's queen and bishop) **3.g3 Nb6 4.e4?** (another "normal" move that is a mistake, because the diagonal f1-a6, leading to the white king, becomes too vulnerable). See diagram 6. After **4...dxe4 5.Bxe4 Qh3+** (even better was the direct **5...Bb5+ 6.Kg2 f5 7.Bc2 Bc6+** when Black's pair of bishops becomes menacing) **6.Bg2 Bb5+ 7.c4** (the only legal move) **7...Nxc4** (objectively, **7...Bxc4+** was stronger, but this knight move lays a trap with the threat of a discovered attack). See diagram 7.



Diagram 7: [Game 3, continued] Black already threatens checkmate (!) on move 7, via a discovered double check. White had an only move to rescue themselves here, but did not find it. Can you spot White's saving move? (It is veiled indeed.) Instead, the game continued **8.Bb4??** (attempting to free up an escape square for the white king) and here Black demonstrated a delightful game-ending tactical combination: **8...Ne5+ 9.Ke1 Qxg2!! 10.Rxg2 Nf3#**

### III. Planning Your Opening is Crucial

One conclusion from the above opening miniatures is that the opening phase in Chess960 cannot be taken for granted and must be carefully executed. Planning the opening is crucial for success, even more so than in classical chess, since one does not automatically know which moves may be good and which may not be. The planning process includes visualizing which pieces should develop where, which pawns should be moved (or not moved), which side should you castle on, how to bring your pieces into coordination quickly (so that they contribute to a common goal), and so on.

#### III.1. Appropriate considerations in planning your opening:

- Some long castles may take really long to prepare (e.g., there can be up to 5 pieces between a king and the more distant of its rooks), which limits your options to a choice between significantly delayed castling "long," leaving the king in the center, or castling short in an area where a predicted attack may be happening.
- The queen could sometimes be harder to bring into the game compared to the relative ease in classical chess - e.g., if it is initially situated in one of the corners and especially if there is an opposing bishop on the same main diagonal.
- Some pawns could be weaker (indeed even undefended) from the very start of the game, potentially requiring special attention. Just as ...f7-f5 may be a rather risky move in many classical chess openings, moving the less-defended pawn that sits next to your king could be a problem in Chess960, especially if the square that this pawn lands on is also initially undefended (much like the f5-square in classical chess, after an early move like ...f7-f5).
- It matters whether the opponent's bishops point at your king from the very start, or point away from the king.
- Depending on their initial position, the knights may not be able to connect effectively for several moves (e.g., if they are Na1 and Nh1), unlike in classical chess when Ng1-f3 & Nb1-d2 already lead to mutual support of the two knights, which is an important theme in many openings.

In the end, part of the beauty (and the challenge) of Chess960 is that a player has to look at every game - and every new starting position - as a new beginning, in its own special context. The best decisions for how to play a fresh position will necessarily be based on the principles and patterns that the player knows and has adapted to the new situation at hand. May you come to enjoy the experience of playing this thrilling variant, Chess960, of our beloved game!



Photo credit: Philip Peterson.

# 1<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL WASHINGTON STATE CHESS960 CHAMPIONSHIP



**Info:** Josh Sinanan, WCF  
President

**Phone:** 206-769-3757

**Email:**  
WashingtonChessFederation  
@gmail.com

**Registration:** Online at  
[nwchess.com/OnlineRegistration](http://nwchess.com/OnlineRegistration)  
Registration **deadline**  
**Sat. 1/9 @ 5 PM.**

SUNDAY JANUARY 10<sup>TH</sup>, 2021

**Site:** Online via 

**Format:** A 5-Round Swiss in two sections:  
Championship and Premier U1600. Sections may  
be combined depending on the number of  
registered players.

**Entry Fee:** \$30 before 1/6, \$35 after. \$40 play-  
up fee for players rated below 1600 playing in  
Championship.

**Time Control:** G/30; +10.

**Rounds:** Sun. 9 AM, 11 AM, 1 PM, 3 PM, 5 PM.

**Byes:** Two half-point byes available, request  
before end of round 2.

**Prize Fund:** \$650 based on 30 paid entries.  
Prizes awarded to the top 3 finishers in each  
section: 1<sup>st</sup>: \$150 2<sup>nd</sup>: \$100 3<sup>rd</sup>: \$75.

**Useful Chess960 links:**

- 🏠 <https://chess960.net/how-to-play/>
- 🏠 <https://www.chess.com/article/view/chess960-fischer-random-explained>
- 🏠 <https://www.chess.com/terms/chess960>

*Highest finishing Washington resident  
in Open Section will be awarded the  
title of WA State Chess960 Champion.*

**Memberships:** Players must be current WCF  
members/Northwest Chess subscribers and have a  
Chess.com account. No US Chess membership necessary.  
Zoom monitoring with webcam required.

**Rating:** Unrated. Section eligibility and pairings based on  
the highest of current NWSRS, US Chess Online, or US  
Chess rating.

**Procedure:** Pairings will be released prior to the start of  
each round. Games will be started automatically by the TD  
in the [Live Chess](#) area. Players must report their result to  
the TD upon completion of the game.

**Fair Play Policy:** All players are required to sign the [WCF  
Fair Play Agreement](#) prior to the start of the tournament. All  
players will be monitored by Zoom during the games.  
WCF's Fair Play Committee will review any suspicious games  
on a case-by-case basis. Fair play violators will be haunted for  
life by the ghost of Bobby Fischer!

# 2020 WA Chess960 Pilot Tournament

By Josh Sinanan

The first ever WA Chess960 Pilot Tournament was held online Sunday November 22 via Chess.com. Chess players from throughout the globe were represented in the 17-player field, including parts of Washington, Oregon, California, Ontario, Armenia, and India. In Chess960, the back-rank pieces are scrambled each round, which forces players to think for themselves starting from move one!

The event was hosted and sponsored by the Washington Chess Federation. WCF Adult Chess Director Rekha Sagar directed the tournament with assistance from Seattle-based chess enthusiast Valentin Razmov and WCF President Josh Sinanan. The five-round Swiss tournament featured nine players in the Open section and eight in the Reserve U1600 section. Each round featured a different Fischer-random starting position, which the players had a chance to study for five minutes before the game began.

IM Mitrabha Guha, a strong International Master from India, won clear first place in the Open section with a perfect 5.0/5 games, defeating IM Shahinyan and FM Talukdar along the way. Armenian ChessMood stud IM David Shahinyan finished in clear second place with 4.0/5 points. Ontario's FM Rohan Talukdar captured clear third place honors with 3.0/5 points in his first ever experience playing Chess960!

Young Sammamish chess prince Arjun Yadav is well on his way to becoming a chess king, as he dominated the Reserve U1600, scoring a perfect 5.0/5 games! Ethan Chung, playing all the way from Richland, finished in clear second place with 3.5/5 points. Seattle's Gabriel Razmov rounded out the prize winners with 3.0/5 points by virtue of winning his last two games of the tournament. Congratulations to the winners and to all who contributed to this fun event! Somewhere, Bobby Fischer is smiling. :)

**Edward Cheng (1721) –  
Rohan Talukdar (2402)**

WA Chess960 Pilot Tournament  
Chess.com (R1), November 22, 2020  
[Ralph Dubisch]

As an introduction to the difficulties

inherent in navigating the opening stages of Chess960, we can talk briefly about this game.



Starting Position

**1.c4?**

1.b4 threatens Qxg7, so makes a decent beginning. Chess960 is situational. Control of the center, development, king safety: all are important. But specific tactics can develop from move one, depending on the piece placement. 1.Nf3, planning 0-0, is sound and good, too.

**1...b6**

1...b5! already wins a pawn! White can probably make an unintentional gambit out of it, but the ability to pose unusual problems early on is supposed to be one of the advantages Chess960, as envisioned by Fischer.

**2.Nf3 Ng6 3.b3**

3.b4

**3...Nf6 4.Ng3 Bb7 5.Bb2 e6 6.e3 0-0 7.Be2 d5 8.0-0**

White could claim that being castled kingside is a disadvantage. 8.h4!?

**8...a5 9.d4**

9.Rbc1±

**9...a4 10.Rfd1**



Position after 10.Rfd1

**10...Ne4?!**

Both sides have been steering the game into more normal-looking channels. The most natural move for Black here is 10...Be7.

**11.Ne5?**

11.Nxe4 dxe4 12.Ne5 Nxe5 13.dxe5. Now a short tactical flurry ends our interest in the game.

11...Nxc3 12.hxc3 Nxe5 13.dxe5 dxc4 14.bxc4 Bxc3 15.Rbc1 c5 16.Qb1 Bc7 17.Rd7 Rbc8 18.Rcd1 Bc6 19.R7d2 Rcd8 20.Bd3 g6 21.Qc2 a3 22.Bc3 Ba4 23.Qc1 Bxd1 24.Qxd1 b5 25.cxb5 Ba5 26.Bxa5 Qxa5 27.Qe2 c4 28.Bxc6 hxc6 29.Rc2 Qxb5 30.Kg2 Qxe5 31.Rxc4 Rd5 32.Ra4 Qb2 33.Qf3 Rf5 34.Rf4 Rxf4 35.Qxf4 Qxa2 36.e4 Qb2 37.e5 a2 38.g4 a1Q 39.g5 Qxe5 40.Qh4 Qd5+ 41.Kh2 Qah1+ 42.Kg3 Qdf3#

0-1

**Selina Cheng (1241) –  
Alfred Su (1370)**

WA Chess960 Pilot Tournament (U1600)  
Chess.com (R3), November 22, 2020  
[Ralph Dubisch]



Starting Position

**1.b3**

I would suggest 1.d4. The basic principles of central control, development, and king safety still apply, and pawns behind them like to be pushed, as long as those three main factors aren't ignored. White might follow up with b3 and c4, opening those diagonals and staking a strong central claim.

**1...Nhg6 2.c4 Ne6 3.Nhg3 0-0? 4.d4±**

Stockfish suggests an immediate kingside attack starting with 4.h4!, when 4...Nxc3 5.Bxc3 h4 6.Rh1 g5 7.Qb1+ Kg8 8.Rxc3! gxc3 9.Qf5 leaves Black utterly defenseless, essentially down all of those undeveloped queenside pieces.

**4...c5**

4...d5 5.cxd5 Rxd5 6.Ne3±

**5.d5+- Nd4 6.e3**

And Black's knight is already trapped in the middle of the board. This was an example of trusting too much in the castled position, especially in view of the white bishop-pair instantly pressuring g7 and h7.

6...Bxg3 7.Nxg3 e5 8.0-0 d6 9.exd4 exd4 10.Bf5 Qc7 11.b4 cxb4 12.Bxd4 Ne5 13.Bd3 Nxd3 14.Rxd3 b5 15.cxb5 Qxc1 16.Rxc1 Bxd5 17.Rd2 Rb8 18.Bxa7 Rxb5 19.Nf5 Bxg2 20.Ne7+ Kh8 21.Kxg2 Rb7 22.Be3 Rxe7 23.Rxd6 Ra7 24.Bxa7 Ra8 25.Rdc6 h6 26.Rc8+ Rxc8 27.Rxc8+ Kh7 28.Bd4 f6 29.Rc4 Kg6 30.Rxb4 Kf7 31.a4 Ke7 32.a5 Kd6 33.a6 Kc6 34.a7 Kc7 35.a8Q Kd7 36.Qb7+ Kd6 37.Rb6#

1-0

**Mitrabha Guha (2445) –  
Davey Jones (1819)**

WA Chess960 Pilot Tournament  
Chess.com (R1), November 22, 2020  
[Ralph Dubisch]



Starting Position

1.Ng3 d5?

1...Nf6; 1...b5

2.Nh5±

Arg! Tricked on move two!

2...f6 3.Nxg7+ Kf7 4.Nh5 Ng6 5.b3 c5 6.e3 e5 7.c4 d4 8.Bf3 Bf5 9.Ba3 Re8 10.Bxc5 Bxb1 11.Bd5+ Re6 12.Qxb1 a5 13.Qf5 Qa6 14.Nh3 N8e7 15.Bxe6+ Qxe6 16.Ng5+ Kg8 17.Qxe6+

1-0

**David Shahinyan (2580) –  
Rohan Talukdar (2402)**

WA Chess960 Pilot Tournament  
Chess.com (R2), November 22, 2020  
[Ralph Dubisch]



Starting Position

Northwest Chess

The Masters play the opening well against each other, though the position seems depressingly normal, at least until around move 19...

1.d4 d5 2.b3 c6 3.c4 f6 4.Bc3 Bf7 5.Ne3 Nb6 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.Nd3 Ng6 8.h4 Nf4 9.Nc1

9.Nxf4 Bxf4 10.Rh3±

9...a5 10.g3 Ne6 11.Nf5 Nc8 12.a4 Nc7 13.Qa3 e6 14.Ne7+ Nxe7 15.Qxe7 0-0 16.Qc5 Na6 17.Qa3 b6 18.h5 e5 19.h6 g6

19...Bd6 20.Qb2 e4 21.hxg7 Kxg7∞

20.dxe5 fxe5

20...d4!∞

21.Qe7! d4 22.Bxg6!

22.Qf6?? Qxh1+! 23.Kxh1 Bd5++

22...hxg6?

22...Bd6 23.Bxf7+ Rxf7 24.Qg5+ Kf8 25.Bb2±

23.h7+ Kg7 24.Bd2 Qxh1+ 25.Kxh1 Rh8 26.Kg2 Bd6 27.Bh6+ Kxh6 28.Qf6 Bd5+ 29.f3

1-0

**Rohan Talukdar (2402) –  
Mitrabha Guha (2445)**

WA Chess960 Pilot Tournament  
Chess.com (R4), November 22, 2020  
[Ralph Dubisch]



Starting Position

1.f4 f5 2.g3 g6 3.Nc3 Nc6 4.d3 e5 5.e4 exf4 6.Qxf4?!

6.exf5

6...d5 7.Qd2 dxe4?!

7...fxe4 8.dxe4 d4.

8.dxe4 Qe6 9.Bf2

(Perhaps 9.0-0-0.)

9...0-0-0 10.exf5 Bxc3!± 11.bxc3 Rxd2 12.Rxe6 Rxe6 13.Nxd2 Re2 14.fxg6?

14.Ne4 Bd5 (14...gxf5 15.Nf6.) 15.Bf3 Rxf2 16.Nxf2 Bxf3 17.fxg6 Nxg6±

14...Rxd2+ 15.Bxc6 Rxf2 16.gxh7 Bxh7 17.Ba4 Rxh2 18.Kb2 c6 19.Re1 Nd7 20.Re7 Nc5 21.Bb3 Nxb3 22.axb3 Bxc2 23.Ka3 Rg2 24.Rg7 Bf5 25.Kb4 Bd7 26.Rg8+ Kc7 27.Rg7 b6 28.Kc4 Rd2 29.g4 a5 30.b4 a4

0-1

**Davey Jones (1819) –**

**David Shahinyan (2580)**

WA Chess960 Pilot Tournament  
Chess.com (R5), November 22, 2020  
[Ralph Dubisch]



Starting Position

1.d4 g5 2.c3 d5 3.g3 Nb6 4.e4??

A serious weakening of the king position!  
4.Ne3

4...dxe4

Better: 4...Bb5+! 5.Kg2 dxe4±.

5.Bxe4

5.0-0

5...Qh3+

5...Bb5+ 6.Kg2 f5

6.Bg2 Bb5+ 7.c4 Nxc4!?



Position after 7...Nxc4

A brilliant conception, opening up double check, discovered check, and possible smothered mate. If this was "real" chess, it would be an amazing brilliancy. 7...Bxc4+ 8.Qxc4 Qxg2+ 9.Kxg2 Nxc4 10.Ne3 Nb6±

8.Bb4??

White missed the hidden defense. 8.0-0!!

8...Ne5+ 9.Ke1 Qxg2! 10.Rxg2 Nf3#

0-1

# Oregon Class Championships

By Wilson Gibbins

The Oregon Class Championships were held November 7-8 as an online event. Interestingly, no one entered the A section, so the 30 players were divided into Open, Class B, Class C and U1400 sections. Although most of the Oregon online tournaments have been held over Chess.com, this tournament used lichess.

David Murray and Mike Morris tag-teamed the TD duties—Mike made the pairings and relayed them to David, who updated a shared spreadsheet online. Players were responsible to send challenges to their opponents, which has the potential downside of tedious explanation and the introduction of human error. To mitigate these risks, a software solution that leverages the Lichess API was developed to give players with White a link to click on to send their challenges and be redirected to their game. All in all, things went smoothly, and good chess resulted.

While most online events in the Pacific Northwest have been conducted on chess.com, lichess.org was used for this event. Our intention was to introduce variety and to attract players who have been avoiding online chess due to preference for one site over the other. We now feel confident running events on either site and have been happy to see players create (free) accounts on either in order to participate.

Zoey Tang continued her impressive winning ways with a perfect score in the Open, earning her a seed into the Championship section of the 2021 Oregon Closed. Her brother Austin, with his second-place score, earned a seed into the Challenger's section of the 2021 Oregon Closed.

Kushal Pai took first place in the Class B section. Francisco Lopez and Edward Li tied for second.

Daniel Rilling won the Class C section. Jalen Wang, another rapidly improving junior, took second place.

Another pair of siblings, Thomas and Michael Schuff tied for first place in the U1400, each with perfect scores.

**Zoey Tang (2097) –  
David Murray (1924) [D35]**  
Oregon Class Championship  
lichess.org (R1), November 7, 2020  
[Wilson Gibbins]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5

The exchange variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined scores nearly 65% in my database, but the engines are not particularly impressed (Leela 12 says 0.12, Stockfish says 0.19). When I lived in Minneapolis, I watched Grandmaster Andrew Tang score well from both sides of this position.

5...Bb4

This move is known to theory, but it isn't a main line. Black is inviting White to play Nf3 with a transposition to the Ragozin variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined. More popular are 5...Be7, 5...c6, and 5...Nbd7.

6.e3 0-0 7.Bd3 Nbd7 8.Qc2 Qe8



Position after 8...Qe8

This is a new move in this position, though it seems logical to unpin the knight and the game transposes to positions that have been played before. A thematic Ragozin plan is 8...h6 9.Bh4 where 9...c5 where 10.Nf3 (10.Nge2 allows White to recapture on c3 with a knight, retaining more control over the e4 square, but not a genuine advantage.) 10...c4 looks close to equal.

9.Nf3 h6 10.Bh4 c6

This is another popular way to play the Ragozin, not every Ragozin player likes to lash out with c7-c5.

11.0-0 Bxc3 12.bxc3 Ne4 13.Nd2±

And White wins the battle for the e4-square.

13...f5 14.f3 Qh5

14...Nxd2 15.Qxd2 minimizes White's edge.

15.Be1

15.fxe4 fxe4 16.Bxe4 dxe4 17.Bg3 wins the pawn on e4 for not much compensation, but there is still a fight ahead.

15...Nd6

This is often the correct square for Black's knight in the QGD exchange, but

here this move allows Zoey to increase her advantage. 15...Nxd2 16.Qxd2 Nb6 17.Bg3 Nc4±

16.Bg3± Ne8 17.c4 Ndf6 18.Rab1 Kh8 19.Nb3 Qg5 20.Bf4 Qh4 21.Be5 dxc4 22.Bxc4 Nd7 23.Bg3 Qe7 24.Rfe1 h5?!

Lashing out in an inferior position is unlikely to help, but sitting tight in an inferior position has plenty of downsides too.

25.h4 Nb6 26.Bd3 Nd5 27.Qd2 f4 28. exf4 Qf6



Position after 28...Qf6

Regaining the pawn, Dave hasn't made any blunders, but Zoey has positionally outplayed him. At this point, she switches to Zoey attack mode.

29.Re5! g6 30.Rg5 Rg8 31.f5 Kh7 32.fxg6+

1-0

**Ryan Min (1915) –  
Zoey Tang (2097) [E73]**  
Oregon Class Championship  
lichess.org (R2), November 7, 2020  
[Wilson Gibbins]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5. Be2 0-0 6.Be3



Position after 6.Be3

This looks offbeat to my old eyes, but it is the third most popular move in the position after 6.Nf3 (Classical variation) and 6.Bg5 (Averbakh Variation). The 3809(!) rated Leela engine played it last May, so it must be good. If you don't trust the opinion of the silicon monsters, the 2773 rated carbon-based lifeform

Lev Aronian played it last June against Grischuk and last September against Firouzja.

A lot of the opening theory resembles the Averbakh variation, as some of the lines are nearly identical with Black getting a free h7-h6 move, which may help or may hurt. 6.Bg5 h6 7.Be3 c5 8.dxc5 (or 8.d5).

**6...c5**

This scores a little better for Black than the more stereotypical King's Indian move 6...e5 which is playable but may be what White is hoping for. After 7.d5 White may follow with 8.g4 or 8.h4, when White may be attacking or may just be trying to shut down Black's kingside counterplay. 6...Na6 is playable too, with a possible transposition to known lines after 7.Nf3 e5.

**7.dxc5**

Heading towards the Maroczy Bind. 7.d5 is also playable, reaching a Benoni structure.

**7...Qa5**

7...dxc5 8.e5 is playable but tricky (8.Bxc5 Qa5 9.b4 Qc7 is also playable, also tricky).

**8.Bd2**

Also a known idea from the Averbakh Variation.

**8...Qxc5 9.Nf3**

And we reach a position where White scores over 62% in my database. I suspect it is because White is more familiar with the position rather than an objective advantage. Leela and Stockfish think Black is fine.

**9...Be6 10.Rc1 Qc8**

The engines choose 10...Bxc4 though it isn't a move many people would play with the Rc1 aimed at the black queen.

**11.0-0 Nc6 12.Be3**

12.h3!? first makes the square e3 a little safer for the bishop.

**12...Ng4 13.Bd4**

This is a non-stereotyped but correct move. I would be reluctant to allow Black to trade a knight for White's dark-squared bishop, as King's Indian players love to have unopposed dark-squared bishops, ready to wreak havoc.

**13...Nge5**

Zoey finds a move that keeps the game complicated, giving her more chances to outplay her lower-rated opponent. 13...Nxd4 14.Nxd4 Ne5 15.Nxe6 Qxe6 is equal, justifying the move 13.Bd4.

**14.Nxe5 dxe5 15.Be3 Nd4 16.Bxd4 exd4 17.Nd5 Qd8 18.f4 Rc8 19.Bf3**

If you know what is coming, you might try 19.Bd3 to blockade Black's d-pawn. In a perfect world, White would blockade the d-pawn with a knight, but 19.Nb4 Qb6 20.Nd3 Bxc4 loses a pawn.

**19...Bxd5 20.cxd5 Qb6**



Position after 20...Qb6

The position is still roughly even, but White has to be careful with the pawn on b2 under attack and a discovered check on the way.

**21.b3?**

21.Qb3=; 21.e5 Qxb2 (The plan Zoey uses in the game is probably better 21...d3+ 22.Kh1 Qe3 but while Black has an edge, it isn't as large as the one Zoey obtains in the game.) 22.Rb1 Qxa2 23.Qxd4∞

**21...d3+! 22.Kh1 Qe3! 23.Rxc8?**

23.Rc4 Rxc4 24.bxc4 Rc8♠ (24...Qxf4 is also better for Black as after 25.Qxd3 the material is even, but Black's Bishop is much more active than White's); 23.Bg4 Rxc1 24.Qxc1 d2 (24...Qxe4♠ is also good) 25.Qc4 Bd4♠.

**23...Rxc8 24.Re1 Qxf4 25.Qxd3?**

25.g3 Qg5 26.Qxd3♠

**25...Rc3+ 26.Qf1 Be5 27.Qg1 Bc7 28.e5 Bxe5 29.Re4 Qd2 30.Rc4 Rxc4 31.bxc4 Qxa2 32.c5**



Position after 32.c5

White hopes for salvation from opposite colored bishops in the ending, but Black is winning with two extra pawns and more active pieces.

**32...Qa1 33.Qxa1 Bxa1 34.d6 exd6 35.cxd6 b6 36.Be2 Be5 37.d7 Bc7 38.h3 Kf8 39.Bb5 Ke7 40.Kg1 Kd6 41.Bc4 f6 42.Bg8 h6 43.Bf7 g5 44.Be8 a5 45.Kf1 Bd8 46.Ke2 b5 47.Kd3 Kc5 48.Kc3 a4 49.Bf7 b4+ 50.Kb2 b3 51.Ka3 Kb5 52.Bg6 Be7+ 53.Kb2 Kb4 54.Bf7 a3+ 55.Kb1 f5 56.Be6 a2+ 57.Kb2 Bf6+ 0-1**

**Zoey Tang (2097) –**

**Brent Baxter (1919) [A45]**

Oregon Class Championship  
lichess.org (R3), November 8, 2020  
[Wilson Gibbins]

**1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 b6!?**

Brent finds an offbeat but playable line against Zoey's Trompowsky attack.

**3.Bxf6 exf6**

Stockfish gives White a slight edge, Leela says Black is fine.

**4.e4 Bb7 5.Nd2 Qe7**

Brent's bishop blocking queen move is the engines' top choice.

**6.Qe2**

And Zoey's bishop blocking queen move is also the engines' top choice.

**6...Qb4 7.0-0-0**

7.Qc4 keeps material equality, but Zoey prefers the initiative over trifling pawns.

**7...Qxd4 8.Ng3 Qd6 9.Qe3 Nc6 10.Bc4 0-0-0**

Trying to hang on to the pawn with 10...Ne5 isn't wrong, but 11.Bd5 keeps some initiative for White.

**11.Bxf7 Ne5 12.Bb3 Qc5 13.Qe2 Be7 14.Kb1 Kb8**

White has more board space, Black has two bishops, dynamic equality.

**15.Nxe5 Qxe5 16.Rhe1**

Zoey still values the initiative over trifling pawns.

**16...Qxh2 17.Nf3 Qh5**

17...Qxg2 18.Rg1 Qh3 19.Rxg7 gives White a well-placed rook that Black cannot oppose with Rg1 without dropping the exchange.

**18.Bd5 Rhe8 19.Rh1 Qg6 20.Nh4 Qg5 21.g3?!**

Engines don't like this move, but Leela is happier with White's position than Stockfish is. 21.Bxb7 Kxb7 22.Rd5 Qh6 (giving back the pawn immediately with 22...f5 is safer 23.Rxf5 Qh6 24.Rh5 Qc6) 23.Rh5 Qf4.

21...f5

The computer move 21...Bc5! aims at g1, allowing Black to defend against 22.f4 (there are other artificial engine ideas like 22.Nf3 Qf5) 22...Qxg3.

22.Nxf5 Bc5= 23.Bxb7 Kxb7 24.Qd3 h6 25.f3 Qf6 26.Qb3 Bf8 27.Rd3 Kb8 28.Rhd1 g6 29.Nd4 Bc5 30.Nb5 a6 31.Nc3



Position after 31.Nc3

31...Qe7

31...d6 may be best, as it is a move Black eventually plays anyway, but I would be reluctant to further weaken my light squares and lock in my bishop, making it vulnerable to b2-b4.

32.Nd5 Qe5 33.Rc3

33.f4! Qxe4? (33...Qe6 34.e5) 34.Nf6.

33...d6 34.Qc4 Kb7 35.a4

35.b4! b5 36.Qd3 Bb6 37.a4

35...c6 36.Nf4

Brent has played well up to this point, blunting Zoey's initiatives. But he is now down to six minutes (Zoey has eight). In time pressure, it becomes more difficult to defend accurately.

36...b5?

White has only a slight advantage after 36...g5.

37.Qf7+!± Re7 38.Nxg6 Rxf7 39.Nxe5 Rg7? 40.Rxc5 Rxg3 41.Nf7 Rf8 42.Rf5

1-0

Ryan Lu (1948) –  
Zoey Tang (2097) [B51]  
Oregon Class Championship  
lichess.org (R4), November 8, 2020  
[Wilson Gibbins]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Nd7 4.d4 cxd4 5.Qxd4 a6 6.Bxd7+ Bxd7

This line scores slightly under 50%

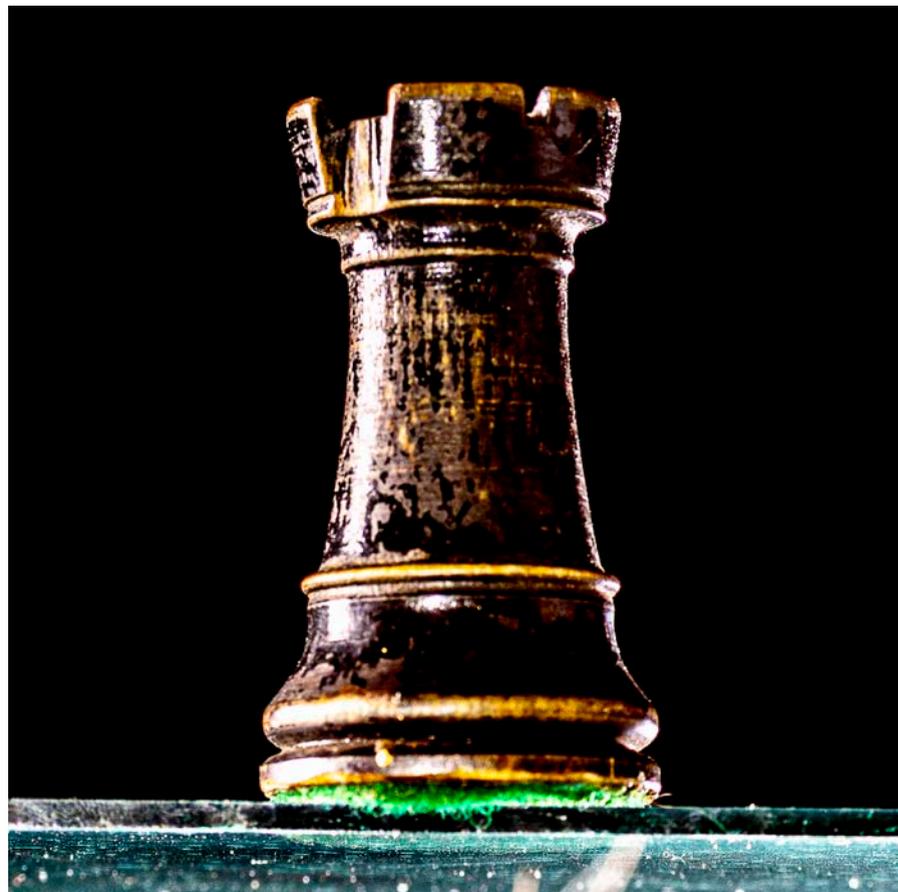


Photo credit: Philip Peterson.

for White. I wouldn't have suspected that. I would believe that White's better development would lead to a few early knockouts.

7.Nc3 e5 8.Qd3 Rc8 9.0-0 h6

The correct move, but it takes faith in the Sicilian structure to make a move like this before touching any of your kingside pieces. I would be worried about White's development, but since White has no pawn breaks or open files, it is hard to use the time advantage to do much damage. The natural move 9...Nf6 allows 10.Bg5 White is gets an edge based on the d5 square becoming a destination shopping square for knights.

10.a4 Nf6 11.Be3 Be7 12.Nd2 Be6 13.a5

13.Nd5= might be a shade better. It has scored three wins and a draw in the four games in which it has been played, but White's results are unrelated to the quality of the current position.

13...d5

Now or never. 13...0-0 14.Nd5

14.exd5 Nxd5 15.Nxd5 Qxd5

Black's move is better than 15...Bxd5 16.Bb6 Qd6 17.Rfd1.

16.Qxd5 Bxd5. 17.c3 0-0 18.Nf3 Bf6 19.Rfd1 Bc6 20.Rd2

White controls the d-file, but as are no entry squares for White's rooks, Black is still better.

20...g5 21.h3 Bg7 22.Bc5 Rfe8 23.Bb6 f5 24.Rad1 Ba4 25.Ra1 Bc6 26.Rad1

Ryan appears willing to take a draw.

26...Kf7

Zoey does not.

27.Ne1 Ba4



Position after 27...Ba4

These Ba4 "probing" moves are interesting. I doubt if they are to gain time on the clock, as neither player is in time trouble. This time, Ryan is the one to break from repeating moves.

28.Ra1 Bc6 29.Nd3 Bf8 30.Nb4 Bb5 31.Nd5 Bc6 32.Re1 Re6 33.Ne3 Kg6

Northwest Chess

34.Nc4 e4 35.g3 Bb5 36.Ne3 f4 37.gxf4 gxf4 38.Nd5?

Natural, but for the first time in the game, White is in trouble. 38.Nc2

38...Kf5 39.Nb4 Bxb4 40.cxb4 Rg6+ 41.Kh2 Rcg8+

Another opposite-colored Bishop ending for Zoey. Like her ending in Round 2, this isn't drawish at all.

42.f3 e3 43.Rd5+ Ke6 44.Rd2 Bc6 45.Rf2 Kf5 46.Rc2 Bxf3 47.Rc5+ Ke6

Bad stuff happens after Black moves a rook to g2

0-1

**Mike Morris (2025) – Austin Tang (1852) [B89]**  
Oregon Class Championship  
lichess.org (R2), November 7, 2020  
[Wilson Gibbins]

This game was fun to watch. It reminded me of the games Fischer and Tal played in the 1960s, before the age of the Berlin Wall and Slow Italian. It also reminded me that young players today do not conform to stereotypes like "strong at openings and attack but weaker in endings and defense."

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bc4 e6 7.Be3 a6 8.Bb3 Be7 9.0-0 0-0 10.Kh1

White sometimes plays Kh1 in the Sozin when delaying Be3, so that a later f2-f4 will not allow pins on the a7-g1 diagonal. But with the bishop already on e3, the move 10.f4 is more popular. Game four of the 1972 Fischer-Spassky World Championship continued 10...Nxd4 11.Bxd4 b5 12.a3 (12.e5 had been played a few times before this game, but is now overwhelmingly the main line because of Spassky's 13th move) 12...Bb7 13.Qd3 and after 13...a5! it was apparent that Fischer had drifted into Spassky's prepared analysis. Fischer later drew extracting himself from a difficult position.

10...Na5

Without 10.f4, there is no immediate threat of 11.e4-e5, so Austin takes time to remove Mike's dangerous bishop.

11.f4 b5 12.e5 dxe5

12...Ne8= is awkward looking. But moves like this are often Black's best alternative in the Sozin Sicilian, as the bishop on c8 defends the pawn on e6 and the position stays closed.

13.fxe5 Nd7?!

13...Ne8=

14.Rxf7!±

Here come the 1960s-style fireworks.

14...Nxe5!



Position after 14...Nxe5

Austin defends accurately over the next few moves, but his position is still a little worse. 14...Rxf7 15.Nxe6 Qe8 16.Nc7 Qd8 17.Bxf7+ Kxf7 18.e6+ Kf8 19.Nxa8; 14...Kxf7 15.Nxe6 Qe8 16.Nf4+ Nxb3 17.Qd5#

15.Rxf8+ Bxf8 16.Bxe6+ Bxe6 17.Nxe6 Qxd1+

Austin heads for the ending, a surprising choice since he is a pawn down. But his choice is absolutely correct. 17...Qc8 18.Nxf8 Qxf8 19.Qd5+ Nf7 20.Rf1±; 17...Qf6 18.Qd5+-.

18.Rxd1 Nac4± 19.Bf4?!

The passive looking 19.Bc1 retains a small edge. 19...Ng4 20.Rd8 Rxd8 21.Nxd8 Nge3 22.b3 Ba3! 23.bxc4 Bxc1 24.cxb5 axb5 25.Nxb5 Nxc2±

19...Ng4

19...Nxb2=

20.Rd8

20.Rb1 Nge3 and Black's active pieces compensate for the missing pawn 21.Rc1 Bb4 22.Nc7 Rf8 23.Bxe3 Nxe3 24.Nxa6 Bxc3 25.bxc3 Nd5 26.Nb4 Nxc3 27.g3 Ra8 28.Rf1 Ra4 (28...Nxa2? 29.Ra1)

20...Rxd8 21.Nxd8 Nxb2= 22.Ne6 Nc4 23.Nd5 a5 24.Kg1 b4 25.Kf1 Bd6 26.Bxd6 Nxd6 27.h3 Ne5 28.Ke2 Ndc4 29.Nc5 Kf7 30.Ne3 Nd6 31.Kd2 Nb5 32.Nd5 Nc4+ 33.Kd3 Nb2+ 34.Kd2 Nc4+ 35.Kd3 Nb2+ 36.Kd2 Nc4+

1/2-1/2

**Kushal Pai (1687) – Francisco Lopez (1778) [B01]**  
Oregon Class Championship  
lichess.org (R2), November 7, 2020  
[Wilson Gibbins]

Francisco finished tied for second, so Kushal's second round win over him

paved the way to his first place finish in the Class B section.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.Nc3 Qd6

Grandmaster Sergei Tiviakov has been quite successful with this move. And my database shows that World Champion Magnus Carlsen plays it too, though mostly at faster time controls. 3...Qa5 is most popular; The unlikely-looking 3...Qd8 is a favorite of IM John Bartholomew.

4.d4 c6 5.Nf3 Nf6 6.h3 Bf5 7.Bd3 Bxd3 8.Qxd3 Nbd7 9.Ne2 e6 10.0-0 Qc7 11.c4 Rd8 12.Qb3 Be7 13.Bf4 Qc8 14.Rac1 0-0 15.Rfd1

White has a little edge, but Black is solid.

15...Rfe8 16.Nc3 Nf8

Black's queen is a little uncomfortable with White's rooks and bishop aimed in her direction. Leela suggests 16...b6 to provide a safe square on b7 for Black's queen.

17.d5 exd5 18.cxd5



Position after 18.cxd5

18...Bd6?

18...Qf5 removes Black's queen from the line of fire. 18...Bc5 looks a little unstable with the bishop on an undefended square and a rook on c1 aimed at it, but the engines say that Black has only a slight disadvantage.

19.Bxd6 Rxd6 20.Nb5!

And White has an overwhelming advantage.

20...Rxd5 21.Rxd5 Nxd5 22.Nd6 Qd7 23.Nxe8 Qxe8 24.Qxb7 Nf4 25.Rxc6 h6 26.Rc7 a5 27.Re7 Qa4 28.Rxf7 Qd1+ 29.Kh2 N8e6 30.Ne5 Qd6 31.Qa8+ Kh7 32.Qe4+ Ng6 33.Qxg6+ Kg8 34.Rxg7+

1-0

**Jalen Wang (1263) – Daniel Rilling (1032) [A17]**  
Oregon Class Championship  
lichess.org (R4), November 8, 2020  
[Wilson Gibbins]

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e6 3.g3 Bb4 4.Bg2 0-0

5.e3 d5 6.cxd5 exd5 7.Nge2 c5 8.a3 Bxc3 9.Nxc3 d4 10.Na4 Qd6 11.Qb3

11.0-0 is safest and best. White neglects castling, perhaps due to concern over getting his knight on a4 trapped.

11...Nc6 12.Qc4 b6

12...Ne5 is also strong, but Daniel's move is more than sufficient.

13.exd4

13.0-0 is still best, but White is much worse after 13...Be6 with threats like Na5 followed by Nb3, Bb3, or Bc4.

13...Re8+ 14.Kf1 Qe7 15.Bxc6

15.Kg1 Nxd4 16.Bxa8 Bh3

15...Bh3+

0-1

Shaayan Sinha –  
Michael Schuff (1342) [C42]  
Oregon Class Championship  
lichess.org (R1), November 7, 2020  
[Wilson Gibbins]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 Nc6!?

This move looks like a romantic 19th century gambit. But it has been played by GM Aleksandr Lenderman in Banter Blitz games.

4.Nxc6 dxc6 5.d3 Bc5 6.h3

This doesn't lose, but slow defensive moves in wide open positions can pave the road to quick losses.

6...0-0 7.c3 Re8

7...Nxe4 8.dxe4 Bxf2+ 9.Ke2 Qh4 is another way to create confusion on the chessboard.

8.Bg5?



Position after 8.Bg5

8...Nxe4!

8...Bxf2+! is also winning.

9.dxe4

9.Bxd8 Nxc3+ (or 9...Bxf2+ 10.Ke2 Nxc3+-) 10.Kd2 Nxd1+

9...Qxg5 10.Nd2 Bf5 11.Be2 Rad8

12.Qc2 Bxf2+ 13.Kxf2 Rxd2 14.Qc1 Rxe4 15.Re1 Qe3+ 16.Kf1 Rf4+ 17.Bf3 Qf2#

0-1

Thomas Schuff (1334) –  
Shaayan Sinha [C47]  
Oregon Class Championship  
lichess.org (R4), November 8, 2020  
[Wilson Gibbins]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3 Nc6 4.d4 exd4 5.Nxd4 Bc5 6.Nxc6 bxc6 7.Bd3 d6 8.0-0 Be6 9.Bf4 Ng4 10.h3 Qf6 11.Qd2 Ne5 12.Bxe5 dxe5 13.Rad1 Qg6 14.Kh1 0-0 15.a3 Qh5 16.b4 Bxh3

This should lead to a perpetual, however ...

17.Be2?

17.bxc5 Bxg2+ 18.Kxg2 Qg4+ 19.Kh2 Qh4+

17...Qh4?

17...Bg4+ 18.Kg1 Bd4.

18.bxc5+- Bg4+ 19.Kg1 Bxe2 20.Qxe2 Rfe8 21.Rd7 Re6 22.Qf3 Rf6 23.Qh3 Qf4 24.Rxc7 Rh6 25.Qc8+

1-0

Tomasz Krzykawski –  
Michael Schuff (1342) [E90]  
Oregon Class Championship  
lichess.org (R4), November 8, 2020  
[Wilson Gibbins]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 d6 3.Nc3 g6 4.e4 Bg7 5.Bg5 0-0 6.Nf3 h6 7.Bxf6 Bxf6 8.Bd3 e5 9.d5 Bg7 10.0-0 f5 11.Re1 f4

And the standard King's Indian kingside attack with pawns commences.

12.Rc1 g5 13.h3 h5 14.Qd2 g4 15.hxg4 hxg4 16.Nh2 Qh4 17.Nb5 Na6 18.a3 Rf6 19.f3 g3 20.Ng4 Bxg4 21.fxg4 Rh6 22.Kf1 Qxg4

Attacks like this keep King's Indian addicts addicted.



Position after 22...Qxg4

0-1

Normally  
the Oregon  
State Closed  
(Championship  
and Challengers  
sections) is held  
in February, but  
because we cannot  
hold it in person  
the board voted  
to postpone the  
tournament until  
July 16-19.  
If we still cannot  
hold it in person  
then it will be  
held as an on-line  
event.

# Chess Shorts: Cheerleaders And Chess

By Breck Haining

On a wall in the Seattle Chess Club you will find a cartoon by Roz Chast once published in *The New Yorker* magazine. This cartoon features cheerleaders shouting encouragement to The Hollyhock Middle School Chess Team. One cheerleader shouts: “Take that rook! Take that knight! Take that queen and say GOOD NIGHT!” Another shouts: “Namby-pamby hunt and peckers, you should stick to playing checkers.” Checkers! Ouch! This type of smack-talk is common in some sports, but not chess. If you haven’t seen the cartoon you can see it online at <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/cheers-from-the-hollyhock-middle-school-chess-roz-chast.html>.

The idea of cheerleaders cheering for a chess team seems to be inherently funny. I don’t know when the cartoon was published. I wonder whether it inspired Saturday Night Live’s 1996 skit about cheerleaders cheering for the East Lake High School Spartans Chess Team. Will Ferrell fans might enjoy this short skit: <https://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/video/spartan-cheerleaders-at-a-chess-tournament/3505907> (4:58). He’s one of the cheerleaders.

The comedic idea of cheerleaders and chess apparently inspired The Young Actors Project to produce “Cheerleaders in the Chess Club.” The series can be found on YouTube on the YAP TV channel. Alternately:

- Season One Episode One: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0eb4XR64Dw> (10:56)
- Season One Episode Two: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O\\_dUAeMT0Pw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_dUAeMT0Pw) (16:12)
- Season One Episode Three: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAxh8zmwBX8> (17:35)
- Season One Episode Four: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROSSa3IUn\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROSSa3IUn_w) (18:47)

- Season One Episode Five: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlPec7aTfTs> (14:54)
- Season Two Episode One: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4y277371hI> (23:42)
- Season Two Episode Two: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7-S--yFzM4> (23:25)
- Season Two Episode Three: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgsHc-WyKtE> (38:41)
- Season Two Episode Four: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hfFEPS5abQ> (6:36)
- Season Two Episode Five: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41urLV3yv9I> (8:27)
- Season Two Episode Six: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPzZY3tbnmE> (11:10)
- Season Two Episode Seven: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8FgJ\\_mzPYU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8FgJ_mzPYU) (12:32)
- Season Two Episode Eight: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3FIKnC2wYY> (8:36)

The main story is told in season one episodes one through four and season two episodes one through three. The other episodes are bloopers, behind the scenes, and Q&A sessions. I watched ‘em, so you don’t have to. A high school chess club officer has blackmailed a cheerleader into joining the chess club in hopes that the club will gain enough members to be able to compete in tournaments and earn varsity letters. The unfortunate cheerleading victim drags a friend, a fellow cheerleader, along with her to the club. The club seems more interested in producing videos on chess related topics for their 22 subscribers than in playing chess. There is some question whether all 22 of the subscribers are legitimate. One of the jokes in the series is that for a chess club they don’t play much chess.

The audio and video are high quality, but the storyline and script—how do I say this nicely? — are lacking in material that would interest anyone older than perhaps a young teen. One of the events in the first episode is that the friend cheerleader learns how to play chess. She opens her game with 1. d5 and wonders whether it was a good move. Yes, black moved first. In the background we see another game being played. Our unfortunate cheerleading victim, playing white, slides a rook h1-g1. Her opponent, a girl suffering from Sleeping Beauty Syndrome (SBS), follows with pawn b6-b4. She later adjusts the pawn back to b5. It isn’t clear whether these are attempts at humor or the actors only vaguely know how to play chess.

I think the best thing I can say about the series is that The Young Actors Project is providing students interested in acting the opportunity to have fun and hone their acting skills. I applaud the project for this. For chess players, this is a series you may comfortably skip.



Photo credit: Philip Peterson.

# Recap For ICA Online Events

By Jeffrey Roland



The first four Idaho Chess Association (ICA) online events were covered on page six of the November 2020 issue of *Northwest Chess*. ICA holds at least one tournament every other weekend on chess.com. And starting August 29, 2020 they have all been US Chess rated as well as rated on chess.com.

The seven tournaments held between September 26 and November 25 produced a total of 289 games. In the clubs area of chess.com, as soon as a tournament is completed, the results and games can be downloaded as soon as the event is done.

In the past with live over-the-board events, I have spent a great deal of time and energy inputting games into PGN from raw score sheets, which is necessary in order that they may be enjoyed and published in our digital age. Online events do this automatically, which appeals to me as a player, organizer, historian, and chess journalist.

Here is a summary of the ICA online events continuing from where we left off in the November issue:

September 26: **Eastern Idaho Open** — 4SS, G/30;d0 (19 total players) (US Chess Rated). Winners: First — Kaustubh Kodihalli 3.5/4 (SB 9.25), Second — James Wei 3.5/4 (SB 8.25), and Third — Finn Belew 3.0/4 (SB 6).

October 9: **Norman Friedman Memorial Blitz** — 6SS, G/5;+3 (13 total players) (US Chess Rated). Winners: First — James Wei 5.0/6 (SB 17), Second — Pranav Sairam 5.0/6 (SB16), and Third — Finn Belew 3.5/6 (SB11.25).

October 10: **Norman Friedman Memorial Classic** — 5SS, G/30;+5 (19 total players) (US Chess Rated). Winners: First — Arun Dixit 4.5/5 (SB 11.5), Second — Alex Machin 4.0/5 (SB 11.75), and Third — James Wei 4.0/5 (SB 10.25).

October 24: **North Idaho Open** — 4SS, G/30;+5 (11 total players) (US Chess Rated). Winners: First — James Wei 3.5/4 (SB 7.75), Second — Kaustubh Kodihalli 3.0/4 (SB 6), and Third — Jeffrey Roland 2.0/4 (SB 3.5).

November 7: **Southern Idaho Open & Veterans Day** — 4SS, G/30;+5 (23 total players) (US Chess Rated). Winners: First — James Wei 4.0/4 (SB 9.5), Second — Kaustubh Kodihalli 3.5/4 (SB 8.25), and two tied at Third — Leonardo Wang 3.0/4 (SB 6.5) and Forrest Zeng 3.0/4 (SB 6.5).

November 21: **Turkey Shoot Open** — 4SS, G/30;+5 (19 total players) (US Chess Rated). Winners: First — James Wei 3.5/4 (SB 8.75), and three tied at Second — Adam Porth 3.0/4 (SB 5.5), Josh Price 3.0/4 (SB 5.5), and Kaustubh Kodihalli 3.0/4 (SB 5.5).

November 25: **Turkey Trot Open** — 7SS, G5;+3 (22 total players) (US Chess Rated). Winners: First — Kaustubh Kodihalli 6.0/7 (SB 24.5), Second — Jonathan Geyman 6.0/7 (SB 24), and Third — James Wei 5.0/7 (SB 17.5).

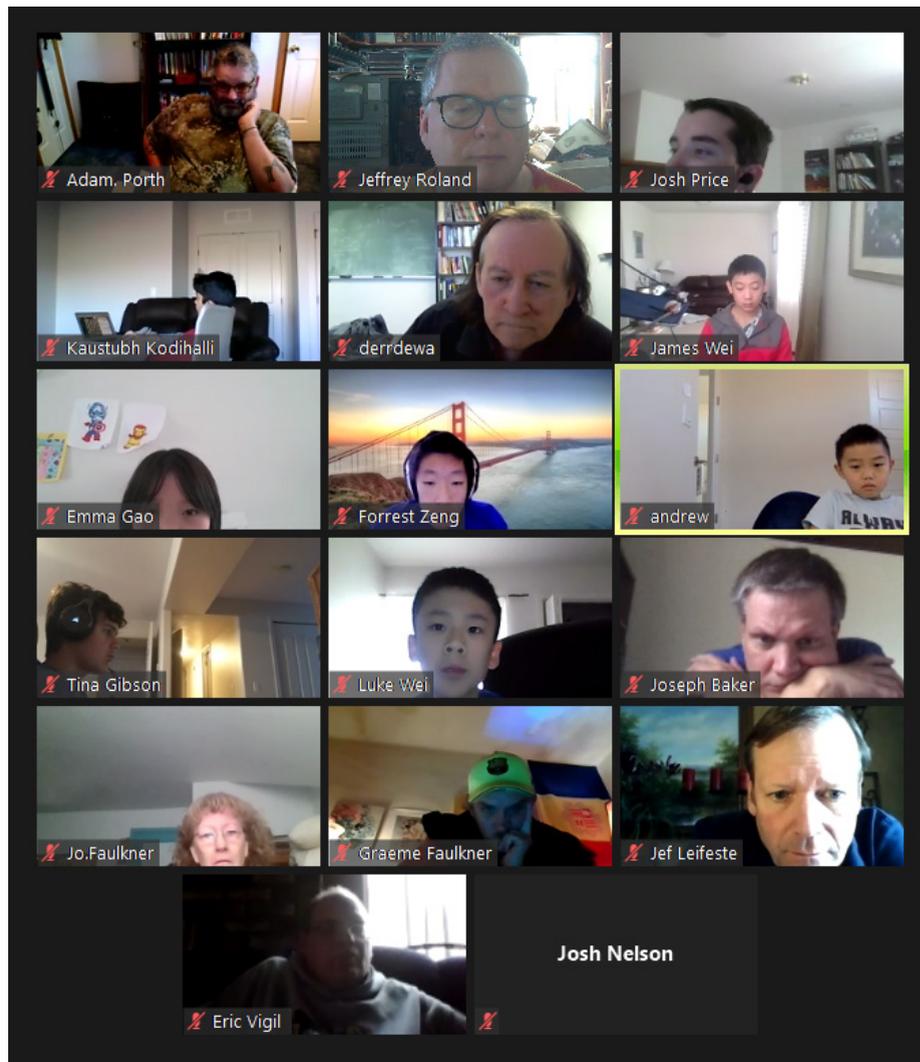
**Kaustubh Kodihalli (2133) – James Wei (2093) [B38]**  
 Turkey Shoot Open Chess.com (R4), November 21, 2020  
*[Ralph Dubisch]*

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 g6**

The Hyper-Accelerated Dragon, less common than 2...Nc6, 2...d6, and 2...e6. 2...Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6 is the normal Accelerated Dragon.

**3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4**

**Northwest Chess**



Screen shot done at the Turkey Shoot Open on November 21, 2020.

4.Qxd4 is another possibility. After 4... Nf6 5.e5 (5.Bb5 Nc6 6.Bxc6 dxc6 (6... bxc6 7.e5 Nd5 8.e6?! f6 9.exd7+ Qxd7.) 7.Qxd8+ Kxd8 8.Nc3 Bg7) 5...Nc6 6.Qa4 Nd5 7.Qe4 Ndb4 (7...Nc7 8.Nc3 Bg7 9.Bf4 b5!?) 8.Bb5 things are far from clear.

**4...Bg7**

4...Nc6 5.c4 Nf6 6.Nc3 Nxd4 7.Qxd4 d6 reaches another main line.; 4...Nf6 5.Nc3 d6 is a transposition to the Modern Dragon.

**5.c4**

5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Bc4 0-0 8.Bb3 d6 (8...a5 9.0-0 a4?! (9...d6 10.Ndb5) 10.Nxa4 Nxe4 11.Nb5/ is complicated.) 9.f3 Bd7 10.Qd2 Nxd4 11.Bxd4 b5∞

**5...Nc6 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Nc3 0-0 8.Be2 d6 9.f3**

9.0-0 Bd7 10.Qd2 Nxd4 11.Bxd4 Bc6 12.f3 a5 is similar to the line in the next note.

**9...Bd7 10.0-0**



Position after 10.0-0

**10...a5!?**

I haven't seen ...a5 played in exactly this position before, but it has been played after 10...Nxd4 11.Bxd4, when 11...a5 12.b3 Bc6 13.Qd2 Nd7 has reached one of the more common lines of the Maroczy. 14.Be3 Nc5 15.Rab1 Qb6 16.Rfc1 Rfc8 has likely been played hundreds of times, with White showing only a slight edge overall.

**11.a4?!**

White weakens the b4- and c5-squares in order to prevent further advance by the black a-pawn, but the cost seems too high. 11.Ndb5!?!z

**11...Nxd4 12.Bxd4 Bc6 13.Qd2 Nd7 14.Rfd1**

14.Be3 Nc5 15.Bd1 Qb6 16.Nb5∞

**14...Bxd4+ 15.Qxd4 Qb6 16.Nb5**

16.Qxb6 Nxb6 17.b3 Nd7.

**16...Bxb5 17.axb5 Qxd4+ 18.Rxd4 Nc5 19.Ra3 b6**



Position after 19...b6

Black has established a classic good knight on a safe outpost versus a bad bishop restrained by its own pawns. White is looking at a long, arduous, passive defense.

**20.Rd1 Rac8 21.Kf2 Rfd8 22.Ke3 Kg7 23.Rc3 Rc7 24.e5?!**

White leaps at the chance to change the dynamic, but the end result — the exchange of all the rooks — will favor Black by giving his king more to do.

**24...Rcd7 25.exd6 Rxd6 26.Rxd6 Rxd6 27.Rc2 e5 28.Rd2 Rxd2 29.Kxd2 f5+ 30.g3 Kf6 31.Kc3 g5 32.Bd3 e4!?**

33.fxe4 fxe4 34.Bc2 Ke5 35.b3

**35.Bd1**

**35...h5+**

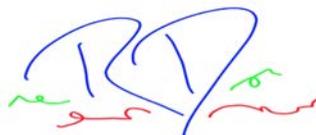


Position after 35...h5

It's interesting to note how naturally Black's game has progressed from slight edge to clearly winning. This didn't require anything spectacular, just a slow advance of king and pawns.

**36.Kd2 Kd4 37.Bd1 h4 38.gxh4 gxh4 39.h3 e3+ 40.Ke2 Ke4 41.Bc2+ Kd4 42.Bd1 Ne6 43.Kf3 Kd3 44.Be2+ Kd2 45.Bf1 Nc5 46.Kg4 e2 47.Bxe2 Kxe2 48.Kxh4 Nxb3 49.Kg4 a4 50.c5 Nxc5 51.h4 a3 52.h5 a2 53.h6 a1Q 54.h7 Qg7+ 55.Kf4 Qxh7 56.Ke5 Qe7+ 57.Kd4 Qd6+ 58.Kc4 Qd3+ 59.Kb4 Qb3#**

0-1



**The 2021 Idaho Closed State Championship will be delayed until at least June in the hopes of playing it over-the-board.**

**The ICA Board will meet to assess the situation.**

**The 2021 ICA Annual Business Meeting will take place online Sunday February 14 at 3pm via Zoom.**

**Join Zoom Meeting:**

[Click here to join Zoom Meeting.](#)

[www.idahocheessassociation.com](http://www.idahocheessassociation.com)

# PCC Winter Open

By Mike Morris

There was some early hope that the Portland Chess Club Winter Open would be the first in-person event in many months. Alas, the fall increase in Covid-19 cases required adherence to pandemic-era virtual chess. Nevertheless, a good turnout of 23 players, assigned to three sections, led to a lively tournament.

Konner Feldman, demonstrating that studying and playing lots of on-line chess is paying off, won the Open section with a perfect score. Canadian Richard Ingram took clear second with 2.5 points.

Bill Dwyer and young Calvin Chang tied for first in the U1800 section with three points each.

Tom Krzykawski won the U1400 section with three points. Tied for second were Nachiketh Narendran, Cleve Johnson, Arthur Yang and Ethan Chung with 2.5 points.

Mike Morris and David Murray directed.

**Konner Feldman –  
Ted Lundin [A83]**

Portland Winter Open  
online, December 5, 2020  
[Ralph Dubisch]

**1.d4 f5 2.e4 fxe4 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 g6**

Two other moves are a bit more popular: 4...Nc6 5.d5 (5.Bb5!?) 5...Ne5 6.Qd4 Nf7 7.Bxf6 exf6 8.Nxe4 (8.0-0-0 f5 9.f3!?) 8...f5♣; and 4...c6 5.f3 (5.Bxf6 exf6 6.Nxe4 d5 7.Ng3 Bd6 8.Bd3 0-0 9.N1e2 doesn't look like something to which White should aspire.) 5...Qa5 6.Qd2±

**5.Bc4**

White commonly continues with the standard gambit plan of 5.f3 exf3 (5...d5 6.fxe4 dxe4) 6.Nxf3 Bg7, with generally good compensation for the pawn.

**5...Bg7**

5...c6 6.d5 Bg7 7.Nge2

**6.Nge2 e6?!**

6...c6

**7.Nxe4 0-0**

7...d5 8.Nxf6+ Bxf6 9.Bxf6 Qxf6 10.Bd3±

**8.0-0 d6**

8...d5

**9.f4**

9.Bb3 Qe8?! 10.Nxf6+ Bxf6 11.Bxf6 Rxf6 12.Qd2±

**9...Qe8?!**

9...d5 10.Nxf6+ Bxf6 11.Bxf6 Qxf6 12.Bb3±

**10.Bxf6 Bxf6 11.Nxf6+ Rxf6 12.Ng3 Nc6?!**

12...d5

**13.Qd2**

13.d5 Na5 (13...Ne7 14.Qd4) 14.Be2±

**13...d5 14.Bb3 Qf7 15.Rae1**

15.c4! a5 (15...dxc4 16.Bxc4) 16.cxd5 exd5 17.Ne4 Rf5 18.Ng5±

**15...Bd7**

15...b6 16.c4 Na5 17.cxd5 Nxb3 18.axb3 exd5 19.Re5±



Position after 15...Bd7

**16.c4! Rf8 17.cxd5 exd5 18.Ne4!**

A cool knight maneuver.

**18...Rf5 19.Ng5**

19.g3!?

**19...Qf6 20.Nf3 Kg7 21.g3 Qd6 22.Ba4 R5f6 23.Ne5**

23.Bxc6 Bxc6 24.Ne5

**23...Rf5 24.Kg2 Be6**

24...R5f6

**25.g4 R5f6 26.Bxc6! bxc6 27.Rc1 Bd7 28.Rc3 Qe7 29.Ra3 Ra8 30.f5! c5 31.Rh3 Bb5 32.Re1 Re8 33.fxg6 Rxc6 34.Nxc6! Qxe1 35.Qh6+ Kf6 36.Ne5+**

Or 36.Rf3+ Ke6 37.Nf8+ Ke7 38.Qf6#.

**36...Ke7 37.Qg5+! Kd6 38.Rh6+ Re6 39.Qd8+ Bd7 40.Qxd7#**

1-0



Photo credit: Philip Peterson.

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# The 2020 Mike Neeley Memorial Northwest Grand Prix

Murlin Varner, Administrator

Eighty players participated in the Washington Class (Online) Championships. Not the numbers we expect in a “normal” year, but not a bad number. Only eight from outside Washington, however, which is low compared to previous online events. As I write this, we have two remaining events, and then the prizes can be calculated. There could still be some volatility in the standings before all is said and done.

Of course, the end of one year’s competition is just the beginning of the next. At least I hope it is. The promise of a vaccine means we can start thinking of a return to normal, although the logistics of the problem means that it is likely to be June before we can even begin to relax. And with 2020 ending with the highest infection and death tolls of the entire pandemic, we shouldn’t risk getting ahead of ourselves. Patience is a virtue and impatience in a pandemic results in more illness and death. Stay safe my friends, be responsible, and know that our lives will get back to normal eventually, no need to rush it.

The December magazine had no advertisements for any events in January. However, there is one event (at least) in this issue, the Seattle City Championships on Chess.com. I am looking forward to a good 2021, as this will be my 20th year of doing this tabulations thingy. Seems like just yesterday ... (no, actually, it doesn’t). I hope we can get all three states back to participating in 2021 and have a good year, even if it will still be online for a number of months. And thanks to all our friends from all over the globe who have helped to make this year a success in spite of social distancing.

Congratulations to Lois Ruff for taking over first place in the Washington overall competition. One month and two events to hold that spot, Lois. Good luck.

Data below current through December 1.

2020 Memorial Northwest Grand Prix Standings								
Washington				Other Places				
	last	first	pts.		last	first	place	pts.
<b>Masters</b>				<b>Masters</b>				
1	Mahajan	Rushaan	52.0	1	Shahinyan	David	ARM	117.5
2	Levine	David	25.0	2	Lenderman	Aleksander	NY	102.0
3	Pupols	Viktors	24.5	3	Raptis	Nick	OR	84.0
4	Orlov	Georgi	22.5	4	Talukdar	Rohan	CAN	77.5
5	Kaufman	Ray	19.5	5	Bernadskiy	Vitaliy	UKR	58.5
<b>Experts</b>				<b>Experts</b>				
1	Vijayakumar	Advaith	115.5	1	Vega	Isaac	OR	67.0
2	Whale	Nicholas	97.5	2	Sairam	Pranav	CA	51.0
3	Bell	Harry	62.0	3	Huang	Patrick M	CAN	47.5
4	Shubin	Daniel	56.5	4	Guha	Eshan	NJ	33.0
5	Jiang	Brandon	42.5	5	McConnell	Griffin	CO	25.5
<b>Class A</b>				<b>Class A</b>				
1	Tien	Sophie	129.0	1	Moore	Michael	OR	74.0
2	Razmov	Valentin N	97.0	2	Ingram	Richard	CAN	38.5
3	Qian	Daniel	93.0	3	Bagchi	Sounak	NJ	28.0
4	Chang	Eddie	59.0	4	Pang	Ashley	CA	19.5
5	Chen	Minda	54.5	5	Two tied at			19.0

Washington				Other Places				
	last	first	pts.		last	first	place	pts.
<b>Class B</b>				<b>Class B</b>				
1	Wang	Felicity	90.5	1	Guo	Yu Han (Veronica)	CAN	30.0
2	Gottumukkala	Ananth	88.5	2	Pai	Kushal	OR	21.0
3	Vemparala	Nikash	87.0	2	Zhao	Maxwell Z	IL	21.0
4	Li	Edward	80.5	4	Fowler	James F	OR	17.0
5	Kompella	S Aditya	73.0	5	Herr	Griffin G	ID	16.5
<b>Class C</b>				<b>Class C</b>				
1	Li	Emma	126.0	1	Martin	Andrew	CAN	41.0
2	Brown	Northern	107.5	2	Zhu	Florina	NJ	31.5
3	Ramkumar	Aditya	92.0	3	He	Justin	ID	19.5
4	Singh	Saket	81.5	4	Gabunia	Davit	OR	18.0
5	Zhou	Leonardo	72.0	5	Three Tied at			15.0
<b>Class D and Below</b>				<b>Class D And Below</b>				
1	Ruff`	Lois	136.5	1	Malakar	Saarthak	OR	56.5
2	Zhang	Michael	110.0	2	Hack	Don	CAN	54.5
3	Devadithya	Hiruna	107.5	3	Arul	Sharvesh	AZ	54.0
4	Kona	Vidip	104.5	4	Li	David	IL	40.0
5	Wong-Godfrey	Emerson P	95.0	5	Morris	Brian L	CA	36.0
<b>Overall Standings</b>								
1	Ruff`	Lois	136.5	1	Shahinyan	David	ARM	117.5
2	Tien	Sophie	129.0	2	Lenderman	Aleksander	NY	102.0
3	Li	Emma	126.0	3	Raptis	Nick	OR	84.0
4	Vijayakumar	Advaith	115.5	4	Talukdar	Rohan	CAN	77.5
5	Zhang	Michael	110.0	5	Moore	Michael	OR	74.0
6	Brown	Northern	107.5	6	Vega	Isaac	OR	67.0
6	Devadithya	Hiruna	107.5	7	Bernadskiy	Vitaliy	UKR	58.5
8	Kona	Vidip	104.5	8	Tarjan	James	OR	58.0
9	Whale	Nicholas	97.5	9	Malakar	Saarthak	OR	56.5
10	Razmov	Valentin N	97.0	10	Hack	Don	CAN	54.5
11	Wong-Godfrey	Emerson P	95.0	11	Arul	Sharvesh	AZ	54.0
12	Qian	Daniel	93.0	12	Sairam	Pranav	CA	51.0
13	Ramkumar	Aditya	92.0	13	Huang	Patrick M	CAN	47.5
14	Zhang	Michelle	91.5	14	Aleksandrov	Aleksej	BLR	46.0
15	Wang	Felicity	90.5	15	Martin	Andrew	CAN	41.0



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